Uncommon Cause
A Life at Odds with Convention
Volume II
The Transformative Years

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Uncommon Cause - Volume II
A Life at Odds with Convention
The Transformative Years
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Only one who devotes himself to a cause with his whole strength and soul can be a true master.

Albert Einstein, 1938
For my brilliant co-authors
Ted Warner and Frank Miller
Who served their nation with unsurpassed excellence

and

For my irreplaceable helpmates
Larry Kutcher and Dan Harrington
Whose boundless devotion brought this memoir to closure
Welcome back, dear reader, and my apology for the interruption occasioned by my decision to divide this memoir into two volumes. That decision was driven by two realities: the final page count, which would have produced a book of unseemly size, and a roadblock to the timely publication of what is now the second volume that I would never have anticipated. For eighteen months of utter frustration, I was forced to navigate a bureaucratic maze in the Department of Defense that left me angry with and embarrassed for organizations I knew intimately, given my three tours of duty in the Pentagon.

I was quite aware when I made the decision to publish that a DoD directive required all such writings to be submitted for review and approval. The directive notes that the author should allow at least 30 working days for the review, with caveats as to length, subject matter, etc. In my case, it became a year and a half, including four months of review, beginning in early May of 2014, by the United States Strategic Command (STRATCOM, the organization I headed before retirement), followed by the Department of the Air Force. The manuscript was passed to the OSD office responsible for shepherding the manuscript through the next steps the first week of September, 2014, and from there it was passed to other offices in OSD, to the Joint Staff, and to the Department of Energy (DoE).

STRATCOM and Air Force Headquarters made no comments; the various OSD and DoE offices requested minimal changes, easily accommodated. To my astonishment, the principal delay proved to be caused by the chapter that opens this volume, co-authored by Frank Miller, about whom much more shortly, and disarray in the Joint Staff, where two directorates, Strategic Plans and Policy (J-5) and Operations (J-3), issued starkly opposing reviews. The J-5 division, which has principal responsibility on the Joint Staff for the material of primary interest – nuclear weapons employment policy – had little to offer, whereas the J-3 representative demanded that some twenty-five pages, virtually all from the chapter that immediately follows, be amended in some form, or in some instances, that entire pages be removed.

This outcome only came to my attention when a FedEx package arrived unannounced on my porch on a Saturday morning almost exactly a year after I
submitted the manuscript to STRATCOM. It contained cover memoranda from
the Public Affairs Office of the Secretary of the Air Force and the OSD office
responsible for the review process as well as thirty pages of text redacted to
some degree. As I cross-referenced these pages to my original manuscript,
I could hardly believe what I was seeing. Nearly all of the material marked
“classified” was available to the public in declassified United States govern-
ment sources. The reader would be quite correct in assuming that Frank and I
had taken great pains before ever putting pen to paper not to reveal security
information; indeed, we were the Original Classification Authorities for the
very material in question and knew better than anyone else what was or was
not appropriate for open publication.

After consulting with Frank, we began the appeal process, which we
were assured would be expedited with expected completion in 30-45
days. In the course of what became almost another 5 months, we came to two
other startling realizations: the review process was marred by two embed-
ded flaws, both to our detriment. First, there was no requirement for any-
one in the administrative chain of review to reconcile conflicting judgments
among reviewers. Second, despite the fact that at least a half-dozen review-
ers had made no or only minor comments, the system defaulted to the most
restrictive review. When the response to our appeal finally arrived, the re-
sults were decidedly mixed, posing a host of problems for us to resolve. At
times, wholesale passages were excerpted, leaving us to create connective
tissue to replace the Swiss-cheese-like document returned to us without
guidance on what might be acceptable. In other instances, terms or con-
cepts were marked for exclusion on some pages but not on others. In the
same vein, some of our most important judgments regarding terminology
were upheld but others were not, despite our irrefutable documentation
that these terms had been declassified. For example, Frank was precluded
from using a particular phrase in describing an especially egregious case of
the JSTPS purposefully ignoring presidential guidance, even though this con-
struct and many others were made public years ago when the documents
that gave it birth, National Security Decision Memorandum 242 and Nuclear
Weapons Employment Policy 74, were declassified.

I include this bit of back story drama only because the more expert readers
will immediately realize that at several points in the narrative we are purpose-
fully skirting the use of data that is well known to be declassified. While they
will be very familiar with the source material, lay readers will not. Hence for
the latter audience, I urge you to consult the Presidential and Secretary of
Defense documents that originated such concepts—NSDM 242, NUWEP 74,
PD 59, and NSDD 13—which have been declassified in full or in part and may be found at the following websites:


In sum, this guidance is of unsurpassed importance in shaping all of the planning and operational dimensions that I will describe in my introduction to Frank’s portion of the narrative. Notwithstanding the obvious complexity of the subject to be addressed, I ask that the reader bear in mind that for years crucial guidance from the President was often deliberately ignored with mind-chilling consequences.

And now, dear reader, I offer you the rest of my life’s story, the pace of which quickens like that of a thoroughbred under the finishing whip and the import of the issues addressed elevates to a global stage. But first, I would be remiss if I did not thank Rob Green and Kate Dewes for parachuting in from New Zealand by email at the eleventh hour in order to reconstruct for me the complex relationships among people, organizations and nations in the fractured arena of nuclear weapon abolitionists.
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We now come to a second departure from my solo penning of this retrospective: another chapter with a helpmate, in this case, the aforementioned Frank Miller. Moreover, this chapter carries a rather auspicious title—declaring oneself a master of anything is a bit cheeky, as that accolade is best left to the eye of the beholder. In Frank’s case, since that would be me, I can absolutely vouch for his credentials.

Frank retired in early 2005 after a 31-year career in public service, including important work in the Departments of State and Defense as well as in the White House. In the latter post, he was a Special Assistant to President George W. Bush and Senior Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control on the National Security Council Staff. I introduced him in Chapter 22 as my collaborator in uncloaking the secretive world of strategic nuclear target planning. At that point, he had served on the staff of the Secretary of Defense for several years, where he had steeped himself in the intricacies of the Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy document, or NUWEP, the seminal directive that guides the military as it plans for the employment of U.S. strategic nuclear forces. Moreover, Frank had just been elevated to the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Forces and Arms Control Policy, becoming a key player in the creation of that document. At the time, he was far more knowledgeable than I of this highly arcane business, marked by deep secrecy and a unique vocabulary, that was of supreme consequence to the survival of not only the United States but, arguably, the whole of mankind.

One might well surmise that Frank Miller is, in a word, brilliant, blessed with a remarkable intellect that earned him Phi Beta Kappa honors from Williams College with highest honors in Political Science and honors in History.
He also served three years in the U.S. Navy, earning the Surface Warfare Officer designator. After resigning from the Navy, he earned a master’s degree in Public Affairs from Princeton University’s prestigious Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and joined the Department of State before moving over to the Defense Department a couple of years later.

In short, I could find no one better versed in the subject to which I now devote an entire chapter, given its crucial impact on the responsibilities that, as described in the chapters immediately following, came increasingly to occupy my every waking moment: ensuring the security of the United States of America against the threat of nuclear war. Although challenging for the lay reader, the revelations that follow are the most important of the entire narrative: they unveil a flaw in the link between nuclear weapons employment policy and execution planning that grossly distorted the most vital element of national security strategy, heedlessly compounding the already otherworldly risks and costs involved. With that, I shall lead off the discussion, Frank to follow.

PART I: INTRODUCTION

At this juncture in the narrative, as I was about to step into my new responsibilities as the J-5, I had yet to merit the accolade of “master.” Notwithstanding my now broad experience in strategic nuclear arms control, long-range bomber and tanker operations, the strategic reconnaissance and surveillance missions, nuclear weapons surety, the essence of NUWEP formulation, and the rudiments of the Single Integrated Operational Plan, I had just begun to scratch the surface of a host of other dimensions of what I call the U.S. nuclear weapons enterprise, an immense universe whose beginnings are rooted in the genius of Albert Einstein. His brilliant theorizing was given operational life in 1939 with the initiation of what became known as the Manhattan Project, which began modestly and then accelerated with the outbreak of the Second World War. Under the leadership of Army Major General Leslie Groves, the project grew to employ over 130,000 people and expended some 23 billion dollars measured in today’s value. This historic effort produced the first atom bomb, a weapon that was initially tested in mid-July, 1945, and four additional devices by the end of the year – two of which were employed against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August.

With the advent of the Cold War in 1947-48, this seminal project burst into a multi-faceted and far-flung enterprise that encompassed the efforts of vast organizations with gargantuan budgets. These organizations operated in the deepest secrecy to produce the intelligence, policy, strategy, plans,
weapons, delivery systems, and highly skilled specialists who performed their unique duties from a huge array of globally deployed installations. Including the initial costs associated with the Manhattan Project, by the time I would become commander of the Air Force’s contributions to U.S. strategic nuclear forces in 1991, the total expenditures on America’s nuclear weapons capability had grown to six trillion dollars. That is a staggering figure by any measure. I will use it as a springboard for what will, by the end of this chapter, give the reader an appreciation for the scope of the responsibilities that awaited me when, after fifteen tumultuous months as the J-5, I was given a fourth star and became CINCSAC, later to become the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Strategic Command. This is a crucial distinction whose import is made clear in Chapters 25 and 26. The most important of those duties as CINCSAC included: command of Air Force strategic nuclear forces, Director of the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff, and Principal Advisor to the National Command Authority in the event of a nuclear war, most particularly with the Soviet Union.

When I speak to this subject with interlocutors such as journalists, authors, politicians, film producers, professors and students who seek my counsel, I employ a teaching aid that I title The Nuclear Weapons Enterprise Puzzle. I speak at length to each of its 13 “pieces” that collectively make up this vast universe, guarding my reason for choosing the term “puzzle” for later in the discussion. Hence, for the moment I shall simply describe each piece in the briefest of terms and come back to this very deliberately chosen word in Part Three of this book.

Theory: What are the role and utility of nuclear weapons? What is the likelihood of nuclear war? What interests are so vital as to warrant the employment of nuclear weapons by a state as a means of defense? The answers to these crucial questions frame the array of strategies next described in highly abbreviated form.

Strategy: What are the dictums and underlying assumptions of the various real-world approaches for dealing with the grim reality of nuclear weapons? At one end of the spectrum lies Radical Pacifism – caustically characterized as “Better Red than dead,” tantamount to surrender in the face of nuclear attack. Next up the scale come notions of “Limited Deterrence,” premised on faith that no attacker would risk even a relatively modest level of destruction, knowing that the targets of a retaliatory strike would likely be his own cities. The middle ground is held by differing forms of “Flexible Response,” based on the hope that full-scale warfare might be prevented by “controlling escalation.” Finally come the more extreme notions, most graphically exemplified
by preventive or preemptive war, a deliberate attack designed to limit damage to one’s nation by striking first. Library shelves groan under the weight of the boundless literature propounding these constructs.

**Intelligence and Security:** What agencies comprise the U.S. Intelligence Community? What are their individual and collective responsibilities with respect to nuclear policy, planning, and operations? How do their agendas and interests align regarding nuclear matters? How does the extraordinary level of secrecy associated with much of the intelligence information relevant to the nuclear weapons enterprise affect the collection and dissemination of that intelligence? What products comprise those intelligence assessments, and how are they screened and reconciled before being provided to senior decision-makers?

**Policy:** How is broad U.S. nuclear weapons policy established in presidential directives fleshed out by intermediate levels of authority to enable operational commanders to create strike plans? Who decides the explicit damage objectives to be achieved, and what assumptions underpin those decisions? What is the interplay among U.S. nuclear targeting policy, our arms control objectives, and the nuclear weapon policies of our allies, Great Britain and France? Where and how are differing opinions and purposes regarding these momentous matters reconciled, and by whom?

**Strategic Planning:** What is the authority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with respect to the Secretary of Defense’s detailed nuclear weapons guidance? What levels and types of forces are required, and how should they be broadly allocated with respect to the types of targets they are to hold at risk? What levels of readiness should be maintained in order to strike those targets upon presidential order?

**Operational Planning:** Where are U.S. nuclear forces based? How many facilities of what capabilities are required, in the United States and on the territory of allies? What military, political, economic, geographic, and social factors bear on the selection of basing locations and assignment of missions to these forces, whether in the United States or abroad? How should daily readiness levels correspond to evolving threat conditions? What tactical doctrine governs the deployment and possible employment of those forces during crises and armed conflict?

**Targeting:** How do planners select targets for nuclear strike? For example, how is the relatively general guidance issued by the JCS Chairman as agent for the Secretary of Defense and the President translated into detailed targeting options that would do a specified degree of damage to a family of targets that comprise a designated capability? What oversight exists to ensure that the
Masters of the Nuclear Weapons Enterprise

final target plans accord with the intent of the guidance that brought them into being?

**Weapons Acquisition:** What are the human and physical resources that make up the web of nuclear weapons scientists and other specialists, research initiatives and laboratories, technologies and manufacturing facilities that led to the concepts, design, development, testing, evaluation and production of some 70,000 individual warheads?

**Systems Acquisition:** Similarly, what was and is the industrial base that designed, developed, tested, and produced the vast array of nuclear weapon delivery systems used over the years, including intercontinental-range bombers and missiles, shorter-range fighter-bombers, land mines, sea mines, and even jeep-mounted systems and artillery shells?

**Command, Control and Communication:** What are the capabilities and protocols necessary to ensure “failsafe” control of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems via clear-cut channels of authority? What are the secure, redundant paths essential to communicate properly authenticated decisions and orders, thereby ensuring that nuclear forces can be employed under the most stressful conditions of a nuclear attack?

**Operations:** What are the basing, manning, training, maintenance and other support, exercise and evaluation resources, physical and human, required to field and sustain globally-deployed U.S. nuclear forces? What directives, protocols and procedures are essential to guarantee the safety, security, surety, and readiness of the forces? What considerations bear on the allocation of support requirements between military and civilian personnel and organizations, and how are local communities affected by the presence of a large military facility with a nuclear mission?

**Crisis Management and Execution:** What are the capabilities essential for the timely detection, characterization and communication of a nuclear attack by an adversary? Given the short flight time of ICBMs and especially SLBMs stationed closer to our shores, what protocols and decision aids are in place to allow the President to make a decision within minutes of notification? How is the President briefed on the nature of the threat and the array of response options available to him? How is the President’s decision communicated to the U.S. forces deployed worldwide?

**Continuity of Government:** With a nuclear attack on the United States underway, what measures will ensure that federal, state and local government entities survive and continue to exercise appropriate authority in the midst of the unprecedented destruction associated with large-scale nuclear war?

Each of these thirteen facets of the nuclear weapons enterprise could be
parsed to a level of detail that would consume at least a semester-long course of instruction, and, in most cases, a full-blown, multi-year doctoral program. Indeed, the reader may recall that in my days as an assistant professor in the Political Science Department of the Air Force Academy, I taught a semester-long honors course to senior cadets in American Defense Policy, in which a substantial amount of the material was devoted to nuclear strategy and policy.

Of course, parallel courses and advanced programs of study could be created to analyze the nuclear weapon enterprises of each one of the eight other nuclear weapon-capable states, not to mention those of the several other countries that at some point have pursued such capability – most notably, in recent years, Iraq, Iran, and Syria.

My own education along those lines started, albeit one-dimensionally, with the films on the Soviet menace that were required viewing for all of the early classes at the Air Force Academy. But that education broadened through the rest of my career, bringing me to the month of August, 1989, when as the J-5, I became responsible for Annex C of the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan, wherein the Chairman relayed the President’s guidance, as further expounded by the Secretary of Defense, to the Director of the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff and commanders of all U.S. nuclear forces.

And with that, I now turn the pen over to my colleague, who will recount the evolution of U.S. nuclear weapons policy dating from his involvement in this crucial piece of the nuclear enterprise puzzle. I have taken the liberty of placing in boldface those portions of his narrative that warrant special attention; these passages are especially damning with respect to human failures, whether deliberate or unmindful, in formulating and implementing the most consequential policy ever conceived by private or public agents.

PART II: FRANK MILLER’S NARRATIVE

I was appointed Director, Strategic Forces Policy, in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) in early October 1981. President Reagan had just signed National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 12, on the modernization of U.S. strategic nuclear forces and NSDD 13, nuclear targeting policy, on October

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1 The discussion in this section, dear reader, refers specifically to targeting policy issues which were dealt with between 1985 and 1992, that is to say, between 23 and 30 years ago. You should not presume it pertains to current policies and plans, because it does not; this is purely a historical discussion.
My office’s responsibilities included developing national declaratory nuclear policy, providing policy input to U.S. strategic forces modernization programs, overseeing U.S.-U.K. (United Kingdom) nuclear interaction, assessing the compatibility of U.S. arms control initiatives with U.S. deterrence policy and objectives, and handling public affairs with respect to nuclear deterrence. Nuclear targeting policy was not in my portfolio; for byzantine historical reasons, that was placed elsewhere in OSD/Policy. Over the next three and a half years, I was able to reorient much of the overblown rhetoric DoD had inherited from the 1980 Republican Party platform into the traditional mainstream; shape our strategic modernization programs to address policy requirements; assist the sale of the Trident II/D-5 SLBM to the U.K.; create various follow-on agreements (to include creating the missile “pool” arrangement whereby U.S. and U.K. missiles were built up from common stock); and contribute to the Reagan Administration’s efforts to reverse the public impression that it believed in nuclear war-fighting. However, I grew increasingly frustrated at the bureaucratic incompetence displayed by the Policy office that had responsibility for nuclear targeting policy. Their antics prompted the Director of the Joint Staff, Lieutenant General Jack Merritt, to try to abolish the Secretary of Defense’s “Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy” (NUWEP); failing that, he simply gutted the 1984 version of the document. That compounded my concern, given that I had been made aware of huge problems in the SIOP, problems so egregious that parts of the war plan were inconsistent with Presidential Guidance.

**Phase 1: Fixing the Options (1985-1989)**

In the spring of 1985, with the strong support of my boss, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy Richard Perle, the responsibilities for nuclear targeting policy were shifted to my office. I immediately hired a young naval officer, Commander Ed Ohlert, from OP-65, the Navy Staff’s nuclear policy shop. We spent the next several months cataloguing the most serious

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2 Overarching U.S. nuclear weapons policy is provided via a Presidential Directive to the Secretary of Defense. These directives are variously designated “National Security Decision Memorandums,” “Presidential Decisions,” and so forth. For some arcane reason, Democratic administrations use names beginning with “Presidential” and Republican administrations use names beginning with “National Security,” but there is no substantive difference between the two: all are authoritative. These documents put forth broad guidance for deterrence and targeting policy. The Secretary of Defense then issues a “Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy” or “NUWEP” which translates the Presidential guidance into more specific directions for the construction of the national nuclear war plan. Based on the NUWEP the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff sets forth even more detailed guidance to the JSTPS for building the plan.
macro-policy issues regarding the war plan: city avoidance, limited options, de-confliction with the NATO Scheduled Strike Plan, a reserve force, and launch under attack (LUA). Soon after, I made two crucial personnel moves. First, I hired a young wunderkind out of the Presidential Management Intern program, Gil Klinger. Gil would become my strong right hand, my alter ego, and, indeed, a key aide when I later went to the National Security Council Staff. Next, I stole from OSD/Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E, the forerunner of today's Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation or CAPE directorate) a three-person analytic team headed by a dedicated numbers cruncer and computer whiz (back in the days of mainframes) named Wayne Lumsden. Wayne and his team worked a minor miracle in accessing the crucial targeting data essential to the insights that informed the unprecedented review we were about to undertake; the validity of that data also made our analyses nigh irrefutable.

The team’s initial challenge was the egregious circumstance that my co-author described in the preceding chapter and that goes to the heart of this chapter: for decades, the military authorities who controlled access to the SIOP target base and the protocols employed in its construction thwarted every effort by the OSD officials responsible for formulating nuclear weapons targeting policy to gain the insight necessary for overseeing the translation of that policy into the nuclear war plan. Requests for specific information about the plan had to be signed out by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy to the Director of the Joint Staff, who in turn sent a memo to the Vice Director of the JSTPS at SAC Headquarters in Nebraska. The answer back up that chain was invariably that OSD had “no need to know,” a process made to take months. Wayne, however, had managed to gain access to the SIOP database, which was compiled separately at JSTPS from the “Air Room,” where targets in the database were designated and weapons were subsequently allocated in the actual construction of the war plan. At the same time, Wayne was also able to develop contacts in the Air Room who provided us with sufficient information about these targeting protocols that we could begin to connect the dots between policy and planning.

With these analytical insights in hand, we then decided to take on the nuclear war planning issues with which we were dealing in serial fashion, thus avoiding one of the bureaucratic mistakes made by our predecessors: bundling all of their initiatives into a single revision of the NUWEP, which meant that in the normal give-and-take of organizational compromise with the Joint Staff and the JSTPS, they had to trade gains here for concessions there, thus effectively eviscerating the guidance.

The first issue we took on had its origins in Secretary of Defense Robert
McNamara’s 1962 speech to the American Bar Association in Chicago. McNamara argued that the President should have the option, in a major counter-military strike, to spare (“withhold”) nuclear attacks on certain Soviet cities in the hope of sending a signal of restraint to the Kremlin. This was incorporated into formal plans. At some point, presumably in the 1970s, the war planners at the JSTPS (without informing the Joint Staff or OSD, much less the White House staff) had decided to define a “city” in such a manner that had the President ordered a strike that included the cities withhold, all of those cities would nevertheless have been obliterated.

After studying this, we developed a methodology, working with DIA, that implemented faithfully the Presidential direction to provide a true cities withhold option. Secretary Weinberger approved our approach. Here was our first foray into targeting, emphatically asserting our authority. The JSTPS and the Joint Staff were accustomed to ignoring the OSD staff on nuclear planning matters; by picking an issue where the planning so clearly violated national policy, by carefully preparing our analysis, and by ensuring that the Secretary would back us when we needed it, we demonstrated that henceforth we would be a force to be reckoned with.

That newfound respect paid off when we tackled the next issue on our priority list: limited options. This mid-1970s change to the NUWEP grew out of the Nixon Administration’s National Security Decision Memorandum 242, directing DoD to develop plans for “limited employment options which enable the United States to conduct selected nuclear operations …. in which the level, scope and duration of violence is limited in a manner which can be clearly and credibly communicated to the enemy.” The new guidance was prompted by the fact that the Soviet Union had achieved strategic nuclear parity with the United States and, by virtue of the deployment of a new “Yankee-class” nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) force, had also achieved a secure second-strike capability. The Administration perceived that Moscow, in light of these new advantages, might consider limited conventional or nuclear attacks.3

Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger’s associated NUWEP 74 mandated

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3 Much later, Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci explained the rationale for building these options as follows: “Flexible response confronts Soviet attack planners with the possibility that we may respond to a conventional attack with conventional forces or, if those fail to defeat the aggression, with land- or sea-based nonstrategic nuclear weapons, or with limited or massive use of US strategic weapons against targets in the Soviet homeland. Flexible response has enhanced deterrence, multiplying the uncertainties confronting the Soviet leadership and confronting them with the threat of costs that would far outweigh any gains that might be achieved through aggression.” Annual Report to Congress, FY 1990, January 1989, p. 35.
that the JSTPS create these (and other) small options. His successor twice re-
moved, Harold Brown, repeated that direction in the 1980 edition of NUWEP. 
By this point, in 1985, my team and I had gained much more direct access to 
the JSTPS, allowing us insight into the small options structure the targeting 
staff had devised, including both the number and type of assigned warheads 
and delivery systems. \textit{Our assessment revealed the implementation of the 
plans was absolutely inconsistent with the intent of national nuclear policy, as 
the Soviet leadership would have been unable to determine that a “limited 
U.S. option” was not a major US strategic attack.} We set out, with the 
Defense Intelligence Agency, to assess the capabilities of the Soviets’ ballistic 
missile early warning radars and launch detection satellites. Armed with this 
knowledge, we worked to create an entirely new series of limited options that 
were both focused and militarily effective while conveying to the Soviet leader-
ship the restrained nature of our response. Once again, Secretary Weinberger 
signed out the new guidance and my team and I followed up, per our new 
authority to ensure that his direction was implemented.

Our third major thrust was to deal with the equally serious issue arising 
from the fact that SIOP targeting was “deconflicted” with but not “coordinat-
ed” with the targets contained in NATO plans. \textit{The bottom line was that, in 
very large number of cases, U.S. and Allied pilots would have been directed 
to risk their lives by penetrating Warsaw Pact air defenses in order to strike 
targets already destroyed by U.S. strategic missiles.} This was no easy mat-
ter to resolve; we vigorously prodded the Joint Staff to deal firmly with the 
JSTPS and the targeting staff of the four-star Supreme Allied Commander in 
Europe to revise and coordinate the two nuclear strike plans. Here again, this 
longstanding anomaly was so egregious, and the policy changes we developed 
were such an obvious improvement, that we had no difficulty in obtaining 
the Secretary of Defense’s endorsement. This made it crystal clear that we 
knew the policy intent and the broad parameters of presidential guidance and 
NUWEP better than any other organization in DoD – and that we had the clout 
to make our proposals stick.

Our fourth major initiative concerned the Secure Reserve Force or SRF, 
a creation of National Security Decision Memorandum 242 (which directed 
that “employment plans should be developed which provide to the degree 
practicable with available forces for the following: (1) maintenance of surviv-
able strategic forces in reserve for protection and coercion during and after 
a major conflict...”) and NUWEP 74. The SRF was endorsed subsequently by 
the Carter and Reagan Administrations. Carter’s PD 59 stated: “Pre-planned 
options should be capable of execution while leaving a substantial force in
secure reserve and capable of being withheld for possible subsequent use. The forces designated for the reserve should be the most survivable and enduring strategic systems consistent with the need for a flexible and varied reserve force capable of being effectively employed against a wide target spectrum and withheld if necessary for a prolonged period.” Given that a major fixation of U.S. nuclear policy during the 1970s and 1980s was the vulnerability of the Minuteman ICBM force to a Soviet first strike, we were surprised that planning in the 1980s included ICBMs as part of the secure reserve. We remedied this.

During the time we were working on the above four issues, we were also involved with the question of launch under attack. Presidential Guidance on this point was explicit. PD 59 stated, “While it will remain our policy not to rely on launching nuclear weapons on warning that an attack has begun, appropriate pre-planning, especially for ICBMs that are vulnerable to a pre-emptive attack, will be undertaken to provide the President an option of so launching.” President Reagan, in NSDD 13, wrote, “Deterrence can best be achieved if our defense posture makes Soviet assessments of war outcomes, under any contingency, so uncertain and dangerous as to remove any incentive for initiating attack.” Nevertheless, the war plan ignored this—yet another failure to comply with Presidential guidance. Our successful resolution of this issue was affirmed in Secretary Carlucci’s confident statement to Congress in January 1989: “We have not spent billions of dollars to modernize and increase the capabilities of the bomber and sea-based legs of the Triad only to leave the President with a single effective option with which to respond to a massive Soviet attack. We do not however intend to reduce the uncertainties facing Soviet attack planners or the Soviet leadership.... It is not our policy to explain in detail how we would respond to a Soviet missile attack. However, the United States does not rely on its capability for launch on warning or launch under attack to ensure the credibility of our deterrent. At the same time our ability to carry out such options complicates Soviet assessments of war outcomes and enhances deterrence.” (Annual Report to the Congress, FY 1990, January 1989, p 37 [emphasis added]).

It was disturbing to discover during our involvement in the LUA debate that, despite Presidential guidance, the JSTPS resented our involvement in what they considered a strictly military issue, in part because no senior officer there could believe a President would not choose to direct a launch on warning/under attack. Rather, the JSTPS pressured the Joint Staff to resist our attempt to find ways in which launch on warning/under attack capability would be preserved, while retaining the flexibility in the SIOP to ensure that we could still retaliate effectively if the bulk of the Minuteman force did not survive
the attack. The upshot was that we were forced once again to take the issue
to Secretary Weinberger, who again predictably decided that the President’s
guidance was to be implemented faithfully. By this time Admiral Bill Crowe
had become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. A member of the OSD staff
earlier in his career, he recognized that we were simply performing our legiti-
mate responsibilities in seeking to ensure that the war plans conformed to the
Commander in Chief’s direction and that we kept winning. He took steps to
have the Joint Staff work with us on a more collegial basis rather than treating
us as the enemy. The hypocrisy in all of this was that the JSTPS kept the Joint
Staff as much in the dark about how the war plan was constructed as it did
the OSD staff, yet demanded that the Joint Staff front for it in Washington.
This had to change and it did, dramatically, in a few short years.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, the late Fred Iklé, did not show
interest in any of these major reforms, or in nuclear forces or nuclear policy
issues generally. In mid-1987, however, as we were wrapping up the launch
on warning issue, he began pressing us, for reasons we never understood, to
draft a new NUWEP, which struck us as a very bad idea. As I noted above, we
viewed this as opening the door to a negotiation in which issues of impor-
tance became bargaining chips; we firmly believed in solving these issues in
series, based on their merits. Given that Iklé was the senior official in Policy,
we of course had to comply. Given our positive experiences with Secretary
Weinberger, and the newly collegial relationship we were building with the
Joint Staff, thanks to Admiral Bill Crowe, we proceeded to draft what became
NUWEP 87. No major policy issues were decided in it, no “counter-revolution-
ary” attempts to overturn previous decisions on urban withhold, etc., were
made by the Joint Staff or JSTPS. However, among the few issues which did go
to Secretary Weinberger for decision the most crucial by far was the question
of whether my staff and I could have access to the “Black Book.”

The Black Book was the President’s guide to the U.S. nuclear war plan;
it was prepared by the Joint Staff’s Directorate for Operations (J-3) and jeal-
ously guarded. In light of all that had transpired during our three years in
the nuclear targeting business, we wanted to ensure that the material the
President would consult in a crisis accurately reflected what was now in the
war plan. J-3 fought hard to preclude our access, even calling our integrity
into question. A flag officer, who earlier in his career had served on the NSC
staff, told us that we should not have access since we were civilians, “and not
subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice” – insinuating that, because
we were not subject to court martial if we leaked classified information, we
could not be trusted. In a final bizarre effort, the J-3 staff tried to construe
Secretary Weinberger’s specific direction in NUWEP 87 for Black Book access for designated OSD staff, i.e., my office, as intending that it be one-time only. A call to Admiral Crowe was sufficient to quell this rebellious bureaucratic nonsense. That said, NUWEP 87 only marked the conclusion of the first round of our nuclear targeting work.

Phase 2: The SIOP Review, the Unraveling of the Soviet Empire, and the Negotiation of START II (1989-1992)

The SIOP Review

The election of George H. W. Bush brought new management to DoD. President Bush initially chose Senator John Tower to be his Secretary of Defense, but the nomination collapsed as a result of allegations about his private life. President Bush next turned to Representative Dick Cheney of Wyoming, the House Minority Whip, who was confirmed easily. The new Deputy Secretary was a former General Motors senior executive, Don Atwood. The new Under Secretary for Policy was Paul Wolfowitz, and my immediate boss, the new Assistant Secretary for International Security Policy, was Steve Hadley. Wolfowitz was concerned that our work, which he had heard about from some unnamed flag officers in the Pentagon, was intruding too much on military prerogatives. Fortunately, we had a trump card. I had formed an excellent professional relationship with Mr. Cheney while he was a member of the House; we had served together in a classified program for several years and he was well aware of the changes we made to the nuclear war plans. As Secretary, he was now enormously supportive of the work my team and I were doing.

A number of events occurred in the first half of 1989 that propelled us into a new line of inquiry. Soon after Secretary Cheney took office, the CINCSAC, General Jack Chain, came to Washington to present a brief on the SIOP – having recently made headlines by telling a Senate committee “I need ten thousand weapons because I have ten thousand targets.” The briefing took place in the Joint Chiefs of Staff conference room known as “the Tank,” and the Secretary had asked me to accompany him. He was astonished at the number of weapons directed to the general area of Moscow; he was similarly surprised by the many hundreds of weapons that General Chain asserted were essential to destroy certain target sets. After the briefing, the Secretary called me to his office and asked that my team investigate General Chain’s numbers. I replied that our role had been limited to determining whether the war plan was consistent with national policy; we were abjured from investigating specific weapon-to-target assignments. The Secretary’s response was all I could have
hoped for: henceforth, our job included examining all aspects of the war plan. For the next several months Gil Klinger and I worked Wayne Lumsden and his number crunchers to death. Wayne had access to the SIOP data base and had been hoping that he would get the chance to perform a detailed analysis of it. By the late fall of 1989 we had come to several startling findings, including that the weapon-to-target ratio in many cases far exceeded what was necessary to achieve the desired military attack goals, and that sophisticated nodal analysis had not been incorporated into attack planning, resulting in both less efficient attacks and the use of more weapons than necessary to achieve desired military objectives.

We presented these findings to my four bosses, laying out all of these facts and advancing the hypothesis that both the target base and the weapons allocation process were incoherent and riddled with errors. (Our insight was informed serendipitously: an officer new to my staff from the JSTPS had brought with him its closely-held internal targeting guidance manual known as the Blue Book, which not even the Joint Staff possessed or was allowed to read.) Asked our intentions by Secretary Cheney, I replied that the only way to solve this was for my office to do a zero-based review of the SIOP target base, rebuild it, and then assess how weapons should be applied according to the present NUWEP. I also made clear that this was not a task we in OSD could perform on our own. We needed a close-hold team effort with members from the Joint Staff and the JSTPS, together with access to every rule, internal guidance document, or other material that influenced nuclear target planning. I was instructed, together with Gil Klinger, to brief the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, my long-time colleague General Colin Powell; his Vice Chairman, General Bob Herres, who had long harbored doubts about the plans produced by the JSTPS; and the new Director of the Joint Staff, three-star General Mike Carns, on our proposed tripartite targeting review. Given the overwhelming evidence we presented, they concurred, even Mike Carns, who, though initially skeptical of our role in the targeting world and the concerns we expressed, soon became a close friend, collaborator and one of the strongest proponents of the forthcoming review. Shortly after Thanksgiving, 1989, Secretary Cheney signed a directive establishing this sweeping study, naming me the head as a newly appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary, and I directed Gil Klinger to run it. General Herres, Klinger and I then flew to Omaha to present our brief to General Chain and his senior staff. As their eyes first widened at evidence they were clearly seeing for the first time and then narrowed at the realization that OSD had penetrated
so deeply into their process, it struck me that this meeting could have been titled, “Gentlemen, meet your war plan.”

Task One entailed scrubbing the SIOP target base down to its bare essentials, with Gil leading the working group through several months of exhaustive work, from which a number of remarkable facts emerged, among them:

- The plan had not applied nodal analytic techniques that would have increased military efficiency and reduced warhead requirements.
- In building the plan, it was the task of one part of the JSTPS to break target complexes into various “elements.” These elements were passed to the weapons application branch, which then applied weapons to each of them based on Blue Book rules. Astonishingly, once weapons application was complete, there was no final review of the entire target complex – which would have revealed that striking its multiple elements individually resulted in a level of destruction that could have readily been achieved by fewer weapons.

Once the target base scrub was complete, we presented the results to Secretary Cheney, General Powell, and the JSTPS vice director, Admiral Ron Eytchison (General Chain chose not to attend any of our review meetings), together with recommendations as to which targets to keep, which to delete, and how the targeting process should deal with nodal analysis and the “elements” issue. When the session was over, we had a template for writing guidance for the next SIOP now approved at the highest level of DoD – for the first time in history.

Task Two focused on examining the modified target base in light of the new weapons application process. We developed recommendations covering how target classes should be struck, i.e., one weapon or two; delivery by ballistic missile, bomber or cruise missile; and, for targets requiring two weapons, which combination of weapons would be most efficient. After briefing the Secretary and the Chairman, we had another first – weapons allocation guidance approved at the highest level of DoD.

Equally important, we took the opportunity to underscore for these two principals a largely unrecognized but hugely consequential 30-year-old verity going back to the Eisenhower presidency. The case in point was driven by the fact that, at the same time we were briefing the results of our review, negotiations on the START 1 treaty were in their final phase. The draft treaty limited the U.S. and the Soviet Union to no more than 4,900 strategic missile
This gave rise to a critical question which we prompted Secretary Cheney to ask Vice Admiral Eytchison: whether, in light of the work of the review team, the U.S. could meet its deterrent requirements within the proposed limit. Eytchison, whose principal responsibility was to oversee the JSTPS on a daily basis, gave the by-the-book answer: as he was not in a position to impose requirements, he could not answer the question, which we already knew to be “yes.” The Secretary persisted: why couldn’t the Vice Director of JSTPS tell him what the war plan required? Eytchison’s answer harkened back thirty years: when President Eisenhower took steps in 1960 to ensure against the duplication inherent in the separately constructed Air Force and Navy strategic strike plans against the USSR, neither service would countenance the other being empowered to impose requirements on it. The resulting bureaucratic compromise was the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff, whose responsibility was to allocate to a target every weapon committed to it by the Services — but not to determine the appropriate number and type of weapons through an independent analysis of what an integrated war plan, conforming to nuclear weapons employment guidance from civilian authority, would require. Thus, it was left to the Air Force and to the Navy, in their own internal budgeting processes, to decide how many strategic nuclear delivery systems to buy (e.g. 132 B-2As, 18 Trident SSBNs), each with an associated weapons load, the weapons to be fabricated by the Department of Energy and committed to the JSTPS for allocation to the war plan. Nowhere in this process was there provision for a senior civilian or military official to determine what was required based on U.S. security and nuclear deterrence objectives that had been set at the highest levels of government. The point was not lost on the Secretary and the Chairman, who had approved our proposed target base and allocation plan, and now authorized us to develop the first requirements-based SIOP in history. The resulting number was 5,888 strategic nuclear weapons, a more than 40% reduction from the 10,000 nuclear weapons the United States was entitled to deploy under the soon-to-be signed START 1 treaty. (Gil Klinger gave momentary consideration

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4 START 1 had multiple limits. Its foundation was 4,900 ballistic missile warheads within an overall 6,000 warhead ceiling. Because bomber-delivered weapons (gravity bombs and cruise missiles) flew much more slowly than ballistic weapons, they were considered “more stabilizing.” While each ballistic warhead counted as one weapon, cruise missiles were counted as “half” a weapon and gravity bombs were not counted at all. (Bombers were assessed as counting as one weapon each, even if they actually carried 16 bombs.) As a result under START 1, each side could deploy about 10,000 nuclear weapons, of which no more than 4,900 could be ballistic.
to applying for a vanity license plate with the number.) Although we had not considered this during the review, our work paved the way for a major reduction in future US weapons inventories as well as advances in negotiated arms reductions with the Soviet Union, now in its waning days.

**The Unraveling of the Soviet Empire**

The year 1989 witnessed a series of remarkable developments in the USSR’s satellite empire in Eastern Europe. Popularly-backed movements for true independence which began in the mid-to-late 1980s grew increasingly bolder and stronger as it became clear that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was unwilling to order Soviet forces stationed in the satellites to suppress those hungering to remove themselves from Soviet domination. True national governments were beginning to emerge. In November 1989, the world was transfixed as the East German government removed restrictions on transit between East and West Germany; the Berlin Wall had figuratively fallen, foreshadowing the literal breach to come. While we in OSD were probably late to the game in recognizing the irreversible nature of these changes, we were among the very first to act on them. In May of 1990 we recommended to Secretary Cheney that the NUWEP guidance regarding Eastern European member states of the Warsaw Pact be revised as of October 1, 1990, the commencement of the next SIOP revision, to accommodate the dramatically changed security changes in these nations. The Secretary forwarded this recommendation to President Bush, who approved it at the end of May. Events continued at breakneck speed, and by August 1990 it was clear to us that West and East Germany were on track to reunify, thereby integrating East Germany into the territory of a NATO ally. In our view, it would then be unconscionable to continue targeting Soviet forces in the former East Germany. Thus, we recommended to Secretary Cheney that he seek the President’s agreement to cease targeting all installations in Eastern Europe on October 1, 1990. On August 21st the President concurred, just in advance of the German reunification treaty signed August 31st and ratified in late September, leading to the historic reunification on October 3rd.

Even as the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe crumbled, the internal contradictions within the Soviet Union itself became ever more apparent. Thanks in part to the effects of President Gorbachev’s glasnost policy, and emboldened by the fact that he was unwilling to use force to keep the Eastern European satellites under the Soviet boot, domestic unrest in his nation began to build. In early 1991, I sought and received permission from Secretary Cheney to begin a new close-hold analytic effort. Building on the success of the SIOP Review,
we engaged with the Joint Staff and the JSTPS to determine what U.S. nuclear deterrent requirements might look like in the event the USSR broke apart. Gil Klinger, now the Director of Strategic Forces Policy, again led the team’s day-to-day work. We focused on what would happen to the 5,888 weapons requirement we had calculated if various republics, or combinations of republics, dropped out of the Union. At the end of the day, we concentrated on U.S. deterrent and military requirements associated with the four republics where strategic nuclear weapons were based: Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. Understandably, our estimates decreased substantially.

The abortive coup perpetrated by hard-liners in the Politburo against President Gorbachev in August 1991 accelerated dramatically the Soviet Union’s demise. As we observed all this, we devised an innovative scheme to significantly improve strategic stability. From the time land-based multiple-warhead strategic missiles (“MIRVed ICBMs”) were deployed by the two superpowers in the 1970s, strategic experts had been concerned that they were highly destabilizing with respect to nuclear deterrence. Their fear was that, should one side strike first with a much smaller portion of its deployed forces, it could destroy a disproportionate number of its enemy’s ICBM warheads in their silos, thus gaining a decisive advantage. Offsetting steps, such as reliance on launch-on-warning or launch-under-attack, only heightened concerns about instability, by fueling fears that such a launch might be triggered by miscalculation or natural phenomena resembling an attack. This is precisely why U.S. policy abjures reliance on launch on warning/launch under attack to preserve the credibility of our deterrent. All of this said, accepted wisdom in the last decades of the Cold War was that in this case, “the genie was out of the bottle,” but we decided it could be put back. We proposed to Secretary Cheney that the Administration advance an arms control initiative to eliminate MIRVed ICBMs altogether. Our reasoning was that a return to single-warhead ICBMs would improve stability because an attacker could “kill” only one enemy warhead versus perhaps ten with one or two of his own. This dramatically lower exchange ratio would make a first strike unattractive from a military perspective. We further proposed that U.S. could gain leverage to achieve this objective by advising the Soviet leadership that we would commit to very deep mutual reductions from the START 1 force levels (which, thanks to the SIOP Review, we now knew we could safely make). President Bush was highly supportive of the approach, witness his January 29th, 1992, State of the Union address. After announcing cuts to U.S. strategic modernization programs and standing down the U.S. strategic bomber force from day-to-day nuclear alert
Masters of the Nuclear Weapons Enterprise

– steps our SIOP review had made clear were risk-free and that were later matched by President Boris Yeltsin – the President stated:

This weekend I will meet at Camp David with Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Federation. I’ve informed President Yeltsin that if the Commonwealth, the former Soviet Union, will eliminate all land-based multiple-warhead ballistic missiles, I will do the following: We will eliminate all Peacekeeper missiles. We will reduce the number of warheads on Minuteman missiles to one and reduce the number of warheads on our sea-based missiles by about one-third. And we will convert a substantial portion of our strategic bombers to primarily conventional use. President Yeltsin’s early response has been very positive, and I expect our talks at Camp David to be fruitful.

I want you to know that for half a century, American presidents have longed to make such decisions and say such words. But even in the midst of celebration, we must keep caution as a friend. For the world is still a dangerous place. Only the dead have seen the end of conflict. And though yesterday’s challenges are behind us, tomorrow’s are being born. The Secretary of Defense recommended these cuts after consultation with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and I make them with confidence.

START II

The process thus begun culminated a year later, on January 3, 1993, when President Bush and Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed the START II treaty. Regrettably, although ratified by both sides, the treaty never came into force. It fell victim to deep differences over ballistic missile defenses and to internal politics in both countries during the unruly 1990s. That said, however, the treaty was inspired by, and set a critically important precedent that sprang from, our SIOP review. While the arms control community heralds START II’s mandated reduction of 65-70% in strategic arsenals from levels permitted by the START I treaty, its greatest import was sowing the seeds for the eventual elimination of strategic instability introduced by MIRVed ICBMs; the massive reductions were merely the price we were prepared to pay to bring along the Russian government.
Lessons Learned

Many of the problems we encountered and solved over the period 1985-1992 were not the result of deliberate disrespect for the policy guidance of the Commander-in-Chief. In fact, most resulted from the almost complete absence of dialogue between policy makers in Washington, both civilian and military, and the JSTPS war planners. General Curtis LeMay, the legendary second commander of the Strategic Air Command who imbued SAC with its deeply ingrained culture, wanted to reduce Washington’s influence in what he considered his military business. He was able to succeed beyond his wild-est dreams, in part because three months before he assumed command of SAC the Air Force Chief of Staff ordered its headquarters moved far from Washington to Offutt AFB in Bellevue, Nebraska, just south of Omaha. That isolation exacerbated the many mistakes directly attributable to planners not understanding – and, candidly, not seeking to understand – the intent of the policymakers. For their part, generations of policymakers had con-sidered the development of a nuclear weapons guidance document as the end of their job and moved on to other tasks. Policy, however well crafted, is meaningless if not implemented, and the OSD staff did not do the neces-sary follow-up to ensure that what the President and Secretary of Defense had directed was in fact translated into operational war plans. To be sure, there were planners who disagreed with Presidential or Secretarial direction, and there were bureaucratic efforts to impede oversight of implementation, but our experience demonstrated that these critical issues can in fact be openly and fairly adjudicated. In the wake of the SIOP review, we established a process whereby the Commander-in-Chief of Strategic Air Command would review, together with the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, SIOP policy development for the following year at its mid-point, thus providing for early resolution of potential disconnects between policy and target planning. We also maintained regular working-level interaction among the tripartite OSD-Joint Staff-JSTPS participants that had worked so well during our extensive SIOP review and its aftermath.

The second problem, highlighted in the discussion of the START I bal-listic missile warhead ceiling of 4,900, was the absence of a senior officer to set military requirements for nuclear forces rather than allow Air Force and Navy weapon system acquisition decisions to drive how many nuclear weapons we deployed. The OSD and Joint Staffs began working separate solu-tions to this problem, both arriving at the same answer. Gil Klinger and I proposed to Steve Hadley and General Mike Carns that the CINCSAC and
Director, JSTPS posts be eliminated and replaced with a “Commander, U.S. Strategic Command,” thus placing both requirements and target planning in the same hands. Carns conveyed our idea to the Chairman who, unknown to us, had in late 1990 received from three-star General Lee Butler, then the Joint Staff Director of Strategic Plans and Policy, a proposal to overhaul the entire Unified Command Plan. Among a number of major initiatives, Lee’s proposal included the creation of a U.S. Strategic Command strikingly similar to what Gil and I envisioned. The resonance of our separate but parallel recommendations set the stage for a future series of events that would finally resolve a dysfunctional nuclear war planning and execution approach that had prevailed for nearly three decades.

For that story, I now return the narrative to my co-author.

Frank’s enthralling account of this incredible state of affairs sets the stage perfectly for all that follows. It enables me to meld my retrospective on these matters with much greater fidelity to what was transpiring beyond my bureaucratic horizons. Truth be told, until he undertook this history on my behalf, I was not aware of much of it, despite my involvement with the latter stages of his SIOP review, as I noted in the previous chapter, and with the revision of NSDD 13. My broader education would only begin eighteen months later, when I would wear the dual hats of CINCSAC and Director of the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff, with the opportunity to take to an even deeper level the work of the nuclear war planning review Frank had led. But that is a story to come. In the interim, there are more dramas to reveal in the endless tension between the civilian and military leaders of the United States armed forces.
With Jack Baldwin’s move to head the National Defense University, the stage was set for my promotion to three-star rank and elevation to the J-5. Admiral Crowe conducted the ceremony with his usual captivating charm. His humorous anecdotes and generous praise made our family feel very special – Brett, Lisa, and Dorene were radiant. The moment was wonderfully satisfying; it signaled the confidence of my seniors that I was ready for major responsibilities in guiding the nation’s armed forces. I felt well prepared for my new position, thanks to the latitude Jack Baldwin had given me to learn by doing and the broad learning opportunities the Chairman had then allotted to me.

The promotion also entailed a move from our townhouse in Alexandria to nearby Bolling AFB, where I had taken my tests for the Air Force Academy thirty-two years earlier. There, we were assigned spacious two-story quarters, with neighbors who were also senior Air Force officers serving in the Washington area. With a third star came more official hosting, so we were permitted a house aide. Dorene and I selected Technical Sergeant John Hearn, who had earlier served General Larry Welch, the Air Force Chief of Staff. It was a great choice; he proved to be bright, able, enthusiastic and devoted. He was a true jack of all trades, picking up our culinary preferences quickly, keeping a clean, orderly house and my uniforms in good order. He and Dorene developed a solid relationship that made them an effective team.

Those details settled, I turned my full attention to the range of tasks that defined the role of the J-5. The most complex and contentious issues were in the arms control arena. Two complementary sets of negotiations were particularly vexing: one sought agreement on reciprocal reductions in U.S. and USSR nuclear forces under the Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty, or START; the other aimed at an agreement on reciprocal reductions in NATO’s and the Warsaw Pact’s Conventional Forces in Europe, or CFE. I had been so focused on my own negotiations with the Soviets about dangerous military incidents that I had a
Joint Staff Director (1989 – 1991)

lot of catching up to do regarding these and several other fora. Fortunately, Rear Admiral Tom Fox, the seasoned officer in charge of the International Negotiations Deputy Directorate, had fully mastered his domain, had the complete confidence of Admiral Crowe, and did not need much guidance from me.

It was just as well: in two months’ time, Admiral Crowe would retire, and I would join forces with a new Chairman, Army General Colin Powell, to rewrite the book on U.S. military strategy, planning, organization and force structure. The history of that effort, which follows, is central to the responsibilities of the Chairman, the Joint Staff, and the Department of Defense. In the interest of accuracy, I have relied heavily on a monograph written by Dr. Lorna S. Jaffe, a historian with the Chairman’s Joint History Office. The document, entitled “The Development of the Base Force, 1989-1992,” was published in July, 1993, two and a half years after I left the Joint Staff to become commander of the Strategic Air Command. Prior to my departure, however, I had participated in the extensive interview program Dr. Jaffe conducted, and I am now greatly indebted to her for capturing the details of a time, twenty-five years removed, that put the world on a new and promising course. As General Powell noted in the foreword to the monograph, “This manuscript tells the story of how our strategy underwent its first major revision since World War II. It is the story of the clash of bureaucratic interests seeking the ‘right answer’ in a period of great uncertainty and change. We tried to see the future while fighting real wars left over from the past.”

By virtue of my position, I was destined to play a major role in shaping the new military strategy. By virtue of my experience as the deputy J-5, most especially with the response to the Vander Schaaf Report, the Soviet negotiations, and a third task which I shall now treat in detail, I was on the same intellectual frequency as the extraordinary man who became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on October 1st, 1989.

The stage for my third task was set in June, 1986, a year before I moved to the Joint Staff. The Army Chief of Staff, General John Wickham, Jr., had called for a reassessment of a critical planning assumption regarding the defense of Western Europe. That re-assessment, in turn, prompted a major change in the contingency war plan on which that defense was based. Two years later, my own examination of that revised assessment led me to a stunning revelation: the plan as modified had become fatally flawed. In the event of an invasion by the Warsaw Pact, the plan’s timetable for getting adequate NATO forces, specifically U.S. forces, to the fight was much too ambitious. My efforts to fix that potentially disastrous problem would set in motion sweeping changes in U.S. military strategy and planning, so it is appropriate at this point to take a
look at the roots of the error.

America’s combat forces were organized, trained, and equipped by the military services and were allocated to worldwide, regionally-oriented organizations called combatant commands, each headed by a four-star commander-in-chief selected by the President on advice of the Secretary of Defense and approved by the Senate. Since it would be prohibitively expensive to man and equip every combatant command to the full extent required by their individual war plans, the available forces, typically Army divisions, Air Force wings, and Navy carrier battle groups, buttressed by support capabilities such as airlift and sealift, were apportioned in amount and priority according to an annual negotiating process brokered by the J-5 as part of the Joint Operation Planning System (JOPS) cycle. Over the years, the prioritization had become pretty much pro forma, with the European Command, or EUCOM, receiving the lion’s share of forces. Many of those forces were stationed in the theater, but they were slated to be reinforced in the event of war by a much larger increment of air, ground and naval forces based in the continental United States (CONUS).

Apportioning a combatant commander’s assigned forces between units forward-based in his theater of operations and those designed to flow from the CONUS during crisis and war is driven by two critical factors: cost and risk. Stationing forces overseas is extremely expensive, often requiring sprawling bases on foreign soil, provisioning from the local economy, hiring a large indigenous work force, building or leasing housing for families, providing schools, stores and commissaries, and negotiating complex “status of forces” agreements covering all manner of legal and diplomatic concerns. Why do that? Because the risk aspect of the equation is even more daunting and consequential, as it encompasses factors that could determine success or failure in war: having too few forces in the potential war zone at the moment hostilities begin could be a recipe for disaster, and keeping too many people and machines present overseas, in a state of constant readiness, could be a budget breaker. That conundrum is resolved by making judgments about the amount of warning time likely to be available before the outbreak of war, that is, the period, normally measured in days, during which the mobilization and movement of enemy forces will provide sufficiently clear indications of hostile intent to prompt a corresponding marshaling of offsetting friendly forces.

Putting that into the simple formula planners use, if all required U.S. forces

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5 These four–star commanders no longer bear the title “commander-in-chief” but I have retained it in these memoirs as the “in-chief” was removed after I retired from military service.
Joint Staff Director (1989 – 1991)

are to be in place in theater when hostilities break out, that is, on “D-Day,” U.S. forces in CONUS must have “commenced” their movement to their designated overseas locations by some earlier “C-Day.” In fact, those forces not already on active duty could move on C-Day only if they had been “mobilized” on some still-earlier “M-Day.” Therefore, required warning time equals D minus C (or, as planners referred to it, “D to C”) or, for reserves, “D to M.” In planning, of course, we start out with a value for “D to C” based on intelligence estimates of how many days before D-Day we expect to have clear evidence that the enemy is preparing to launch his attack. That assumption’s consequences then ripple out to such matters as creating and maintaining intercontinental airlift and sealift, streamlining mobilization routines, and improving crisis response, as well as to the peacetime split of forward-based and CONUS-based forces discussed above. The longer the assumed “D to C” interval, all other things being equal, the more time will be available to mobilize and deploy U.S. forces based in the CONUS, thus allowing fewer forces to be based abroad on a day-to-day basis.

Planning Europe’s defense presented a particularly difficult “D to C” problem because large, potentially overwhelming numbers of ready Warsaw Pact forces were stationed right on NATO’s eastern borders. Therefore, for Europe, M-Day = C-Day = D-Day: the warning period was assumed to be zero, requiring NATO to maintain huge standing forces at a high state of readiness. A sizeable component of those forces were U.S. units stationed forward. They guarded NATO’S heart – the critical inter-German border – and the most vulnerable regions along its flanks, an arc running through Italy, Greece and Turkey. Those U.S. forces were stationed at hundreds of installations, and sustaining them cost tens of billions of dollars each year.

Through the mid-eighties, this burden was borne by the U.S. as the price of its contribution to NATO’s forward defense strategy, which was to meet any Warsaw Pact attack as far forward as possible in Europe. Put another way, we used our forces and those of our allies to erect a combined buffer against Warsaw Pact invasion, the allies’ reward being our commitment to maintaining NATO’s security against our common enemy, and our reward being reduced risk of war coming to the shores of America. With the advent of the Gorbachev era in the Soviet Union in 1985, tensions between East and West began to wane, prompting the Congress and the military Services to look for ways to reduce U.S. spending on European defense. Army Chief of Staff Wickham’s 1986 proposal along those lines was to act on the intelligence community’s assessments that Warsaw Pact intentions were moderating. In his view, the time had come to insert a non-zero warning window into the European mobilization
equation, allowing fewer U.S. troops to be stationed forward in the European theater.

In early 1987, after months of contentious debate, and based on a judgment that as much as two weeks of warning might be available, the conflict-in-Europe mobilization formula was amended to read $M\text{-Day} = C\text{-Day} = D\text{-Day} – 10$. This seemingly reasonable modification left two critical questions unaddressed: first, would it actually be possible within a week and a half to mobilize and redeploy the additional forces that would have been returned to CONUS from their forward stations in Europe? Second, was the underlying intelligence assessment really hard and fast, or was it a best guess, subject to a variety of hedges depending on the facts on the ground at the time of potential hostilities? The responsibility for finding those answers would soon fall to me.

My quest had begun while I was still the deputy J-5, when I was assigned to be a principal witness before the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) and its Chairman Les Aspin, who was trying to uncover the assumptions about Soviet mobilization readiness used as the basis for U.S. force planning. His real agenda was to determine how these assumptions drove the cost of U.S. forces stationed in Europe. Aspin, then a fixture in the House of Representatives, was a restless, quirky but endearing intellectual who took his obligations as chairman of the HASC very seriously, so I undertook a rigorous effort to master the voluminous U.S. Operations Plan 4102, *Defense of Western Europe*, beginning with the critical $M\text{-Day} = C\text{-Day} = D\text{-Day} – 10$ formulation. Presuming that the judgment about warning time had come from the intelligence community, I assembled in my office the senior analysts of Soviet military matters from CIA, DIA, and the Services and posed the question, “Who made the calculation that precisely ten days of warning time will be available prior to the outbreak of war in Europe, and was it based on Soviet mobilization timetables?” They all looked at me like I was the village idiot. Finally, the CIA representative said, “Sir, none of us came up with that number; we just presume that at some point between fourteen days and twenty-four hours prior to the start of the war we will be able to see unambiguous warning of a major Soviet attack. We have no way of knowing when the Politburo (Russia’s highest political authority) might actually decide to attack. In fact, we view it as highly unlikely that any such decision would be made as early as ten days before D-Day. The Warsaw Pact is greatly advantaged by the simple facts of geography: proximity to the war zone and interior lines of communication. Therefore, it is in the Pact’s military interest and within its capability to give as little advance notice as possible about its intention to commence hostilities.”

Something was clearly amiss here. The answer must be elsewhere, most
likely, I presumed, in one of the lengthy annexes to the 4102 Operations Plan. Wrong. Not only did I not find the source anywhere in the plan, I instead discovered buried in the text of the plan’s Logistics Annex an even more disconcerting revelation. The folks responsible for mobilizing the vast contingent of men, equipment, and supplies housed in the CONUS and destined for Europe had made their own calculation of the time required to complete the thousands of actions required to amass an armada of trains, planes and ships, to get them filled with the right people and right stuff in the right order, and then to stream them in an orderly, deconflicted flow to their ports of embarkation and then across the Atlantic Ocean to a wide array of ports and airfields of debarkation in Western Europe. That time frame, as announced in an inconspicuous paragraph on one of the hundreds of pages in the annex, was not ten but thirty days!

In other words, in the minds of the people who actually had to execute the mobilization and movement forward, the formula read, “M-Day = D-day – 30,” with C-Day, or force movement, occurring on a continuum sometime after M-Day, depending on conditions existing when the President of the United States made the momentous decision to, in fact, begin marshaling and moving forces. I went immediately to see the J-4, the Director of Logistics on the Joint Staff, to confirm my understanding of his annex. When I asked him about the obvious disparity between the ten days of presumptive warning and the thirty days actually required to mobilize and move the initial tranche of U.S. reinforcements to Europe, he just shrugged his shoulders. Not his problem, which made it mine. I advised Admiral Jack Baldwin of the situation, and he told me to run with it. My first decision was to keep my peace at the upcoming hearing. I simply engaged Aspin in a rather convoluted discussion about the trade-offs between the amount of risk one was prepared to accept and the warning time one assumed, without getting into the particular difficulties I had found in the 4102 plan. Correctly sensing that something was bugging me, he invited me to a private breakfast in the Georgetown Four Seasons dining room a few days later. There, off the record, I spelled out the problem and told him I was working it hard. Little did I know, nor did he, that I was talking with my future boss.

Working the substantive issue would require eighteen months of difficult conceptual work and consensus building. The hardest nut to crack was getting the diverse community of war-fighters, logisticians, and budget experts across all Services, commands and the OSD staff onto the same page with respect to reconciling costs and risks based on a common perception of U.S. force mobilization time versus assumed warning time. What follows is Dr. Jaffe’s
General Butler hoped to improve understanding of planners’ needs and to bridge the gap between those needs and the intelligence community’s work. He therefore convened what he called the Roundtable on Warning (ROW), in which strategic planners, intelligence analysts, and force programmers met regularly from April 1989 through October 1990 to examine the issue of warning. By including force programmers, General Butler hoped that the ROW might also lead to a more effective linking of operational planning and force programming.

The ROW provided a forum for the exchange of ideas on warning in a changing strategic environment and a means for General Butler to attempt to influence thinking in the direction in which he—and later General Powell—wished to move. Its work complemented work being done concurrently to develop a range of options for responding to crises. The ROW met during a period of profound changes in the Warsaw Pact. These changes, which produced a significant diminution in the threat posed by the Soviet Union, resulted in the spring of 1990 in a shift in the focus of the intelligence community’s warning assessment from Pact military preparations to Soviet political decisions to rearm and regenerate forces. This reorientation of intelligence led in turn to the development of a new concept of warning of war with the Soviet Union. The life of the ROW also coincided with J-5’s work on multiple Generic Scenarios and the resulting recognition that responding to regional crises would require a new approach to warning.

The exchange of views in the ROW led to agreement on the need for new approaches to warning to correspond with the changes in strategic thinking occasioned by the altered relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. The discussions also produced recognition of the difficulty of determining precise warning times. The outcome was the identification of multiple warning patterns applicable in a regional as well as a global context. This new conception of warning included warning patterns for both evolving and quickly breaking regional crises as well as a slowly developing global crisis and imminent global conflict. Thus, the ROW, which began as an effort to improve understanding of warning of global war with the Soviet Union, was instrumental
in the development of a new conceptualization of warning. This new concept of warning meshed with General Powell’s strategic vision, in the implementation of which General Butler, as Director of J-5, played a key role.

By the time he became Director of J-5 General Butler had developed his own strategic overview. His predecessor, Vice Admiral John A. Baldwin, Jr., had hoped that one outcome of the reform of the Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS) that took place during his tenure would be allowing greater scope for new ideas. Among General Butler’s responsibilities as Vice Director of J-5 during this period was to develop such ideas and present them to various audiences. Preparation of a lecture on long-range strategy for delivery at the National War College in May 1988 gave General Butler the opportunity to synthesize his ideas into a comprehensive view of the world and the U.S. role in it on the eve of the twenty-first century.

On the basis of his assessment of developments in the Soviet Union, General Butler concluded that the Cold War was over, communism had failed, and the world was witnessing a second Russian Revolution. He examined the implications for U.S. strategy of the success of the policy of containment. In his view, the world was entering a multi-polar era, in which superpowers would find it increasingly difficult to influence events militarily. In addition to the decline of the Soviet Union and the further evolution of West European alliance relationships, the coming era would see the rise of new hegemonic powers, increasingly intractable regional problems, and the global impact of disastrous Third World conditions.

General Butler maintained that the United States was the only power with the capacity to manage the major forces at work in the world. Implementing this new use of U.S. power in order to shape the emerging world in accordance with U.S. interests would require a coherent strategy that defined U.S. vital interests, decided the role of the military, and then set the necessary forces in place. It would also require dealing with the nation’s fiscal problems. When he presented his views to the Air Staff (a test military audience) in September, he anticipated that budgetary retrenchment would lead to a major restructuring of the armed forces. If they did not undertake this task themselves, they would find
reductions forced upon them.

Initially, General Butler thought that the changes he had outlined would take place over a decade and that the United States would have to deal with them within the context of an ongoing relationship with the Soviet Union. However, in the autumn, when he traveled to the Soviet Union as head of the U.S. team to negotiate an agreement on the prevention of dangerous military activities, he found that the Soviet Union was in worse condition than he had realized. He concluded that the shift in the balance of world power would therefore be accelerated.

As Vice Director of J-5, General Butler pursued the development of his ideas on the need for a new U.S. approach to the world independently of the Strategy Division’s efforts to shift the focus of strategic planning away from the Soviet Union. However, Joint Staff planners had heard him present his strategic overview elsewhere, and his ideas about the new strategic tasks facing the United States were among the factors influencing their attempts to place greater emphasis on regional rather than global planning.

A number of themes in this narrative bear underscoring. First, the work of the ROW, which encompassed a series of roughly monthly meetings over a year and a half, a period which saw the advent of a new Administration – President Bush having succeeded President Reagan – and the arrival of General Powell to replace Admiral Crowe as the Chairman of the JCS. I began with a relatively small audience of mostly Joint Staff experts in order to build consensus before expanding the group to include the Service staffs and, subsequently, members of the OSD staff. From that initial brainstorming, I gradually evolved a revised warning construct that I whimsically entitled, “The Dreaded Left of ‘W,’” so named to emphasize the inherent uncertainty involved in correctly gauging an enemy’s intention during the run-up (Warning) to a prospective war; and the difficulty that that very uncertainty posed in persuading senior decision-makers to take the momentous step of mobilizing the nation’s military forces. Embedded within that overarching problem was a no-less-consequential dilemma that I dubbed, “Too much too soon, too little too late.” On the first horn of that dilemma is the very real possibility of mobilizing because of a misreading of a potential foe’s innocent intent, thereby provoking precisely the hostile act that the early mobilization aimed at preventing. The other horn of the dilemma is the equally real possibility of responding too slowly to a genuine threat, thereby ceding to the enemy an irreversible battlefield advantage, and possibly victory as well.
Joint Staff Director (1989 – 1991)

After getting my conceptual feet under me, I expanded the ROW, as planned, bringing in Service staffers as well as key OSD civilians who had long been held at arm’s length from a process they were, in fact, charged to oversee. In a typical ROW session, usually held in a large conference room suitable for some fifty people, I would start at the blackboard and write out a question pertaining to the warning equation. Then I would steer the discussion along lines that helped illuminate the complexities of the question, to wit: the uncertainty of reading enemy intentions, the U.S. domestic political barriers to mobilization on a large scale, the challenge of responding flexibly with military units organized and equipped for massive, wholesale movement, coping with the potential loss of critical airfields and seaports, and so on. Over a period of many months, consensus gradually emerged among the ROW participants around a solution I had pictured in my head from the outset: reorganizing U.S. military forces into carefully-tailored force packages that could be deployed quickly and discreetly, thereby signaling serious intent by bolstering forward forces, but not bolstering them so urgently or robustly as to trigger an enemy preemptive attack.

By reducing U.S. forces stationed in Europe in peacetime, this more flexible force posture also would enable a new way of thinking about planning for a broad range of regional conflicts. As noted by Dr. Jaffe, the new concept meshed perfectly with an initiative already underway in the J-5 Strategy Division to do just that. In her words:

Beginning in the spring of 1988, these strategic thinkers began to press for greater emphasis on regional planning. They were aided by the Bush White House, which directed in March of 1989 a review of national defense strategy. Joint Staff participants in this review argued that, with the substantially reduced risk of a deliberate Soviet attack on Western Europe and increasing non-Soviet threats in the Third World, the United States should shift its focus not only from Europe but also from the Soviet Union’s role in the Third World. Instead, it should develop strategies for dealing with regionally based Third World threats. They particularly emphasized the emerging importance of the Pacific Rim and Central and South America to U.S. security interests. In their emphasis upon the necessity of preparing for regional contingencies outside Europe, the Joint Staff representatives unsuccessfully opposed the European focus of Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, who chaired the Department of Defense review steering committee.
Within the Bush Administration, Paul Wolfowitz was the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, coming to that post from his prior position as ambassador to Indonesia. He was a brilliant, arch-neoconservative, anti-communist intellectual, messianic in his conviction that the United States had a moral obligation to implant democracy in the four corners of the globe. A veteran of Washington power circles, he had held key posts in the State Department, including Director of Policy Planning during the Reagan Administration. His primary duty in his new DoD job was to interact with the services and the Joint Staff in reshaping military strategy. As the Joint Staff J-5, I would become his primary interlocutor and, as events progressed, staunch adversary. The focus of our conflict went straight to what was viewed as the heart of America’s defense challenge and the U.S. role in the world: the fate of the Soviet Union. Paul was unyielding in his belief that Moscow was still bent on world domination, had the military and economic strength to pursue that goal, and therefore must remain the central focus of U.S. national security strategy. Although a pleasant and considerate man, he was also an ideologue of the first order; in my view, that made him dangerously ill-suited for his critical policy responsibilities.

As I came to know Under Secretary Wolfowitz better and continued to cross swords with him over the years since 1989, my initial opinion was confirmed many times over. In 1998, we served together on the Rumsfeld Commission, a body created by the Congress to investigate charges of political meddling in CIA estimates regarding the likely emergence of ICBM threats from Iran and North Korea; throughout that group’s meetings, his antipathy for the Clinton Administration was palpable. History will record that as the Deputy Secretary of Defense in the second Bush Administration he played a pivotal role in leading the United States into the fiasco in Iraq in 2003, a tragic reflection of how badly his ideological zeal continued to trump his judgment. His poor personal judgment as head of the World Bank put him once more in the headlines, this time for the gaffe of having his girlfriend, who worked at the World Bank, transferred to a plum job at the State Department, where her new salary exceeded that of Secretary Condoleezza Rice. When that maneuver came to light, the bank’s directors asked for and received his resignation.

Until I became the J-5, my strategic planners had to deal with Under Secretary Wolfowitz without the benefit of top cover from either Admiral Baldwin or Admiral Crowe, although – as described below – I began to work that problem somewhat covertly through a J-5 agent whom I had convinced Admiral Baldwin to bring on board from the staff of the National Security Council. The debate over placing greater emphasis on regional conflicts
independent of Soviet involvement was unresolved for months. This was in some respects understandable, as the shift from maintaining a Eurocentric NATO “Forward Defense” against the Warsaw Pact in favor of increasing “Forward Presence” in other, long-ignored regions such as Southwest Asia (SWA) was opposed not only by Under Secretary Wolfowitz but also by the Army, the Air Force, and the U.S. Commander-in-Chief in Europe (CINCEUR). Not until August of 1989 did Admiral Crowe finally step up to the plate and recommend a somewhat watered-down, revised version of Forward Presence in the National Military Strategy document, which is presented annually to the Secretary of Defense. By that time, I was fully engaged on the issue and argued strongly to Admiral Crowe that the time had come to ignore Service and CINCEUR objections in order to open the door for greater changes that I was convinced were waiting in the wings. In other words, I was saying that the “D to C” issue in Europe need no longer preoccupy us: it was no longer relevant, but other problems abounded.

A closely-linked set of issues lay in another key step in force planning: the formulation of Illustrative Planning Scenarios, or IPSs. The function of these scenarios was to provide a simulated real-world starting point for the difficult task of “force sizing,” that is, assessing the conditions under which a war, most likely with the Soviet Union, might actually begin, and then deriving from the presumed unfolding of events the number and type of forces required to blunt and defeat the attack. The IPS construct had been put in place by Under Secretary Paul Wolfowitz in the late 1970s, during an earlier Pentagon tour in which he was serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Regional Programs in the OSD’s Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E) shop. Not surprisingly for that time, almost every IPS (a war in Korea was the exception), irrespective of the region of focus, presumed that whatever conflict might arise would be the result of a Soviet challenge to U.S. vital interests in the area, and therefore was very likely to escalate to global war. More than a decade later, that was still the theme of the IPSs. Therefore, as part of their efforts to deemphasize the Soviet threat and shift to a global forward presence strategy, Joint Staff planners had no choice but to challenge those scenarios. Their challenge focused first on the scenario for possible theater war in Southwest Asia, in which Wolfowitz had many years before postulated a Soviet invasion of Iran that would quickly escalate into global war as the United States responded forcibly to an intolerable threat to Western oil supplies.

Here again, the bureaucratic in-fighting became fierce, to the point that the head of the Bush transition team at DoD, Paul Stevens, asked for a special agent from J-5 to work with his team to find common ground on how to
strengthen the role of planning in the annual cycle of planning, programming and budgeting that ultimately produced U.S. fighting forces. I had just the man for him: a newly-minted brigadier general named Bob Linhard, one of the most intellectually gifted officers I had ever known, and one whose career I had just agreed to salvage after he had become a bone of contention stuck in the throat of the Air Force Chief of Staff by the White House. The saga of Bob Linhard and our relationship over the ensuing years is sufficiently important to spend some time on it here.

Bob was commissioned from the ROTC program at Fordham University, where he had earned a master’s degree in English. He came into the Air Force as an ICBM launch officer, stationed first with the Titan ICBM wing at Little Rock AFB in Arkansas and then with a Minuteman ICBM wing at Ellsworth AFB in South Dakota. He far surpassed his peers as a junior officer, earning greater responsibility as a missile crew evaluator, then being selected for a choice assignment as an Air Staff intern, a one-year tour at the Pentagon designed to groom outstanding young officers for future duty there. In Bob’s case, the one year in Washington turned into fourteen. First, his intern tour was extended to a full four-year tour on the Air Staff, following which he was sent to the Joint Staff as a strategic force planner. From there, his extraordinary intellect and bureaucratic skills took him to the National Security Council Staff in the White House, where he remained for seven and one-half years, eventually rising to become a Special Assistant to President Reagan for Nuclear Issues and Arms Control. Along the way, he was promoted with dizzying speed, to include receiving his first star in May of 1989. And there was the rub. He became the victim of his own success.

Bob’s long tenure in Washington, and most especially in the White House, had taken him completely out of the Air Force operational mainstream. He had, for all intents and purposes, become a civilian, and indeed one whose position and responsibilities on the NSC Staff gave him sway over policy decisions that far exceeded the authority of many much more senior Air Force officers. Consequently, when his White House bosses directed that he be nominated by the Air Force for promotion to brigadier general, an action the service would otherwise never have taken, the heartburn was extreme. The rancor was all the deeper because Bob had pretty much ignored his health and physical appearance during the long and stressful years on the NSC Staff, where he participated in many U.S.-Soviet presidential meetings and helped conclude some historic arms control agreements.

I had met Bob briefly during his Air Staff intern tour in 1975, and I had been highly impressed. My next contact came in the form of a phone call from
the colonel in charge of Air Force General Officer Matters, practically pleading with me to find a place for Brigadier General Linhard in the J-5. I had Bob come to my office for an interview, during which I made two observations. First, he was at least fifty pounds overweight and looked a wreck. Second, his unmatched experience and network of high-ranking friends throughout government would be invaluable assets to the directorate. Consequently, I cut a deal with Jack Baldwin – Bob would come on board, but only after a month’s leave and a draconian weight loss program to get his personal appearance and career back on track. It was one of the best personnel decisions I ever made. Bob signed on as the Deputy Director for Strategy and Policy, and I thrust him forthwith into the role of dealing with the Bush DoD Transition Team in the weeks following the 1988 presidential election. His Job One was to broker a deal on replacing the controversial Illustrative Planning Scenarios developed during the height of the Cold War.

It was a perfect fit. Bob had worked with Paul Stevens and also with I. Lewis (Scooter) Libby, who was reviewing the defense management process for Stevens. Libby’s charter was to change the structure of strategic planning so as to more effectively link strategy to resources, precisely the problem I was working in the ROW. Consequently, Bob fed off of the work my eclectic collection of staffers had been doing to develop a new concept entitled “multiple generic scenarios,” which applied to regional as well as global war. This construct incorporated all our work on warning, represented a compromise between Joint Staff preferences for Forward Presence scenarios and Wolfowitz’s insistence on a strong anti-Soviet component in most of the scenarios, and most importantly, led to a decision by the Defense Planning and Resources Board in July 1989 to charge the Joint Staff with responsibility for fully developing the new generic scenarios. As a result, when I became the J-5 a week later, all of the pieces were in place to begin a wholesale revision of both the Joint Strategic Planning System and the Joint Operation Planning System.

No sooner had I undertaken this enormous task, Dorene and I were confronted with a family crisis harkening back to the traumatic early months of 1984 when we lost Dorene’s two brothers and my father in a span of several weeks. As a consequence, the last four months of 1990 became an intellectual, physical and emotional marathon. The personal dimension was by far the most demanding, beginning in late August 1989, when Dorene’s father, J.O., began to fail and had to be hospitalized, triggering a nightmare of battles over medical benefits, alternative care arrangements, and worries about his and Veda’s future. Dorene rushed to California, found an assisted living facility in Hemet, and managed her parents’ difficult move from independent living in a
lovely home to a safer, but much less comforting, senior living facility. Dorene had begged them to come and live with us in Washington, but her mother would have none of it. We reluctantly backed off, knowing we could lean on her nephews and niece, Jim, Jerry and Judy Nunley, and many loving friends.

Bad as that was, things quickly got worse. J.O. soon moved to long-term care where, after a brief but difficult period, he passed away in late September. His death took a terrible toll on Dorene, who loved her parents more than life itself. The funeral was heartbreaking, and leaving Veda alone afterward, bereft of her husband of more than sixty years, was unbearable. Dorene stayed a few days after I left, but finally felt compelled to return to D.C. To this day, the image of her mother’s face in the window as Dorene drove away has not dissipated. It was the last view she would have of her beloved mother. Dorene was in mid-flight home when Veda joined J.O. in Heaven.

Despite all of the happiness we had brought to them over the years, beginning with a home they could finally call their own, and they to us through the safety net of abundant love and safe harbor, we continue to anguish over the decision to leave them in Hemet. The situation was, of course, imponderable; we might have only made things worse by uprooting them from a community they treasured and the extended family that adored them. So we are left with the bittersweet joy of missing them so much because we loved them so much. In the end, love is all that really matters.

While Dorene tended to her emotional wounds, I pushed my J-5 strategic planners into full throttle. Recall that at the opening of this chapter, General Colin Powell had just succeeded Admiral Bill Crowe as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The shock waves triggered by that transition were multiplied by the fall of the Berlin Wall, followed closely by the collapse of Communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe and the reunification of Germany. These cascading events heralded the most sweeping changes to the nation’s military strategy and armed forces since the unification of the Services in 1947.

The first of the shocks to the Pentagon establishment was General Powell’s elevation to be the nation’s senior military leader. It was a surprise to many and deep disappointment to any number of more senior officers who considered themselves the more likely choice. Powell’s many years in the White House had taken him out of the Army’s typical career track toward high command, but his stellar performance as President Reagan’s National Security Advisor led to a fourth star and field command. Insiders who understood his equally close ties to President George H.W. Bush knew he was the odds-on favorite to become the 12th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

My first view of my new boss came at his initial staff meeting during the
first week of October, 1989, which was also marked by the beginning of a continuing crisis in Panama that would command his attention through the end of the year. As two dozen senior members of his 1600-person Joint Staff awaited his arrival in the same spacious room where I had briefed my rebuttal to the Vander Schaaf Report, his approach was heralded by the booming voice of a ramrod-straight NCO stationed outside the door: “Ladies and gentlemen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin L. Powell.” This daily ritual was part and parcel of Joint Staff custom going back many years, but General Powell found it overdone. He stopped as he reached the NCO, greeted him, and asked politely if this were a recurring morning ritual. Assured that it was indeed so, Powell said in a considerate voice, “Well, you have performed so splendidly today that I am confident no one here will ever forget who I am. Thank you for serving, and you are now relieved of this duty.”

At that point, I was already prepared to follow him into the jaws of Hell, and my nascent loyalty was only reinforced by what followed. He took his chair at the head of the table and said, “I don’t know what the typical agenda here is, so let’s just go through the usual slides, and I’ll give some guidance when we’re finished.” There followed the customary region-by-region intelligence brief, followed by a lengthy rundown of U.S. forces’ status around the globe. At the close, General Powell observed, “Well, I’ve actually read all that in my office, and will continue to do so. What I’d prefer to do here each morning is to just go around the room and let each of you tell me what’s on your mind, and I’ll reciprocate as events dictate.”

With that, he started on his left and went first round the table, then to the strap-hangers sitting along the walls on three sides of the room, calling each individual by name – more specifically, by his or her preferred name. In my case it was “Lee,” not “George,” my first name, which strangers typically use. I was struck by the amount of time and consideration that I knew from experience underwrote this performance: studying pictures and biographical data for hours in order to show his staff that he cared about them on a professional and a personal basis. I knew I was in the presence of a world-class actor, in the very best sense of that word – polished, skillful, and fully committed to connecting with his audience.

In my then-fifty years on the planet, I had never met anyone quite like Colin Powell. As we took each other’s measure over the coming weeks, two things became increasingly clear. First, our personas were acutely different, no small matter in a relationship where clear communication and some degree of camaraderie were essential. He is big, gregarious, supremely confident and commands a room by his very presence. I, of course, am slight, introverted,
cautious, reflective to a fault, and do not warm readily to strangers, or even colleagues, for that matter. On the other hand, as I would soon find, our world views were completely in sync. That insight, however, would not come for another month. Its genesis grew out of the Chairman’s new fitness regimen: an early morning ride on his Lifecycle stationary bike. It had come as a gift from Arnold Schwarzenegger, to whom Powell had recently commented at a charity dinner that life back inside the Beltway was eroding the edge he had regained while on the field command he had left a month earlier. While “pumping away on a Saturday morning, November 4th,” as he tells it, “I started to crystallize what I really wanted to accomplish as chairman.” That led to a series of epiphanies surrounding what he termed “an informed intuition” garnered over his years in the White House as National Security Advisor. As I will shortly recount, it was remarkable in many respects, but from my perspective, the most important is that it was exactly parallel to the central thrust of my speech to the National War College eighteen months earlier: the impending collapse of the Soviet Union and all upheaval this geopolitical earthquake would unleash.

General Powell spent the weekend capturing his thoughts on purple-bordered notepads – indicative of his joint versus service-unique responsibilities – and arrived at his office Monday morning armed for action. The ring on my hot line got my immediate attention: “Lee, this is Colin Powell; can you come to my office for a minute?”

When I arrived, a bit breathless after the hundred-yard dash from my door to his, he waved me into his office, where he was loading his briefcase for a trip to the White House. “Lee, sorry to be in a rush, but I wanted to say hello to my J-5. You and I are going to be doing a lot of work together, so why don’t you take a minute and give me your world view.”

Here was the proverbial moment of truth: without the slightest notion of the Chairman’s own vision, I quickly ran through the principal points of my “Tides, Trends and Tasks” thinking (Appendix A): the Soviet empire was on the verge of collapse, presaging the breakup of the Union and the Warsaw Pact; Western Europe would be faced with enormous challenges and opportunities, most importantly the issue of a divided Germany. The Middle East and the Korean Peninsula would be relatively unaffected, while continuing to pose major threats to regional stability; other regional animosities, long suppressed by Cold War tensions, would be rekindled. Congress would quicken its drumbeat for steep defense cuts, and forty years of strategic planning were going to be rendered moot. With that, he snapped his briefcase shut, said, “That’s about right,” and directed me to be ready to rejoin him when he returned, along with my Joint Staff colleague, Major General Dave Robinson, the head of the Force
Structure, Resource and Assessment Directorate. Dave and the smart folks in his Program and Budget Analysis Division (PBAD) had learned from friends on the Hill and in the Office of Management and Budget that there was serious support for the view that the end of the Cold War was within the near-term planning horizon. Steep cuts in the defense budget were being considered, with major implications for U.S. military force structure. Trying to get out in front of this wave, but without stirring up service anxieties, PBAD had initiated an analysis they dubbed the “Quiet Study,” aimed at identifying where these cuts might be taken in a prospective post-Cold War world. General Powell was aware of the study and saw that the force structure proposals it laid out coincided closely with his own thinking, but that these cuts needed to be justified from a fully developed strategic assessment of a dramatically transformed global security environment.

When Dave and I sat down with the Chairman an hour or so later at the small round table adjacent to his imposing desk, he talked to his views on a new world order from the sheaf of notes he had written out by hand. He had in fact projected radical changes in the world by 1994, anticipating the transformation of the Soviet Union into a federation or commonwealth of many newly-independent states, including a Russia that had adopted a defensive posture, with its military budget cut by 40 percent, its forces withdrawn from Eastern Europe, and its force levels reduced by 50 percent. In addition, he had anticipated the demise both of the Warsaw Pact and of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the reunification of Germany, and the consequent re-casting of NATO. He also foresaw substantial progress in both conventional and strategic East-West arms control. As a result, the warning time for a major war in Europe would be six months, and a new military strategy would replace that of NATO’s Forward Defense of Western Europe. In the Pacific, relations between the two Koreas would improve, and the United States would phase out its bases in the Philippines. In South Asia, India would emerge as a major regional nuclear hegemonic power. Of the major Third World hot spots, the areas of likely U.S. military involvement would be Korea and the Persian Gulf.

In response to these changes, the Chairman believed the United States should not only significantly cut its conventional forces and change the pattern of their global deployment, including its forward deployments in Europe and Korea, but also substantially reduce its strategic nuclear arsenal. He would cut the Army from its 18 divisions and its active personnel end-strength of 760,000 to a force comprised of 10-12 divisions with an active end-strength totaling 525,000. Instead of the Navy’s 1989 deployment of 551 ships, including 15 carriers, it should plan for 400 ships, including
12 carriers, with its active end-strength reduced from 587,000 to 400,000. While General Powell had not yet determined the projected size of the Air Force, he wished to maintain the Marine Corps’ active force of three divisions and three air wings, but reduce that service’s active end-strength of 197,000 to 150,000. The reduced threat from the Soviet Union, coupled with progress in arms control, would, he believed, make it possible to cut the U.S. ICBM force from 1000 to 500 Minuteman III missiles and our ballistic missile submarines from 34 to 18, all of which would be of the new Ohio class. These capabilities would support a posture that General Powell came to call the “Base Force,” composed of two regional and two functional groups of forces: Atlantic forces and Pacific forces, whose areas of responsibility would extend correspondingly, plus contingency forces to deal with sudden crises anywhere on the globe; and strategic nuclear forces to meet the residual threat still posed by the Soviet nuclear arsenal.

This was a breathtaking worldview, one whose timetable was more accelerated than the pace I had envisioned in subtitling my vision, “The Security Environment of the 21st Century.” It was also the analytical equivalent of a thermonuclear bomb so far as the services were concerned. No service leader had at that time even remotely considered the extraordinary changes envisioned by General Powell and his Joint Staff. The charge that Dave and I now received was to build a briefing that encompassed the Chairman’s grand strategy and the associated changes to U.S. military force structure. Our meeting with General Powell had taken place on the 6th of November, 1989, and we learned soon thereafter that he intended to take a presentation to President Bush on the 15th, just nine days later. Dave and I knew we and our organizations were now joined at the hip, an association facilitated by the personal chemistry we had developed. That fact was not lost on our respective action officers, whose relations had become strained after a 1986 Joint Staff reorganization that created the J-8 Directorate from what had been elements of J-5. Hence, Dave and I dubbed our two groups “J-5/8” to drive home the point that an action this urgent would brook no trivial organizational barriers.

The division of labor was obvious. I would take the lead in articulating the strategy piece; Dave and his PBAD Division would flesh out the force structure cuts with costing specifics. I jumpstarted the J-5 effort by converting my “Tides, Trends and Tasks” lecture, appropriately amended to account for the Chairman’s timeline, force structure detail, and regional specifics, to the formal prose required for a military planning document. I then put together a small team headed by one of my sterling Army colonels, Monty Meigs (a future four-star general) to work directly with J-8 and the Chairman in melding my
Joint Staff Director (1989 – 1991)

words with his and converting them to the bullet point slides that would serve as the traditional Pentagon briefing vehicle. As described by Dr. Jaffe:

The Strategy Division of J-5 provided a strategic underpinning for the “Quiet Study,” greatly expanding its coverage of the new security environment and associated implications for the United States. Strategy Division action officers approached the question of force structure from the standpoint of the forces needed to carry out the Chairman’s recommended strategy, while PBAD did further work on the cuts required to meet its budget projections. These two approaches produced essentially the same recommendations. With the incorporation of General Butler’s strategic concepts and the Strategy Division’s views as well as the Chairman’s vision, the focus of the “Quiet Study” shifted to the strategy that U.S. forces would need to execute in the changed environment and the force posture required to carry out that strategy.

Our work continued right up to the day of General Powell’s briefing to President Bush. The urgency of our task was multiplied by the historic events of the 9th of November, when East Germany opened its borders, a consequence, albeit unintended, of Gorbachev’s effort to transform the Soviet Union and its alliances. The fall of the Berlin Wall confirmed for us the assessment of the future direction of Soviet policy outlined in the Chairman’s briefing: a much more benign outlook and reduced military posture, allowing the United States to significantly reduce and re-posture its own forces. However, when we took the presentation to the Secretary of Defense on the 14th, we got a rude reception. President Bush’s Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney, did not share the perception of a substantially reduced threat from the Soviet Union, nor, as outlined earlier, did his Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. This strategic disconnect did not derail the meeting with the President the following day, but it did trigger a series of debates between the Chairman and the Secretary, and between Under Secretary Wolfowitz and me, on the appropriate U.S. response to the changes occurring in the Soviet Union. President Bush’s response was sufficiently positive to prompt Secretary Cheney to give the Chairman license to take his views to two additional, very tough audiences: the combatant commanders-in-chief (CINCs) and the service chiefs.

General Powell briefed the service chiefs in a Pentagon meeting on November 16th, in a Deep Executive Session in the Tank, informing them that he had discussed with the President his views on the need for a new strategy and emphasized that major force cuts were in the offing. His audience was a
bit put off for not having been consulted, but they read the subtext very clearly: this Chairman intended to fully exercise his role as the principal military advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the President under the new authority granted by the Goldwater-Nichols Act. That said, Powell knew that granted authority is a different matter than earned authority, and he resolved to exercise his unique powers more sparingly in the future.

That made things a bit terse for those of us on the Joint Staff, who had the responsibility to keep our OSD and Service counterparts in the loop on what had become a very fast-paced series of events. J-8 worked diligently behind the scenes informing service programmers of General Powell’s force structure concepts, and to verify with them that the expected budget would be adequate for the forces recorded in the Presidential briefing – now entitled “A View to the 90s.” The more urgent task, which fell to me, was bringing Under Secretary Wolfowitz on board with the concept of removing Soviet forces from operative descriptions of potential wars in secondary theaters (i.e., other than Europe), most particularly, in Southwest Asia and the vital Persian Gulf. As recorded by Dr. Jaffe:

OSD’s planning and programming process went forward. Since the National Military Strategy (NMS) was an integral part of the Secretary’s Defense Planning Guidance (DPG), the inability of the Joint Staff and OSD to agree on the focus of strategy for Southwest Asia had prevented the issuing of the DPG to guide the Services in the preparation of their Program Objective Memoranda (POM). After months of debate between J-5 and Mr. Wolfowitz over the omission of Southwest Asia from the initial theater strategies for war with the Soviet Union, General Powell agreed to a compromise worked out by General Butler and Mr. Wolfowitz. The Secretary would add an initial theater strategy for Southwest Asia to the NMS, but planning would provide only for Soviet air cover for an Iraqi attack into the Arabian Peninsula rather than a Soviet ground incursion into the region as past planning for Southwest Asia had postulated.

This drawn-out intellectual battle went to the very heart of promulgating a new military strategy and all that it entailed for war planning, force structure, and force allocation – not to mention budget dollars and service roles and missions. Paul and I went round and round for weeks, and it was very clear he had Secretary Cheney in his corner. Hence, the need for the compromise noted above. I persuaded General Powell that getting Soviet ground forces out of
the Generic Planning Scenario for Southwest Asia was in fact a major victory. Consequently, a groundbreaking Defense Planning Guidance was finally issued on January 24th, 1990. However, both of us understood we had simply won a battle, not the war. Months of head-butting lay in front of us to gain acceptance of the even more controversial consequence of the new strategy: draconian force cuts, on a scale that the services were unprepared to accept. This protracted confrontation would require a lot of heavy lifting from Chairman Powell, but it was now obvious to me that he was up to the demands. Then, in the midst of this verbal jousting, a real-world conflict unfolded that gave me an up-close and personal look at the real stature and capabilities of my new mentor: the invasion of Panama on December 20th, 1989.

The run-up to the invasion had been going on for months as tensions mounted between the U.S. government and Manuel Noriega, the Panamanian president. A series of incidents culminated on the 16th of December with the killing of a Marine officer outside the headquarters of the notorious Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF) in the El Chorrillo district of Panama City. By that point, the U.S. military presence in Panama had been significantly augmented in response to the increasingly unsafe environment for Americans, and planning was going on quietly in the Joint Staff for a possible invasion. On the 17th of December, President Bush decided to execute the resulting invasion plan, setting in motion the deployment of some 27,000 U.S. servicemen and women. The media quickly picked up signs of the impending operation, and speculation became rampant. On the evening of December 19th, I joined General Powell, Secretary Cheney, and the Joint Staff J-2 (Intelligence) in a small room off the main floor of the J-3 (Operations) Command Center, located in the bowels of the Pentagon. As the clock ticked past midnight toward the designated H-Hour of 0200 local Panama time, we were glued to the CNN broadcast from Panama City on the monitor tucked in one corner of the ceiling. The city was filled with American reporters, one of whom was standing outside the gates of the principal U.S. airfield in Panama, interviewing the Commander of the Panama Defense Forces. During the conversation, the reporter offered his best guess as to the likely kick-off hour, which happened to be precisely correct. With that, General Powell suggested that Secretary Cheney accelerate the timetable, to which Cheney agreed, although both knew this change risked disrupting the complex execution phase of the invasion plan.

From that point on, we followed events through a phone connection between General Powell and General Max Thurman, the four-star CINCSOUTH (Commander in Chief, US Southern Command, encompassing all of Central and South America), a similar communications link between the J-2 and his
SOUTHCOM counterpart, and, finally, the medium of CNN. For a relatively small operation, the invasion had a large number of moving parts, including SEAL Teams and other Special Operations Forces, and it included the inaugural combat operations of two new aerial machines: the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter and the F-117 Nighthawk stealth fighter. Separate but related engagements were being conducted on a number of fronts, with heavy air strikes throughout the theater of operations. I was a fascinated observer during all of this, my job having been done during the preceding months of diplomatic activity. And for me, the real show was not in Panama, but in the room where I was sitting.

For several tense hours, as with the opening phases of all wars, getting a clear picture of the facts on the ground was impossible. Anecdotal data flowed in constantly, from the TV screen and the telephones, as the battles ebbed and flowed. The PDF resisted fiercely, especially in the heart of the city, and the fighting resulted in a major conflagration in El Chorrillo, where destruction was massive and the death toll severe. Eventually, some 2,500 families were evacuated from the neighborhood (but were later paid handsomely for their loss). The final number of Panamanian casualties has been estimated at 1,000 to 4,000, the uncertainty resulting from the usual chaos attending urban warfare. As the night progressed, I marveled at the presence of General Powell, the taciturn demeanor of Secretary Cheney, and the unspoken acknowledgement of the division of authority in the room. Over the course of eight hours, the Secretary spoke hardly a word while the Chairman orchestrated the multifaceted undertaking with consummate skill. Powell was the picture of aplomb as he kept the volatile CINCSOUTH, General Thurman, affectionately dubbed “Mad Max,” on a tight leash, pieced together a coherent picture of the evolving battle from disparate bits of data, and periodically updated President Bush by secure phone.

At 7:00 a.m., with everyone in the room now operating on deep reserves, General Powell stepped away from the table to a restroom a few feet away, ran an electric razor over his face and emerged looking fresh as a daisy. Powell then spoke with the President, proposing a brief message the latter might make to the nation, which he in fact delivered at 8:00 a.m. Next, Powell and the Secretary moved upstairs to the media room, where the Chairman conducted, without notes, a meticulously detailed, comprehensible, and compelling briefing on the events of the past twenty-four hours. In the question period that followed, he deftly handled a flood of questions from a hostile press corps not pre-briefed on the President’s rationale for the invasion: the growing threat to U.S. citizens, Noriega’s involvement in the drug trade, his overturning of
democratic elections to choose his successor, and implicit threats to the treaty-guaranteed neutrality of the Panama Canal, a vital waterway.

The upshot was that, despite the ensuing, protracted search for the deposed Noriega, and the uproar in the Organization of American States, which condemned the invasion, General Powell’s stature soared. That, however, did not endear him to Secretary Cheney and his closest supporters. On the contrary. I gleaned some insight into a tension between the two men in early August, 1990, just after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. I was in the Chairman’s office awaiting his return from a meeting with Cheney and Prince Bandar, the Saudi Arabian ambassador to the United States. When he came in, he seemed a bit unsettled, an unease he shared with me. At the conclusion of the Bandar session, the Secretary asked Powell to stay behind for a moment. When they were alone, Cheney quietly but pointedly admonished him for speaking out of turn to the President at a National Security Council meeting on Kuwait earlier in the day.

Powell had asked President Bush if it was worth going to war over Kuwait, a question more properly reserved for the Secretary of Defense – or, the National Security Advisor, the position Powell had held for several years. He recognized immediately the impropriety he had committed, acknowledged same, and accepted the remonstration with good grace, although privately unrepentant – the question needed to be asked and no one else in the room had posed it. What I took from the telling was his distress that he had put himself in a position to be called out by a man who was a past master in making others feel ill at ease.

These many years later, I have watched their tension evolve to antipathy born of sharp political differences and divergent personalities. Whereas Secretary Cheney is an insular, cautious, bureaucratic street fighter who reveals nothing of himself, General Powell is wonderfully centered, open, engaging, and largely free of artifice. Nowhere were those qualities on better display than in the course of our first trip together to an historic meeting at the Confidence and Security Building Measures Military Doctrine Seminar in Vienna, Austria, in mid-January, 1990. The seminar was the product of an unprecedented agreement between NATO and the Warsaw Pact to convene an unheard-of conclave of the senior military leaders from each of their member states.

I observed closely the Chairman’s preparation for this event, beginning with the thrust of the remarks with which he would open the proceedings. He fully grasped the opportunity offered by this gathering: five of the seven Warsaw Pact chiefs attending were new to their positions, including Russian
General Mikhail Moiseyev, Chief of the Soviet General Staff, who, as I noted earlier, had succeeded Marshal Akhromeyev. General Moiseyev was barely fifty years old, handpicked by Gorbachev to begin the agonizing process of reforming the massive Soviet war machine, but a complete naïf on the international stage. Consequently, above all else, General Powell wanted to drive home the fundamental lesson of civilian control of the military as a fixture in democratic governments, an important aspect of which is keeping the armed forces out of the business of policing domestic society.

The 16 January speech was remarkable, forcefully delivered and obviously heartfelt. I had watched as General Powell rehearsed it for hours onboard our aircraft during the long flight from Andrews AFB to Vienna, alternatively recording and listening to his words until he was satisfied with cadence and content. For the moment, however, it appeared to have fallen on deaf ears; his principal interlocutor, General Moiseyev, gave a perfunctory speech laced with standard Cold War rhetoric. His failure to grasp the import of the gathering was further evidenced when the moment came for the most important aspect of this historic meeting: the group photo, which would be headlined on countless newspapers and television stations around the world. Never before had the two leaders of the most powerful military organizations ever assembled stood amicably shoulder-to-shoulder, much less flanked by their NATO and Warsaw Pact colleagues. General Moiseyev was clueless as to his role in this dramatic setting, positioning himself toward the back of the pack gathered on an elevated stage at the front of the conference room. Powell sought him out and gently steered him to the front row, where the two of them stood front-and-center, their smiling faces radiating the message that the long dark days of superpower confrontation were ending.

That evening, I was witness to a darker side of life in the Powell fast lane. Wives had been invited to the event, and Alma Powell was my companion at a very long head table for what would prove an interminable dinner. We formed an immediate bond and talked candidly about ourselves and our families. I could sense the toll taken by her role as the wife of a powerful up-and-comer who had succeeded against long odds in a profession and in a nation where race still mattered. Their married life began with a car trip from New York City to his first duty station in Kentucky, a journey made much longer by the fact that nowhere along the way could they find a lodging that would take them in. She had endured his two tours in Vietnam, where he was twice seriously wounded, and his years in the White House, where he frequently spent days on end without returning home. Their son had barely escaped death in a jeep accident in Germany, then suffered through a prolonged recovery. Whatever
the weight of these burdens, perhaps worse were the personal slights I wit-
nessed over the course of the meal when well-wishers eager to get her hus-
band’s attention thrust their hands out to him directly in front of her face.

On our return to the States, General Powell and I worked to refine the
“View to the 90s” briefing with respect to the size of the U.S. forces the new
strategy required and its core justification. The term “Base Force” was now
presented as a minimum posture below which the United States must not
go if it were to retain its superpower status and responsibly exercise global
responsibilities. In our analyses, that force was still packaged into two large
contingents, one with an Atlantic and the other a Pacific regional focus, sup-
plemented by U.S.-based reinforcements, a contingency force for smaller-scale
contingencies, and a modified Triad of strategic nuclear forces, relying mostly
on the SSBN force. In total, this Base Force represented a half-million person
reduction from the 2.1 million person active end strength of the U.S. Armed

We pulled the new briefing together for a prospectively bruising meeting
with the CINCs and service chiefs on the 26th of February, 1990. There, General
Powell hoped to gain consensus on the new force structure and end strength,
to be reached on an accelerated timetable geared toward completion in 1994.
This would allow him to shoot for agreement with OSD on a fully-articulat-
ed military strategy by the end of May, in time for his and the Secretary of
Defense’s response to Congressional concerns and a series of upcoming NATO
meetings. On the latter score, he had already sent me to the four major NATO
capitals to forewarn their prime ministers of the forthcoming cuts in U.S.
troops in Europe. And that is a story worth telling.

I was assigned that task in the first week of January of 1990, through a call
from the Director of the Joint Staff, Lieutenant General Mike Carns, whom I in-
troduced in Chapter 22, a fast friend thanks to our early morning carpooling and
constant interaction on the issues crowding my in-box. He advised me that in
his upcoming State of the Union Address, President Bush wanted to highlight a
so-called “peace dividend” that reduced tensions in Europe following the fall of
the Berlin Wall. This allowed relief to be taken in the form of a 100,000-person
cut in U.S. forces based throughout the region. This would obviously be a bomb-
shell to our NATO allies, one whose effect had to be softened by a prior round of
“consultations.” I was to be part of a three-person delegation departing in two
days for meetings in London, Paris, Rome, and Bonn. In the meantime, I had to
master the details of where the cuts were to be taken and be prepared to jus-
tify them to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, President François Mitterrand,
Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, and Chancellor Helmut Kohl.
That led to an intense crash course during meetings with Joint Staff experts to pull together data from work that was still in progress, to include the U.S. units to be withdrawn, their locations and equipment lists, and the impacts of those moves on allied forces, nation-by-nation. By the early Wednesday morning departure, I was reasonably up to speed but had a briefcase full of information still to memorize. I arrived at Andrews an hour before the scheduled 8:00 a.m. departure, checked in at the counter, and a waiting staff car took me to a remote corner of the ramp where waited a sleek, all white, unmarked executive jet capable of trans-Atlantic flight. I presumed it was from the CIA stable – the pilots, in civilian clothes, were not in the mood for conversation. Shortly after I got buckled in, a second car arrived and out spilled two men I had never met, laughing and talking a mile a minute.

They clamored up the stairs, plopped down in seats across from mine, and, ignoring me, continued their good-old-boy yammering right on through takeoff and climb-out to our cruising altitude. Finally, as we leveled off, one of them, whom I had gathered was named Bob, a slight, trim, buttoned-down man with graying hair, turned to his companion, someone named Larry, and said, “Well, why don’t you dig out the talking points, and let’s figure out how we’re going to pull this off.” Larry, the older of the two, ebullient and a bit rotund with hair not much used to being combed, replied, somewhat taken aback, “I don’t have the talking points; I assumed you’d bring them!” At that point, they both looked at me in hopeful anticipation. “Sorry, gentlemen, not my job, but if you want to speak to force cuts and their impacts, I’m your man. I’m Lieutenant General Lee Butler, Director of Strategic Plans and Policy for the Joint Staff, and the Chairman’s representative on this trip. Sounds like we have some work to do.”

At that point, the trip began in earnest. In the course of the long and stressful hours that followed, I learned that my companions were Bob Gates, the deputy to Brent Scowcroft, the President’s National Security Advisor, and Lawrence Eagleburger, James Baker’s Deputy Secretary of State. Once they got their game faces on, I knew I was in the company of two consummate professionals, whose positions made them the right choices for the trip – not the principals in their respective agencies, but certainly senior enough to command respect and speak for the U.S. Government. We landed at a low-profile airstrip just outside London and were whisked in a dark limousine, with curtains tightly drawn, to the residence of the United States Ambassador to the Court of St. James, one Henry Catto, a wealthy Texan and close friend of President Bush. Secrecy was paramount, due to the sensitive nature of our mission, and my two new friends had high profiles in foreign policy, so we took
every precaution to stay out of public view. Consequently, as a dinner party was underway at the residence, we were taken through a side entrance onto the grounds and then led through the residence’s kitchen door up the back stairs to the living quarters.

The ambassador came up to greet us some hours later, and after a few pleasantries, we labored on well past midnight. In truth, even when we called it a night, I wasn’t really certain about the morning’s game plan. The palpable anxiety in the car as we pulled up in front of Number 10 Downing Street led me to believe that Gates and Eagleburger weren’t at all sure about what was about to unfold. We were met at the curb by the Prime Minister’s chief of staff, ushered inside, down a narrow hall and up a flight of stairs to a door that opened precisely as we made the landing. There, beautifully coiffed, her classic English face radiantly backlit by the window behind her, stood Prime Minister Thatcher, the Iron Lady, hand extended and exclaiming in her most commanding voice, “Welcome, Larry, won’t you and your friends come in. I am so pleased to see you.”

If diplomacy is, as has been said, the art of lying in service to one’s country, she was a master of disguising her real feelings about our presence. As we would soon learn, she not only knew why we were there, but had brought reinforcements in the persons of the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs. We were three little lambs ripe for shearing.

Eagleburger led off with a slightly tortured homily about events in Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, domestic U.S. political pressures for a peace dividend, and President Bush’s “desire” to announce a U.S. troop cut in Europe during his forthcoming State of the Union address. The purpose of this meeting was to “consult” with key allies regarding the size and allocation of the U.S. force reductions, and to assure them that NATO’s collective security would not be adversely affected. With that, he turned, looked squarely at me, and said, “And General Butler is going to explain that to you now.” No more uncertainty. Turns out the talking points were mine to make. The Prime Minister engaged me with laser intensity; I could see my words flowing straight onto her mental hard drive, scrutinized, analyzed and permanently recorded. She allowed me, without interruption, the twenty minutes required to talk through my brief, done without notes. Then followed ten minutes of piercing questions which I answered to her apparent satisfaction.

When she finally loosed her verbal fingers from my throat, she turned on Eagleburger. “Well, Larry, all this makes a modicum of sense. You can tell the President that I will, of course, support his initiative; indeed, I have no choice. But, Larry, let us understand each other. This is not consultation. This is take it
or leave it.” With that, she stood, smiling, to signal the end of the meeting. She walked us to the door, opened it, and bade us farewell with one final smack of the handbag: “Always good to see you, Larry. You are welcome back at any time. But not on this subject.”

With that it was back down the stairs, through the corridor, and out the door to our waiting car. As the driver hustled around to open the door, I suddenly felt myself wrapped in a bear hug and lifted completely off the ground. “God damn, Butler,” exclaimed Eagleburger as he shook me like a rag doll, “You just saved our bacon!”

After the short flight to Paris, I found myself on familiar cultural turf, noting with pleasant surprise how clean and fresh the city looked following the decades-long campaign to scrub centuries of grime from scores of historic buildings and monuments. I had gathered myself for the meeting with President Mitterrand, but I needn’t have bothered. We were marched into what amounted to a throne room and seated in a stark row of uncomfortable seats facing a most grand chair on an elevated platform. After allowing us to cool our heels for several minutes, the President of France swept into the chamber, took his place, lectured us for ten minutes on his nation’s irreplaceable role in European security, and said that, so far as he was concerned, the United States could withdraw as many forces as it wanted, making it tacitly clear that withdrawing more of them would be better and withdrawing all of them would be best. With that, meeting over, abrupt departure, and we were on our way back to the airport. C’était bien amusant – not so much at the moment, but in retrospect, it was all very amusing, for at that point no U.S. forces could be withdrawn from France, as none were stationed there; as the reader will recall, de Gaulle had sent them and other non-French NATO forces packing in the 1960s during my years as an Olmsted Scholar.

The flight to Rome was short and Rome traffic was, as always, impassable, making the ride to the American ambassador’s residence interminable. We were exhausted and, after a blessedly short meal, fell into bed. The morning dawned bright and beautiful, setting the scene for a session with Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti that bordered on the comic. The Italian body politic changes prime ministers almost with the seasons, and our present host was back in office for the third time. He greeted us in his working chambers, a bright, spacious, handsomely-appointed room. On our entrance, he leaped up from behind an ornate desk, shook hands warmly, and waved us to an intimate seating area where coffee awaited. After the briefest of introductions designed to set the stage for my presentation, he waved it off, saying that whatever President Bush wanted to do was fine with him. After a few more
minutes of happy babbling we were out the door and on our way to Bonn, where we found the atmosphere dramatically different.

Our U.S. host in Bonn was Ambassador Vernon Walters, a well-known figure in the diplomatic world. Born in New York, the son of a British immigrant, and with only a few years of formal schooling, he rose to three-star rank in the U.S. Army, spoke six West European languages fluently, as well as Russian and Chinese, was present at a succession of historic events at the side of several presidents, and had served as the Deputy Director of the CIA prior to his appointment in Germany. In every way a larger-than-life figure, he briefed us over lunch in his sumptuous quarters exactly what to expect from Helmut Kohl, one of the most powerful chancellors of the post-World War II era. That forewarning helped prepare us for the stiff, carefully-scripted meeting that followed. The Germans awaited us as if for negotiations, facing tables, complete with headphones linked to a bevy of simultaneous interpreters behind glass walls. The briefing was received in dead silence, without comment. It was clear our German allies were extremely unhappy about the planned U.S. troop reduction – from their perspective, the departure of one American soldier would have been one too many. Chancellor Kohl would deliver his response to the President, not a bunch of minions like us, but we knew that, like Prime Minister Thatcher, he really had no say in the outcome. This session was about registering his pique, and he did a splendid job of it.

With the trip and the President’s speech behind us, General Powell and I focused with a vengeance on the February 26th presentation to the service chiefs and the field commanders, which would also be attended by Secretary Cheney. At that meeting, I played the role of recorder and watched with fascination the unfolding drama as General Powell engaged a room crowded with powerful egos, some of whom considered themselves better qualified for his position. General Max Thurman, CINCSOUTH, launched the assault with an attack on the whole premise behind the Base Force, asserting that military end-strength and capabilities should be founded on the assessments of the commanders in the field regarding the respective threats they faced in their areas of responsibility. This was, of course, a self-serving formulation designed to perpetuate the status quo rather than confront the reality of a world being turned upside down. Not surprisingly, General Thurman’s position was echoed by General Ed Burba, Powell’s successor at Forces Command. But the Chairman drew support from the CINCSAC, General Jack Chain; CINCEUR, General John Galvin; and CINCCENT, General Norm Schwarzkopf.

The remaining CINCs held their counsel, and the service chiefs kept their comments short. General Vuono, Army Chief of Staff, said he thought the
Chairman’s numbers for Army forces were far too low; General Welch, Air Force Chief of Staff, objected to cuts in the air leg of the nuclear Triad; and in keeping with the Navy’s consistent stonewalling of the whole process, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Carl Trost, made no comment whatsoever. The meeting ended inconclusively. Secretary Cheney had remained noncommittal, so General Powell knew that he had yet to bring the civilian leadership fully on board with the new military strategy and the consequent reduced force structure, an absolute prerequisite if he were to have any chance at forcing the hands of the service chiefs. What follows next is Dr. Jaffe’s account of one of the most bruising periods in Pentagon history, as Chairman Powell and his Joint Staff team fought to shake the military establishment, from the Secretary of Defense down through the service staffs and the far-flung organizations of the field commanders, out of its sclerotic Cold War thinking and into a new international security environment free of a global Soviet threat.

In a meeting with the Director of the Joint Staff, General Butler and General Robinson, General Powell planned how to proceed. J-8 stood by the force numbers in the revised briefing. Although the Chairman thought that additional reductions in defense funding were likely, he decided to let the briefing’s specific recommendations stand as notional figures, with maximum total active strength to be set at 1.5 million. He directed J-5 to adopt the Base Force vision as the basis for standardizing the generic scenarios being developed for regional war. Endorsing General Butler’s efforts to have strategic planners in J-5, rather than OSD force programmers, assume primary responsibility for these scenarios, he instructed the J-5 Director to win the support of Dr. David Chu, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E), for designing scenarios consistent with the Chairman’s view of the world.

General Powell focused his own efforts on developing a narrative that could be used in speeches and eventually expanded into his preferred National Military Strategy. He turned to the Chief of the J-5 Strategy Division’s Applications Branch, Colonel Monty Meigs, in whom he had developed great confidence. Meigs’ task was to work with both the Chairman and General Butler to put the “View to the 90s” briefing into prose that would support a campaign inside and outside the Pentagon to win support for Powell’s positions.
General Butler regarded J-5’s assignment as an opportunity to achieve his goal of reconciling resources, objectives and strategy and guided Meigs’ efforts. In developing a standard presentation providing a rationale for a global U.S. forward presence, Colonel Meigs was to review the world by region, describe the Chairman’s projected role for the United States in each area, analyze the likelihood of U.S. military engagement there, and determine whether J-8’s resource-driven force structure and the Chairman’s recommended force posture provided the capability to pursue U.S. objectives. After outlining a conventional strategy based upon this approach, the narrative that General Butler and Colonel Meigs would prepare should then address the question of strategic forces. Here the justification would remain the necessity of deterring Soviet nuclear attack.

In revising the Chairman’s briefing, Colonel Meigs adopted the same approach outlined by General Butler for preparing the narrative rendition of General Powell’s strategic views. At the Chairman’s direction, he re-titled the briefing, “A View to 1994: The Base Force.” It was expanded to include his thinking on how the new strategy and force structure would begin to affect the whole military culture, methods of assessing requirements, investment in research and development, the rate of modernization, and base structure, headquarters and training.

While he regarded the civilian leadership as his principal audience, the Chairman also hoped to win the support of the service chiefs, who believed he was usurping their force planning prerogatives. In the interest of defusing Service discontent, General Powell asked General Butler to present the revised briefing to the Operations Deputies while it was still being developed, which he did on the 13th of April. In outlining the Chairman’s views, General Butler concentrated on explaining the strategic rationale for the Base Force. He described General Powell’s belief that the Cold War was over and the Warsaw Pact dead, the difficulty the Soviet Union would have reconstituting its forces once it completed the transition currently under way, and the intelligence community’s assessment of a drastically reduced Soviet military pursuing a defensive strategy. The configuration of forces in the Base Force was designed to maintain U.S. superpower status in this dramatically changed environment. Through deployments, exercises,
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assistance and military exchanges, the Base Force would make it possible to provide a global forward presence despite significant budget cuts.

The reaction of the service three-star Operations Deputies to my brief was clear: neither they nor their bosses were prepared to buy into the new strategy. So the crunch was on. On April 13th, I gave General Powell the narrative he had asked for, entitled *A National Military Strategy for the 90s*. He put his final spin on it and then went public in earnest, in response to mounting press and Congressional pressure for a peace dividend now. Beginning in late March, Senator Sam Nunn had begun a series of speeches criticizing DoD for not coming forth with a new strategy for the post-Cold War world and announcing his intention to craft his own version. The Chairman countered with a bold stroke: a direct response to Nunn using the venue of a Washington, D.C., meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations. I accompanied him to the event and took careful note of the reaction, which proved very positive. He gave a forceful presentation and meant every word of it, laying down a marker not only to the Senator, but by implication to the Secretary of Defense as well. Before this most influential audience, many of them members of the American foreign policy establishment who would be able to affect the course of the Administration’s debate with Congress over the defense budget, he challenged the contention that the department was not recasting its thinking in response to the dramatic change in the threat. In answer to DoD critics, he set forth his world view clearly and concisely, underscoring his points with anecdotes from his early years as a lieutenant in Germany standing guard at the Fulda Gap, then the most likely corridor for a major ground invasion across the inter-German border. All in all, the speech achieved its immediate objective of staking out his turf as the nation’s senior military officer and principal advisor to the President. There, of course, was the rub: the President and his Secretary of Defense had yet to endorse the views being publicly marketed by their Chairman. He and I now began a full-court press to bring them on board. The time for sparring was over.

Achieving lasting success would depend on gaining acceptance in government circles and among the public at large of the fact that the world was moving rapidly away from the prolonged Cold War confrontation between East and West. And, on that point, I interject here the narrative of an extraordinary opportunity that had come my way in the waning weeks of Admiral Crowe’s tenure as Chairman, but that I waited to exercise until General Powell had
Joint Staff Director (1989 – 1991)

replaced him. In mid-July of 1989, the defense attaché from Poland had asked for an appointment to discuss “a sensitive matter.” That proved to be an invitation from his government for me to make an official visit to this Warsaw Pact nation that for so many centuries had been in the crosshairs of trans-European conflict. The implications of this offer were so potentially consequential that General Powell’s approval and guidance were essential. To my knowledge, I would be the first senior United States military officer to visit Poland since the Iron Curtain had been drawn across Europe forty years earlier. Clearly, something remarkable was in the wind, and I was about to become a central figure in the drama to follow. As I had surmised, General Powell grasped all of this instantly, agreed I should depart in mid-October of 1989, and gave me wide negotiating authority.

This was another Alice-in-Wonderland trip, harking back not only to my first Moscow visit, but also my C-141 flight to China in the spring of 1973. I was warmly greeted at the Warsaw airport by a bevy of generals, then taken straightaway to the war memorial honoring their fallen heroes, where I laid a wreath. Riding into the city proper, I noted on all sides signs of economic penury, but, surprisingly, the street was also lined with billboards advertising all manner of goods from foreign manufactures, most notably Japanese luxury cars. My hotel room was spare, but attractive, clean, and well stocked with amenities. After some down time, I was picked up and delivered to a colorful restaurant where a sumptuous dinner was laid out. The meal was also replete with heroic quantities of alcohol, much of which was consumed by my host for the evening, the Director of National Intelligence. A big, boisterous man with thick hair and a flowing mustache, the Director became decreasingly sober and increasingly garrulous as the night wore on. Sometime after midnight, as my energies were fast ebbing, he draped his arm around my shoulder, put his face close to mine, and said, “Tell me, General Butler, do you know the story of the Polish soldier’s dilemma?” Assuming correctly that I did not, he plunged ahead. “Polish soldier has rifle with only one bullet remaining. German soldier is approaching from the front and Russian soldier from the rear. Which one does he shoot?” After pausing a moment for effect, he roared, “German! Business before pleasure!” That said everything I needed to know about the reality of military relationships within the vaunted Warsaw Pact.

The following morning, I was given an audience with the President of Poland, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, a polarizing figure in the nation’s recent history. This uninspiring lout had cut a bloody swath on his way to the top of the Polish Communist Party. Bête noire of Lech Walesa’s Solidarity Movement, he had led the Polish military contingent during 1968’s brutal Soviet invasion of
Czechoslovakia, and he had ordered the equally merciless repression of unrest in his own country over a decade later. I sensed a deep sadness in this tragic man who masked his feelings with the darkened glasses he wore night and day. In an odd departure from his rigid ideology, he had approved the opening to the United States which I for the moment embodied, but that would be one of his last acts in office. He fell out of favor with Moscow for failing to maintain order, and he was gone by the end of the year, succeeded as president by Walesa in a triumph of democracy.

The following two days, I toured a number of military facilities, sat in the cockpit of a MiG-21 and listened to its pilot speak to its virtues. I was also awarded honorary pilot wings in the Polish Air Force, and dined with a host of officers. More memorably, I made a private walk through of the Museum of Polish Military History, which contained a number of priceless artifacts, including the map signed in 1939 by German Foreign Minister Joachim Ribbentrop and his Russian counterpart, Vyacheslav Molotov, dividing Poland into two roughly equal portions, the anticipated spoils of the double invasion scheduled to begin just a few weeks later. Attached as a secret codicil to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact, this simple chart, with its crude, hand-drawn line cutting through the heart of Poland, gave chilling testimony to the cynical motives of Stalin and Hitler, who were equally bent on dominating the vast Eurasian land mass. I was also struck by a display featuring life-size models of successive generations of Polish cavalrymen mounted on fiery steeds, which had been created in loving detail by an army of artisans. One rider was particularly eye-catching because of the intricately feathered wings fixed to the back plate of his armor. In response to my query, my host explained that the sound of the wind whistling through the wings of hundreds of charging cavalrymen was so unnerving as to instill panic in the enemy troops facing the onrushing horde. Seeing my obvious delight, my host took due note and, one morning some weeks after my return to the States, the Polish Defense Attaché arrived at my J-5 office bearing a miniature replica of the armor I had admired, complete with feathered wings!

The highlight of my stay in Warsaw was an evening visit to the restored, dazzlingly-illuminated heart of the city where, based on archived documents that somehow had escaped the razing of the capital by the Nazis, every building had been rebuilt precisely according to its original specifications. As is customary with visitors, I began my tour by viewing a film at the small museum just inside the boundaries of the rebuilt area. It opened with a visual overview of the city in its pre-World War II glory, segued to the closing days of the conflict, and then cut to a close-up of Hitler’s infamous telegram to his commander in
Warsaw directing the total destruction of the metropolis. Then followed mind-numbing scenes of German troops methodically numbering with white paint every single structure, laying out the order of the wholesale demolition to follow. The film closed with a tribute to the architects and artisans who eventually rebuilt the city center with the most exacting attention to detail.

The final stop of my stay was the historic city of Krakow, considered the cultural capital of Poland and recorded in the annals of the United Nations as one of the world’s most treasured places. I was given a private tour of the renowned St. Mary’s Church with its famous wooden altar. Despite its rich heritage, Krakow was also at the time one of the dirtiest places on earth, thanks in large measure to the gigantic steel mill in the heart of the city that belched lung-choking smoke around the clock, wreaking havoc on both residents and structures.

On return to Warsaw, I signed a memorandum of understanding that acknowledged the new era of reduced tensions and pledged the two nations’ intent to establish closer military ties based on continuing consultations. I had no doubt that Poland would become one of our closest allies. When I de-briefed General Powell on my return, we mused about this sudden openness from a key Warsaw Pact nation. The import became crystal clear three weeks after my return, when the Berlin Wall began to crumble and, with it, the Iron Curtain. The world was on the threshold of a historic turning point, bolstering us in our role as change agents.

Fast forward to April of 1990, when I received two new and equally remarkable invitations in the same vein, from the governments of Hungary and Romania, a clear signal that the Warsaw Pact was in its death throes and its members were in search of a new patron. Hungary had suffered mightily under Soviet occupation, never more so than during the tragic events of the Revolution of 1956, when its citizen uprising had been so murderously repressed. Romania had been equally if not more distressed during the long, cruel years of the Ceauşescu regime, which in some instances made even Soviet rule seem tame by comparison. My back-to-back visits to these nations surpassed all expectations and had a major impact on my world view. What I had begun to surmise two years earlier about the true nature of the Soviet empire and its ultimate fate, and had seen firsthand in Poland, was about to be fully affirmed. The long, dark nightmare of East-West confrontation in Europe was drawing to a close, with earthshaking implications, and I was fated to play a significant role as the drama unfolded.

The tone of my stay in Budapest, or rather Buda and Pest, as the twin cities are known to their residents, was decidedly different than in Warsaw – lower
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key, more relaxed and personal. My military hosts again treated me with great
deferece, to include bringing some notable civilians into the mix. I was quite
taken by a charming married couple who taught at the University of Budapest.
This learned twosome took me to dinner at a splendid restaurant and spent
the evening giving me a tutorial on the history of Hungary under Soviet rule.
Clearly, Moscow’s response to the Revolution in 1956 had a searing and endur-
ing impact, reminding me once more of how tenuous had been the relations
among members of the Warsaw Pact. I came away convinced that the Kremlin
must have had serious reservations about the loyalty of this mutinous collec-
tion of so-called allies.

I took the obligatory tours of military facilities and cultural icons, spent
several hours in discussion with senior leaders from the government, and
signed a second memorandum of understanding pledging closer ties and mili-
tary cooperation between our two countries. As I watched the city fall away
beneath my aircraft, I felt acutely the suffering its inhabitants had endured
under the heavy hand of Soviet occupation. Having now seen at close range
two Eastern Bloc countries which I had previously known only through history
books and intelligence reports, I was even more curious about circumstances
in my third and final stop: Romania.

And, indeed, the third adventure was even more memorable, surpass-
ing all my expectations from the moment I stepped off the plane at Otopeni
International Airport. My host, General-Colonel Nicolae Eftimescu, was just
finishing a conversation with a civilian interpreter when the door of the air-
craft snapped open, and I was startled to hear what sounded very much like
French being spoken between the two. On a hunch, I spoke first and greeted
him in the language I had painfully mastered in France twenty-five years ear-
lier. He broke into a broad smile, returned my greeting in French, and warmly
gripped my hand. It had never occurred to me that Romanian is a Romance
rather than a Slavic language, with deep roots in French. That happy fact set
the stage for an extraordinary experience. Being able to communicate directly
with General Eftimescu, a central figure in the December 1989 revolt leading
to the overthrow of the tyrant Nicolae Ceauşescu and his equally evil wife,
Elena, allowed us to develop a bond that deepened our professional ties. He
dispensed with the interpreter standing at the ready, took me by the arm
and led me to the waiting car, which took us straightaway to the traditional
wreath-laying ceremony at the national monument to Romanian soldiers.
From there, we moved to the hotel owned and run by the Defense Ministry, in
which General Eftimescu was the second-ranking officer. After lunch, we con-
tinued our journey to the Military Academy, an impressive marble structure

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near the center of the city.

The opening round of talks was fascinating, as our host talked about the circumstances leading up to the revolt against the Ceauşescu regime. The former dictator and his wife were megalomaniacs of the first order. He was a hardline Stalinist, but hardly pro-Soviet. Indeed, he detested the relaxing of political controls that Gorbachev had introduced in the Soviet Union. For his part, he maintained an iron grip on power, resorting to such measures as setting aside an hour each evening for a radio and television talk to the nation that preempted every media channel and was deemed obligatory fare for every citizen regardless of age. His zealously extended far beyond the airways, however, to include a Nazi-inspired program to “purify” the Romanian “race” by forced transfusions for a generation of infants born under his reign. Due to a nationwide shortage of needles for the number of procedures required, the results of multiple usages were tragically predictable: one-fourth of the babies “purified” became HIV-positive and were relegated to God-awful institutions, where many perished under inhuman conditions. Equally telling was my visit to the monstrous, grotesquely excessive Otroceni Palace, the Ceauşescus’ monument to themselves. Built on the compacted rubble of a large area of the historic city that had been razed for the purpose, this vast edifice of white marble was consuming an inordinate amount of the nation’s resources, human and physical. From the acres of gold leaf to the twenty-foot tall hand-carved doors and endless rows of crystal chandeliers, this architectural nightmare was simply beyond belief. Eftimescu told me that the new government still had not decided what to do with it, since it was only some eighty percent complete. The best option on the table at that point was simply to make it a tourist attraction.

Chafing under such emotional and physical abuse, the Romanian people grew increasingly restive, to the point that Gorbachev called Ceauşescu to Moscow and asked for his resignation, which he steadfastly refused to offer. As with many revolutions, all that was needed was a spark to ignite the masses. That spark flew on the evening of December 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1989, in the city of Timisoara, where the government had forced the local bishop to remove from his post a pastor of the Hungarian Reformed Church who had made critical comments about Ceauşescu. When his parishioners demonstrated in protest, the mayor’s heavy-handed intervention set off the powder keg. Within days, the unrest spread to the streets of Bucharest. Ceauşescu, blind to the extent of antipathy for him and his wife, actually departed his restive country for a planned visit to Iran. By the time he returned on the 20\textsuperscript{th}, events were moving rapidly beyond his control.

An attempt the following morning to rally the crowd from the balcony of
the Central Committee building only incited the mass of protestors to greater agitation. At that juncture, history becomes unclear as to the sequence of actions. General Eftimescu's version to me was that by the 22\textsuperscript{nd}, the crowds gathering in the main square each day had so grown in size and unruliness that Ceaușescu directed Defense Minister Vasile Milea to order the Army to fire on the assembly of citizens. Apparently Minister Milea left the room and then killed himself so as to avoid carrying out the order. General Eftimescu discovered the body of the man who had been his close friend and was overcome with grief. Ceaușescu, on learning of Milea's death, appointed General Victor Stanculescu, General Eftimescu's boss, to succeed Milea, and directed him to have the Army forcefully break up the crowd. After consulting with General Eftimescu, the new minister elected to ignore the order and instead sent the Army to its barracks. He also somehow convinced the Ceaușescus to become fugitives. Within three days they had been run to ground, summarily tried by the Army, and shot.

By then, chaos had descended on the capital. After several weeks of bloody fighting, a shadowy organization called the National Liberation Front, led by Ion Iliescu, a former Ceaușescu loyalist and now a self-proclaimed reformer, gradually consolidated power. By the time of my April 1990 visit, an uneasy calm had been restored, and when I eventually met with President Iliescu, a handsome, articulate man, he seemed very much in charge and said all the right things about necessary political reforms.

After two days of discussions and touring in the capital, General Eftimescu treated me to a visit to his home town of Suceava in the northern reaches of Romania. I enjoyed this personal touch immensely, especially the chances to commune with the residents of a local monastery and to dine in the home of a local peasant family. By the time we returned to Bucharest, the general and I were fast friends, and we struck an agreement that promised very positive relations between our countries. Most importantly, this remarkable conclusion to my tour of the rapidly-collapsing Warsaw Pact cemented my conviction that the Soviet empire was in its last days. As I returned to the full-scale bureaucratic battle now raging between, on the one side, the Chairman and me, and on the other, Secretary Cheney and Under Secretary Wolfowitz, I was even more determined not to let the outmoded ideology of our civilian masters thwart a miraculous opportunity to bring the Cold War to a close.

My opening came from Deputy Secretary of Defense Don Atwood, who chaired the Defense Planning and Resources Board, or DPRB. His charter was to iron out disputes among DoD agencies that arose during the annual planning, programming and budgeting cycle. With the services due to submit their
budget requests to the Secretary of Defense on the first of May, Atwood asked Under Secretary Wolfowitz and General Powell to kick off his review of those requests (which he knew did not conform to the Chairman’s vision), with presentations on their competing views of policy and force structure. This led to an intensive scrub of the “A View to 1994” briefing that I had given to the service Operations deputies three weeks earlier. This time, the audience would be Secretary Cheney, whose endorsement of the Base Force was essential for the Chairman to win timely approval from President Bush.

Fortunately, events in the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact were moving so rapidly that Wolfowitz was beginning to waver in his opposition to the dramatic changes proposed in the Base Force. Paul therefore decided to make his own run at developing a defense strategy and a supporting force structure for a prospective new world order. He turned to Scooter Libby, now elevated to the position of Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Resources, and his staff to develop his presentation to the program review board. The team leader for this work was none other than the new Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Resources and Plans, retired Army Lieutenant General Dale Vesser, my earlier boss as Director of J-5. Fortunately, the good terms on which we had parted now paid dividends. Dale and I, and my close colleague from J-8, Dave Robinson, worked closely together behind the scenes, and the result was a presentation whose strategic emphasis was very close to General Powell’s and whose force structure was virtually identical to the Base Force. To assuage Wolfowitz’s and Cheney’s concerns about a possible reversal of trends in the Soviet Union, the brief also contained options to halt the prescribed U.S. force cuts and provide a timely remounting of Forward Defense should the Soviet Union manage to halt its political and military decline.

Wolfowitz made that presentation to the review board on May 14th, followed by General Powell the next day. The Chairman’s view did not entirely prevail, mostly because of his insistence on two aspects of his thinking: that the military threat from the Soviet Union had virtually disappeared and that the Congress was determined to cut the defense budget so rapidly that the Base Force levels would need to be achieved by 1994 versus 1997. The first of these cost him the support of Secretary Cheney; the second, that of the service chiefs.

The result was a compromise directed by Secretary Cheney. Under attack from the Congress for presenting a budget that failed to respond to the changes in the international security environment, he endorsed an integrated package that contained Powell’s Base Force and Wolfowitz’s crisis response and reconstitution strategy, with a target date of 1995 to achieve the proposed cuts in U.S.
force levels. On June 26th, Cheney, Wolfowitz, and Powell presented the com-
promise strategy and force structure to President Bush and Brent Scowcroft,
the National Security Advisor. The compromise won the President’s approval,
and he decided to personally make his endorsement public in a major address
a few weeks later at the Aspen Institute, a highly regarded think tank based in
Colorado.

This was a major victory for General Powell, one that promised significant
leverage over the service chiefs and the Congress in the defense-budget battle
to come – a battle that loomed ever larger as Soviet policy under Gorbachev
continued to moderate. Another important factor entered the equation with
the replacement of the Air Force’s retiring Chief of Staff, Larry Welch, by
General Mike Dugan, who would return from commanding our air forces in
Europe. Dorene and I had recently visited General Dugan and his wife Grace
at his headquarters on Ramstein Air Base, Germany, where he and I had long
conversations about world events and what they portended, especially for the
strategic nuclear forces whose fate was still tied largely to the outcome of
arms control negotiations. I made no secret of my preference to cut these
forces as far and as fast as possible, along with making a wholesale revision in
the associated nuclear war plan.

General Dugan’s elevation to become the Air Force Chief of Staff did not
come as a complete surprise. Some weeks before the announcement, General
Powell had asked my opinions of my long-time friend, Mike Dugan, and of the
commander of the Pacific Air Forces, General Merrill McPeak. I told him that
I did not know General McPeak, but had only the highest praise for General
Dugan, whose leadership qualities were unsurpassed and badly needed. The
Air Force had suffered some bad press relations over the past several months,
and General Dugan was, in my opinion, just the man to fix that. Further, he
would be a strong ally in implementing the Base Force concept, which he fully
embraced. Tragically, his campaign to start afresh with the Washington press
corps went completely off the rails a few months later, ending his career – but
not before he had once more put my feet on a highly fortuitous path. More to
come.

In the interim, the anticipated campaign to take the new military strategy
public hit a bureaucratic snag: OSD proved incapable of providing the White
House with a draft for the President’s upcoming Aspen Institute speech. As
the weeks wore on, an exasperated General Powell sent the NSC Staff a draft
of his own making, which was quickly approved and scheduled to be delivered
by the President on the 2nd of August. Meanwhile, I had briefed each of the
service chiefs, including General Mike Dugan and Admiral Frank Kelso, who
had replaced Carl Trost as CNO. Like General Dugan, Admiral Kelso accepted that the Base Force, or something very much like it, was inevitable. General Vuono, the Army Chief, was also coming around, thanks to gentle but persistent prods by the Chairman. That left the Marine Commandant, General Al Gray, as the lone holdout, and his opposition was unshakeable. Finally, General Powell cut a deal: He accepted General Gray’s request for active end-strength level of 159,000 Marines, and Gray came off his original demand for 180,000 Leathernecks.

The stage was set to open a carefully-scripted campaign to be triggered by the speech at Aspen. With the Chiefs on board, a CINCs’ Conference was scheduled for August 20th, Wolfowitz did a backgrounder for the New York Times that appeared in the morning edition on the 2nd of August, and I was scheduled to do a pitch to the defense press in September. But OSD’s foot-dragging and the gross misjudgment of a Middle East dictator, Iraq’s Saddam Hussein, conspired to completely disrupt the timing of our campaign. At 2:00 a.m. on August 2nd, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait, with designs on absorbing it and its rich oil resources as the 19th province of Iraq. Although President Bush still went to Colorado and proclaimed the new military strategy, the speech did not even make front-page news at home or abroad.

The month of August, 1990, proved momentous on a number of counts. First, of course, was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which would not only draw the United States into war, but also validate the change to the Contingency Planning process that I had been pushing for months, with the Chairman’s support. My initiative had grown out of the revision to the Illustrative Planning Scenarios that Bob Linhard and I had brokered with OSD. Specifically, the new IPSs did not envision Soviet forces being involved in a war in the Persian Gulf region. To drive home the import of this new direction with the CINCs, at my instigation the Chairman had several months earlier tasked the commander of CENTCOM, a bear of an Army four-star named Norman Schwarzkopf, to create a Concept Plan, or concept of operations, for a U.S. military response to an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, an invasion that did not involve Soviet forces in any way. Schwarzkopf was initially unreceptive, his concern legitimate: if no Soviet forces were involved, who in Washington was going to approve taking U.S. forces from other regional CINCs (CENTCOM was short on assigned forces in peacetime) to create a credible combat capability for such a contingency? Still, he acceded to J-5 working with his staff, and the resulting concept of operations, dubbed ConPlan 1002-90, reached my desk on the first of August. The following day, it became the basis for the American response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, with no Soviet troops in sight. Strategic planning at its finest.
The second major event in August was the CINC’s Conference on the 20th, where the Chairman’s hand was greatly strengthened by the President’s endorsement of the new military strategy and the Base Force. With looming budget cuts even more severe than had been imagined at the April meeting, resistance among the service chiefs and the CINCs was waning, with General Dugan and Admiral Kelso vocal supporters, General Vuono coming around, and General Gray, placated by his partial victory on Marine Corps active end-strength, no longer opposed. By the end of the session, it was clear that General Powell was going to prevail, through dint of his relentless insistence that the world was changing fundamentally, which it continued to do right before the eyes of his opponents.

On a personal level, my future path also became clear in late August. I was on a week-long trip to sit on a promotion board being held at Randolph AFB, Texas, one of those duties that periodically come to general officers. Just before it kicked off, I got a call from General Dugan, who went right to the point: it was time for me to move from J-5, and my destination was Strategic Air Command. Being a three-star, I assumed I would take the Vice CINC post, and knowing that the current CINCSAC, General Jack Chain, was slated for retirement, I asked who his replacement would be. General Dugan paused for a second, and then said, “Well, do you think you can handle it?” I was shocked by the decision. Almost without exception, the Commander-in-Chief of Strategic Air Command was appointed from the ranks of currently-serving four-star generals, not a three-star who would require the advice and consent of the Senate for promotion. Further, there were any number of more senior contenders for the job, some of whom were probably viewed as stronger candidates. Finally, I had been so consumed by my J-5 duties that I had given no thought to leaving, especially with only one year on the job and a full plate of issues to work.

When General Dugan recovered from his amusement, he cleared me to tell Dorene, who was thrilled that we were “moving to the big house” at Offutt. My family was, of course, overjoyed by the news, and they seemed less surprised than I was. Dorene was far more adept at reading the undercurrent of relationships, and she had long recognized Mike Dugan’s growing confidence in my judgment and vision. For their part, Brett and Lisa had spent a lifetime observing – and paying the price for – my swift rise through the officer ranks, and this seemed to them to be part and parcel of the Air Force game plan for my career. As for me, it was hugely gratifying on a personal and professional level. Given the highly unconventional path I had followed, going back to the days of the Olmsted Scholar selection, there were several reasons and realities that could have foreshortened my career. Foremost among them was my early
decision to diversify my exposure to a wide range of Air Force missions rather than to develop a specific major command identity, a strategy which was risky enough by itself. By compounding that commitment with the various confrontations I had had with my seniors, as recounted in these pages, I sporadically courted professional suicide. But, in the end, I had chosen to stay faithful to my instincts and my core values, and, in turn, I had benefited from the unswerving devotion of my family and the generous tolerance of my superiors. Finally, in testimony to my broad experience and the sage mentoring I had received from several senior officers along the way, I felt completely confident in my ability to perform at the four-star level, most especially as Commander-in-Chief of Strategic Air Command. I knew SAC’s organization, its history, missions, forces and infrastructure in exquisite detail. I could not have been better prepared to play a leading role in reshaping the command as it entered the brave new post-Cold War world.

The final steps toward full implementation of the new military strategy and the Base Force into the myriad processes and documents that encompass the DoD planning, programming and budgeting cycle consumed all of the remaining months of 1990, all of the following year, and finally ended in late January of 1992. My contribution to this lengthy process, in the closing weeks of my tenure as the Joint Staff J-5, was to incorporate all of the work that had been done throughout the defense establishment into a single, integrated document: the Chairman’s first post-Cold War “National Military Strategy.” From this strategic center of gravity would flow the broad array of supporting guidance and plans that would collectively prepare the nation for day-to-day global military engagement and a range of contingencies, including various theater wars. In the words of Dr. Jaffe:

Work on preparing a new NMS had proceeded while the Contingency Planning Guidance and Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan were being drafted. Over the months, General Butler had interwoven his ideas with the Chairman’s into a statement of the new strategic direction. He had expanded upon the strategic vision that he had submitted to General Powell the previous April. He had incorporated as well the ideas that he had first presented in his 1988 speech to the National War College, the new approach to warning that had emerged from the meetings of his roundtable, and the results of J-5 work on crisis response options. This exposition of the new strategy became the first two chapters of the 1991 Joint Military Net Assessment completed by the Joint
Despite the pain engendered in these few months, life had its joys as well. Our eighteen months on Generals’ Row at Bolling were well spent. My hours were long, and the travel demanding, but Dorene was at my side for many of my duties. As had been the case going all the way back to Craig AFB in 1963, her presence was instrumental in building relationships with my seniors. To wit, she first met Admiral Crowe in a receiving line at a soirée held shortly after my briefing to Secretary Carlucci on the Vander Schaaf Report. When she was introduced to the Chairman, he gave her a big hug and said with a grin, “You’re married to that God-damned lawyer,” to which she replied, “Tell me about it.” He roared, and from that point on his eyes lit up every time he saw her. It was the same story with General Powell, who opened his first conversation with her by asking if she knew how to pronounce his first name. Without hesitation, she replied, “It’s Colin with a long ‘o’ and my name is Dorene, spelled ‘e-n-e.’” He told me later, “I knew you were smart – but she is smarter.” No surprise there.

She was also at my side during the endless rounds of embassy parties we attended that were occasioned by my extensive network of contacts in an attaché world that included dozens of countries. We made several fast friends, some of whom enrich our lives to this day. Among the most valued were two colleagues from France whose stellar careers eventually elevated them to command of the French nuclear forces, one following the other, at the very time I took command of Strategic Air Command. Our strong personal relationships fostered a personal trust that, as I will recount shortly, provided me extraordinary and unprecedented visibility into French nuclear war planning – which proved to be sharply at odds with the U.S. nuclear war plan, the SIOP.

Three events on Bolling’s Generals’ Row bear special mention, the first being a real bummer. I had become a three-star on the first of August and, wanting to make our 28th wedding anniversary especially memorable, I hit on the idea of a romantic dinner, followed by a night’s stay at The Inn at Little Washington, nestled in the bucolic woods of Virginia, an hour’s drive from Bolling. One of the top ten eating establishments in the nation, The Inn required reservations six weeks in advance, which I had dutifully made. And then duty called. The Philippine defense chief, General Fidel Ramos, was coming to town, Admiral Crowe was his host, and the admiral wanted his new J-5 to serve as a co-host, to signal the importance of the visit. I bit my tongue, gave Dorene the bad news and, come August 25th, we trudged the hundred yards
from our quarters to the Bolling officers’ club for an interminable evening making small talk with a tired group of visitors over bland food in a stuffy room. As the night looked like it was drawing blessedly to a close, one of our guests rose to announce that his six-year-old daughter was now going to entertain the assemblage with song. He pulled a boom box from under his chair, clicked on a tape recording, and this little Shirley Temple impersonator launched into her repertoire. It was awful. Worse than awful. Unendingly awful. I could not look at Dorene, and Admiral Crowe would not look at us. He had somehow learned that this was our anniversary, and so was forced to endure our pain as well as his own. When the misery finally ended, we made the walk home in dead silence. What was there to say?

The other two occasions were decidedly more pleasant. The first was a surprise fiftieth birthday party I staged for Dorene with Joan Kohout’s help. Brett and his wife Lee flew in, as did several friends from across the nation. Dorene was taken completely unawares, and despite the fact that she arrived home the evening of the event a bit under the weather, her spirits quickly lifted and the affair was a great success. This kind of spontaneity is not my long suit, but I wanted to return the favor of my surprise fiftieth a year earlier at the Virginia townhouse. On that day, I had returned home from the Pentagon to be greeted by a house full of former members of the 13th Squadron from my cadet days. One among them, Bill Dickey, had aided Dorene as she spent untold hours surreptitiously contacting some one hundred people, getting an enthusiastic response, and creating a heartwarming evening I shall never forget.

The final event of note, on the first of October, 1990, turned out to be a dual celebration: planned was the public announcement of my promotion to four-star general and selection to become CINCSAC; happily coincident was the birth of our first granddaughter, Madison Anne. Dorene, John Hearn, and my J-5 staff outdid themselves in putting together a gathering that was simply overwhelming. Hundreds of friends came to spend time and to wish us well. In the days to come, I was inundated with letters of congratulation, many from people I had not seen or heard from going back to the earliest days of my military career. This was a moment to relish, to tuck away in the recesses of memory, to revisit during quiet reflection. Dorene and I felt so blessed, blanketed by the warmth of friends, thrilled to become grandparents, and to be on the threshold of new responsibilities we eagerly awaited. One other piece of news came that day, sad, but given the events to follow in the next three years, also tinged with irony. General Curtis LeMay, the father of SAC, whose masterful handiwork I would soon command and then transform, passed away just short of his eighty-fourth birthday.
In addition to pushing the new national military strategy toward closure, dealing with personal loss, enjoying an announced promotion, and celebrating the arrival of a granddaughter, my final sixteen weeks as J-5 were consumed by two other major responsibilities. The first was planning for a post-Cold War reorganization of the combatant commands. The second was helping to create an overall strategy for the U.S.-led political and military response to Iraq’s invasion and occupation of Kuwait and helping to build the broad coalition of nations needed to execute that strategy. The latter was by far the more urgent task. Some of the grinding, behind-the-scenes legwork required to bring twenty-nine nations together in a coalition with a mutually-acceptable agenda for defeating Iraq fell to the J-5 Directorate. I turned the details over to my talented staff, allowing me to focus on the strategy underlying our coalition response, in particular, establishing the coalition’s war termination objectives, which is to say, deciding how we would know when we had won.

This was a very contentious issue, focused on one overarching question: the fate of Saddam Hussein and his regime. On one side of the debate, led by Paul Wolfowitz, were those who wanted regime change, expelling Saddam Hussein and his clique from power as the core strategic objective of the military campaign. Brent Scowcroft, the Chairman, and I were opposed – none of us wanted any part in taking over the governance of Iraq. We wanted to avoid what General Powell would characterize a decade later, under diametrically-opposed circumstances, as the Pottery Barn rule: “If you break it, you own it.” In this first Gulf war, the first President Bush came down squarely on our side, laying out four clearly-limited goals for the collective international military response: restore the sovereignty of Kuwait; ensure regional stability, thereby preserving the reign of the House of Saud in Saudi Arabia; secure uninterrupted Western access to the region’s oil and gas reserves; and destroy Iraq’s stocks of and programs to build weapons of mass destruction.

Many have since argued, most particularly Paul Wolfowitz and Dick Cheney, that failing to overthrow Saddam Hussein was a strategic blunder. They protest too much. It simply was not feasible at the time, and for several reasons. The most cogent was that our Arab allies would not permit it. Whatever their dismay over the Iraqi President’s ill-advised invasion, which grew out of a dispute about drilling in the Rumaila oil field that underlies the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border, none of Saddam’s fellow leaders could politically tolerate the spectacle of a sister Arab state occupied and run by Western infidels. Bad blood from the colonial era runs deep in the region, made worse by the Arabs’ unshakeable belief that the United States is on the wrong side of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Thus, even with limited war aims, getting basing rights in the Persian
Gulf region was going to be difficult; in fact, it required months of delicate negotiations, and in some cases, access was not granted until the war began.

President Bush also clearly understood that Iraq was a nation in name only, its Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish communities held together only by Saddam Hussein’s brutal suppression of centuries-old animosities. Absent Saddam, there would be no competent authority to hold back a tidal wave of sectarian violence, and the President did not want America to assume this responsibility. In short, the goal was to restore the *status quo ante bellum*, but with two vital caveats: reduce Iraqi military forces by 50 percent, leaving enough capability to keep the Iranians and Syrians at bay; and, allow United Nations inspectors free rein to find and destroy every vestige of Iraqi programs to develop nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. That was, in my view, a very wise decision by a President steeped in the ways of war, intelligence, diplomacy, and bureaucracy. Thirteen years later, it would be overturned by his much less experienced son, who thereby sentenced his fellow Americans to a decade of relentless war, resulting in thousands of dead servicemen and women, tens of thousands of wounded, trillions of dollars of expenditures, and the loss of United States’ prestige – all for very little if any long-term gain.

In sharp contrast, I marvel still at the clarity of President George Herbert Walker Bush’s vision and his steady courage in managing the run-up to the first Gulf War. The American public and the Congress were strongly against the war. Pundits were forecasting tens of thousands of American casualties, the financial costs were predicted to compound the nation’s economic difficulties, the National Guard and Reserves would have to be called up in large numbers, and a significant fraction of the country’s commercial aviation would have to be diverted to the war effort during the busy Christmas season. But as he reviewed these and other costs laid out in a decision brief in November, he did not flinch. To the contrary, when he looked at the planning figure that some 250,000 U.S. troops would be needed to accomplish the war aims, he ordered the number doubled. This was not going to be a level playing field. He fully supported General Powell’s strategy of overwhelming force. I was relieved and delighted by the decision, which called to my mind General Patton’s famous quote, “War is not about dying for your country, it’s about making the other poor son-of-a-bitch die for his.” Amen to that. Get in, get out, and then contain Saddam Hussein for as long as it takes. We had been keeping that type of commitment in Europe and Korea for thirty-five years, ensuring peace and stability in parts of the world where stability is vital to our interests. It made perfect sense to me to take on the same obligation in the Gulf, for as long as necessary. Looking to the future, we could have sustained that containment with a
sufficiently low profile to placate our Arab friends, while continuing to build long-term presence and credibility in the critical Persian Gulf region.

With clear-cut coalition goals identified, the United States continued deployments through December to reinforce “Operation Desert Shield,” that is, to augment our initially outmanned units sent piecemeal to northern Saudi Arabia in the days following Saddam’s near-instant takeover of Kuwait. Desert Shield’s initial mission had been to block any further moves by Iraqi forces, while building up strength sufficient to push those forces back into Iraq. That coalition buildup south of the Kuwaiti border was possible because Saddam grossly miscalculated in not immediately extending his original invasion beyond Kuwait into the rich oil fields of Saudi Arabia. When he invaded Kuwait in early August, the U.S. had virtually no forces in the Gulf, nor did we have the ability to deploy to the region in large numbers in time to meet and defeat his forces. Those limitations, coupled with our inability to determine his intentions during the weeks preceding the invasion, and the hesitation this inability had caused in U.S. decision-making – all that – put a real-world exclamation point on the argument I had spent a year making in the meetings of the Roundtable on Warning. Further, it underscored my related contention that our forces had to be restructured into rapidly-deployable joint expeditionary force packages that could get to trouble spots in a hurry, providing demonstrable strength that would in the future deter just such aggression as this.

These were very tense times, the more so because we did not know the status of Saddam’s nuclear weapons program and therefore had to presume in our planning that he might have operational nuclear warheads. In my view, if that were the case, the most likely target would not be coalition forces, but Tel Aviv, especially if the Iraqi leader believed that we were coming after him and his regime. This, in turn, raised two very tricky and related questions: what would we do if Israel were struck with a nuclear weapon; and, perhaps more importantly, what would the Israelis do? After studying the first question at length, the answer was clear: U.S. nuclear retaliation would make no sense. A strike against an Iraqi population center was out of the question; it would be an ethical calamity. We were not at war with the Iraqi people, some of the holiest sites in the Muslim world are in Iraq, and we would alienate a billion Islamic faithful for all eternity. Nuclear attacks on Iraqi forces would be both fruitless – given the vast reaches of the country – and unnecessary. Having been given time to build up our far-superior conventional forces, there was no need for us to break the forty-five-year taboo against the use of nuclear weapons. Secretary Cheney looked at these conclusions, agreed, and directed that all the associated analysis be destroyed.
The answer to the question of what might be the Israeli response to a nuclear attack on their country was easy to imagine and chilling to contemplate. I had no doubt that such a response would be immediate and devastating. I got a very up-close-and-personal insight into the Israeli mind-set regarding their security soon after the air war began, an unforgettable moment I will describe shortly.

In the midst of this planning turmoil, I was wrestling with the other task the Chairman had given me: reviewing and possibly modifying the organization and areas of responsibility (AORs) of the ten United States combatant commands. This was closely related to overseeing the formulation of our national military strategy, and it was equally at the heart of my J-5 duties. My charge from General Powell was to propose a realignment of these institutions that would reconcile their scope and missions with the new military strategy and the smaller U.S. forces associated with the Base Force. That, of course, made perfect strategic sense. My challenge was the fact that the slightest dickering with the Unified Command Plan (UCP), the document that defined the combatant commanders’ roles, missions and AORs, was guaranteed to stir up a hornets’ nest. These were the family jewels, the functional and geographic turf that provided the basis for their existence, force allocations, budgets, and prestige. Moreover, the four-star billets authorized by the Congress for these ten commands were doled out with keen attention to long-standing service equities. For example, with one exception, the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. European Command (CINCEUR), who was also the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO forces in Europe (SACEUR), had always been an Army general; the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Command (CINCPAC) had, without exception, been a Navy admiral; and the Strategic Air Command had, of course, always been headed by an Air Force four-star.

I had first been in the middle of one of these turf fights when Admiral Crowe decided to flex a bit of his new Goldwater-Nichols Act muscle by proposing to move Pakistan from the Central Command’s AOR to that of the Pacific Command, which already was assigned responsibility for India and points east. At the time, the continuing tension between India and Pakistan argued, in Admiral Crowe’s mind, for having a single U.S. senior commander in charge of helping to keep them from each other’s throats. Things quickly got uglier than a Hollywood divorce. After weeks of take-no-prisoners debate in the Tank and end-runs to the Secretary of Defense and the Hill, the Chairman drew in his talons, bloodier and wiser for the effort. As the responsible Joint Staff directorate’s head, I suffered through much of the acrimony during that debate, so I was not looking forward to teeing up a proposal that would make
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the India-Pakistan imbroglio look like a playground spat by comparison.

But this was a different Chairman, and his charge to me was clear. Start with a clean sheet of paper, think out of the box, and imagine how we would have organized had global war with the Soviet Union not been our driving concern. Having taught U.S. Defense Policy at the Air Force Academy in 1972, I was familiar with the history of the Department of Defense, especially the Reorganization Act of 1958 that had established the unified and specified commands. Now, I set about revisiting that history in fine-grained detail, sending one of my action officers to the Joint Staff archives where he uncovered exactly the anecdote I needed to get my head straight on this complex puzzle. The 1958 Reorganization Act, in conjunction with the impending introduction of the Polaris fleet, the Navy’s first complement of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), triggered an intense debate within the Joint Chiefs of Staff about whether to unify command of the nascent fleet with the existing capabilities of Strategic Air Command. After long and inconclusive discussion, the Air Force Chief of Staff at the time, General Thomas D. White, formally proposed the creation of a new joint combatant command to be named the United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM). This unified organization would have responsibility for maintaining strategic nuclear deterrence vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, with command of Air Force bombers, land-based ICBMs, and what would become a 41-boat Polaris fleet. This eminently sensible idea foundered on service parochialism. While General White viewed it as moot whether the CINCSTRAT was Air Force, Navy or Army, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Arleigh Burke, was unalterably opposed to the STRATCOM concept regardless of its commander’s service – for what seemed to him equally sensible reasons having to do with what he termed “the principle of the integrated, balanced fleet.” Here was yet another battle in which service loyalties outweighed all other considerations.

The fight over this recommendation to merge the nation’s strategic nuclear forces under a single command and single commander was so contentious that it spilled over into the headlines and into the Congress. President Eisenhower, mindful of the bitter aftermath of the 1949 cancellation of the Navy’s supercarrier in favor of the Air Force B-36 bomber, wanted no part of this conflict, so he made an historic sidestep. Recognizing the urgent need for at least a joint targeting mechanism to integrate strikes from the three legs of the new triad of forces – ICBMs, SLBMs and bombers, the President directed the establishment of the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff. As the reader knows, this staff was based at Offutt, the home of Strategic Air Command, but reported directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington. Its director
would be CINCSAC, wearing a second, joint hat, and he would be assisted in that second task by a Navy three-star deputy. If that sounds convoluted, it was the absurd consequence of not doing the right thing – establishing a U.S. Strategic Command with the responsibility to direct all of America’s strategic nuclear forces and their targeting, headed by a four-star officer chosen alternately from the Air Force and the Navy. This was precisely the arrangement that would become the central element of my recommendations to Powell, together with a proposal to meld into STRATCOM the functions of the U.S. Space Command (SPACECOM), a relatively new unified command that had been created in 1985. This also was not a new concept; it had been proposed several times in the past, and another study had recently been mandated by the Goldwater-Nichols Act with a view toward better integrating offensive and defensive capabilities. I knew General Chain, the CINCSAC, had already embraced the construct. While the Colorado-based Space Command did not exist in General White’s day, its roots were in SAC, and in my view its responsibilities for strategic warning, which transferred to it from SAC, should not have moved at all.

With that piece in place, the rest of the puzzle – what to do with other commands: Atlantic Command, Pacific Command, European Command, Southern Command, Central Command, Forces Command (FORSCOM), North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and Special Operations Command (SOCOM) – fell into place. The key was General Powell’s Base Force’s focus on U.S. interests in the Atlantic region, a vast area that included Europe, and the Pacific region, another vast area that included much of Asia. All I needed to do was add a broader Western hemisphere focus to the mix and I had a clear vision for the new UCP: five unified commands in lieu of ten. In addition to merging SAC and SPACECOM into a new STRATCOM, I proposed creating an Americas Command with responsibility for the functions of NORAD and SOUTHCOM, folding Europe and Atlantic Commands into an expanded LANTCOM, merging Pacific and Central Commands into a sweeping new PACOM, and finally integrating FORSCOM and SOCOM into a new Contingency Command.

This was heady stuff, but the more I thought about it, the more logical it seemed to me. Working long hours with my action officers, I got enough meat on the bones of this skeleton to take it to General Powell, who signed on, lock and stock but not barrel. Selling this package in one piece was way beyond the art of the possible; its very existence was dicey at this point. On reflection, the Chairman decided that, to get an idea of what might be saleable in the months ahead, he wanted to vet it with the chiefs. He was now seized with the notion of achieving agreement on the Base Force and on some initial element of a
revised UCP at the same time. His solution was for me to brief him and the chiefs in Deep Executive Session in the Tank – no strap-hangers, no advance copy of the package, not even identification in advance of the subject that was to be discussed. This was a set-up, so I was glad to have a job waiting.

I knew this little challenge was going to make the Vander Schaaf Report briefing look like a day in Mr. Rogers’ neighborhood. The current crop of service chiefs was not what you might call a warm and fuzzy group, beginning with the crusty Marine Corps Commandant, General Al Gray, whose daily dress was battle fatigues, his constant companion a camouflaged cup into which he continually expectorated the residue of his ubiquitous “chaw.” The Army chief, General Carl Vuono, was still smarting mightily from the fact that General Powell had forced the Army to give up its tactical nuclear weapons, following a huge fight that had left lots of scars. The Navy chair was occupied by Admiral Frank Kelso, and in the Air Force Chief’s seat sat General Tony McPeak, who had replaced my mentor, General Mike Dugan – and therein lies a very sad tale which bears relating now.

I noted earlier that General Mike Dugan met with disaster in his well-intentioned campaign to mend Air Force relations with the Washington press corps. In fact, he was summarily fired and retired by the Secretary of Defense in November, 1990. I learned the astounding news from Dorene, who reached me in Germany on a trans-Atlantic call at six o’clock in the morning. There for an annual conference of NATO principals, I had been out of touch with the news for a day. Dorene’s call remedied that. “Quick,” she said, “turn on the television,” not “Good morning” or “How are you?” I pried my eyes open, groped for the remote, and clicked on the TV, which happened to be tuned to a news channel. There on the screen was the face of Defense Secretary Dick Cheney explaining to the world why he had just removed the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Michael Dugan. I was shocked, hardly believing the words pouring from the mouth of the Secretary, who was obviously steamed. It seems that during a long flight home in his executive airplane from a visit to the Persian Gulf, with three members of the press corps invited along to enjoy some face time with the new Air Force boss, General Dugan began thinking out loud about, among other topics, prospective targets for air attack in Iraq, to include President Saddam Hussein, his family, and his inner circle. Mouths gaped, pencils flew, and when the stories were published within hours after the plane touched down in Washington, General Dugan and his views were front-page news.

The repercussions were immediate and merciless. General Powell was furious and Secretary Cheney more so. The war plan for what became known as “Desert Storm” was still in draft stages, the strategic objectives were still being
developed, and targeting Baghdad was, of course, a sensitive matter in the Arab world. While we might eventually decide to take out Saddam Hussein, the implications of that action were enormous, given our tenuous standing in the region. Senior administration leaders, treading on these political egg shells, concluded that Dugan would have to be replaced, and the axe fell swiftly. Then, in from the wings was called none other than Mike’s rival for the post in the first place, General Tony McPeak, the Pacific Air Forces commander, whom I would see for the first time in his new job, sitting in the Tank listening to me pontificate about why Strategic Air Command needed to go away. Irony of ironies, when the day came for that to happen, he proved to be my strongest ally, but for the moment I was flying blind.

I did not talk publicly about the matter until a near-mutiny among my Air Force action officers on the Joint Staff over Mike’s treatment forced me to act. I called them together in my conference room, shut the door, went to the head of the table and took the stars off my uniform. I didn’t want my rank to get in the way of their understanding how I saw the matter as a fellow Air Force officer. I apprised them of my long friendship with General Dugan and his family, my respect for his leadership and accomplishments, and my conclusion that in simple terms, he had misjudged the prospective reaction to his comments. I told them I thought the firing was unnecessarily harsh. At the same time, I reminded them that Washington is a hardball town, that the President was under fire for an unpopular decision to go to war, and his inner circle was trying to protect his flanks. I closed by telling them that General Mike Dugan was a very tough guy, who never confused who he was with his role or his rank, and a man who would find other, constructive things to do in life. After listening to my strategic planner’s perspective about why I saw it this way, the group’s mood softened considerably.

And now, dear reader, back to the Tank and my blue-sky unified command reorganization briefing. I had, of course, walked the Chairman through my viewgraphs beforehand – all that is, but one, the second in the stack after the titillating cover chart that introduced the briefing: *Aligning the Unified Command Plan with the Base Force*. The minute those words appeared, the tension my interlocutors had brought into the room thickened ominously. I began my remarks by taking responsibility for the presentation, suggesting that the Chairman was simply humoring me in my J-5 hat as I tried to think through all of the implications of a post-Cold War world. If things went really badly from that point, at least I had provided General Powell a little cover, although this audience was savvy enough to know they wouldn’t be there listening to me if he had not been fairly intrigued by what was to come. Then I set the
stage by telling them that this conceptualization of new command arrangements was premised on two core assumptions: a greatly reduced Soviet threat and the likely consequence of draconian cuts in the defense budget – the same set of assumptions that had driven the creation of the Base Force construct, which they had already bought into, however reluctantly.

With that, I introduced the second viewgraph by alerting them that it would be a schematic of a major realignment of UCP command arrangements showing all of the new elements. That would set the stage for addressing each of the proposed changes one by one. By now, my audience was paying rapt attention; indeed, General Gray looked like he was ready to charge the podium. Even the Chairman winced when the chart went up. Sitting above a set of four boxes labeled from left to right, LANTCOM, PACOM, AMERICAS and CONTINGENCY, and connected to them by a set of lines that clearly signified their subordination, was a single large box entitled STRATCOM. Off to the side of that square, connected to it by a dotted line indicating an advisory function, was a small box labeled “Joint Chiefs of Staff.” Knowing that I had been approved in late summer to take charge of Strategic Air Command in January, the implication of the chart was obvious: I had transformed and elevated my position-in-waiting to that of ranking military authority in the U.S. armed forces.

Gray was the first to break the stunned silence. “God damn you, Butler, I bet you’re serious, aren’t you?” With that, the tension dissipated, General Powell gave me a nod, and I said, “Well, if you all think that’s too much, too soon, try this version.” From that point on, the Chiefs took the briefing in the spirit it was intended – a bit of strategic thinking in the face of wholesale change. And, as I will relate in the chapters to come, over a period of several years, key elements of this “outside the box” proposal have, in fact, been adopted. On the first of June, 1992, as the final CINCSAC, I would preside over the disestablishment of the Strategic Air Command and then, as the first CINCSTRAT, raise the flag of the new United States Strategic Command. More than a decade later, STRATCOM’s responsibilities would be further expanded by taking on all of the missions of the former U.S. Space Command, as well as cyber operations and global intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations. In 1999, the proposed Atlantic Command was created as the United States Joint Forces Command, with the role of leading the transformation of the U.S. military through experimentation and education and the training of officers for certain joint assignments. This mission was subsequently enlarged to include the task of identifying for the Chairman and the Secretary of Defense those service forces to be provided to the regional CINCs in response to specific contingencies, precisely one of the key jobs I had envisioned for what I had dubbed
Contingency Command. Finally, in 2002, a United States Northern Command was established with the critical role of homeland defense.

Obviously, the prospect of creating a modern-day STRATCOM was one of the factors that drove my commitment to be an agent of change when I reached my post as CINCSAC in January of 1991. A second was the progress in arms control across a number of fronts, but especially as it affected strategic nuclear weapons and systems. A signing date for the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) appeared to be within reach, a treaty that would require a reduction in the number of strategic nuclear warheads on each side’s deployed ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers to a combined total of 6,000 “accountable” weapons – the actual U.S. number was closer to 10,000, due to a “discounting rule” that treated bombers as if they carried a single weapon. This reduction was to be achieved within seven years after the treaty’s entry into force. This force level and schedule included several sub-limits and intermediate phases designed to achieve the new ceilings in an orderly and transparent way. As the Joint Staff J-5, I had been up to my ears in the START negotiating process, and I understood better than most that this train was not only moving fast, but was carrying more freight than just the very significant START cuts. This inexorable reality was lost on any number of agencies who were either not paying attention or were in denial.

A graphic case in point was the Department of Energy (DoE), whose duties include the production and maintenance of the nation’s arsenal of nuclear warheads. One of my enduring memories is of the morning I got a call to represent the Vice Chairman, who was traveling, at a critical meeting at DoE where a two-year-long study to chart the future of the nuclear weapons production complex would be unveiled. It had been kept under heavy wraps to avoid leaks, and therefore drew an audience that included all of the heavyweights, the three nuclear laboratory directors, the heads of reactor programs, managers of huge field installations, and so forth. The session was chaired by the Deputy Secretary of Energy, a political appointee who was overseeing the nuclear weapons production complex study for the Secretary. My seat was at the bottom of one leg of a huge U-shaped arrangement of tables, and I listened with bemusement as the briefing unfolded. To the delight of all in the room but me, the study director laid out a grandiose facilities-expansion roadmap, costing untold billions of dollars, doubling the capacity of America’s nuclear weapons complex. When he had finished, the Deputy Secretary went around the table for comments, starting on the side opposite me. Each respondent lauded the briefing with lip-smacking anticipation of what it would mean for his or her piece of the pie. When the ball got to me, I said, “Frankly, I don’t know what to
make of what I’ve heard. For the past several months, I’ve been conducting a study for General Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. That study recommends cutting our future weapons requirements by fifty percent, based on waning enmity between the United States and the Soviet Union. General Powell has signed off on that study, and I am certain the Secretary of Defense and the President will agree with that recommendation."

Dead silence ensued. No one moved. All eyes were now on me and the Deputy Secretary, who finally announced, “Obviously, this changes everything. This meeting is adjourned. General Butler, would you please join me in my office?” What followed was a lesson in Washington spin control. Rather than attacking me or my analysis, or wringing his bureaucratic hands, he simply asked if this were for real, which I assured him it was. Then he clapped his hands and said, “This has a terrific upside for the President. He will be able to take credit for a tremendous savings in the DoE budget. Thank you, general, I’ve got the ball.”

Success in yet another arms control venue also set the stage for affirming my conviction that my impending role as CINCSAC might be short-lived. In Paris on the 19th of November, 1991, the Conventional Forces in Europe, or CFE, Treaty was signed by the member nations of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. It committed the parties to unprecedented limitations on the numbers and stationing of conventional forces in an area from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains, the purpose being to reduce tensions by shrinking armaments and constraining the number of troops that could be present in a number of sub-zones across this vast area. The signing ceremony was hailed by the participants as marking the end of the Cold War, the first time such a claim had been made publicly by any, much less all, of these former adversary states. Since the Strategic Air Command was the quintessential child of the Cold War, it was clear to me that its mission was now effectively accomplished, calling for either a radical transformation of its charter or its replacement by a more relevant organization.

I had one final burr under my saddle. The insights I gained in overseeing the nuclear targeting studies under General Herres, strongly reinforced by our discovery of the little-known Blue Book during our trip to the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff in 1988, made me a man on a mission. One of the earliest stops on my new-guy agenda at Offutt would be the JSTPS morning staff meeting.

I got a small taste of the prevailing culture at my command-in-waiting during a brief visit with General Jack Chain, the man I would replace, who had invited me out for an orientation with him and key members of his staff. I flew out in mid-December, arrived on a snow-covered airfield, and was greeted at
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Base Operations by General Chain, who stood resplendent in his perfectly-tailored blue flight suit, topped off by a white silk scarf that beautifully complemented his splendid salt-and-pepper hair. His welcome was courteous but studiously aloof, correct but certainly not warm. Jack, a career-long fighter pilot until he became CINCSAC, was larger than life, his demeanor and warrior mentality very much akin to those of many of his predecessors in command of the Air Force’s strategic nuclear forces. He loved the good life, riding to the hounds and living large.

General Chain dropped me off at my guest suite in Quarters 13, a minute’s walk from the CINC’s residence three houses up the street. I freshened up and arrived at his door about five minutes before the appointed seven o’clock hour. My knock was answered by one of the house aides, a smiling, red-haired sergeant who served as a chef for the Chains. She bade me come in and I followed her into the large, well-equipped kitchen where we engaged in polite chit-chat until my hosts appeared in the doorway and ushered me forthwith to dinner. A rather awkward tension due to my early arrival eased over a lovely meal, after which the general and I repaired to the living room for serious conversation about the state of the command. After five years at the helm, he had a great deal to be proud of, having largely implemented the standards of facility maintenance and personal pride that he had learned as a protégé of General Bill Creech, former commander of the Air Force’s Tactical Air Command, and that I had promoted as the SAC Inspector General four years earlier. That said, he also had a tendency to go over the top, decreeing, for example, that no one in his organization who smoked or whose cholesterol scores exceeded specified levels could expect to be a commander. While those are laudable goals, to set these dictums as conditions of advancement generated discontent and even ridicule. I judged them minor flaws in an otherwise shiny record of accomplishment. I would soon learn that General Chain bequeathed me issues that were more serious and that caused me no end of grief before and after I took his chair as CINCSAC.

The first of those issues surfaced in a phone call on my return to Washington from the Air Force three-star who headed up the Communications Directorate on the Air Staff and was a good friend. A solid, taciturn officer of unimpeachable integrity, he wanted to unburden himself of a situation at SAC Headquarters that had come to his attention by virtue of a letter from a dismayed member of SAC’s communications staff. The writer complained that the one-star general in charge of the directorate was an adulterer and a liar who had girlfriends stashed around the country whom he visited using government airplanes on the pretext of giving speeches in the associated locales. My friend had made
General Chain aware of the allegation, and the general had told him to mind his own business. Hence, the call to me.

At that point, with charges of serious misconduct sitting in my lap, I felt I had no choice but to alert the Air Force Inspector General, who was none other than Lieutenant General Brad Hosmer, my former cadet squadron commander, now himself a three-star. When I relayed the information to Brad, I underscored that I wanted my sources held in strictest confidence given the sensitivities involved. Brad vowed he would honor my request, but then thought better of it and called General Chain, who went through the roof. General Chain’s first call was to the man who had called me, who later described it to me as a “highly unpleasant” conversation. General Chain’s next call, to me, was not much improved in tone. “General Butler, what are you doing in my business?” he asked curtly. Knowing instantly the subject, I replied, “General, given the circumstances, I would have to say this business affects both of us, as I am going to have to deal with it shortly. Good day.” That was the last conversation I had with Jack Chain, to include the frosty change of command ceremony that awaited us in January. To make matters worse, once in his chair, I would discover that General Chain had verified the misconduct charge and then had largely disregarded it.

With that unpleasantness on hold, my closing days as the Joint Staff J-5 were dominated by the impending war in the Persian Gulf. D-Day had been established as the 16th of January, U.S. time. My move was not scheduled until the 25th, so I was still the J-5 when hostilities commenced in earnest. But when the Operation Desert Storm air war kicked off, I was sitting not in a Pentagon war room, but in the living room of the guest quarters at Bolling. We had moved out of our quarters in order to get our goods on the road to Offutt. Dorene was at my side, a bit puzzled by my insistence that we be in front of the television precisely at seven o’clock watching CNN. Her answer came as the voice of the newscaster reporting from Baghdad went up an octave – the first U.S. cruise missile was passing overhead and the Iraqi air defense positions opened fire with a spectacular barrage. As the massive air campaign unfolded and the damage mounted over the following days, Saddam Hussein took the bold step of firing Scud short-range missiles into Israel, hoping to draw a response that would splinter the Arab nations from the U.S.-led coalition. The attacks sparked panic among the Israeli populace, leading the Israeli government to tee up just the reaction Baghdad had anticipated. This thrust me into the middle of one on the most intense and consequential conversations ever held between senior members of the U.S. and Israeli governments.

A call from Secretary Cheney’s office directed me to go there quickly, to
sit in as note-taker for a meeting to take place in the next few minutes. On arrival, I was ushered into the Secretary’s chamber by a side door, just before his visitor, a high-ranking Israeli official, entered through the main entrance. After cursory handshakes, the three of us sat down, and the visibly distressed spokesman went straight to the point. The Iraqi Scud attacks were an intolerable threat to Israel’s security, and, even as he spoke, a formation of fighter aircraft sat poised on the end of an Israeli runway awaiting for the launch order that would follow the conclusion of this “advisory meeting” – in other words, he was there to inform the U.S. government, not to ask its permission. There was no need to specify Israel’s target: it was likely to be Saddam Hussein, his family, and his inner circle.

Secretary Cheney listened dispassionately and then said in a voice as cold as Arctic ice, “Make no mistake, if you persist in this course of action you will greatly jeopardize the coalition, our troops, and our war aims, all of which serve your interests as well as ours. Therefore, I must tell you that what is at stake here is the special relationship between our two countries.”

Implicit was a dire threat: if you go ahead with this, don’t count on the U.S. to bail you out when you become the target of retaliation by your Arab neighbors. His interlocutor was completely taken aback by an answer he clearly did not expect. Secretary Cheney let him twist for a long, silent moment and then said, “On the other hand, we fully understand and appreciate your concern. Therefore, we are prepared to strip our most advanced Patriot missile defense batteries from our active units in the United States and to ship them to you by air, on our C-5 aircraft, beginning today.” The chagrined visitor realized he was being given a graceful exit from the strategic corner his government had painted him into, and he took the deal. With that, the meeting ended, and I returned to my office, marveling at Secretary Cheney’s steely performance. This was gravitas in action: commanding presence, unquestioned authority, and grim determination. The day would come when I would return to the Secretary’s office not as an innocent bystander but to suffer his wrath. But that is a story to come.

Here ends the saga of my eighteen months as the Director of Strategic Plans and Policy on the staff of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I had served two remarkable senior officers, great Americans both, who between them served to bridge an historic divide in the unfolding of our nation’s national security: the ending of the Cold War and the “new world order” unveiled in its aftermath. I was privileged to have been an actor in this drama and to have played a role in shaping the broad outlines of America’s response. I saw much of that emerging new world in travels, only partly chronicled here, that
prepared me for greater responsibilities to come. In countless hours of discussions during bilateral and multilateral meetings in dozens of countries, I made professional contacts and built relationships that would prove invaluable in the years ahead. On the home front, the credibility I had won with stalwarts whose ranks I would soon join as a peer enabled subsequent agreements that introduced pervasive change in the nation’s most powerful military arm.

The one great constant in my life amidst this turbulence was, as always, my family: Brett, by then a father and a businessman managing the Zest soap account for Procter and Gamble; Lisa, who brought with her to Washington over Christmas a Mr. Mike Herring, one year her junior at UCLA, smart as a whip, sandy-haired and freckled-faced, who won our hearts and would soon win our daughter’s hand; and Dorene, my rock and my one true love. She bore my frequent travel and preoccupation with endless patience, contributed immeasurably to my success by her gracious presence in the company of superiors and subordinates, generals and privates, ambassadors and attachés, princes and paupers. Watching her dazzling smile and damp eyes during my promotion ceremony to full general, I could hardly focus on the proceedings. The glitter of those four stars was far outshone by the love I felt for the woman I married when I was a second lieutenant and the two children who added such luster to our union.
The two-day road trip from Bolling to Offutt AFB was a welcome respite. Dorene and I needed to decompress from the hectic pace of the past four years and gather ourselves for what the future held in store. We spent several hours of road time on our first priority: memorizing the names and background of the SAC staff and their spouses. I did not plan to make any immediate changes, although Dorene and I had agreed that at some point we would bring in two trusted professionals introduced earlier, Lieutenant Colonel Bob Smith as Chief of Protocol and Colonel Tim Titus as my executive officer. The former position was still filled by Dorene Sherman, now with 20 years on the job. I would also leave Colonel Orin Godsey in the executive officer chair to provide continuity and advice as I got up to speed.

Artifice Alert. One of my most valued reviewers reminded me to point out to the lay reader that my shorthand employment of the personal possessive pronoun in the following two chapters could be misconstrued. When I write about “my staff, my headquarters, my airplane, my car,” and so forth, be assured that I am keenly aware that these resources were simply in my charge for the duration of my tenure as Commander-in-Chief, courtesy of the American taxpayer. Indeed, my four-star rank, as is true with every four- and three-star position, was itself temporary, linked to the associated responsibility as opposed to being a permanent elevation to that rank.

As I looked through the list of twenty generals and one admiral (the Navy three-star who was the Vice Director of the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff), many of the names were familiar to me, one irritatingly so — the one-star general whose philandering had led to the dust-up with General Chain. Resolving this issue would be my number-one concern, both in the name of good governance and to send the message that the rules of conduct had
changed. At the top of the senior officer list was my vice, a three-star officer whom I had met a few years earlier when he was involved in the arms control arena. He was quite a bit my senior in years, nearing retirement after four decades of service. I was very interested to see how this rather formal officer, a longtime SAC veteran, would fit with my leadership style and values for the brief time we would serve together. The other three-star about to be in my employ bore a familiar name: the aforementioned Vice Admiral Ron Eytchison who had been an Olmsted Scholar in Sao Paulo when I had been similarly occupied in Paris. Ron was a solid guy, but I suspected that, like all of his predecessors in his role as vice director of the JSTPS, he considered targeting to be his province and, therefore, that he did not expect much, if any, guidance from me. If that was his expectation, I intended that he be swiftly disabused of it. As for the other eighteen military members of the senior staff, I would let events take their course and make case-by-case judgments on whether to retain or replace them.

While sizing up my staff, my second priority was getting an immediate handle on SAC’s participation in the Gulf War. I knew our role in Operation Desert Storm to have been extensive in terms of sheer numbers and vital as regards missions, but I was not aware of how well the fleet of B-52, KC-135, and U-2 aircraft and crews were performing from day to day. I had no qualms about the refueling mission. The tankers’ daily fare was the same in peace and in war: get in front of a receiver and pass the gas. The U-2s, however, were in unfamiliar and inhospitable territory that was poorly surveyed and harsh on electronics. As for the bombers, SAC had not been in the conventional weapons delivery business since Vietnam, and I was very concerned about the crews’ bombing performance. The B-52s’ computer systems and training programs were optimized for low-level release of nuclear weapons, but the surface-to-air missile threat in the Gulf War had driven these venerable planes to very high altitudes.

Priority number three was to get my arms around the nuclear war plan (the SIOP). Its thousands of targets to be held at risk drove a requirement for over ten thousand strategic nuclear warheads. Delivering this massive stockpile was the whole point of having a huge force of land-based ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers carrying gravity bombs and air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs). These “delivery systems” were supported by an armada of aerial tankers, reconnaissance aircraft, and – for early warning, communications and navigation – military satellites linked to a host of commercially-maintained communication networks. Operating this vast array demanded an industrial complex of staggering proportions, a global network of bases, and a huge complement of headquarters and field units employing some 120,000
people. The SAC Headquarters staff alone numbered six thousand, a thousand of whom were intelligence analysts backed up by a large complement of air- and ground-based linguists and an army of fellow analysts in the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and elsewhere. SAC, which had been created in 1946, had accounted for a large fraction of the six trillion dollars expended on the U.S. nuclear weapons enterprise since its inception. By 1953 it had already commanded the bulk of the Air Force budget, which itself accounted for nearly half the entire defense budget. At the moment, some $40 billion in new strategic delivery platforms programs awaited my approval. That was not going to happen. I knew the Cold War was in its last days, and I was determined to help to scale back its nuclear component significantly.

That conviction was reinforced as we drove the last mile to the North Gate of Offutt. An array of shiny new office buildings lined the approaches to the base, all emblazoned with the names of defense-industry firms feeding at the strategic nuclear mission trough. One in particular caught my eye, a glass-faced structure that housed a local headquarters for a software company. What contracts were possibly so lucrative as to stimulate that level of investment? I would discover that the SIOP was at the heart of the matter and that the situation was even worse than I imagined,

The fourth marker I intended to lay down the first week as CINCSAC was that the mission, organization, size, basing, and arsenal of Strategic Air Command were going to change drastically over the coming year. That process would begin with me delivering a presentation to my senior staff on the new National Military Strategy, keying on my judgment that the Soviet Union was on the verge of collapse. That would come as a major shock for an organization long infused with the premise of a massive, implacably hostile and permanent Soviet threat. Whatever I might decide about revising the SIOP or determine about the performance of SAC forces in the Gulf War, I harbored no doubt that inculcating this new outlook would be, by far, the most challenging of my priorities. Changing the image of Russia from hostile to moderately adversarial or even benign would rock the foundations of the Strategic Air Command, whose warriors had helped man the ramparts of U.S. nuclear deterrence for nearly forty-five years. This would not be about just downsizing or moving boxes on an organizational chart; I was going for the cultural jugular of a storied military organization, and at that point, I was far from certain that the command could survive the emotional impact of such a fundamental transformation.

Priority five was to sit down with Mike Harper, the Chairman and CEO of ConAgra, one of the world’s largest food companies, and discuss my interaction with the Consultation Committee, which he headed. This group of prominent
Omaha business leaders was part of a heritage that went back to General Curtis LeMay’s days at Offutt. The base, which is actually located just outside Omaha’s city limits, in the small town of Bellevue, was in the early 1950s quite Spartan, as were its environs. General LeMay’s approach to building a world-class headquarters, besides spending a ton of federal money, was to lean on the business community for substantial additional support. Some two dozen of the wealthiest and most influential local leaders banded together and took responsibility for tasks such as acquiring and donating additional land, working with the Nebraska Congressional delegation to get housing built, weaving SAC personnel into the fabric of Omaha social life, and, over the years, spending large sums out of their own pockets to improve the quality of life of those assigned to the base. Mike Harper was one of only a handful of chairmen who had headed the Consultation Committee. He was a mover and shaker of the first order, and I soon discovered that our inaugural meeting stood even higher on his agenda than it did on mine.

The final priority was a round of base visits, beginning with Offutt itself, where we arrived in high spirits on January 24th. At the North Gate, the Security Police greeted us warmly, in welcome counterpoint to the frigid air and snow-blanketed grounds. A short and familiar drive led to our spacious visitors’ suite in Quarters 13, where we would spend two weeks as the CINC’s Quarters were freshened up. The following morning’s weather was cold, but no colder than the Chains’ greeting at the officers’ club, where we had gathered for a briefing on that day’s change of command ceremony, a briefing I knew by heart from managing two of those events during my days as the SAC IG. It was snowing hard, with a swirling wind, which meant the event would be held inside the huge hangar built to house the E-4B command and control aircraft, highly-modified 747s outfitted to serve as airborne operations centers for the National Command Authority (the President and Secretary of Defense) and for the Chairman of the JCS. One of SAC’s responsibilities was to ensure that one of the four aircraft in the nation’s E-4 fleet was on alert at all times, ready to undertake its wartime mission.

The JCS Chairman, General Powell, was out of pocket on this day, so the Vice Chairman, Admiral Dave Jeremiah, did the honors. The ritual unfolded with its familiar sounds and cadences in front of long rows of bleachers packed with dignitaries and other spectators. After the obligatory speeches, the change of command terminated with the passing of the SAC flag from General Chain to me. And then General Chain’s Retirement Ceremony began. Despite thirty-four years in uniform, I had not previously seen anything quite like what followed. Admiral Jeremiah delivered a gracious tribute to Judy and Jack Chain,
hung a medal on him, and then relinquished the podium. Jack gave a peroration that made no bones about his views on the Evil Empire, the essentiality of nuclear deterrence, and the preeminent role of Strategic Air Command.

Next followed the casing of his four-star flag, the customary pass-in-review of the troops, and what normally would have been a swift close to the event. Not this time. On some unspoken cue, a huge canvas cloth that had been hanging from the ceiling of the very large hangar and curtailing off one of its niches was drawn back to reveal Mike Harper’s prized Stearman biplane, a 1930s vintage, two-seat, open-cockpit beauty in mint condition. As I watched with growing trepidation, General Chain and Judy proceeded to don leather flight suits, boots, gloves, and World War I-style helmet and goggles, strapped into their seats, she in front, he in back, fired up the engine with a deafening roar, and, as the giant doors at the north end of the hangar rolled open, taxied out into the blowing snow and disappeared. Surely, I thought, they are going to taxi over to Base Operations, shut down, get out, and depart the premises. Then came the sound of the powerful radial engine being put through a magneto check, being advanced to full throttle, and slowly fading away as the Stearman mushed down the runway and into the air. “My God,” I whispered to Dorene, “my first official act here may be convening an accident board to investigate the death of my predecessor.”

With that bit of theater behind us, we were back in the car and off to the officers’ club for the welcoming reception. I now had in my hand the clunky cell phone that would be my constant companion for the next thirty-seven months, my link, when not in my office, quarters, or well-equipped aircraft, to the underground command post buried fifteen meters beneath the front lawn of SAC Headquarters. After two tours as a wing commander, I was more than used to carrying this “brick”; the difference this time was that in the event of a nuclear crisis the person on the other end of the line would be the President of the United States.

That prospective conversation was a function of the most important, most urgent, and surely most consequential role of the CINCSAC: principal nuclear advisor to the National Command Authority. Should the ultimate nightmare of a full-scale nuclear attack by the Soviet Union ever have materialized, SAC’s Commander-in-Chief had the responsibility to describe the response options to the President, solicit his decision, and transmit that order to the massive array of forces now poised for immediate launch. In monthly no-notice missile threat conferences, dubbed “Night Blue” and initiated by the Joint Staff, a typical scenario involved thousands of incoming Soviet thermonuclear warheads and played out with blinding speed. Given the roughly 30-minute flight of an
ICBM launched from the Soviet Union against the United States, by the time such an attack was detected and verified, the President would have about ten minutes to grasp the circumstances, listen to me run through the retaliatory options, and make a decision that could mean life or death for tens or hundreds of millions of people. Flight times were even shorter for SLBMs launched from Soviet ballistic missile submarines that may have crept closer to our shores.

During the months to follow, I would come to understand that no President had ever fully grasped the immense complexity of the nuclear war plan and its multiple response options. In every exercise during my three-year tenure, my conversation with the President’s stand-in (not once did the Commander-in-Chief himself participate!) came down to this: “General Butler, what is your recommendation?” If that was the outcome of an actual missile threat conference, the decision regarding the U.S. retaliatory nuclear strike would have been mine to make, an authority that should never have been the province of a mere mortal. Even the Creator would shudder at its consequences.

For the moment, however, as Dorene, Brett and Lisa and I greeted the senior staff and their spouses and much of the local political and business leadership during two hours in the receiving line at the reception, it was comforting to see so many familiar faces, especially so for Dorene, who had cultivated a wide circle of friends during my SAC IG tour. In fact, the first letter of congratulations from Omaha had been addressed to her, not to me. In it, Ed Owen, president of the Board of the Omaha Community Playhouse – one of the best and largest in the nation – invited her to resume her old post on the Board. When the guests finally departed the officers’ club, we were off to Quarters 13, this time chauffeured by my full-time driver, a young NCO named Curtis (I have searched high and low for his last name, to no avail) with broad shoulders and a smile to match. Awaiting us were the other two members of our personal staff, Sergeants Lynn Bader, the chef during my December visit, and John Hearn, who had followed us from D.C. His principal duties were to keep up the house and grounds and to manage my uniforms. The two seemed like a good fit, but only time would tell. The responsibility for their supervision fell to Dorene, who would be in their company much of every day.

As Dorene and I went about our pre-work routine the next day, snow was still falling. I had decided that my normal duty day would begin just before seven, with a five-minute ride to my office. Since I have always enjoyed breakfast, six-thirty found us in the kitchen, which opened onto the alleyway where Curtis would pick me up. As Dorene peered out into the gloom, she said, “Come look at this…” There stood Curtis, at ramrod attention by the right rear passenger door of the car, covered with snow. I stuck my head out the
back door and inquired as to why he had arrived so early and why in God’s name he was standing at attention in a blizzard. He replied that he was following standard operating procedure, at which point I told him to come inside, have a cup of coffee, and thaw out. After Dorene and I finally got him to relax a bit, I made a proposition. Since most destinations on base were within a few minutes of my office, I was content to drive myself. In light of his other duty tending the communications gear nestled in the trunk, he would do all of the off-base driving, but otherwise he was welcome to get another hour of sleep in the morning, to help with security duties around the headquarters, and simply to be on call if I needed to leave the base. This face-saving approach won his approval and spared me the discomfort of feeling like some Grand Poobah being driven a mile to work.

When Curtis discharged me for the first and last time at the entry to my headquarters, I was greeted by two unpleasant surprises. In the expansive foyer of the SAC Headquarters building, the archway leading to the hall beyond was emblazoned with the words, “War Is Our Profession, Peace Is Our Product.” This rather stilted mission statement was General Chain’s revision of SAC’s historic motto, “Peace is our Profession,” a motto that dated back to General LeMay’s tenure as CINCSAC. Dorene had pointed out this bastardized version at the gate the day we arrived, but I had assumed it was simply a temporary modification designed to put the spotlight on SAC’s conventional operations in the Gulf. Otherwise, it was completely antithetical to the hallowed mission of nuclear deterrence, namely, the prevention of nuclear war. Now I realized that it was designed to replace the older motto throughout the command. While I was contemplating that, a second realization dawned: the several people who had been transiting the lobby when I had walked in were now backed up at attention against the nearest wall. “What in Holy Hell,” I thought, “is going on?” It finally occurred to me that this had to do with the august presence of the CINC in their midst. Embarrassed, I asked them to go on about their business, saluted the two members of the SAC Elite Guard who greeted me as I passed their station, and, blood boiling, walked up the flight of stairs to my office. Although that style of leadership had been not uncommon to SAC over the years, it was definitely not my style.

I had forgotten how expansive is the suite of rooms, beautifully-appointed and teeming with support staff, that comprised the Command Section of SAC Headquarters. Here resided the CINC, his executive officer, secretary, aide-de-camp and personal protocol aide; the Vice CINC, his executive officer and secretary; the Chief of Staff, his executive officer and secretary; and a phalanx of administrative personnel managing a paper flow that churned like a river
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through this plush sanctuary. The hallway leading into the Command Section was lined with large portraits of my predecessors, storied men all, none more so than the late General Curtis LeMay, the legendary father of Strategic Air Command and, as the reader may recall, my table companion at the 1961 Air Force Academy Honor Squadron Banquet.

The approach to my office area was flanked by the large room that served as my conference area, by a second room reserved for Distinguished Visitor briefings, promotion ceremonies, and the like, and by the SAC Protocol Office, where Dorene Sherman presided over her superb staff. A bit further down the hall was the Senior Officer Dining Room, reserved for colonels and above, with a private eating area for the CINC, should he choose to take a meal there rather than in his office. All of this, of course, was just the tip of the headquarters iceberg; its three above-ground floors sat on a huge underground complex housing a vast intelligence operation, a command center, the JSTPS, and a host of other offices. It would take me several months to visit all of the six thousand residents in their work spaces and to assimilate the full scope of the responsibilities they handled. That was an essential prelude, of course, to deciding what would become of them. By the end of my tenure, over half of them would be gone.

That process of elimination began on day one, as I undertook my most urgent priority of evaluating my staff. The Vice CINC was waiting in my office when I arrived; I wanted him present as I received the several briefings most urgent to assuming my duties. When we finished, I asked him to fill me in on the brigadier general who had been using government aircraft to carry on a series of dalliances around the country – and whom I presumed had been found guilty of serious misconduct and dealt with accordingly. My Vice visibly stiffened. “What,” he replied, “do you want to know?” “Everything there is to know; most importantly, why is he still here?” The answer only darkened my already black mood on this matter. An in-house investigation had revealed evidence of substantial wrongdoing, the miscreant was chastised and the case was closed. Furious, I called in the agent assigned to my staff by the Office of Special Investigations and tasked him to conduct a second, full-blown investigation, which his wry smile told me he was only too glad to do. He was back in a week with an ironclad case of blatant, egregious misconduct. I called the offender to my office and confronted him with the findings, which he readily acknowledged. I then offered him the choice of facing a court-martial or immediate retirement. His papers were on my desk within the hour, and the news was all over my command in very short order.

Next, I asked my executive officer, Colonel Orin Godsey, to come in. Tongue
in cheek, I asked him to start by explaining to me why his desk was larger than mine. Orin paled and said that his was actually General LeMay’s desk, which he had inherited when General Chain opted for another style. Pleased to know this artifact was still at hand, I told him to switch the desks at the end of the day and, while on the subject, to have General LeMay’s portrait brought in from the hallway to hang above the couch on the wall opposite his desk. Unsaid, since I was about to do major surgery on my vaunted predecessor’s creation, I wanted a constant reminder of the extraordinary man who had built the world’s most formidable military organization. I returned the office décor to a close approximation of his era, replete with a large Mercator-projection world map on the wall behind my desk. Next, I asked Orin to explain what was with the “up against the wall” routine I had witnessed in the headquarters’ reception area. Puzzled by the question, he told me that had been the practice for as long as he could recall. “Well,” I said, “it ends right now. Your second task is to get the word out to this headquarters, and thence the entire command, that this will cease immediately. Please ask folks to just smile and say hello when we pass in the corridors, but otherwise just keep on about their business.” The look on Orin’s face told me it wasn’t going to be all that simple, and he was right.

Next stop was the morning staff meeting, where the agenda had not changed much since I had sat at the far end of the table as the SAC IG five years before. After a roundup of the past twenty-four hours’ significant events came a detailed review of strategic reconnaissance flights, with special focus on the sensitive U-2 missions. As I watched the several graphics, I was particularly struck by how many of these especially valuable assets were now dedicated to the Gulf War. Next, I took reports from each of the staff heads, following which I advised them that, over the next several weeks, I would be visiting their work areas. Each visit would start in my conference room with a detailed look at the mission and structure of the organization and bios of the principal division chiefs. Then we would walk through every nook and cranny in the headquarters and talk to as many folks as possible. Finally, I told them, “Beginning this week, every Saturday morning we will meet in Executive Session in this room, in casual dress, with coffee and rolls supplied by me, for a series of discussions on the future direction of the command. Plan on being here for three hours. The first Saturday round will be entirely my show.” Pained looks all around. The culture war was about to begin.

With that marker laid down, it was on to the “Underground,” as the buried SAC Command Center was commonly known, to begin my second priority: a long hard look at the operation of SAC forces deployed to support the Gulf War.
Uncommon Cause

The first-rate presentation was led by the DCS for Operations, Major General Hal Estes, a shiny two-star clearly destined for greater things. He was polished, thorough, and knew exactly where my interests lay. As I suspected, the tankers were doing an A-plus job in the most diverse and demanding scenario they had encountered since Vietnam. The U-2s were also proving indispensable, but were experiencing data-link difficulties because of technical issues related to the imprecise mapping of the region; however, those problems were manageable and were being fixed. In fact, we were on the verge of a breakthrough in supporting tactical, versus strategic, operations, with rapid collection and analysis that could be passed in near real-time to orbiting fighters ready to strike time-urgent targets. This was exciting stuff that we believed promised a high payoff in the cat-and-mouse game with Iraqi mobile Scud missile launchers. But then came the bombing results.

My fears proved well-founded; the several dozen B-52s in theater were having a devil of a time getting bombs on target – indeed, getting bombs anywhere near their targets. Tactically, that was wholly unacceptable, embarrassing, and, in terms of unintended collateral damage, dangerous. Moreover, I had a longer-term, bureaucratically-strategic need for the bombers to do well in the Gulf War: flickering in the back of my mind was a vision that the entire bomber fleet – B-52s, B-1s, and the stealthy B-2s then nearing production – would one day operate almost entirely in a conventional role. For that to come to fruition, those long-range platforms would have to meet a stern test of effectiveness in conventional combat, and that examination was already underway.

So when Hal Estes finished, I asked him to put together a “tiger team” of the best experts in the B-52 manufacturer’s stable, along with someone on active duty or retired who was expert in high-altitude bombing. I wanted them on an airplane to the Gulf tomorrow, to help solve the problem. Hal was cocked and ready for the tasking, and the team produced the solution within two weeks. The problem stemmed from three interrelated elements: the type of bombs being employed, known as banded, high-drag bombs; the high drop altitudes, which resulted in long fall times that exposed the bombs to significant wind effects; and, most importantly (and most incredibly), the fact that the computer algorithms being used had not been updated to account for those weapons being dropped from those altitudes. The last issue was readily fixed, and that fix had an immediate impact. Shortly, I had a request from the CINCCENT, General Schwarzkopf, to greatly increase the number of B-52s available in theater. I was eager to accommodate.

Priority number three, review of the SIOP or nuclear war plan, was on
top of my agenda for day two on the job. After my daily staff meeting, I took Admiral Eytchison by the arm and said I wanted to sit in on the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff’s daily staff meeting that I knew followed immediately thereafter. I am sure that was the last thing in the world he expected, never mind wanted. He pointed out that he had not yet put my desired “tour” of his work area together, but I explained this was a horse of a different color. I intended to spend a great deal of time with my joint targeting staff, so today I would just get comfortable with the typical daily agenda reviewed at the staff meeting and then give guidance on what I wanted over the longer term. We walked down the stairways and long corridors leading to the vast targeting complex. When we walked into the meeting room, all the chairs were filled by the division heads, with the exception of the seat at the head of the table, where I settled in. The puzzled faces staring back at me said it all.

Suspicion number one – that the real Director of JSTPS, the CINCSAC, had rarely, if ever, attended his staff’s daily morning meeting – was confirmed by the fact that no one had gone to the trouble of having one of the handsome walnut and bronze name plates arrayed around the table personalized for the new JSTPS Director. Suspicion two was equally validated by the incredulous stares when, at the end of the meeting, I conveyed my desire to examine the SIOP in detail, by which I meant that I intended to review every one of its thousands of targets individually. Quizzically, Ron asked, “Sir, you mean by category, such as airfields, submarine pens, and so forth?” “No, Ron,” said I, “every single target, beginning with the leadership category, then nuclear forces, then conventional forces, and finally the industrial base. We will devote an hour at a crack, for as long as it takes, starting next Monday.” With that rhetorical equivalent of a nuclear strike, I took my leave. The fallout, as it were, would go on for months. Much more to come.

My fifth priority jumped to the top of the stack the morning of my third day on the job, when my exec buzzed me on the intercom to say that Mike Harper, leader of the civilian Consultation Committee, was on his way in. He wasn’t kidding. The door opened and through it charged this giant of a man, who acted very much at home. “Hello again, General,” he said. “We need to talk.” As we eased into two of the comfortable chairs flanking my coffee table, Mike got right to the point. It was customary for each CINC to make his mark on the Consultation Committee relationship by tasking the group with a major undertaking, so I needed to come up with something soonest. Delighted, but a little dubious, I inquired as to the appropriate price tag on my personal project, to which Mike replied, “Try and keep it under a million dollars, but let me worry about that.” Whoa, Nellie, that was some serious money, even for this
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influential gang of twenty-four. “Give it some thought and call me next week. We need to get going on this.” With that he was up and out the door.

Such was my introduction to the extensive interaction that awaited me not just with the Consultation Committee, but with the city of Omaha and, in fact, with the entire state of Nebraska. This former way-station on the Missouri River is a far more sophisticated and affluent metropolis than is suggested by the caricature of a Midwest cow town. The city was home to six Fortune 500 companies, including the legendary Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway, which alone accounts for scores of millionaires, many of whose individual worth is counted in the hundreds of millions. Omaha also boasts a number of world-class activities, beginning with the aforementioned Omaha Community Playhouse and the Henry Doorly Zoo, the second-largest membership zoo in the nation, run by one of the world’s most-respected directors. Once Nebraska’s state capital, Omaha remains its business center, and the metropolitan area accounts for nearly half of the state’s population. This is a vibrant, dynamic city with a history of innovation, entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and per capita generosity unsurpassed in supporting causes ranging from large capital-intensive projects to the many social service organizations that tend to the less fortunate. And the economically-healthy region’s largest employer and generator of revenue is Offutt Air Force Base, whose prime role was at that point to support Strategic Air Command Headquarters. Together, the base and the headquarters accounted for annual local spending of hundreds of millions of dollars. No wonder, then, that SAC enjoyed overwhelming attention and support from the surrounding municipalities. We were a source not only of pride and prestige, but also of bread and butter.

As my first week wore on, the rigid routines and protocols I encountered at every turn increased my frustration. Most maddening was the “up against the wall routine,” which continued unabated. My appointed “fixer,” Colonel Godsey, pleaded for time, arguing that the habit was deeply ingrained and that people did not yet trust that I was serious. The turning point came on my first Friday morning, as I was returning from the weekly Command Center briefing in the Underground, which was devoted to a detailed run-down of the status of SAC forces and events in the Gulf. Moving through a long and rather dimly-lit corridor, with my entourage of flag officers and colonels strung out behind me, I spied a female lieutenant coming toward us. When we were about thirty feet from her, she slammed up against the wall. I immediately slammed up against the opposite wall, stopping my rank-heavy entourage in their tracks. And there we stood while the seconds ticked by. Puzzled that I had not yet passed her position, the young lady stole a glance in my direction, and our
eyes met. “Good morning, Lieutenant,” I said. “May I ask why you are standing against the wall?” “Sir,” came the reply, “I am waiting for you to pass.” “Well, then,” says I, “we are both in for a long wait, because I am not moving until you do; and oh, by the way, I don’t have a boss who will be looking for me.” With that, she unglued herself from the wall, did a right face, walked briskly by, smiled, and wished me, “Good morning, sir.” By nightfall the story had been told in every corner of my headquarters. No more up against the wall.

This little episode reinforced my determination to get out and about to let people see and hear me up close and personal. It was especially important to me to put my stamp on new folks joining my staff right from the get-go, so I put myself first on the agenda of the monthly Newcomers Orientation sessions run by the protocol shop. From that pulpit, I preached the same sermon time and time again. Rule One: Treat people with decency and respect; I am death on abusive behavior, ethnic slurs and sexual harassment. Rule Two: Military service is a public trust; I will not tolerate unethical conduct. Rule Three: Always do and say the right thing; my trust is your most priceless asset. Rule Four: Always do your best; the mission demands it, the nation deserves it, and I will be certain to reward it.

Come Saturday morning, my spirits were much improved, on four counts. First, folks had begun to greet me cordially rather than reacting to my presence like Marine recruits cowering under a drill sergeant. Second, while I had been standing on the porch of Quarters 16 at sunset on Thursday evening, surveying the vast field that flanked the roadway opposite Generals’ Row, a spark of inspiration kindled a vision for my response to Mike Harper’s challenge to come up with a project for his group. Third, my trusted collaborator Don Pettit, now wearing silver lieutenant colonel leaves, had reported for duty as my aide-de-camp. Finally, my one-man brain trust from the Joint Staff J-5, Brigadier General Bob Linhard, was also on board. Five months after I had rescued Bob from the White House, General Chain had hired him out from under me and put him in charge of a SAC air division. At the time, I had not been happy, but now I reaped a considerable benefit: since he was assigned to SAC, he was my resource to manage, and I needed him right now to serve as my DCS for Plans. Whether he liked it or not, Bob was going to be my go-to guy for reshaping Strategic Air Command. I would depend on every brain cell he could muster for the task that lay ahead. That challenge would begin with my fourth priority: a prolonged effort to get the SAC senior staff that I had inherited on board with my vision, one that would soon cost all of them their current jobs and half of them their careers to boot.

On Saturday morning, it was show time. In my inaugural Executive Session,
after a few minutes of coffee, rolls and chit-chat, I stationed myself at the large blackboard at the front of the conference room, then issued two ground rules for our discussions. First, nothing we said would leave the room. None of this conversation was to be shared with subordinates or, for that matter, with family. Rumor control was essential, especially when the focus would turn to force structure and dramatic organizational changes. Bob Linhard would keep the only set of notes, which would become the basis for a concept paper capturing what would hopefully become a unanimous vision for the future of SAC. Second, every person’s opinion mattered equally; rank was not a factor, which is why we were in civilian dress. Obviously, the final decision would be mine, but in the quest for consensus I needed to know what horse each man in the room was riding as we moved along this collective intellectual journey. My commitment to them was that at the end of the day, no matter how we came out, I would treat each of them fairly.

With that, I spent the next hour and a half laying out my worldview as originally captured in the “Tides, Trends and Tasks” lecture given to the National War College nearly three years earlier, affirmed by my travels to the Soviet Union, and refined in light of the dramatic changes that were still unfolding in the international security environment. Next, I traced the translation of the key points in that speech into the draft National Military Strategy that I had just left on the desk of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I underscored that General Powell and I were on exactly the same wavelength regarding the precipitous decline and likely demise of the Soviet empire and the subsequent effects that would sweep across the United States defense establishment. I then spelled out in some detail what I believed would be the impacts on Strategic Air Command: an acceleration of U.S.-Soviet arms control talks, with outcomes that would sharply reduce nuclear forces; a concomitant move to close bases, consolidate missions, and reduce the number of personnel; a demand to curtail or terminate the production of hugely expensive new strategic delivery systems such as the B-2 at four hundred million dollars a copy and the mobile ICBM that wags labeled “Midgetman”; a growing need to divert SAC’s bombers, tankers, and reconnaissance aircraft to support regional contingencies fought with conventional weapons having nothing to do with confronting Moscow; and, finally, an unavoidable decline of interest in, attention to, and support for the strategic nuclear deterrence mission.

Then I cut to the chase. Turning to the blackboard, I drew the outlines of a simple graph, labeling the vertical axis “Quantity,” and the horizontal axis “Time.” Next, starting in the upper left hand corner, I drew a downward-sloping arrow. “This,” I said, “represents the future of Strategic Air Command: fewer
dollars, bases, people, strategic delivery systems, warheads, and targets held at risk. That wrenching change of direction is going to happen on our watch. Therefore, I want you to know that I am absolutely determined that the fate of this storied organization, with its rich history of courage and accomplishment, will be determined by those of us in this room rather than being forced upon us by well-intended but uninitiated outsiders.”

The room was as still as a church when the minister calls the sinners forward. No one spoke or moved. I presumed they were still breathing, but there was no visible indication. Finally, Bob Linhard broke the silence. “Boss, why don’t I get all this down on paper as a first draft, circulate it to the audience, and they can make line-in and line-out comments as to where they might agree or disagree with your vision. The draft will be protected as ‘Eyes Only,’ and, if you concur, I am going to label it ‘Project Phoenix.’” Bob had just earned his paycheck for the year. The staff needed time to regroup, clear their heads, and come to grips with the haymaker I had just delivered. The more intuitive could already sense where this might be headed, although at this point my vision was about shrinking and repackaging SAC rather than putting it out of existence. That vision would, however, have a very short life. The tidal forces of change I had just described were gathering momentum even faster than I had imagined. A scrub of SAC’s performance in the Gulf War, my first budget hearing before the Congress, and the DoD announcement of plans to conduct another round of base closures soon led me to a new picture of SAC’s future.

Even with Major General Hal Estes’ fix to the B-52 weapons delivery software, one that worked wonders with the conventional-bombing accuracy problem, our contribution to Desert Storm had not really advanced much from what had been accomplished with conventional weapons during World War II: this was still, in effect, high-altitude area bombing with the Norden bombsight. The success stories of the first Gulf War had been the introduction of stealth technology and the precision that laser-guided munitions afforded to U.S. tactical strike aircraft such as the F-15E. Achieving that kind of precision was not then in the future of the SAC bomber force, and only the B-2 was stealthy. If as I believed the Soviet Union were truly on its last legs, the days of our nation supporting a large force of long-range bombers solely to carry out the decreasingly-central nuclear deterrent mission were numbered. Moreover, on the conventional side, the many limits of the B-52, the still-nagging maintenance problems of the controversial B-1, and the strictly nuclear roles accorded it and the B-2 made SAC’s long-range bomber strike capability either of marginal significance or irrelevant. To my mind, this state of affairs was intolerable. While I was no airpower zealot, I had long been convinced of the
enduring utility of a large, manned aerial platform capable of very long range and configured to deliver a variety of weapons, conventional and nuclear, with great accuracy, all while protected by a blanket of stealth technology. That the nation did not have – at least not yet.

My concern for the future of the bomber force intensified during the Command-wide “hot wash” of SAC’s performance in the Gulf War that I convened in mid-March of 1991. I wanted a report card from every commander, at wing and squadron level, on his unit’s performance in Desert Shield and Desert Storm, as measured by the detailed list of performance criteria my staff had compiled. I underscored my desire for objectivity; any grade above a “C” would have to be rigorously validated. This was the first test since Vietnam of SAC’s participation in a real-world military conflict, and I knew that after seventeen years most, if not all, of the lessons from that experience had been lost. Further, in order to make a case for upgrading the bomber fleet to meet the demands of modern-day warfare, I needed a no-baloney baseline of its capabilities and limitations in a major theater conventional war.

The assessment conference more than met my expectations. My field leaders rendered precise, no-nonsense judgments on their people and systems. After two days, I had a clear picture of SAC’s capabilities in conventional war: refueling: “A+”; reconnaissance (usually termed “recce”): “B-”; and bombing: “D,” although through no fault of the crews. The tanker force had done a sterling job, conducting tens of thousands of refuelings with near perfection, often under extremely demanding circumstances. The recce forces had continued to improve throughout the operations, as the electronic glitches were eliminated. The bomber guys had struggled heroically from start to finish, saddled with inadequate software, jury-rigged bombs, difficult maintenance conditions, grinding transit times, and poor defensive measures. Conversely, given the right targets and good protection, they proved their worth and potential time and again. The Iraqi ground forces deployed in Kuwait and Iraq had been petrified by B-52 carpet bombing, a thunderous storm of terror that struck without warning and spread devastation over a wide area. SAC units earned high praise from General Schwarzkopf for this contribution, and rightly so, but the handwriting was on the wall: fast-moving fighters equipped with precision-guided weapons would prevail over the current bomber force in future budget competitions. Worse, SAC’s history of reluctance to release or relinquish control of its forces to joint commanders for extended periods meant that those commanders would be of no help in a battle for dollars, a battle I now joined.

Congress’s approach to the annual defense budget legislation formally begins with testimony on strategy and force posture issues before the
appropriate defense committees. By law, that legislation originates in the House of Representatives, so my inaugural testimony as CINCSAC, in April, 1991, took place before the House Armed Services Committee, chaired by Congressman Les Aspin, with whom the reader will remember I had had some prior experience while in the J-5 chair. The session began at 8:00 a.m. and ran until just past noon, without a break, at least not for me. As usual, committee members wandered in and out with little respect for the witness or the process. While I would eventually have some give and take with each of them, the bulk of my dialogue was with Chairman Aspin. He led off by laying down a marker, leaning over the small podium that commands the chairman’s central position on the top tier of committee seats. Wagging his finger in my direction, he warned, “General Butler, you must understand the task of this committee and this Congress. We are faced with an enormous fiscal problem: the deficit is out of control, we’ve got to bring federal spending down, and the defense budget is going to have to share in this reduction. And in this committee, we will have to choose between funding strategic or conventional needs.”

Now it was my turn to lay down a marker. “Time out, Mr. Chairman, I need a clarification.” “You want to go off the record?” he replied. “No, sir, I am just a bit puzzled. If you want to have a discussion regarding strategic versus tactical needs, I am well prepared to address those. Or, if you want me to talk to nuclear versus conventional requirements, I would be happy to do that as well. What I don’t understand is your formulation of strategic versus conventional demands.” Mr. Aspin was completely nonplussed by my reply, as I knew he would be. I wanted to make a point that focused on my principal concern for the future of the bomber force. Since the dawn of the atomic age and the birth of SAC in the 1940s, the Air Force had confused itself and its global constituency by using the words “strategic” and “nuclear” interchangeably. That is why none of our allies in the Gulf War except Great Britain would permit B-52s to be stationed on their territory. They viewed “strategic bombers” as nuclear, and they did not want to risk becoming a target in the event, however unlikely, that a U.S.-Soviet war grew out of the hostilities in the Gulf region. Consequently, our bomber crews had to fly 24-hour round-trip sorties from Diego Garcia, the U.K’s tiny island possession in the middle of the Indian Ocean, rather than being able to operate out of Saudi Arabia, next door to Iraq.

“Mr. Chairman, suppose that at some time prior to the Gulf War, somewhere on the single main highway running from Baghdad to the Kuwait border, there had been a single bridge over a wide, deep river, a bridge that had to be crossed by the Iraqi army in order to conduct an invasion. Imagine also, that when the Iraqi army began to mobilize and deploy, the President of the
United States wanted to thwart the invasion and ordered his CENTCOM to do so. Now, with no meaningful forces stationed or deployed in the region, the CENTCOM commander would have only one timely response option: long-range air power. At that point, then, the outcome of the engagement would depend on the timeliness and accuracy of the strike. If SAC’s bombers dropped the bridge before the Iraqis crossed, that would be a strategic success. If they arrived a bit later and half the force had crossed, that would be a tactical victory. If the entire Iraqi ground force had passed over the bridge before it was dropped, the strike would be irrelevant.” I saw a flicker of understanding in the Chairman’s eye, but this appearance before him was not the place to give a longer seminar on military terminology. In addition, as the hearing proceeded, it became increasingly obvious to me that the B-2 buy was in very big trouble.

On the flight back to Offutt, I pulled out a legal pad and began to sketch out a new vision for the future of my command, one that set the stage for three momentous developments: first, ensuring that the entire fleet of B-52, B-1, and B-2 bombers could effectively deliver conventional weapons; second, conducting a wholesale reorganization of SAC in order to consolidate its four principal groups of combat systems – bombers, tankers, ICBMs and reconnaissance aircraft – into four organizations called numbered air forces (NAFs); and third, playing an appropriate role in the major realignment of the Air Force that would be necessitated following what I saw as an unavoidable, indeed desirable, event: the inactivation of Strategic Air Command.

My conceptual construct started with sketching the triangle shown on the left in Figure One, long known as the “nuclear Triad.” It depicts the United States’ arsenal of nuclear-capable forces: bombers, land-based ICBMs, and SSBNs. I then added to its right a new triad, whose legs corresponded to SAC’s conventional forces: Recce (reconnaissance) aircraft, Tankers, and Bombers. To emphasize the crucial linkage of the two triads, I drew a double-ended arrow connecting the two facing Bomber legs. That depiction, showing one triad of systems to carry out nuclear operations and a second to carry out conventional operations, makes sense if - and only if - the bombers that are common to both triads are able to “swing” between nuclear and conventional operations with seamless continuity. That was no small matter.
With the Twin Triad intellectual ground plowed, what remained was to convince my SAC staff, the JSTPS, the rest of the Air Force, the CJCS, the Secretary of Defense, and the White House to sign on not just to the vision, but also to the huge price tag that would come with bringing the bombers and their crews to that level of flexibility, a matter not only of training, but also of hardware, communications, control, and, ultimately, a matter of command.

In the event, the first two of those audiences proved the easy ones, although my key staff heads hedged their support until they saw the costs associated with making the B-1 and the B-2 capable of effectively employing conventional weapons. Happily, the B-1 issue was resolved by an “outside” factor: in order for the U.S. to meet one of the de facto sub-ceilings in the START Treaty, one of our three models of bombers had to be designated solely for conventional weapons delivery missions, then modified to preclude its use for nuclear weapons. For me, the B-1 was the obvious choice: given its continuing readiness problems, eliminating its nuclear capability would simplify the demands on its performance. My seniors bought that logic, so, with the B-52 long since dual-capable (though not yet a precision-delivery system), the one nut left to crack was to add conventional capability to the B-2. An initial step in that direction was a trip to the White House for a face-to-face meeting with the President’s National Security Advisor, retired Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, who had once been — among many other things — the acting head of the Air Force Academy Political Science Department. He told me bluntly that he thought my proposal would never sell on the Hill, but he added, “Lee, if you want to risk making a fool of yourself, go ahead, but don’t expect any support from here.” Good enough for me. Game on.

The Air Force Chief of Staff, General Tony McPeak, and the Secretary of the Air Force, Don Rice, bought into the Twin Triad and also accepted my plan for reorganizing SAC into four functionally-based NAFs. That accorded me
the privilege of bringing back two storied NAFs from the Air Force’s rich heritage. I realigned all of the bomber bases into the existing 8th Air Force, with headquarters at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana. The SAC tanker installations were consolidated under the existing 15th Air Force, headquartered at March AFB, California. The ICBM wings, many of which were tenants on bomber bases, were repackaged into the reactivated 20th Air Force, with headquarters at F.E. Warren AFB, near Cheyenne, Wyoming (the 20th had, under LeMay, orchestrated the strategic bombardment of Japan in World War II). Finally, I gathered the reconnaissance assets into the reactivated 2nd Air Force, headquartered at Beale AFB in northern California (its roots were also in World War II, and it had been an active NAF in SAC up to 1975). I presided over the two reactivation ceremonies, events that generated tremendous pride in the missile and recce communities, both of which had long operated in the shadows cast by the more visible and storied bomber and tanker forces. This reorganization had a number of additional advantages, including better focus by all on their training and operations, along with simplified oversight for me. Serendipitously, it also greatly facilitated the reassignment of SAC’s forces to their new homes in the Air Force-wide reorganization that was to follow.

Selling the Air Force leadership on the B-2 as a dual-capable platform and the reorganization of SAC inaugurated a long period of intense interaction with McPeak and Rice, neither of whom probably knew quite what to make of me. I had had no association with either of them, other than McPeak having attended my briefing on the Unified Command Plan. They, however, had a long history with each other. Indeed, Tony McPeak, rather than Mike Dugan, had been Rice’s preference to succeed Larry Welch as Chief of Staff. Their friendship was in many respects understandable; both were insular, highly intelligent, and keenly analytical.

Be that as it may, it was clear that both Tony and I had big agendas for the large organizations we headed, agendas that had to be carefully meshed in substance and timing over a very tight schedule. And, while we quickly found common ground on essential elements, one point of contention brought us head-to-head. Tony was a change-agent bent on reshaping the Air Force from top to bottom, and on that score my proposal to reorganize SAC resonated well. His plan for restructuring the service at the wing level, however, called for a change that he called, “One Wing, One Boss.” That meant, first, that the title “Base Commander,” identifying the senior officer who headed up a base’s housekeeping functions, would be eliminated, thereby avoiding confusion with the position of “Wing Commander,” reserved for the senior officer in charge of the primary operational mission housed on the base (and to whom
the aforementioned base commander reported). I had no problem with that clarification of the existing relationship between those two commanders, but Tony wanted to extend the “One Boss” concept to give each base’s “host” wing commander the authority also to command any other SAC operational wings that happened to be co-located on that base. That was incompatible with my new organizational scheme in which all missile wings were in the newly created 20th Air Force, headed by a two-star general, because some bases hosted two wings – a bomber wing and a missile wing. My purpose was to enhance not only operational focus, but also the standing of missileers vis-à-vis aviators. Intercontinental ballistic missiles were an anomaly in the airpower arena, and as the SAC IG I had seen firsthand the cultural divide, much like what I had witnessed at Griffiss between pilots and navigators/electronic warfare officers. Hence, the last thing in the world I wanted was for a missile wing to be subordinated to a host aircraft wing commander; from my perspective, that would send exactly the wrong message, as well as diluting the authority of the 20th Air Force commander. Conversely, Tony envisioned that by making the host commander a one-star general, this position would be perceived more as a broad oversight role, with the true operational focus at the next two levels down, i.e., a senior colonel “operations group” commander and most importantly, highly experienced lieutenant colonel squadron commanders.

While I understood what Tony was driving toward, and very much supported the elevation of host wing commanders to one-star rank, I knew in my own strategic operational heart that the missile community would never see it that way. This would be just another instance of subordinating missileers to pilots. To his credit, Tony did not try to overrule me by virtue of his seniority, not that I expected him to do so. I was, after all, not only the commander of SAC, an Air Force major command, but also the commander-in-chief of a combatant specified command, which meant that, in accord with the Unified Command Plan, my operational chain of command did not run through the Air Force, but instead went directly to the National Command Authority – the Secretary of Defense and the President. That gave me considerable license with respect to the organization, training and equipping of my forces, although I still needed agreement with, if not approval from, the Air Force Chief of Staff. After a courteous face-to-face, he accepted my position, clearing the way for what became a very productive relationship through the intensive 12-month effort required to reorganize the Air Force’s strategic, tactical and mobility forces.

Despite my best efforts as the Congressional hearing cycle continued, I could not find any traction with the Congress for my proposal to give the B-2 delivery capability for conventional as well as nuclear weapons. The additional
cost was unwelcome in the Congress, but the real sticking point was the members’ ingrained belief that the Air Force would never use so expensive an airplane in a conventional war, even though its stealth was supposed to obviate or at least greatly reduce its vulnerability to enemy air defenses. That the ultimate size of the B-2 force would probably not exceed the twenty-two aircraft already authorized was also becoming increasingly clear, a prospect that reinforced my determination not to let this small but extremely capable bomber fleet be restricted to sitting nuclear alert, deterring a war that I was persuaded was decreasingly in need of being deterred.

By the first of June, 1991, a simple but contradictory math problem had begun to trouble me. As I mulled over the forces washing across the command – the end of the Cold War, shrinking force levels, installations, people and dollars, the uncertain future of the bomber fleet – their sum kept coming up to... zero. Despite the logic of the Twin Triad, the potential of SAC’s systems could not be realized in their Cold War birthplace, steeped as it was in nuclear-oriented organization and thinking. Strategic Air Command had accomplished its core mission: nuclear attack from the Soviet Union had been deterred. The time had arrived to accept, indeed, celebrate that fortuitous outcome and inactivate SAC.

My conclusion that SAC had seen its day introduced a new, urgent, and extremely painful element into the Phoenix Study effort, which had been progressing in regular meetings over the previous three months. During that time, trust among the participants had been building, and Bob Linhard’s paper had been maturing, the Twin Triad construct had been fully accepted, and we were nearing consensus regarding the character of the new international security environment. At that point, I took Bob aside and dropped the final shoe: I was not going to wait for the study to be completed before recommending to the Pentagon and the White House that the Strategic Air Command be disestablished, that its components be realigned within the Air Force major command structure, and that it be replaced by a “United States Strategic Command,” a planning headquarters for all U.S. strategic nuclear forces, ICBMs, SLBMs and bombers – forces that USSTRATCOM would command only in wartime or while they were standing whatever nuclear alert was deemed appropriate for the time.

Bob swallowed hard and accepted my decision, asking only about the timing. I told him that General McPeak had just scheduled an Air Force four-star meeting at Maxwell AFB, Alabama, for the end of July, 1991, to conduct a service-wide assessment of lessons from the Gulf War – for which my homework was complete. My goal was to give the Chief and Secretary Rice a proposal
during the first week of July; if they approved my vision of inactivating SAC, I would ask them to consider putting the matter on the agenda for that meeting. I would draft the presentation over the next few days, give it to Bob for comment, and do a dry run with the SAC senior staff at the end of June in what would be the final Phoenix Project meeting. I thanked Bob for his superior work in managing this sensitive behind-the-scenes effort, and I advised him that if my proposal were to win approval up the line in Washington, he would have the lead in bringing it to fruition. Bob was clearly a player for a second star in my book, and I wanted to give him the visibility with the Chief and Secretary that was essential to keep him moving toward the four stars that would put him in line to take charge someday of the new United States Strategic Command. What better preparation for that position than to design the organization himself?

The briefing and associated cover letter I put together for the Chief and Secretary are now in the Air Force archives. Although I have contributed to an oral history on the major reorganization it triggered, I have never seen a written narrative of that process. And so, for my purposes, this memoir will have to suffice. I called McPeak on the morning of the 9th of July, 1991, and told him that I was sending him a slide presentation entitled “Lessons From The War.” It would arrive by courier that afternoon, marked “Eyes Only” for him and Secretary Rice. I told him that, although he had not asked to see in advance the briefings to be presented at the Maxwell meeting, he needed to know in advance what this one contained. My letter accompanying the package would spell out why, but the last bullet of the last slide summarized the major conclusion of my presentation: I would be recommending the inactivation of the Strategic Air Command. After the briefest of pauses, Tony said, “I will be most interested to see that.” Following is the text of my letter, slightly edited to remove jargon and certain asides:

Dear Chief:

Attached are the bottom-lines of my lessons-learned brief for the Maxwell session. As you will see, I’ve made a very blunt assessment of SAC’s conventional warfighting capabilities, both present and future. My basic conclusions concerning SAC’s performance are right up front on the first slide. The following three slides convey “lessons”/evidence to support my contention that if bombers/recce from this Command are to make a meaningful contribution to future Air Force conventional warfighting capabilities, then major restructuring (and, rethinking) is essential – within SAC and,
ultimately, within the Air Force. I lay that out in terms of several “core issues,” and then address what I am doing in SAC to bring our nuclear deterrence and conventional warfighting capabilities into balance.

However, in my view, Chief, the issue of SAC’s mission goes far beyond the command itself, especially with the creation of STRATCOM on the horizon. I believe you and I agree that in the presence of such a unified command, CINCSAC would become COMSAC, a provider of alert forces only, primarily ICBMs, and some bombers and tankers, to CINCSTRAT. And, like COMTAC today, he would also be a force provider to the regional warfighting CINCs. Which brings me to the crucial point of my Maxwell brief – the last bullet on the last slide. I think we need to begin planning now to simplify this arrangement. The point is, why have two Air Force commands doing essentially the same thing – putting air power at the disposal of a theater or Joint Task Force warfighter?

The Gulf War made that point in spades – the advantages of a single warlord, single-minded in purpose. The terms “strategic” and “tactical” were rendered essentially moot, as indeed I believe they have become. Perhaps targets are strategic or tactical in time/space value, but certainly not platforms or weapons, per se. My concern is that we have so stovepiped ourselves as between SAC and TAC that we are not only failing to get the potential out of present systems, but we are going down separate, uncoordinated paths toward the future. Munitions are a clear case in point, and that is why Mike Loh and I are building a common road map for air-to-ground weapons. Recce is an even more cogent example, in my opinion, and I have proposed to Mike that we build a concept for you and the Secretary to consider that would bring all of our Air Force surveillance, recce and targeting assets – U-2/TR-1, AWACS, JSTARS, RF-4s, and ground stations for space-based systems – under a single organizational entity. That’s a key reason I am standing up 2nd Air Force, Chief. To help facilitate just such a home. The Gulf War demonstrated a crying need to integrate our recce and targeting platforms. The troops did a splendid, ad-hoc job, but that’s no way to operate such high-value assets.

More to the point, I don’t care who “owns” 2nd Air Force. In
fact, I think that once up and running, we should put it under TAC. Which brings me back to my fundamental point – marrying SAC and TAC into a single Air Force command. Much like 2nd Air Force, part of my agenda in creating 20th Air Force, and making 8th Air Force and 15th Air Force bomber and tanker commands, respectively, is to pave the way toward gracefully standing up STRATCOM on the one hand, and a new single Air Force “force provider” major command on the other.

Chief, I realize that many will see this as unnecessary, and perhaps even heretical. However, in my view it is absolutely essential. If we can put Air Force Systems Command and Air Force Logistics Command together, then surely we can meld SAC and TAC – in fact, I think it will be a whole lot easier. More importantly, it takes a giant step toward a composite force. We’ll never achieve the doctrinal, tactical and employment innovations critical to the seamless application of air power if we don’t quit thinking of platforms like the “B”-2 as a bomber, or a “strategic” airplane, or, worse, a “nuclear/SIOP” machine. I’ve discussed this at length with Mike Loh and we agree in principle on the need for an “Operational Air Command” that subsumes TAC and SAC.

If you think all this is too soon or too bold for Maxwell, say so and I’ll refrain from even raising the issue. As it is, I only intend to plant a little seed, not dwell on the question. I know this isn’t the forum to reinvent the Air Force – or is it?

Tony called me back two days later to say that he and the Secretary wanted me to give the brief as written. They would reserve judgment on next steps until they gauged the reaction of the audience. I was elated. If these two seniors were willing to take the risk of exposing such a controversial proposal to this group of heavyweights, then they had effectively bought the concept. What I did not know was that they had already been down this conceptual road and had privately agreed to much of what I was proposing. Hence, my presentation would serve as a stalking horse, allowing them to gauge the reaction of the assembled four-stars.

Given the import of my presentation, Tony put me last on the agenda, which is what I had expected. It was a very long day, as each of my contemporaries went through lengthy narrations on the war. All in all, the Air Force had a great deal to be proud of in its performance in Desert Shield and Desert Storm. This distant conflict had put tremendous strain on people and equipment, had
required all manner of on-the-spot innovation, and had provided a showcase for a new generation of combat capabilities. Conversely, it also had highlighted any number of problems, the most daunting of which were now mine to address. As I rose to take the stage, my table companion, the commander of Air Force Space Command, General Chuck Horner, a confidant of McPeak who had been the joint air commander in the desert war, said “I hear you’re going to drop a bombshell.”

The following slides set forth the points that I presented for the next thirty minutes to this Air Force top-leadership audience, whose demeanor as the presentation unfolded evolved from curious to astonished:

FUNDAMENTAL CONCLUSIONS

- SAC is not organized, trained, equipped or tasked for sustained conventional operations
- Consequently, strong systemic biases, internal and external, constrain the deployment and employment of SAC forces
- This has profound implications for the future of the command and of the Air Force

INTERNAL CONSTRAINTS

- Mission focus: “strategic” means “nuclear”
- Organization/posture: geared to SIOP execution
- Division of roles: “conventional-only” bombers (B-1)
- Unit training: low altitude, one pass, nuc ops
- Unit manning: sized for alert vs sustained ops
- Deployment concept: piecemeal tasking, ad hoc units
- Logistics: inadequate spares, austere forward maintenance
- Munitions: dumb, high-drag bombs

EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS

- SAC capabilities / limitations not well understood
- Low deployment priority / reliance on “organic” lift (KC-135s)
- Poor visibility into prepositioned stocks
- Delayed access to forward basing
- Bomber ops very long range: low sortie rates / high crew ratio
OTHER CONSTRAINTS

- B-52 vulnerability limits employment options
- B-1B has only rudimentary conventional capability
- Virtually no relevant precision-guided munition capability
- Limited in-flight replanning capability
- Recce systems not designed to deploy
- Not part of theater command / control / comm / intel planning

CORE ISSUES

- SAC mission and organization
- Bomber force size, composition, capabilities
- Tanker utilization and apportionment
- Enhancement / integration of recce assets
- Munitions game plan
- Future organization of air force combat capability

WHAT SAC IS DOING

- Redefined mission: twin triad
- Reducing, realigning, reorganizing
- Revisiting NUWEP, national target base, SIOP, reserve stockpile, size of bomber alert force
- Reassessing bomber force structure, missions, weapons, and deployment concepts
- Redirecting training requirements, infrastructure
- Building weapon system / munitions / support roadmaps
- Working closely with TAC on munitions requirements and infrastructure

CORPORATE AIR FORCE ACTIONS

- Rethink role of “bomber” in conventional warfare
- Accelerate move to composite force ops based on family of platforms, munitions, and support
- Build deployment / employment capabilities based on explicit scenarios, campaigns and targets
- Integrate SAC / TAC recce assets into a NAF under TAC
- Move to integrate SAC bomber, tanker, recce assets with TAC forces in a single operational command
As I narrated the last two bullet points, I could see McPeak and Secretary Rice surveying the room, reading the body language. When I concluded by reemphasizing that, yes, I am proposing the inactivation of SAC, the Chief said, “Let’s go around the room, starting on my right.” I remained on stage to take questions, which proved to be remarkably few, the most pertinent coming from long-time friend Mike Loh, commander of the Tactical Air Command, which would be heavily impacted by my proposal. “Lee,” he asked, “are you concerned about the inevitable morale issues in SAC?” I said, “That’s what I get paid for; this is about doing what’s right.” With that, I returned to my seat whereupon Chuck Horner leaned over and whispered, “That would be a bombshell.”

As the conference ended, Tony took me aside and said, “I’ll be in touch shortly.” And he was, the following day, asking Mike Loh and me to join him in Washington to address next steps. I called Mike to ensure we were on the same page about the need to get on with the merger as fast as possible, a view that the Chief did not initially share, as there were a lot of tails on this pony. For example, having already sunk his teeth into the concept of an integrated “force provider” command, he now proposed to take it a step further. Rather than putting the tanker fleet in the reconstituted and expanded Tactical Air Command, Tony proposed aligning the tankers with the airlift fleet managed by Military Airlift Command (MAC), re-naming the expanded organization “Air Mobility Command.” Mike and I readily agreed to what we recognized as a brilliant stroke. With that wrinkle added, Tony’s take was that, given this venture’s scope and impact on the Air Force as a whole, implementing it would take two or three years. I insisted that we did not have the luxury of that kind of time: the budget train was on a track that would force our hand sooner rather than later; most important, we needed to get the Air Force structured to meet the challenge of the post-Cold War world, which would be marked by recurring regional conflicts. The Gulf War had clearly been fair warning of things to come.

After some debate, Tony agreed, and we quickly hammered out the process. SAC would take the lead, with Bob Linhard, who had accompanied me to the Pentagon, in charge of a SAC-TAC-MAC working group that would have two months to put together the basics of a newly-organized Air Force. I could see Bob grinning with anticipation: this was just the kind of conceptual work he thrived on, and he could hardly wait to get started.

During the return trip to Offutt I relaxed at the controls of our C-21 Learjet, while Bob was furiously at work in the passenger compartment. By the time we landed, he had the entire enterprise mapped, to include a provisional
command he would head to provide a home for the large staff to be put at his disposal. The following day, I tidied up the loose ends, first letting General Powell know that the Air Force leadership had bought into restructuring SAC, leaving open the question of whether it should remain as a shrunken Specified Command with day-to-day control only of those Air Force nuclear forces on alert, while retaining full responsibility for developing and possibly executing the SIOP and for nuclear crisis management. The alternative I saw and favored would be to go the additional mile, creating the United States Strategic Command (STRATCOM), a single, joint, unified combatant command headquarters with SIOP planning responsibilities, control of deterrent nuclear forces on alert, and, should nuclear war come, the reins of command over all nuclear forces, including the SSBNs. He told me that he would carry the water in Washington, with one caveat: I would have to sell the proposal to the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). Forward to the past: the 1960 issue of who commands nuclear-armed submarines on patrol was to be revisited, only this time I had a new take on how to allocate the new four-star billet that I intended to see created in the process of establishing STRATCOM.

I called the CNO, Admiral Frank Kelso, whom I had known only in passing, and asked to see him on an urgent matter, subject undisclosed. We met in his office in the Pentagon just a week after my session with McPeak, but by that point I had in my pocket a fleshed-out proposal on how to structure the new joint command. Having divined the subject of my visit, he listened courteously as I laid out the initiative. He had been present several months before as I – then as the J-5 – had briefed possible revisions to the Unified Command Plan, so he had the rudiments already in mind. Of course, he knew about the late 1950s experience, when the original proposal of a STRATCOM had foundered on the shoals of Navy intransigence. Anticipating his concerns, I laid my cards on the table: command of a modern U.S. Strategic Command would rotate between the Air Force and the Navy, probably every three or four years, which was the usual period for a CINC to lead a combatant command. I would serve as the first CINCSTRAT, but only long enough to get the unit up on its sea legs. My Vice CINC would be a Navy three-star admiral, handpicked by the CNO, and he would fleet up as CINCSTRAT when my tenure ended.

With that I relinquished the floor to my host, who demonstrated that he was a whole different breed of Navy cat when it came to the prized ballistic missile submarine fleet. Frank was a career submariner, but in attack boats rather than SSBNs. He had also been Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Command (CINCLANT), and he had a keen appreciation for the role and utility of joint operations. He also understood that I had put skin in the game:
in order to get the rotation to the Navy started, I was prepared to leave active duty three years before my mandatory date of mid-1996 (thirty-five years from my officer commissioning in June 1961). That was immaterial to me. I knew that history would judge me by what I did in my position, not how long I was in it. Deal done. We rose, shook hands, he girded his loins, did battle with his submarine constituency, active and retired, and delivered signed-and-sealed Navy approval of STRATCOM to Colin Powell. Now all I had to do was go home, put Strategic Air Command into the history books, and establish United States Strategic Command.

Even though I had prepared my staff for the news, it still came like a thunderbolt: SAC was to go away, as would their positions and, for many who had grown up in the command, their careers. Once their present jobs were erased from the books, there would be no place to go, except for those few who, like Bob Linhard and me, would assume posts in the new STRATCOM. A case in point was my Vice CINC, Lieutenant General Leo Smith, who had replaced the retiring Don Aldridge on the first of June, 1991. I had gone to the Secretary of the Air Force, Don Rice, to make my personal bid for Leo, who had been serving as the Secretary’s Principal Deputy Assistant for Financial Management. I had known Leo for years, held him in the utmost respect, and was ready to fall on my sword to get him to my headquarters.

Leo was a Nebraska native, a SAC veteran with long and deep operational experience encompassing both B-52s and the Minuteman ICBM, a great leader of people who was usually the smartest guy in the room. I was going to be spending a lot of time on the road in the months ahead, and there was no one I would trust more to run the headquarters in my absence than Leo Smith. Testimony to his character and professionalism were the first words out of his mouth when I informed him privately about SAC’s fate. “Boss,” he said, “just tell me when you need for me to submit my request for retirement.” He understood instantly that he would be replaced by a Navy flag officer and wanted to spare me the painful task of having to ask him to cut short his brilliant career. No finer officer ever wore an Air Force uniform than Lieutenant General Leo W. Smith, II.

The same fate waited Vice Admiral Mike Colley, who had just replaced Ron Eytchison as the Vice Director of the JSTPS. Mike came to me from commanding the Pacific submarine fleet, and that alone made him an invaluable resource, but he would spend only two years in his new three-star rank before having to close his career. All in all, over the next twelve months I would personally conduct retirement ceremonies for half my senior staff. To a man, they departed with dignity and grace, and I am indebted to all of them for their
support and sacrifice.

At the August CINCs Conference, my fellow combatant commanders signed off on creating STRATCOM, with approval from Secretary Cheney and President Bush following in short order, along with the decision to make the announcement from the Oval Office. I was directed to develop an implementation plan by June, 1992, and by then I had been nominated as the first commander. The transformation of SAC also became the centerpiece of a broader package of unilateral initiatives the President wanted to make public in the same speech in order to signal growing trust in Gorbachev and accelerate the arms control process. The long, arduous START negotiations had produced a treaty that was signed by Presidents Bush and Gorbachev on the 31st of July, 1991, and President Bush did not want to lose any momentum in this vital forum. The White House decided to pull together and announce a series of adjustments and unilateral cuts in U.S. nuclear forces, and to challenge Gorbachev to match them. General Powell called and asked for my recommendations on such changes that might be made to SAC’s forces, which I was ready and eager to make: stand SAC’s bombers down from day-to-day nuclear alert, the immediate launch readiness that a portion of SAC’s bomber force had maintained since the mid-1950s, and retire the Minuteman II force of 450 single-warhead ICBMs immediately, rather than over the extended period permitted by the START Treaty. Both proposals squared with the initiatives being assembled by a small Joint Staff working group led by Brigadier General Gary Curtin – quite outside the usual and ponderous formal arms control process – which were finalized and approved with lightning speed. The President’s speech was scheduled for late September, which coincided with the annual convention of the Air Force Association, where General McPeak would unveil the reorganization plan the following day. Remarkably, none of this leaked, despite consultations with key allies and the participation of several Washington agencies.

The Chief invited all of the Air Force four-stars and their spouses to his quarters on Fort Myer for a celebratory dinner on the night of the President’s speech. I enjoyed a private moment of satisfaction as I listened to the declaration that Strategic Air Command would be replaced by United States Strategic Command, that its bombers would be taken completely off alert, and that an entire family of ICBMs would be removed from alert, to be immediately deactivated. Very quickly thereafter, President Gorbachev committed the Soviet Union to its own set of changes and reductions in its nuclear forces. This mutual undertaking became known as Presidential Nuclear Initiatives I (PNI I), signaling that another set of even more sweeping initiatives, PNI II, was in the offing.
If there was any doubt that the Cold War was over, hopefully these accelerating steps between the superpowers would put it to rest. Moreover, I was in the right place, bureaucratically and intellectually, to provide a powerful impetus to the continuing discussions on reducing U.S. and Soviet nuclear armaments. Despite the demands of the Gulf War, its aftermath, and my part in determining SAC’s ultimate fate, I had made good on my commitment to review the Single Integrated Operational Plan target-by-target over the past seven months. What I learned compounded the dismay I had felt during my days as the Joint Staff J-5. The work under way to comply with the policy changes Frank Miller had engineered graphically portrayed how badly the nuclear targeting process had been disconnected from national policy guidance, and indeed, common sense. By now, I had had a chance to reconnect with Frank and to assure him that henceforth he had unfettered access to me and to the JSTPS. I was also now deeply mindful of the tens of billions of dollars at stake in the existing and proposed additions to the arsenal of strategic delivery systems and nuclear warheads supporting the demands of the SIOP. Therefore, I began my own very personal and intensive scrub of the nuclear war plan quite apart from all the other work done or being done.

As a prelude to the history of my long, meticulous engagement with this most consequential of plans, it is essential that you, dear reader, understand the essence of the weapons allocated to the 12,000 targets comprising the plan I inherited. Bear with me as I first introduce the family of nuclear devices and their nomenclature, and then the more important “effects” that warrant the classification of nuclear devices as “weapons of mass destruction.”

The “family” of devices I refer to is in fact a mind-boggling array of warheads spawned by the genius of the nation’s leading nuclear physicists; designed in the national laboratories of Sandia, Los Alamos, and Lawrence Livermore; given life in the vast complex of manufacturing and maintenance facilities spread across the country; and for many years validated in more than a thousand nuclear weapon tests conducted in the atmosphere, below the seas, and underground. In the years since 1945, the United States has built nuclear weapons of several score basic designs, with dozens of variants. Each of those designs and variants had specific operational characteristics, the most widely-familiar being its equivalent explosive power, measured in thousands of tons (KT) or millions of tons (MT) of TNT. Nuclear bombs were initially designated as “Mark 1” through “Mark 27,” then “B28” and forward. Delivery means have included an astonishing array of systems, ranging from aircraft to missiles to artillery to the jeep-mounted (or even tripod-mounted) Davy Crockett, essentially a recoilless rifle whose nuclear round weighed less than
a hundred pounds. Bombers have been designed to carry a mix of bombs and air-launched missiles of varying ranges, while ICBMs and SLBMs carry one or more reentry vehicles (RVs), each enclosing a nuclear warhead. By the mid-70s, technology had advanced to the point that a missile coasting on its ballistic path through space after its final stage’s engine had shut down could eject its RVs sequentially, directing each toward a separate target. The advent of ICBMs and SLBMs carrying these multiple independently-targeted reentry vehicles (MIRVs) transformed the dynamic of the Cold War, dramatically increasing the number of nuclear warheads in the arsenals of the United States and the Soviet Union. By the late 1980s, each of the superpowers had on hand no less than 10,000 strategic nuclear weapons, and each had hundreds of ICBMs, SLBMs, and bombers to deliver them.

However impressive this vast array of weapons, their true significance of course lies in their effects, the totality of consequences that emanate from either splitting atoms, as in the case of “atom bombs,” or by fusing atoms in the thermonuclear devices, popularly termed “hydrogen bombs,” whose power is exponentially greater. In either case the ensuing nuclear explosion produces blast, heat, light, electromagnetic pulse, initial radiation, and the most pernicious effect, long-term radiation. Commonly called “fallout,” it can cause many times the casualties of all the others. In general, nuclear weapons are fused to explode at the optimum height for creating heat, blast, and fallout effects. Since virtually all of the weapons in modern arsenals derive their power from fusion reactions, I will largely focus on the magnitude of their associated effects.

### Effects

#### Heat and Light

In the first split second of a thermonuclear detonation, a nuclear furnace in the weapon’s warhead lights off, millions of hydrogen atoms fuse together, and a tiny amount of their mass is in that process converted into an enormous amount of concentrated energy. The massive fireballs we call stars are fueled by the same process. When that process is unleashed on earth, a fireball is also born, igniting in a blinding and burning flash, creating devastating shock waves as it grows with incredible rapidity and then rises high into the atmosphere, pulling with it prodigious amounts of earth and debris minced by its blast and heat and poisoned by its radiation.

This fusion reaction in a thermonuclear weapon – an H-bomb – does not happen spontaneously. It requires a “trigger” that creates, very briefly, cosmic pressures and temperatures in the millions of degrees. These extreme
conditions are achieved by splitting atoms in a device known as the “primary” – essentially, an atom bomb. The primary’s explosion produces a flood of X-rays that compresses a “secondary” containing the basic fusion fuel, usually a form of lithium deuteride. The implosion of the secondary results in the conversion of the lithium into a heavy isotope of hydrogen, called tritium. The tritium produced then fuses with the deuterium, which results in the production of large amounts of energy. As noted above, the fusion portion of this sequence is essentially what produces the heat and other forms of radiation emitted by a star such as our sun.

The result of this sequence, in addition to the blast effects described below, is a thermal wave of extremely high temperature: a ten-megaton weapon, for example, will ignite building material such as plywood at twelve miles. As regards living things, the thermal wave will cause the skin to char at twelve miles, second-degree burns at fifteen miles, and painful reddening at up to eighteen miles. In addition to these direct effects, a conflagration of secondary fires is created over several square miles, causing immense additional physical damage and human casualties.

**Blast**

Seconds after the explosion, the expansion of intensely hot gases at extremely high pressures creates a shock wave moving at speeds far in excess of a Category 5 hurricane or a tornado. Pressure rises sharply at the moving front and decreases sharply behind it, so the initial shock of outward “overpressure” is followed almost immediately by its reverse, sucking air and colossal amounts of material back toward the center of the explosion, greatly increasing the initial physical damage. With larger weapons, the overpressure is measured in thousands of pounds per square inch (psi); as a benchmark for the ensuing destruction, about 25 psi of overpressure is sufficient to break a pane of window glass.

The transmission of blast through the atmosphere differs from that through the ground. The air blast decays more rapidly than the ground blast, and therefore the latter propagates over a longer distance. Moreover, as the air blast initially outpaces the ground blast, it significantly compacts the earth beneath it, creating an additional effect called “air slap.” The resulting enhanced ground blast is similar to an earthquake, moving the ground laterally. Finally, very high wind speeds create dynamic pressures much higher than the momentary overpressure. Dynamic pressures up to 200 psi have been measured in atmospheric tests – that corresponds to wind speeds of over 2,000 miles per hour, which will utterly destroy most structures above the
ground. Depending on weapon yield, the immediate area of the blast will also become a very large crater, in some cases, over a mile in diameter.

**Initial Radiation**

Radiation released in the first minute after an explosion is highly lethal, causing widespread injuries through the propagation of “alpha” particles, positively charged nuclei of helium atoms that are relatively heavy and easily blocked; “beta” particles, negatively charged electrons that achieve greater penetration than alpha particles; “gamma” radiation of variable wavelengths and deadly penetrating power; and “neutrons,” neutrally charged, heavy particles. Free neutrons have high mass and great energy, destroying human cells on impact. Their collisions with other atoms in the atmosphere create additional gamma radiation.

**Fallout**

In a fission bomb, roughly ten percent of the energy released is in the form of radioactive fission products, providing the source for a torrent of poisonous fallout. In a ground-proximity explosion, as noted above, the fireball picks up a massive amount of material from the surface, some of which vaporizes, but most of which melts, producing a sea of molten particles on which the radioactive products from the explosion soon condense. This fireball rises as high as twelve miles into the atmosphere; as its ascent slows, increasing numbers of radioactive particles fall to the surface, ranging in size from several hundred microns down to very fine dust. The largest particles fall closest to the target, while the smallest ones, wind-borne, can travel hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of miles before falling, all while retaining very high levels of radiation.

The fallout reaching the surface in the first fifteen miles is referred to as “early”; the rest is “delayed.” The early fallout consists of more than 300 isotopes of 36 elements, one of the most deadly being Strontium 90, a “bone seeker” whose half-life is eighteen years. A study that found high levels of that isotope in the teeth of children born in the 1950s persuaded President Kennedy to sign the 1963 Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with the Soviet Union and the U.K., ending such tests in the atmosphere.

As more fallout arrives at the surface, the dose rate of radiation increases. The exact direction, distance and strength of a specific nuclear explosion’s fallout depend on a host of factors, but radiation from every such explosion spreads over thousands of square miles: within an hour after the explosion of a 10 MT weapon a 22,000-square-mile downwind area can receive radiation...
exceeding the safe limit of thirty “rads” per hour. Most fallout is invisible to the eye, detectable only by specialized devices. Thus, its effects can be greatly enhanced by inevitable and unseen transfer on clothes, vehicles, and animal fur – any mobile medium.

**Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP)**

Momentary, but very powerful, electromagnetic fields with a broad spectrum of frequencies are produced in the explosion. When that pulse comes in contact with cables or other conductors, it induces extremely high voltages and strong electric currents. EMP from a 10 MT bomb can destroy circuits out to nine miles and disrupt communications up to six times that far. In war planning, some types of weapons are targeted to explode at high altitude specifically to maximize these effects.

**Types of Weapons**

**Fission Bomb**

An “atom bomb” relies solely on fission for its effects and typically has a yield of a few tens of kilotons. For example, the weapon dropped on Hiroshima, on August 6th, 1945, dubbed “Little Boy,” had an estimated yield of only 12.5 KT, which proved sufficient to destroy two-thirds of the city’s 90,000 structures and to kill 70,000 of its 350,000 inhabitants immediately, another 70,000 over the subsequent five years. This type of weapon produces a great deal of initial and fallout radiation, which in turn creates a large area of lethal dosage.

**Fission-Fusion Bomb**

In this class of weapon, a fission reaction – essentially an atom bomb – is employed as a trigger to create the millions of degrees and the pressures required for fusion to occur, whether in hydrogen, deuterium or tritium. As described above, the energy released is exponentially greater than that produced by a fission reaction, producing proportionately greater blast and heat effects. Theoretically, there is no limit of the size of this type of “thermonuclear” weapon, which the United States tested up to fifteen megatons, and the Soviet Union to fifty megatons.

**Fission-Fusion-Fission Bomb**

The entire slate of nuclear effects can be enhanced by surrounding a fission-fusion bomb with a suitable fissionable material. The radiation produced by the explosion of the secondary will cause this material to undergo fission, resulting in additional yield and fallout.
Neutron Bomb

This is a variant of the Fission-Fusion weapon designed to create large amounts of radiation as opposed to blast and thermal effects.

Armed with this background, the reader can now deduce the essence of the nuclear weapons enterprise introduced in Chapter 23: the decades-long elaboration, mass fabrication, and deployment, poised on a knife-edge for immediate strike, of a weapon that unleashed the immense energy stored in the nuclei of atoms. Mankind was thereby ushered into an era of unprecedented destructiveness. Just over seven years after exploding the first atom bomb, the United States introduced the thermonuclear H-bomb, whose power astounded even its inventors and whose effects dwarfed those visited on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The arsenal of thermonuclear weapons that became my responsibility in 1991 numbered some ten thousand; the Soviets possessed about the same number. In the worst-case scenario of war initiation between the two superpowers – the scenario both sides considered most likely and that therefore was the focal point of their planning – these twenty thousand weapons would have been employed in a matter of hours. Neither side ever calculated, or even considered, the holistic effects of such a massive violation of the water, soil and air of our earthly home. What we now understand is that wholesale nuclear war would have made life as we know it unsustainable. We gambled our very existence on a bet whose risks were astronomical and whose odds were greater than we ever realized.

But, in January of 1991, when I became the Director of the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff, housed beneath the lawn of my headquarters building on Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha, Nebraska, my responsibility was not to muse on the fate of mankind, but rather to build a war plan that assigned targets to the ten thousand weapons in the United States’ nuclear arsenal. And with that, I take the reader back to my first meeting with my targeting staff, with me determined to learn every nut and bolt of their immensely complex task. The response of my deputy, Admiral Ron Eytchison, to my charge to begin with a review of Soviet leadership targets got my alarm flag snapping: “Sir,” he said, “it will take a day or two for the Defense Intelligence Agency analysts who do that work to get here from Washington.” I was taken completely aback. “Why in God’s name do we need DIA to do this work? Why isn’t that expertise resident in my staff?” I think Ron, too, would have preferred it that way, but that division of labor far predated his tenure. I suspected that no good had come of it.
The proof of that premonition came after the DIA analysts arrived – with the very first target we discussed, one of a regional subset of targets centered on Moscow. Per my instructions, each “aim point” we reviewed was depicted pictorially, along with a written description of its characteristics and function. Beyond that, I wanted to see the intelligence assessment of the target, particularly its importance in the particular category being studied, and finally the “strike parameters,” that is, the number of warheads allocated to the aim point and the type of delivery system or systems assigned to deliver them. As the first slide went up, the DIA briefer, who was clearly uncomfortable walking a four-star general through this level of detail, said plaintively, “Sir, I apologize, but we have found a problem with this target. There is a mistake in the computer code, which will be corrected.” Red Alert. “Captain,” I said, “how long has the code been in error, and what would have been the operational effect had the SIOP been executed?” Long silence. “Sir, the error has been there for at least the life of this eighteen-month planning cycle. The nature of the error is such that the target would not have been struck.” A supposedly vital target uncovered, the warhead allocated to it rendered irrelevant.

Matters got worse. In the days and weeks following, the worth of this unprecedentedly detailed review was proven time and again, and from several perspectives. Although coding errors turned out to be few, the review’s true value came from the discussion prompted by my questions, peeling back every layer of the targeting process until I was as expert as my staff. That allowed me to see with great clarity how its logic related to the guidance the President, the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided to SAC and to the JSTPS in the NUWEP and Annex “C” to the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan. Of the dozens of interesting issues that surfaced over months of dialogue, perhaps the most cogent was the planned attack on the ABM system protecting Moscow. The guidance specified that this set of radars and interceptor missiles was to be destroyed with certainty. In theory, their destruction would preserve the option of attacking the USSR’s capital directly, should that option ever be ordered by the President. As I now discovered, the consequences of the attack as planned by my targeting staff would have rendered that option irrelevant.

On the day the Moscow ABM target set came up for review, I was first introduced to a civilian contractor who had come in for the session. When I asked why an outside agency was necessary, the answer again sent warning flags flying. “Sir, the algorithm for this attack is so complicated that we contract it out.” Red Alert. Floor upon floor of main frame computers at the
disposal of my JSTPS, whose software maintenance cost tens of millions of dollars a year, and we are contracting out the derivation of an algorithm? “Let’s cut right to the chase,” I said. “Based on your computations, how many nuclear warheads are assigned to this target set?” The answer nearly knocked me out of my chair. Wholly incredulous, I asked, “In one attack?” Slight pause. “Well, of course, the warheads arrive sequentially, because they are timed for de-confliction.”

I could hardly believe what I was hearing. So many thermonuclear warheads would rain down on the periphery of Moscow that they would create a holocaust of destruction and radioactive debris whose effects were beyond calculation, locally or globally. Had I been more familiar with Strategic Air Command’s voluminous histories (specifically, with page 300 of the now declassified edition covering January-June, 1968), I would not have been caught off-guard—it describes accurately the robust scope of SAC’s attack planning against the Moscow ABM system, going back to its birth. Nor was Moscow unique; those readers who have enjoyed Colin Powell’s engaging memoir, My American Journey, may recall that in discussing his own epiphany regarding SIOP attack planning, it had been revealed to him that 40 warheads had been allocated to Kiev, the capital of Ukraine. Imagine, then, the scope of the attack on Moscow, where strategic targets were likely an order of magnitude greater.

The point here is that the planners believed these warhead numbers to be in accord with decades of guidance, that is, to destroy selected targets, such as the Moscow ABM system, with certainty, and I was determined to get to the bottom of the planning protocol that led to this scale of warhead allocation. My relentless questions finally revealed to me the quintessential disconnect between the targeting guidance issued by the most senior policy-makers in Washington and its interpretation by a targeting staff located half a country away. What was unknown in Washington was that the staff in Offutt was hostage to the rigid math of a damage assessment calculus that took into account solely the effects of blast from the assigned nuclear warheads. The reason for this highly circumscribed calculus seemed to make some sense from the standpoint that the other effects could not be gauged with any certainty, at least not in terms of their contribution to achieving the levels of assured destruction specified in the guidance. That said, in retrospect it seems inconceivable that this extremely narrow measure of damage assessment could have persisted for decades. This relates directly to what Frank Miller had uncovered and what I now saw in exquisitely painful detail. A woefully inadequate damage assessment formula had driven a requirements process that placed trillions of dollars
in demands on the American Treasury, measured in thousands of long-range bombers, missiles, submarines; the immense arsenal of nuclear weapons they deliver; the people required to operate, maintain and build them; and all of the logistics and fiscal tails that attach to the nuclear enterprise. In the process, one of the principal objectives of the NUWEP – to avoid “counter-value” targets if circumstances allowed, in the interest of finding a mutual bargain to limit damage – was rendered largely moot. Those targets, such as industrial complexes and cities per se, were in many cases doomed to suffer irrecoverable damage from the actual effects of weapons intended to damage only “leadership” or “counter-force” targets.

As the reader now understands after the foregoing tutorial on nuclear effects, attacks of this magnitude would have created fire storms of biblical proportions, intense short-term radiation that kills within hours or days, and longer-lived radioactive fallout, laden with the most deadly consequences imaginable for the planet and its inhabitants. Recall if you will the Chernobyl disaster. Compared with an all-out nuclear war between the superpowers, Chernobyl was merely a puff of minimally toxic air. Wholesale nuclear war would fling immeasurable quantities of radioactive material miles into the atmosphere, to be swept by the jet stream into every corner of the earth within days. Billions of people, animals, every living thing, unable to find adequate shelter or sustenance, would be condemned to perish under the most agonizing conditions imaginable. The best description I have read of the consequences of this unspeakable scenario lies in two words juxtaposed by Carl Sagan: “nuclear winter,” the end of life on earth as we know it. None of this was taken into account by the damage effectiveness equations that drove the nuclear war plan and all it commanded.

I have puzzled now for decades on how this incredible circumstance came to pass, this disparity between policy and execution. It stems in part, certainly, from irresponsible bureaucratic machinations, as well as the physical separation by half a continent of policymaking from the construction of the war plan. But these factors were embedded in a larger reality: the rapid expansion of weapons and delivery systems, the associated increase in the complexity of the attack, and the multiplying considerations that policymakers were thereby forced to take into account. Traditional wisdom and bureaucratic practice dictated that these myriad considerations and their implications be weighed in specialized agencies. While reasonable, that choice was freighted with risk, predicated on close and continuing coordination. Given the tenor of the times, and the enduring tension between civilian and military authority described by Frank Miller, the stage was instead set for ever more arcane internecine
power struggles over policy, resulting in a continuous erosion of control over an agency that, as a consequence, became virtually autonomous. In my estimation, there was a far better alternative, indeed, the one acceptable course. To strip away the complexity that drove the decision to separate execution authority, policy planning and targeting, imagine a far more simple circumstance. Suppose that the United States, more mindful of the effects, had elected to deploy but one nuclear weapon, albeit a thermonuclear device capable of vast destruction, to be employed only in extremis. Surely decisions with respect to the target, the timing and the delivery platform would have been made by the person with sole execution authority – the President. Given the enormity of the consequences, it is inconceivable to me that these crucial planning and operational choices would be made anywhere but in the Oval Office. If this is a reasonable judgment, surely it holds even more firmly as the number of weapons mounts and their holistic effects increase exponentially.

Once execution authority was divorced from the multiplicity of steps attending SIOP development, owing to the inexorable growth in complexity and to habitual divisions of responsibility for policy and war planning, the stage was set for a series of dismaying breakdowns. Picture, if you will, the process spelled out in foregoing chapters, one that begins in the White House, where the President’s National Security Council staffers write broad guidance from the Commander-in-Chief. This seminal document is passed to the Pentagon for increasingly detailed elaboration by the staffs of the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Even in these initial steps the division of labor has already taken a toll on the integrity of the process. I believe it is fair to state that however experienced or intelligent, none of the three aforementioned principals ever fully understood either the precise intent of the policy they promulgated, the assumptions and judgments upon which it was based, or the devastation it would wreak once given operational life in the nation’s nuclear war plans.

Next comes the most crucial and what the reader now understands to be the most flawed step in the process from the perspective of ensuring full understanding of and compliance with the intent of senior policy makers: transmission of policy guidance from the Pentagon to the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff. As Frank Miller made patently clear, on arrival the guidance was surreptitiously interpreted and further elaborated by target planners who required a much greater level of detail to parse tens of thousands of candidate targets, cull that list to some twelve thousand, undertake the hugely complicated task of analyzing individual targets, and ultimately assign weapons and delivery platforms against them.
Thus it was that we fell victim to a cascading series of missteps, driven by the visceral fear of an archenemy prepared to risk a nuclear holocaust. Once the fateful decisions were made that put policy and planning in different stovepipes, we reaped the bitter harvest of worst-case scenarios, extremely conservative damage assessment formulas, and a ceaseless demand for more weapons and delivery systems. To compound the folly, throughout the Cold War era, we maintained the wholly misguided belief that the vast nuclear weapons enterprise could be exquisitely managed.

As time wore on, based on my detailed understanding of what had and had not been intended by the policy guidance that I had helped formulate in my previous responsibilities on the Joint Staff, I made certain the new policy directives from the OSD were faithfully implemented, and introduced other on-the-spot changes to the targeting base and the attack plan based on my own intense personal review. As a result of these, the target base held at risk by the U.S. diminished dramatically, allowing not only the early retirement of the Minuteman II ballistic missile force, but also a drastic scaling back of the forty billion dollars of modernization programs for strategic delivery vehicles being proposed by the Air Force and Navy – and by SAC, prior to my arrival. By the time we had completed the detailed scrub of the target plan, I knew that that level of funding was not necessary. Assessing what I had heard from the Congress during the spring cycle of budget testimony told me it was also not likely.

For one thing, the Navy had already reduced from twenty-four to eighteen its planned buy of multi-billion-dollar Trident submarines. Looking ahead to the possibilities posed by the second round of U.S.-Soviet strategic arms reduction talks, then underway, I concluded that it was time for the Air Force to accept that the twenty-two B-2s already authorized and funded were all that would be built: four hundred million dollars a copy was too high a price to pay for any more. Moreover, the nation’s three nuclear laboratories, operated by the Department of Energy, needed to come to grips with the end of the Cold War and the consequent end of the largesse they had enjoyed since its start. Within those areas where I had decision authority or was the principal stakeholder with respect to program decisions made in Washington, I was about to bring down the fiscal hammer on such Cold War spending, whether inside or outside the government.

I had been introduced to the United States military-industrial complex early in my career, through the auspices of the Air Force Association, whose annual tribute to the Air Force Academy’s best squadron was but one of the several yearly functions hosted by this influential group of airpower
enthusiasts. Perhaps the most notable regular gathering of the aerospace industry is at the annual Air Force Association Convention, held in September in Washington, D.C. In essence, the convention is a week of show, tell, and self-congratulation. Thousands of attendees troop through the exhibit halls of the convention, gawking at the gee-whiz displays and collecting souvenirs from the exhibitors. The other services and their industrial allies hold similar annual conventions in Washington. Each of these sprawling, several-day-long events features a midday luncheon and an evening banquet dedicated to speechifying by the top service leadership, recognition programs, and first-class entertainment. Over the years, my experience with and understanding of the AFA annual convention deepened. I became much more aware of the revolving door of senior military officers moving out of uniform and into the corridors of key defense industries, and the reverse migration of top industry executives coming into high-level positions in the Department of Defense and elsewhere in the government. This two-way flow is by no means illegal, nor need it be unethical, but it is fraught with opportunity for mutual nest-feathering, sweetheart deals, inflated requirements, and massive contracts.

After a lifetime in the nuclear business, I would see it all, the best and the worst: inventive genius and unbridled greed, superlative technology and shoddy manufacturing, brilliant foresight and head-in-the-sand denial of new realities. On the latter count, the 1991 crop of aerospace company chairmen and CEOs was about to get a vision test; I invited three dozen of the best, brightest, and most influential to SAC Headquarters for a conclave on the future of their businesses in the strategic nuclear arena.

They came from the four corners of the country, the leaders of Boeing, Lockheed, Northrop, Rockwell, General Dynamics, McDonnell Douglas, Raytheon, and a host of others, all of whose companies had over the course of four decades pocketed trillions of dollars in profits through manufacture of Air Force and Navy strategic nuclear hardware. Given their schedules, I made it a one-day session, starting at 10:00 a.m., to allow for same-day arrivals, until 4:00 p.m. As always, my protocol staff, now headed by the unflappable Bob Smith, rose to the challenge, handling these corporate titans with grace and ease.

I walked into the CINC’s briefing room at the stroke of 10:00, greeted an audience now electric with anticipation, and spent the next six hours walking my guests through the likely impact on their respective companies of the inactivation of Strategic Air Command and the establishment of United States Strategic Command; the draconian force structure and budget cuts necessitated by the end of the Cold War and a succession of strategic arms reductions.
agreements; and my own intention to push those cuts as far and as fast as possible in order to better deploy the remaining assets – human, physical, and monetary. I underscored that the picture I was painting was not mine alone, but was a composite view of the senior leadership of the Department of Defense and the President of the United States. Finally, I emphasized time and again that this was neither speculative nor long range; it was happening as I was speaking. From my point of view, this heads-up was a professional favor to facilitate the sorting-out process in the defense industrial sector that would inevitably follow this sweeping change in the nation’s security environment. What they did with the information was their business, but, in any event, the situation I had described would have a determining effect on the future of their business.

I was fascinated by their reactions. Some shook their heads in disbelief and denial, others looked like they had taken a bullet to the chest, and one got the picture perfectly. He asked if he could walk with me to my office after the meeting. There, he asked one question: “You are serious about all this, aren’t you, General?” “Serious as I can possibly be,” I replied. With that, he thanked me, returned to his corporate headquarters, restructured his company, and substantially spared it from what was to come. As for the rest, most suffered through one of the most painful shake-outs in the history of the defense industry, with wave after wave of mergers, acquisitions and just plain failures. In truth, I could feel their pain. The heralded military organization I commanded was going out of business in a manner I had helped engineer. Now my greatest test was to deal with General Mike Loh’s question regarding the “inevitable morale issues in the waning days of Strategic Air Command.”

In fact, I prepared assiduously for those issues. I made a commitment to talk in-person with every single man and woman in my worldwide organization. I wanted one hundred and twenty thousand people in SAC to hear from their commander’s lips why their lives were being turned upside down, some of their aspirations derailed, and, in many cases, their careers effectively terminated. Furthermore, I had governors and Congressional delegations to deal with, and dozens of anxious local communities, beginning with Bellevue and Omaha, Nebraska. City fathers would have to be informed, hands held, and – where possible – assurances given. Decades-long ties were about to be disrupted, longstanding designations were going by the wayside, and comfortable patterns of interaction would have to be recast. Worse, this upset would be coming on top of the ominous prospect of potential base closings arising from the Base Realignment and Closure process, which already had frayed nerves across the country. In short, this was extremely serious business,
ripe for unending speculation, rumor-mongering, and bitter recrimination; my
task was to keep all that to a minimum. Most important, I wanted to make
absolutely certain that my people understood that, from a SAC perspective, I
bore the lion’s share of the responsibility for this painful change, not General
McPeak or Air Force Secretary Rice. While these seniors had certainly fore-
seen the necessity of this reorganization, it was essential that the three of us
were on the same page. Therefore, if they wanted someone to blame, then
the bulls-eye was painted on my chest. In that task, I was eminently success-
ful. Within days after the announcement that SAC would be disestablished, my
executive officer informed me that T-shirts had appeared, proclaiming, “The
Butler Did It.” They sold like hotcakes.

The gloom spilled over into the surrounding area as the municipalities
around Offutt realized that the change from SAC to STRATCOM would entail
a significant cut in the size of my headquarters; my initial estimate was that
the staff would shrink by half, from six to three thousand people. At the same
time, I was certain that, with the sweeping redistribution of global military
missions attending the present and future rounds of base closings, it would
be only a matter of time before many vacated offices were reoccupied, with
the newcomers reflecting STRATCOM’s new roles and growing responsibilities.
Nonetheless, I invested a great deal of effort in talking to local mayors and
news outlets to tamp down rumors and talk up the significance of the new
joint headquarters.

My first session was with Mike Harper; my second, with the Consultation
Committee he headed. Over a long and riveting breakfast meeting, I took the
Committee members through a detailed recitation of the events leading up to
the announcement and of my long-range vision for STRATCOM as it assumed a
larger and larger role in the nation’s defense. I was certain the day would come
when CINCSTRAT would inherit the functions that were at that time assigned
to the U.S. Space Command, a natural transition back to Offutt, where SAC
had earlier been responsible for several of these missions. My bottom line was
that, because it would become the site of the headquarters of a prestigious
new joint combatant command whose missions were very likely to expand in
the coming years, Offutt Air Force Base had secured a future far brighter than
it would have faced as the post-Cold War Strategic Air Command became in-
creasingly irrelevant.

I knew by the end of the presentation that I had retained their confidence,
a trust that had grown steadily over the first eight months of my tenure as
CINCSAC. Dorene and I understood well from our earlier tour at Offutt the vital
importance of strong relations between the command’s leadership and that

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of the local civilian community. The tone of those relationships was always set from the top, and we raised the bar to an unprecedented level of interaction, aided and abetted by Mike Harper’s take-no-prisoners leadership. Case in point, the “project” he tasked me with to cement my standing with the Consultation Committee, and the eureka moment I alluded to earlier while looking out over the sweeping expanse that a hundred years earlier had been Fort Crook’s drill and parade ground. In recent years, this vast field, with an unsightly transformer yard occupying its northeast corner, had become home to an eclectic collection of activity spaces, ranging from tennis courts to softball diamonds. While functionally useful, the area was out of keeping with the stately brick buildings that surrounded it, including the exquisite SAC Chapel, whose stained glass windows depicted emblems from operational units going back to the earliest days of the command.

In a flash of inspiration, I asked the SAC Historian to bring me photographs of these grounds during the heyday of Fort Crook. I was elated with the elegance of what I saw. The project for the Consultation Committee lay right there in front of my eyes. We were going to work together to restore the beauty and grandeur of the original parade ground, including its magnificent flag pole, elegant gazebo, paired cannons, and imposing reviewing stand. Mike Harper loved the idea and, in typical fashion, laid out the game plan: “Price it, build a scale model, invite the group out to your conference room, talk them through the proposal, excuse yourself, and leave the rest to me.” And, that is just how it went down. The estimate came in just south of $500,000. All twenty-four committee members showed up for my fifteen-minute pitch, after which I dutifully left the room. Very soon thereafter, Mike walked into my office holding twenty-three checks, each in the amount of twenty thousand dollars. “We are one short,” he announced brusquely, “and I am changing out one of the committee members. We will have the last check by week’s end.” He wasn’t kidding. This was pay to play. My deepening relationship with Mike Harper also took me into the inner council of one of the nation’s unique civic organizations, which he asked me to join, and therein lies a stalwart Midwestern story worth telling.

In 1896, Omaha’s local economy had been brought to its knees. Barely forty years old, Omaha had earned its place as the eastern terminus of the transcontinental railroad and, later, as a hub for cattle shipment, but a depression that started in 1893 had sharply curtailed the trade that underlay its prosperity. After three years of frustration, a group of Omaha’s leading businessmen hit on a grand scheme: inaugurate an annual event that would draw to the city large crowds with pockets full of money. They sent an emissary off
to New Orleans who was empowered to buy the floats left over from that year’s Mardi Gras parade. He put them on flat cars and shipped them back to Omaha, where the floats were reconfigured to portray fanciful scenes celebrating harvest time. The initiative, now dubbed “Ak-sar-ben” (Nebraska spelled backwards – a rueful nod to an economy that was moving in reverse), was a great success, became a state-wide attraction, and was over the following years embellished with a number of features, including the coronation of a king and queen to preside over the festival.

As the annual event grew into an enterprise, its originators incorporated themselves into a management team they called the “Board of Governors,” which came to include the most powerful business leaders in the city, each of whom was seconded by a “Counselor” selected from the ranks of up-and-coming entrepreneurs. This mentoring arrangement ensured a succession of tightly-networked leaders whose influence soon had enormous reach. The cash flow from its growing operation permitted its governors to make a rather breathtaking leap into horse racing, a very popular and profitable business that generated a huge earnings stream. By mid-century, Aksarben was the leading charitable organization in the region, pouring millions into local communities to promote and sustain the agricultural economy, to pay for services such as volunteer firefighting, and to encourage education. Soon, the outlying towns receiving some of this largesse were supplying princesses and pages to serve on the Aksarben court, whose king, usually an outstanding businessman, and queen, typically the college-age daughter of yet another business leader, were always chosen from among the ranks of Omaha’s elite.

With some reservation – my lawyers were dubious about the matter – I accepted Mike’s invitation to become a “governor,” an association that, as I surmised, helped secure our ties to SAC’s Omaha support group. That said, for the most part that relationship was much more a product of Dorene’s involvement than mine. At the outset of our return to the area, Dorene was invited to rejoin the Omaha Community Playhouse Board of Directors; this was soon followed by other requests from the boards of the local Salvation Army, the Joslyn Museum and a stream of petitions from other organizations. These had to be considered within the limits imposed by the demands on her time stemming from my role as SAC Commander-in-Chief. Those included expected participation in base activities such as the Officers Wives Club as well as recurring visits accompanying me to the command’s far-flung installations in the U.S and overseas, during the course of which her schedule was at least as demanding as mine.

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Dorene also supervised two house aides, managed the renovation of our historic quarters, and juggled a social life that included at least one dinner party a week in our home, frequently more, and no end of obligatory affairs in Omaha. Entertaining and being entertained were integral to our roles as CINC and First Lady of SAC. That included the regular functions we hosted for my senior staff in Quarters 13, whose ground floor was well designed to accommodate gatherings of up to several dozen people. These in-house get-togethers were carefully designed and timed to help build the camaraderie and loyalty essential to the success of the Phoenix Project and to ease the stress of the impending inactivation of the command.

Dorene and I still enjoy quiet satisfaction from recalling the dinner parties and traditional holiday affairs in our own Quarters 16, where we fed thousands of official guests over three years. The private dinners were exquisite from start to finish: cocktails by the living-room fire, a superb menu served at a table magnificently set, the ten-foot-tall pocket doors rolled open at just the right moment to reveal a select group of musicians from the SAC band, and finally, at the stroke of ten o’clock, a quiet gathering on the porch as the plaintive notes of Taps rolled across the stunning expanse of the perfectly restored parade ground. Here is where we deepened relationships with the Consultation Committee, hosted my counterparts from nations around the globe, feted ambassadors and Washington dignitaries of every stripe. Our household aides, Lynn and her new sidekick, Technical Sergeant Steve Jennison (I had returned John Hearn to his Security Police roots to enhance his opportunity for promotion), prepared and served meals that would rival the menus of the best five-star kitchens. Those were magical times.

Because of the impact of SAC installations and operations on communities across the United States, the command had a well-established program of building ties to local political elites and opinion leaders by hosting them on visits to the SAC Headquarters. At least monthly, depending on my availability, groups of some two dozen citizens would be transported to Offutt aboard a KC-135 tanker, observing an air-to-air refueling en route, be accommodated in first-rate guest facilities, watch a spectacular multimedia presentation on the Strategic Air Command, spend an hour with me to get my take on world affairs, and then join Dorene and me at the officers’ club for a superb meal and concert by members of the SAC band. The feedback from these sessions was glowing, filled with high praise for the quality and professionalism of the young people they had seen in action. These visits were very special to us, and we made every effort to ensure they came off successfully.
As important as these visits were for maintaining healthy civic relations, more-enduring bonds were tended to during the course of stepping up to my final priority: our initial visits to SAC’s three dozen bases, many of which comprised the lifeblood of their local economies. This was a dynamic we understood well from my days as a wing commander at Mather in Sacramento and Dyess in Abilene, as well as my far-flung travels as SAC Inspector General, during which I had met many local community leaders and witnessed their abiding interest in the performance of “their base” during its annual inspection. Indeed, Dorene and I prepared for these visits with the same attention to detail that marked the run-up to an Operational Readiness Inspection. Further, there was not a wing commander worth his salt who did not understand that, despite the relaxed aura Dorene and I worked hard to generate during our two-day stay at his facility, he was undergoing just as important an evaluation as the one that resulted in his yearly IG report card. Dorene had as practiced an eye for detecting good leadership as I did. While I toured the primary mission elements – operations, maintenance, logistics – Dorene made the rounds of myriad support functions. At the end of each visit, we sat down and compared notes, assigned action to my staff for things that needed follow-up, and ran a balance sheet on the leadership team at the base.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of the role Dorene played in assisting me during these critical, face-to-face assessments of my command in action. Not only are her instincts for people finely tuned, her feel for proper organization and management is unexcelled, and her sense of justice is the equal of Judge Judy’s. Her rounds typically included schools, family support centers, chapels, housing areas, libraries, hospitals, childcare and fitness centers, the commissary and BX. Heaven help the local school that failed to give our military children proper attention, or that misused the government funds provided to mitigate the impact of those children on the system’s resources, or the hospital where the level of care failed to meet command standards, or a commissary with poorly-stocked shelves or sub-par service. Most importantly, she met with groups of spouses of all ranks and paid visits to local communities to gauge their support for the base. In short, I was about mission accomplishment, and Dorene was about quality of life. Between us, we could take the measure of a base, its leadership, and its facilities with great precision. Every visit included an evening function so we could commune with the leading local citizens and spend time at the podium conveying our appreciation for their support and addressing their questions and concerns about the future of the base.
We were always keenly interested to see how each of my wing commanders approached our visit. Some – those who hadn’t heard the message that we wanted things relaxed, informal, and unhurried – were stiff, uncomfortable, and seemingly determined to run us ragged. Most, however, particularly those with whom I had a prior relationship from my IG days, got it right. The frosty winter morning we stepped off the airplane at K. I. Sawyer AFB in Michigan’s snowy Upper Peninsula, Dorene was strapped into a dog sled and mushed to her first destination. At Malmstrom AFB, just outside Great Falls, Montana, she rode a narrow platform down into the claustrophobic space between a Minuteman III missile and its silo wall, to experience up close and personal a slice of the daily life of an ICBM maintenance specialist. In short order, her reputation as a caring, highly knowledgeable military spouse won respect throughout the Strategic Air Command, ensuring that the enthusiasm for her itinerary far exceeded what I might expect, and she surely had a lot more fun than I did. Her insistence on being called “Dorene” – “Mrs. Butler is my husband’s mother” – won instant trust.

We were equally interested in the nature of our reception by local communities, which ranged from minimal to highly orchestrated – at Plattsburgh, New York, the chairman of the city’s Military Affairs Committee was waiting with the wing commander when we arrived, as were their wives. Most local communities were very much engaged with their base and unstinting in its support, both as a matter of courtesy to the military and, of course, as a precept of enlightened self-interest. All lived in genuine fear of having their local facilities announced as candidates for closure or realignment. For some communities, that would be a death knell.

Overseas travel, to the Far East, Europe, and the occasional exotic stop like Cairo, Egypt, was uniquely demanding, always enthralling, and for the most part delightful. The Commander-in-Chief of SAC was allocated a dedicated Boeing 707 aircraft, outfitted for executive travel but still equipped as an aerial tanker. The plane was assigned a large crew of superb airmen, including top-notch communications specialists who kept me in constant reach of the National Command Authority (NCA); maintenance specialists who could fix virtually anything; first-rate stewards, a pair of terrific pilots, and an in-flight refueling specialist in the event we needed to revert to tanker status. In addition to full connectivity with the National Command Authority by satellite phone, we carried aboard the codes required for authentication of any execution order issued by the NCA.

In our private compartment, as had our predecessors, Dorene and I had each a comfortable, full-motion blue executive chair, my headrest stitched
with four white stars and in a thoughtful new touch, hers with four red roses. A closet area accommodated our hang-up clothes, neatly arranged by stop so that the required wardrobe could be readily unloaded and transported to our lodgings. A twin-bunk sleeping compartment completed the suite, along with a nicely equipped restroom. On a typical trip, we took with us one or two staff members whose expertise was related to the focus of the journey: my aide, Lieutenant Colonel Don Pettit; Bob Smith from Protocol; and, occasionally, one of our house aides or office staff. I made the takeoffs, descents and landings, always under the watchful eye of my right-seat pilot, a highly qualified instructor. Once Dorene and I got this high-flying army to relax its highly reserved demeanor, travel aboard Casey 01, the plane’s call sign in the air traffic control system, was simply a joy. After an initial unsuccessful effort, Dorene hit on a scheme to break down their wall of formality. As we came up the boarding stairs for our second trip, Dorene, Don, Bob, and I were all wearing Groucho Marx glasses, complete with mustaches. Mission accomplished.

Our second round of base visits would be not nearly so relaxed and positive: I would have to deliver the news that Strategic Air Command was going away as part of a wholesale reorganization of the United States Air Force. But first, I had one other constituency to bring along on the journey to reshape and ultimately inactivate the Strategic Air Command and create the U.S. Strategic Command: my Scientific Advisory Group, or SAG. This body of eminent scientists, nuclear strategists, high-ranking military and civilian leaders from the Air Force, Navy and business world, and most particularly the directors of the nation’s three nuclear research laboratories – Los Alamos, Sandia and Lawrence Livermore – was a longstanding fixture at SAC Headquarters. Within the nuclear weapons community, membership on the SAG was highly prestigious, and many of its members had served for more than a decade. Its ranks had included the likes of Edward Teller, father of the hydrogen bomb and advisor to many U.S. presidents, and a host of other luminaries from the fraternity of nuclear physicists who had given birth to the atomic age. We met twice yearly at my headquarters, a two-and-a-half-day session that covered topics ranging from nuclear weapons policy and strategy to highly technical issues having to do with stockpile maintenance, nuclear surety and weapons reliability. Given its membership, the bias of the SAG was obvious: nuclear weapons were the salvation of the Free World during the Cold War; their number, type and delivery systems needed to be constantly updated or replenished. SAC was the mother command, but the Navy’s strategic ballistic missile submarines with their complement of SLBMs were a critical partner to Air Force bombers and
land-based ICBMs. Notions about large reductions, de-alerting or, God forbid, abolition, were foolish, naïve, and downright dangerous, and the Commander-in-Chief of Strategic Air Command reigned supreme in the operational nuclear enterprise. They were in for a shock.

In my first meeting with the SAG, during the spring of 1991, I reprised my first presentation to my senior staff. I opened by laying out my world view and reviewing the events of the past twelve months that led to the new National Military Strategy drafted for General Powell. I also presented my assessment of SAC’s performance in the Gulf War, the looming cuts in the command’s forces and bases due to START, an anticipated post-Cold War drawdown and the base closure process, as well as the substantial cuts in the SIOP target base. Then I segued to my initial response to these tidal forces of change: the vision embodied in the Twin Triad, repackaging SAC’s forces into homogenous NAFs, rethinking the nuclear war plan, and canceling the requirement for an array of new programs, to include – pay attention, my friends from the laboratories – all of the associated nuclear warheads. As with my staff four months earlier, there followed an incredulous silence. Lunch, as you can imagine, was a bit painful. More to come on the aftermath.

As the foregoing narrative suggests, the first eight months of my tenure were devoted to setting the stage for the two and one-half years that followed. Once the decision to inactivate SAC was approved and announced, all of my energies were focused on explaining the rationale for this upheaval in the comfortable strategic landscape that had provided an intellectual and professional home for hundreds of thousands of residents, military and civilian, active and retired, for nearly half a century. I was fortunate to have Tony McPeak riding shotgun for me in this maelstrom. He was already on a path to recast the Air Force from top to bottom. As recorded earlier, the opening provided by my proposal to inactivate SAC and merge many of its units with those from TAC into a new command squared perfectly with his vision and supercharged his determination. From mid-1991 on, every dimension, nook, and corner of our service was recast: unit designations, historic emblems, depictions of rank, even the uniform – Tony virtually reinvented the Air Force. The only aspect of all that to spark major pushback was the redesign of the so-called dress blues, the day-to-day business suit of Air Force personnel, replete with jacket and tie, whose new design was widely criticized within the Air Force as too closely resembling the uniforms of commercial airline pilots. But dealing with the consequences of our joint vision to inactivate SAC while activating a new Air Combat Command showed the Chief at his best. I could not have cared less about the uniform at that point; I had more important water to carry with him.
to get STRATCOM established, and much bigger fish to fry in my own backyard.

Beginning the day after the announcements regarding the transformation from SAC to STRATCOM by the President and the Air Force Chief, I began the process of explaining the transition from a specified command to a joint unified combatant command. Messages and news clips went out from me and from my Public Affairs Office to every affected unit, community, state governor and Congressional delegation. I spoke directly to the bomber and tanker alert crews as I executed the President’s order to take them off alert. I began a series of presentations in SAC headquarters and on Offutt, where some of the greatest impacts would be felt, a briefing I would give over five hundred times in the weeks and months ahead. Because of the wide scope of SAC, I also needed to empower key intermediaries to speak for me until I could make good on my commitment to talk in-person to every man and woman in SAC. The challenge was to ensure that those who would speak for me were equipped intellectually and emotionally to do so accurately and, hopefully, with a modicum of conviction. Those surrogates were my wing and squadron commanders, the several hundred leaders whose job it now was to explain to their subordinates why their future was being so drastically transformed.

That task began with a SAC Commanders Conference the last week of September in 1991, where my numbered air force, air division, and wing leaders, and their spouses, joined Dorene and me for two days of down and dirty, get it off your chest, cry your eyes out, suck it up and get on with it – which Dorene had already done herself. She knew her role would never be the same. We had held our inaugural conference with this group of key constituents in the spring, triggered by the Gulf War review, and we therefore had some rapport with the shell-shocked crowd we now confronted. Husbands and wives would together hear my opening remarks about inactivating SAC, then have an opportunity to ask questions to their hearts’ content. I also brought in retired Major General Perry Smith, my former colleague in the Air Force Academy Political Science Department and in the Air Staff plans shop, to talk about implementing change. He had published an excellent book on this subject, and his engaging presentation helped set the stage for the difficult discussion that followed.

I told my audience, straight from the shoulder, that whatever angst they harbored, I needed them, husbands and wives alike, to step up to the plate and take an honest cut at helping their people to deal with the turmoil they would face in the coming months, and the years to follow. Over the next four weeks, I repeated this message to hundreds of squadron commanders, who flew in from every corner of SAC to hear the gospel of change. They were
the gut-level leaders I depended on to get the word out and make sure their folks understood the basics of what I would be talking with them about during my coming visits. By and large, I think they got it, and mostly bought it, even though they were legitimately concerned about their own careers in new major commands, Air Combat Command and Air Mobility Command, whose leaders knew nothing of their personal track records and potential for advancement.

And so, Dorene and I spent much of the interval from the first of November, 1991, through the end of May, 1992, on the road, base after base, same speech five or ten times per stop, with audiences whose moods ranged from intense engagement to thinly-veiled hostility. The most vitriolic response came from the retired community: they made no bones in their comments, public and private, about what they thought of me and my desecration of their beloved Strategic Air Command. The irony was that while they were kicking up verbal dust, the Soviet Union was collapsing before their eyes. After Boris Yeltsin, on perhaps his best day, thwarted the anti-Gorbachev coup attempt of August 1991, and after a series of the constituent republics of the USSR had declared independence, or were clearly moving toward it, President Gorbachev formally acknowledged on Christmas Day of 1991 that the Soviet Union had ceased to exist. The future that General Powell and I had envisioned was now a reality enshrined in the new U.S. National Military Strategy, and all that it engendered was now fully validated. The opening steps into the post-Cold War world were already being taken, and replacing SAC with STRATCOM was an essential element of the new strategy. The door was open for a strategic consolidation of platforms, a dramatic reduction of forces and alert levels, major cuts in new acquisition and modernization programs, and a bold, unilateral acceleration of arms control measures. The consequent relaxation in East-West tensions enhanced mutual trust to the degree that my formerly Soviet counterparts and I could engage in unprecedented interaction that would forever change the tenor of the nuclear era. And SAC, by proactively fading away rather than fighting to save a no-longer-urgent Cold War mission, went into the history books with its grandeur and dignity intact. All of that, of course, was lost on the critics.

During the few down days between trips, my attention was largely consumed by the demands of the sweeping organizational changes on the horizon. As I noted earlier, Brigadier General Bob Linhard had assumed the role of commander of USSTRATCOM (Provisional), a surrogate unit that was essential to bring on board and train the people who would form the core of the new joint headquarters. My number-one concern was to ensure that these newcomers felt welcome and wanted, especially the Navy contingent. They had
traditionally viewed SAC as a rival for the nuclear deterrence mission rather than an ally in it. While Bob handled the day-to-day details, I focused on the larger, symbol-driven culture so important to military professionals.

My first order of business was to personally redesign the iconic and ubiquitous SAC emblem that adorned a multitude of uniforms, aircraft, missiles, buildings, street signs, letterheads, coffee cups, mementos, even the floor at the entry of SAC Headquarters. The famous mailed fist clutching three lightning bolts and an olive branch, framed above and below by two cumulus clouds, all set against a sky-blue background on a classic heraldic shield, was a globally-recognized symbol of nuclear strength. To those who claimed it, it was as meaningful as SAC’s long-standing motto, “Peace is Our Profession.” Therefore, I set about with respect, love, and some trepidation to design an appropriately-modified replacement. Leaving the mailed fist with its lightning bolts and olive branch at the center, I rounded the shield to a perfect circle and rimmed it with a golden nautical hawser. Within the hawser’s compass, I added a wide blue band bearing the words “United States” and “Strategic Command” at 12 o’clock, at 6 o’clock, respectively, linking them at both 3 o’clock and 9 o’clock with four gold stars; I replaced the lower cloud with a cross-section of ocean harboring a notional SSBN. I added a notional strategic missile positioned to look as if it could have been launched from either the SSBN or an unseen adjacent land mass. Finally, I kept the upper cloud, highlighting a notional bomber against it. The skilled jeweler I found to do the prototype created a stunning finished product, exquisite in detail and jewel-like in quality. It was an immediate success. I also worked a deal with the Navy to add a Trident missile to the front lawn of my headquarters, on whose upper courtyard a Minuteman ICBM had long stood. Midway up the brick walk leading from the street to the main building, the Trident II/D5 SLBM was soon installed in a beautifully-designed, semi-circular court of honor. Within a short period, it became place of choice for all manner of naval ceremonies: promotions, awards, even weddings. Rather than attempt wholesale modification of the large mosaic of the SAC crest embedded in the entry floor, I had a team of artisans simply embellish it with the dates marking the command’s birth and inactivation: 1946 - 1992.

These and many other touches ranging from art work to menu items created a new ambiance, with grace notes of familiarity for the wave of new residents and comforting elements of continuity to help assuage the discomfort of the hundreds of SAC professionals who would remain on duty with STRATCOM. I knew it would take several successors before STRATCOM finally gelled, but I did my damnedest to jump-start the new culture.
On the substantive side of my agenda, I still had a lot of heavy lifting to do. Getting traction for the Twin Triad concept and selling the conversion of the B-2 bomber to a dual-capable platform were without question the most difficult of the burdens. While the Chief and Secretary Rice were on board in principle, the already-tight Air Force budget could not easily accommodate the diversion of the huge sums necessary to reconfigure the B-2, to procure a new inventory of precision-guided munitions, to support a higher ops tempo, to establish a higher crew ratio, and to lay in the additional spare parts to support increased numbers of conventional missions. Moreover, the number of aircraft to be bought had not been settled; the B-2 program was in big trouble with the Congress because of developmental problems and cost overruns. However, the value of stealth technology had been proven in Desert Storm, so I had a solid case to argue for the stealthy B-2’s large payload and global reach. With the growing potential for regional conflict, the case for even a small fleet of such aircraft was much stronger than simply trying to sell a handful of airplanes capable only of nuclear strike. I was also helped by the fact that B-2 manufacturer, Northrop, after hearing my world view, had gotten conventional religion. They had built a solid analytic base for a B-2 non-nuclear mission, hoping of course not only to save but increase the buy for their exotic new machine.

To force the issue, I asked McPeak to convene at Offutt a meeting of all of the key players, to address the most difficult questions and make an up-or-down decision on the future of the B-2, and, in effect, the entire bomber force. He agreed, and he brought Secretary Rice and his senior staff, joined by Mike Loh from TAC and his top people. The outcome was a great success: commitment to a “Bomber Road Map,” that with its companion “Munitions Road Map,” already in work, would shape the B-2, B-1 and B-52 fleet for a decade to come. Each of these uniquely capable airplanes would play its optimum combat role, with the B-2s and B-52s dual-capable and the B-1s as conventional weapons platforms. Because the Air Force now fully accepted the argument for retaining and reconfiguring even a small force of stealthy dual-capable B-2 bombers, the meeting also had set the stage for service leaders to acquiesce in a final B-2 buy of only twenty aircraft, rather than seventy-five being sought at that point. The Congress had made clear it simply would not support more than twenty (the original goal, agreed by the Air Force and the Reagan Administration in 1981, had been 120 B-2s).

Mike and I took on the challenge of making the case for that small force to the Congress, beginning with joint testimony to Congressman Jack Murtha’s Defense Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. Our dual
presentation was a first and had a strong impact on the members, as we argued for both the nuclear and conventional weapons delivery capability of the B-2. With twenty B-2s authorized and funded, a greatly reduced Russian threat, and the newly-evident utility of stealth technology, we carried the day and, ultimately, won the debate. One of my proudest days in uniform was standing on the ramp at Whiteman AFB, Missouri, to welcome the arrival of the first B-2 – piloted by my friend and colleague, Mike Loh. Giving up the pilot seat to my STRATCOM Air Force Component Commander was a small price to pay for seeing my vision for the B-2’s potential affirmed. Its subsequent performance in helping to restore order in a shattered Yugoslavia in 1999, and to topple Saddam Hussein in 2003, was proof positive.

There were other dramas to weather during the waning months of Strategic Air Command’s existence, such as the last of the annual Bombing and Navigation Competitions, for decades a highlight of SAC’s calendar. The May, 1992, event at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana, closed not only this chapter of a storied history, but an era of menacing confrontation between two nuclear adversaries: among the host of B-52 and B-1 bombers on the parking ramp were two Soviet Bear bombers and an AN-124 transport. With them came fifty-eight Russian crew members and specialists. Here were professionals from the ranks of our sworn enemy sitting in the audience applauding the expertise of U.S. aircrews whose combat mission was still to rain death and destruction on their homeland. Needless to say, emotions ran deep, and many a heart was on a sleeve, most notable that of Peg Ellis, widow of the recently-deceased former CINCSAC, General Richard Ellis. Peg was, to put it mildly, a piece of work. She cared deeply about the fortunes of SAC and did not hesitate to make her opinions known, to wit, during the opening ceremonies, Peg stood up from her front-row seat, marched uninvited to the podium, and proceeded to read me the riot act for “killing SAC.” Judging by the audience’s reaction, most of them were on her side.

The Missile Competition ceremony at Vandenberg AFB, California, in the spring of 1992, was more convivial: missileers, used to abuse from the aviator community, were more tightly knit and took themselves less seriously. Dorene and I arrived just before the final evening’s awards presentation, having flown from Washington, D.C., where I had been testifying on the Hill. We walked into the room and down the center aisle hand-in-hand, both wearing our deep blue missile jump suits – a gift from one of the wings – my shoulders each adorned with four stars and hers with four red roses. The crowd loved it. Mike Loh was present at my invitation, to get a feel for the professionals who would call him boss when 20th Air Force transferred to TAC. He was astonished by the
enthusiasm and camaraderie that filled the room, and he saw that he had a big learning curve to climb to master the ICBM world. By the end of the evening, he had a whole new appreciation for this group of SAC warriors whose work was done out of sight and therefore was often out of mind. The experience reinforced Mike’s unstinting efforts to fully integrate all of SAC’s displaced citizens into his fighter-pilot-dominated Tactical Air Command. Much of the success of the reorganization goes to Mike, who was determined to do right by his new strategic professionals.

The year ended with an unscheduled trip to the Pentagon for an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with my number-two boss, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney. The showdown was triggered by Tom Reed, a member of my Scientific Advisory Group and a former Secretary of the Air Force. I was about to discover that he liked to play the role of political mover and shaker. In order to ease the SAG’s angst over the impending demise of SAC, not to mention my deep cuts in the nuclear target base and warhead requirements, I assigned its members two tasks that underscored my confidence in and appreciation for their expertise. The first was to work with my JSTPS on new algorithms and software that would greatly shrink the time to produce the SIOP and, more importantly, enable us to respond to a regional contingency within hours, should the President deem a threat sufficiently vital and urgent to require a nuclear strike. The second, a companion think piece, was to address nuclear weapons policy in the post-Cold War era, probing the fundamental questions of those weapons’ role and utility, desired capabilities, and prospective targets.

The first study proved highly useful, ultimately helping to accelerate the production of more responsive targeting plans. The second reflected the bias of its authors: by their lights, nuclear weapons were still and would be for all time the basis of U.S. security. Moreover, it imagined a number of prospective regional conflicts where a new family of weapons could be required to deal with deep-underground threats such as command centers and caches of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. It was aggressively forward-leaning, and, of course, it ran against the grain of my conviction that the role of nuclear weapons in American security policy needed to be reduced – steadily. However, the study was in-house and appropriately classified, so I decided I could just quietly sit on it. Wrong. Very wrong. Imagine my surprise when a modestly edited version of Reed’s report appeared in the press and created a global firestorm over “SAC’s new nuclear planning.” Cheney, who was on his way home from a trip to the Far East, called from the airplane to say he wanted to see me the following day. With the Dugan episode still fresh in my mind, that was a very ominous summons.
I walked into the Secretary’s office with my ducks in a row, to include the appropriately classified material that had been leaked. He heard me out, walked to his desk, picked up the phone and said, “Get me Tom Reed,” who thankfully was immediately available, knew exactly what the subject was, given the caller, and acknowledged forthrightly that he had “made the material public in order to demonstrate that the Administration was not locked into Cold War thinking.” Turns out that he and Cheney were long-time friends and so could talk frankly, which they did. When the terse conversation concluded, Cheney turned to me and said, “Sorry to trouble you. Consider this subject closed.” Not a fun day.

Two other episodes during the countdown to the creation of STRATCOM are still fresh in my mind despite the intervening years. They both relate to a tasking from General McPeak to the four-star community to send him our thoughts on Air Force strengths and weaknesses and on what its objectives should be over the next four years. The following letter, dated 21 January 1992, conveys my response. I have included the missive in its entirety because it reflects my thinking not only on the assigned subjects but also on where I saw the world heading at that time.

Dear Chief:

This letter answers your requests for thoughts on two scores: strengths and weaknesses of the Air Force; and objectives through mid-decade.

Strengths. Relative to the threats we faced for the past forty years, we are a well-organized, trained and equipped force. Our leadership, at all levels, proved itself in combat. No better test. Despite some rough edges, we enjoy enormous respect from the public and largely from the Congress. Organizationally and doctrinally, we have thus far proven adaptable to rather sweeping change. Our values are strong regarding the broader social concerns of respect for individual dignity, fiscal responsibility and the environment. In short, we are the world’s best air force. We got there by taking care of business. Staying focused on the threat. Acquiring superb instruments of war. Recruiting and training skilled, motivated professionals.

Weaknesses. Organizationally, we stovepiped ourselves from the very beginning, to the detriment of true composite combat capability. We created isolated, almost alien, cultures of specialists. These represent very real and dysfunctional barriers in today’s Air
Force. The real litmus test of our reorganization will not be getting the boxes right, but getting heads screwed on straight. You have a vital role to play in this latter regard, Chief. We've got a terrific fight song, but we are still far from being one Air Force.

Despite great notices from the Gulf War, we have some serious credibility problems with the public and the Congress. Some because we really stubbed our toe; others because we didn’t tell our story well. I think this will repair itself but it warrants continuing emphasis. For example, we have an excellent media training school for our new brigadiers. I would strongly encourage a companion course for Congressional training, e.g., how to prepare for a hearing, dealing with members and staffers, responding to inquiries, and just understanding the culture and ground rules of the Hill.

Finally, for all of our reorganizing, I am deeply concerned that we as an institution have not yet come to grips with the magnitude of change set in motion by the end of the Cold War and break-up of the Soviet Union. Our galvanizing threat has effectively dissolved. That astonishing reality, coupled with the associated demise of the Warsaw Pact and German reunification, signals the end of an era of large standing U.S. armed forces. NATO is surely in its last days, at least NATO as we have known it. German autonomy is already blossoming. It is hard for one to imagine any consequential U.S. military presence in Europe by mid-to-late decade. The same can be said in the Pacific, as the two Koreas begin to pitch woo and U.S.-Japanese relations sour. All of this, and more (some prospective moderation in Mid-East tension?), in conjunction with a domestic budget crisis both chronic and growing, compels us to think very long and hard about the future of America's role in the world, and the related size and composition of our armed forces. Given the current U.S. political setting, I see little possibility of a genuine national dialogue on this compelling issue. Moreover, within the private council of our Air Force senior leadership, I believe it is imperative that we address the looming reality of at least a 50% reduction in the size of the defense establishment from an ‘88-'89 baseline. Depending on how contemporary tides in international security affairs ebb and flow, the reduction could readily be greater.

Should this be the case, the implications are obvious. Our
present plans for basing, force structure, modernization, training, and so forth will be rendered largely moot. Fundamental questions about service roles and missions will be raised. There will be a premium on joint action and unified command. The Services will literally live or die according to their capacity, individual and collective, to integrate doctrine and forces.

The leading edge of this new era is already upon us. You can see it most clearly in my business. The nuclear age is effectively over, fears of proliferation notwithstanding. Nuclear alert will soon be a thing of the past. Modernization is a dead letter, except for modest improvements to existing systems. Long-standing targeting doctrine and war plans are simply outmoded and largely irrelevant. Forces and bases are rapidly coming down. STRATCOM is a novel and potentially useful organization, but absent additional future missions, it probably has a half-life of five years.

I could go on, Chief, but hopefully I’ve made my point. We simply must begin to posture ourselves intellectually as the nation’s agenda and priorities undergo a profound and historic transformation. Given the sensitivity injected into this sort of responsible forethought by the current lack of political consensus (witness the fate of my own in-house study of nuclear deterrence in the new world order), I’m not sure how we undertake the effort. Simply musing about bases is fraught with risk. Conversely, as regards mid-term policies and objectives, it is imperative that we begin measuring such initiatives as banked pilot assignments against the prospects of considerably fewer cockpits than we currently envision. I think we need a set of institutional roadmaps that lay out the operational, training and logistics consequences (and choices) associated with very much smaller force structures (a few dozen bombers, rather than 150 plus).

In closing, Chief, I think fate has thrust you center-stage at a crucial juncture. In some respects, we as a nation are right back in 1945, absent the looming threat of a hegemonic Soviet Union and the Cold War.

The great challenges are rebuilding a world weary of superpower confrontation and regional war, putting the nuclear genie back in the bottle, and establishing global means of cooperation founded on the rule of law. In this setting, political, social and economic dialogue, can – indeed must – supplant military solutions
to conflict. We won’t get there on your watch, but as a nation we are taking the first few awkward steps down that path. You have certainly shown the brand of leadership required to confront a daunting set of issues. As I told you before, my goal in all of this is to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. As an institution I believe we are on the right track. However, as the poet said, there are miles to go before we sleep.

As I once more read these words, twenty-four years removed from penning them, I weep for the opportunities lost and strategic blunders committed that closed the door on the possibilities for the world that I envisioned in 1992. Distractions during the Clinton years cost irretrievable momentum in arms control, disrupted the United Nations’ monitoring of Iraq’s aspirations for a renewed nuclear weapons program and killed leverage with the Pentagon to compel reformation of the U.S. armed forces. These were inexcusable and carried severe consequences. Worse, taking the easy and popular path of expanding NATO – rather than pushing our European allies to take charge of their own security – tied down significant forces with irrelevant missions, perpetuated Cold War thinking, and needlessly alienated a Russia desperately poor and insecure. The arrogance and shortsightedness resident in these strategic missteps has persisted across administrations, bringing us finally to the debacle in Iraq, a renewal of tensions with Moscow not seen in twenty-five years, and an unprecedented decline in American credibility and prestige.

Once having received the four-star inputs, the Chief called us together for a Corona session of Air Force senior generals at the Air Force Academy in October, 1992, with the goal of hammering out a new vision and mission statement for the United States Air Force. The choice of venue would also allow us to take a hard look at the Academy, which was suffering through yet another siege of honor code violations and dismissals. The session revealed McPeak once again at his best. Most compelling was the passion he brought to the difficult task of articulating a vision that conveyed clearly and succinctly the unsurpassed power and global reach of the forces he was charged to organize, train and equip.

By late spring of 1992, Bob Linhard had pulled all of the pieces together for the June 1st transition ceremony, which was now scheduled to be the last of three such rituals on the same day. As noted, over the course of the reorganization planning, Generals McPeak, Loh, and I had decided to inactivate not only SAC, but also TAC and MAC. In their place would be activated
the new unified combatant command, STRATCOM, and two new Air Force major commands, Air Combat Command (ACC) and Air Mobility Command (AMC), completing a sweeping overhaul of the United States Air Force in both organization and nomenclature. ACC would incorporate all of TAC’s assets and SAC’s bombers, ICBMs and recce forces. AMC would receive SAC’s tankers and MAC’s vast airlift fleet. This last combination made particular sense, given that tankers can transport significant amounts of cargo; indeed, the reader may recall that during the Gulf War SAC’s tankers had carried to the CENTCOM region many of the spare parts needed to support themselves and other SAC units.

As the transition date approached, and with all of the large pieces in place, events moved swiftly. I shuttled between SAC Headquarters and the field, conducting retirement ceremonies for my senior staff, walking hallways lined with shuttered offices, thanking people for their service and sacrifice, and tending to bruised feelings across the command. The most difficult moment was presiding over the retirement ceremony for Leo Smith, that marvelous man who had done such dedicated work overseeing the day-to-day business of SAC while I was on the road. As always, he made it easy for me, his gracious remarks masking whatever sadness he may have harbored for this untimely end to his brilliant career.

Dorene and I also labored long and hard over the invitation list for the pageantry that would mark the last two days of Strategic Air Command’s existence. While most of the luminaries accepted those invitations, it would also be fair to say this was not the most popular event in the history of SAC. None of the former Commanders-in-Chief elected to come, and only one Vice CINC did, that being Leo Smith. I was happy to see that my former boss from my first Pentagon tour, now four-star General (retired) Dutch Huyser, would be coming. There were also a large number of community leaders coming from around the country, good friends who would be happy to see us and to participate in this bittersweet occasion.

On balance, SAC’s final hours were worthy of its forty-six years as the Air Force’s preeminent combat arm. The dinner marking its final evening was elegant (my remarks are at Appendix B), and the concert that followed showcased the incomparable Craig Jessop at his best. He had written a Fanfare for Strategic Air Command and chose as his stage the entrance to the E-4B hangar, its giant doors framing the orchestra arrayed under the nose of this mammoth aircraft. The moment was enchanting, overflowing with affection and acclaim for an institution whose mission had been to deter an apocalyptic threat, whose nuclear arsenal embodied incalculable destructiveness, whose leaders
dominated the Air Force hierarchy for decades, whose budgets accounted for trillions of dollars of national treasure, and whose history was marked by heroic sacrifice and horrific risk. To its last day, SAC never fired a nuclear shot in anger. Peace truly was its profession.
Chapter 26

Commander-in-Chief,
United States Strategic Command

Dorene and I went straight from the farewell concert to a waiting C-21 for a two-hour flight to Langley AFB in Virginia, headquarters of Mike Loh’s Tactical Air Command – to become on the morrow Air Combat Command, in the first of three reincarnations that would end back at Offutt before sundown with the transformation of SAC to STRATCOM. Because of our late-evening departure for Langley, we would not arrive there until 1:00 a.m., leaving at best four hours of sleep to recharge for that very long day. While Dorene dozed fitfully en route, I could not help but reflect on the dramatic changes our lives were about to undergo. The scope of my responsibilities, at least in terms of human and physical assets, was going to shrink appreciably: no bases, a greatly reduced headquarters staff, a much smaller budget, and no forces save those on day-to-day-alert, which comprised the vast majority of the land-based Minuteman ICBMs and the Trident subs on patrol at sea. What would remain was, of course, no less consequential: serving as principal advisor on nuclear issues to the NCA, preparing the SIOP, ensuring proper operation of the alert forces, and maintaining connectivity with those forces. My activities were in most respects parallel to those of my nine counterparts leading Combatant Commands, but they were less stressful in one vital aspect – the likelihood of war in my domain was now very remote – hopefully, it would approach zero – but the prospects for conventional war in many of their regional domains were on the rise.

Whatever the impact of the transition from SAC on my own life and duties, the consequences for Dorene’s role as my professional companion would be more severe. No commander ever had a more supportive, committed, and genuinely caring helpmate. And during my sixteen months as CINCSAC, Dorene had come fully into her element, with the long years of on-the-job training
paying dividends for my command and for her sense of fulfillment. Watching people at all levels respond to the experience, imagination, and enthusiasm she brought to every encounter had been a constant source of comfort and pride. But now, with no bases, not even Offutt, remaining under my official purview, there would be no more in-depth visits and no more conferences for wing commanders and spouses, activities in which Dorene’s skills were unsurpassed. In the blink of an eye, the scope of her leadership opportunities had greatly diminished.

There would still be frequent entertaining to be done, of course, and the social scene in Omaha to attend to, but she had all that down cold: the routines were set, the challenges minimal. On the other hand, we both now had the difficult task of building from scratch a spirit of teamwork in the inaugural STRATCOM senior staff, an amalgamation of Air Force and Navy flag officers, most of whom were new to their posts and many of whom were new to their responsibilities. The coming twenty-one months would be filled with trial and tribulation, satisfying for me only to the extent that this was precisely the outcome I had worked so hard to achieve. As a commander, I was now back to square one: assess and train my staff, learn the strategic nuclear submarine business, continue to reshape my forces according to the dictates of arms control and funding, drive down the size of the target set, and continue revamping the nuclear war plan.

Before all that, of course, we had to cope with the events of the first day of June, 1992, the most extensive reshaping of the Air Force since it had shed its identity as the Army Air Forces and become a separate military service in September of 1947. The ceremony at Langley was presided over by General McPeak in clear and breezy weather. Once the Tactical Air Command flag had been cased and the new Air Combat Command standard was flying in its place, our traveling party flew on to Scott AFB, Illinois, for a repeat performance. Within an hour of our arrival there, Military Airlift Command was in the history books, and Air Mobility Command was officially up and out of the blocks, thanks to its commander and my former colleague at SAC Headquarters, General H.T. Johnson. H.T. had greatly facilitated the reorganization by his thoughtful and seamless integration of SAC’s air refueling units into his command’s legacy airlift operations. Finally, it was on to Offutt, where the threat of rain had forced the ceremonies to be moved to the E-4B hangar, which seemed to me wistfully appropriate, as that was where I had assumed command of SAC some sixteen months earlier. Because of SAC’s status as a specified command, JCS Chairman Colin Powell did the honors. The ceremony was beautifully done, marked by the traditional casing of the flag, along with the presentation to Mike Harper,
the Consultation Committee Chairman, of the SAC crest that had hung for nearly four decades on the entry wall of the headquarters building.

By the time the official party was on its way back to Washington and the last guest was through the receiving line, Dorene and I were hanging on by our emotional teeth. Our new driver, Staff Sergeant Luke Brohaugh, bundled us into our official sedan and drove us to Quarters 16 along streets whose signage was newly emblazoned with the Air Combat Command crest – the first reminder that my headquarters was now a tenant unit on someone else’s base. What had not changed, through prior agreement with Mike Loh, was the innovation I had introduced on my first day as CINCSAC – changing the signage at the head of the sidewalks leading to the senior officer and NCO housing in the historic center of the base to incorporate the two words, “and Mrs.” I had long been annoyed by the chauvinistic custom of displaying only the husband’s name in front of “his” quarters, as if his spouse were some anonymous appendage. It was bad enough that the Air Force placed such enormous demands and expectations on spouses, with no training and little recognition. Not even bothering to acknowledge their presence in their own homes added insult to injury.

When I arrived at my headquarters the following morning, all of the requisite cosmetic changes were complete, thanks to the tireless efforts of General Leo Smith and a task force he assigned to change over all of the crests, office names and locations, phone books, letterheads, and a thousand other details attending the transition to STRATCOM. As I had directed, the portrait of General LeMay was now back in its place in the corridor leading to my suite of offices. My communing with him was complete, the book was closed on Strategic Air Command, and an organization first envisioned some thirty years earlier was finally in place – headed for the moment by an Air Force four-star. My intent at that juncture was to keep the reins for one year, then pass the baton to whomever Admiral Frank Kelso tapped to be first my deputy and then my successor. Had that plan come to fruition, it would have spared Dorene and me a great deal of grief, but at this point we had not a clue about what more fate held in store.

The staff turnover had started in my front office a year earlier, with the promotion of Colonel Orin Godsey to brigadier general. I kept Orin on board in a key staff post and made good on a promise to Dorene by filling the executive officer position with Tim Titus, my former tanker squadron commander from Mather, now a senior colonel in the Air Force Personnel Center. We needed someone familiar, comfortable, and supremely loyal in our inner circle, particularly as I would have to move Lieutenant Colonel Don Pettit to a broadening
job in the headquarters in order to position him for early promotion to full colonel. The establishment of STRATCOM cleared the way for me to hire a naval officer to replace Don – a move I considered essential to good governance in this joint headquarters. I selected Commander (the Navy rank equivalent to lieutenant colonel) Tom Thompson, an affable submariner with a solid record and an easy manner about him. He settled quickly into our routines, was a pleasant companion, and proved most helpful to me in mastering the vocabulary and culture of the nuclear submariners.

My senior staff was a patchwork of standout generals I had retained from SAC and admirals picked by Frank Kelso. My interim Deputy CINC was Vice Admiral Mike Colley, who had replaced Ron Eytchison as the Vice Director of the JSTPS, which was, by the way, now a routine staff arm reporting though the STRATCOM J-5, Bob Linhard (note the change in organizational designations that attended the change from an Air Force to a joint command). Admiral Colley would serve me faithfully and well for the nearly two years it would take for the CNO to manage the move of my new Deputy, three-star Admiral Hank Chiles, from his position as Commander of Submarine Forces Atlantic.

My J-2, or Director of Intelligence, was Major General Barry Horton, a colleague from the Air Force Academy Political Science Department and the Air Staff Plans shop. I had inherited Barry from General Jack Chain, and I was glad to have him. Barry was by this time even more driven, more productive, and more imaginative than the bionic work machine I had known in those previous assignments. He did a superlative job during the Phoenix Project and its aftermath by transitioning his one-thousand-person empire from a dedicated SAC intelligence shop to a Joint Intelligence Center that served the needs of theater commanders around the globe. My one concern for Barry was his emotional health; for all of his intellectual power and professional success, he was inexplicably insecure, to the point of having suffered an emotional breakdown. That could have been the end of his intelligence career, but he had a deep well of support, given his extraordinary record and abilities. I could not have been better served by this man I greatly admired – or more devastated when, just a few years after retiring from the Air Force, he took his own life.

The J-3/J-4, or Director of Operations and Logistics, was two-star Admiral Ralph Tindal, who proved competent and loyal in his stewardship of the sweeping changes invoked by the STRATCOM charter. He worked well in harness with the indefatigable Bob Linhard, on whom I had laid so much – and on whose shoulder I now had the privilege of pinning a second star. As the J-5, I had tasked him with responsibility for overhauling the SIOP. To that undertaking, I now added the delicate task of expanding the STRATCOM portfolio by
persuading the regional combatant commanders to relinquish their theater nuclear planning roles to this new joint headquarters. Fortuitously, Bob would get all the help he could ask for from his new assistant, Navy one-star Admiral Rich Mies, who would soon prove as invaluable as his boss. Extraordinarily bright, able, and personable, and with a vivacious wife to boot, Rich was on a very fast track. In six short years, he would return to STRATCOM as its fourth Commander-in-Chief.

Finally, I was issued Navy one-star Hank Herrera as the J-6, Director of Communications; he proved a superb choice, moving easily into partnership with his civilian deputy, who had been in place for decades and knew that very complex business inside out. Over the coming months, through a combination of daily staff meetings, weekly lunches, monthly socials, and periodic off-site meetings, this stitched-together crew developed a genuine rapport that allowed our new command to make real headway.

I continued to lead off the periodic newcomers’ orientations, talking to just one slide that portrayed the word STRATCOM vertically along the left margin, with a dictum assigned to each of the eight letters. The first entry was “Say and do the right thing,” and the last, “Mission, Mission, Mission,” underscoring the unique nature of our nuclear responsibilities. By the end of their first hour with me, every person joining the headquarters knew who I was and what I stood for, what was expected, and what was unacceptable. Further, to make good on my promise that their workplace be free of abuse and discrimination of any sort, I took quarterly anonymous surveys and had at least one conversation each week in the privacy of my office with someone chosen at random from offices throughout the headquarters. More than one supervisor lost his or her job based on those inputs when further investigation confirmed conduct that violated the standards I had set. As a consequence, over the ensuing year and a half, morale in the workplace climbed steadily and complaints dropped accordingly.

Once I was confident that the headquarters was operating in keeping with my expectations, I went on the road to learn the strategic ballistic missile submarine business, a world that had not previously been penetrated by any Air Force officer, or for that matter, by more than a few naval officers outside the submariner community. The motto, “Run silent, run deep” applied not only to their operational tactics; it was their way of life in the Washington bureaucracy as well.

The ballistic missile submarine stemmed from the vision of Admiral Arleigh Burke, hero of the Second World War and Chief of Naval Operations from 1955 to 1961. It was brought to fruition by Vice Admiral William “Red” Raborn, and
it had Admiral Hyman G. Rickover to thank for its nuclear power plant. Rickover was the longest serving officer ever in the U.S Navy, perhaps the most influential man ever to wear its uniform. A 1922 graduate of Annapolis, he served sixty-three years on active duty (thanks to loyal sponsors in Congress), and he recorded a remarkable achievement: overseeing the installation of nuclear propulsion in 199 submarines, with zero reactor accidents. He became, in effect, a military service unto himself, with autonomous budgets, personnel systems, communications channels, and acquisition methods. Admiral Rickover personally went to sea for the maiden voyage of every ship whose construction he oversaw, and he interviewed every officer nominated to serve on any nuclear-powered vessel. Stories abound from these in-your-face testing sessions, marked by harassment and intimidation, everything from providing interview chairs with uneven legs to launching aggressive verbal assaults.

Ironically, Admiral Rickover was no proponent of nuclear weapons, believing that they should be abolished. When queried by President Carter as to the collective worth of nuclear power, propulsion and weapons, according to the President the Admiral responded, “I would be satisfied if nuclear power had never been discovered.” Despite that reservation, his contribution to marrying the nuclear submarine and the long-range, submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) ushered in one of the most ingenious and consequential achievements in the history of warfare, the more so because it was born in controversy stirred by one of the most bruising confrontations in the history of America’s national security decision-making process. When Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson cancelled the Navy’s supercarrier in 1949, handing the Air Force sole possession of the strategic nuclear deterrent mission, the Navy nonetheless pressed ahead with a program to master the daunting challenge of launching multiple missiles from vertical tubes built into a specially-designed nuclear-powered submarine – and doing it with the vessel submerged. It succeeded brilliantly, with a superlative team of scientists, engineers, and manufacturers creating 59 ballistic missile subs, or SSBNs, and seven types of SLBMs, whose range, accuracy, and destructive power rivalled those of SAC’s ICBMs and bombers and whose survivability surpassed that of their land-based brethren. On the latter score, the Navy also achieved unsurpassed results in suppressing the sounds associated with SSBN underwater operations: continuously submerged on alert patrols that could last months, these boats were virtually impossible for the Soviets to detect, never mind destroy.

From my own experience and that of many Air Force colleagues, I knew that Admiral Rickover’s successors had inherited much of his authority and had over the years operated with much the same overbearing arrogance. For
instance, in my prior role as the Joint Staff J-5, which included responsibility for nuclear weapons policy and planning, I had tried to elicit the Navy’s intentions regarding the number of Ohio-class SSBNs it envisioned. The answer from my three-star admiral interlocutor was, “We will build one every two years until we decide we have enough” – even though he knew, as we spoke, that a decision was being made to cap the fleet at eighteen. Now, as the first commander of STRATCOM, I took the force planning bit firmly in my teeth: at the top of my priority list was illuminating the requirements process behind every program under my purview, especially my new naval components. But first, I had to earn some credibility by learning their business, by establishing my authority as their operational commander, and by coming up with a plan of my own that made sense. That process began in July, 1992, with a trip to Kings Bay, Georgia, home to ten Ohio-class SSBNs operating under the three-star Commander of Submarine Forces Atlantic (COMSUBLANT), headquartered in Norfolk, Virginia. Under the new command arrangements attendant to the creation of STRATCOM, this vice admiral was also one of my operational commanders, in his role as Commander, Task Force 144. A parallel arrangement was established in the Pacific, where COMSUBPAC, headquartered in Honolulu, Hawaii, was my operational commander for Task Force 134, whose eight Trident subs were based at Bangor, Washington. If this alphanumeric naval soup sounds complex, that’s because it is, and it only gets more challenging.

For openers, U.S. vessels of a particular type and capability are categorized into “classes,” and each class is designated by the name of the first ship of that class to be launched, which is known as the class’s lead ship. That tradition applies to subs as well, except that they are properly referred to as “boats” rather than ships, so each sub class is identified by the name of its lead boat. U.S. submarines have been named for historically prominent figures or for U.S. cities and states; the first forty-one SSBNs, collectively known in the Navy as the “41 for Freedom,” comprised five classes, beginning with the George Washington class, whose lead boat was commissioned in 1959, and ending with the Benjamin Franklin class, whose last boat (the USS Will Rogers) was commissioned in 1967. Each class represented an upgrade from its predecessor, usually an advance in the type of missile its boats carried. Those missiles were designated, in succession, the A-1, A-2, A-3, and B-3 (all called “Polaris” missiles), the C-3 (the “Poseidon” missile), and the C-4 and D-5 (the “Trident I” and “Trident II” missiles). In parallel with their class identity, SSBNs also have become closely associated with the missiles they were built to carry; thus, SSBNs are frequently typified as Polaris, Poseidon or Trident boats.

The SSBN force in my employ in the early 1990s comprised two classes
of boats: six Trident-modified Poseidon boats of the aging *Benjamin Franklin* class, each carrying sixteen Trident I SLBMs armed with up to ten warheads apiece, and fourteen *Ohio*-class Trident boats, each carrying up to twenty-four missiles, each armed with up to eight warheads apiece. Some of these *Ohio*-class subs were at that point armed with Trident I missiles, but all were scheduled for upgrade to the Trident II, which was designed to carry twelve warheads, but was limited to eight by the START I Treaty. Eventually, the six Poseidon boats were replaced by additional *Ohio*-class subs, one of which, the USS *Nebraska*, was commissioned on my watch. In 1993, I was privileged to participate in the time-honored ceremony at the Electric Boat Company's naval shipyard in Groton, Connecticut.

Months before that ceremony, I had arrived at Naval Base Kings Bay, Georgia, with the purpose of strengthening my feel for, understanding of, and personal relations with the strategic nuclear submarine forces in whose patrols I now had an abiding interest. I wanted to see the people, their facilities and, importantly, feel the rhythms of operational life ashore and at sea. My appreciation for the operational capabilities of the ballistic missile submarine had already grown to the extent that I could see this component of the Triad moving to the forefront, with the land-based missiles reduced in number and armed with fewer warheads and the bomber forces optimized for conventional conflict. I was already primed to be a cheerleader for the submarine community whose loyalty I was setting off to win.

King's Bay is a former Army facility converted to a submarine base in 1975 and subsequently upgraded to serve as home port for the ten SSBNs whose patrol areas were in the Atlantic Ocean. Providing adequate berths for those vessels had been a costly undertaking, given their size, particularly that of the *Ohio* class: they measure 560 feet from bow to stern and 42 feet at the beam. Longer than the Washington Monument is tall, a 17,000-ton *Ohio*-class boat is capable of speeds in excess of 20 knots. Each boat, with its 24 SLBMs, can launch up to a treaty-limited 192 independently targetable warheads. In other words, each *Ohio*’s total destructive potential exceeds that of several of the nuclear weapons states – combined. Imagine then, the power resident in an eighteen-boat fleet – a number still significantly below the twenty-four boats the Navy originally envisioned building. None of this came cheap, of course. The submarines themselves ran about three billion dollars a copy, each missile cost roughly sixty million dollars, and the annual operating costs were some seventy-seven million dollars per boat. To get the most time on patrol out of its expensive *Ohio* fleet, the Navy assigned each boat two crews – “Blue” and “Gold” – who served on a rotating basis. Each of the crews comprised 15
officers and 140 enlisted men, and their alternating twice-a-year deployment
cycles ran 70 days at sea plus 25 days of transfer, maintenance and reloading
of munitions.

Kings Bay had received five of its Ohio-class Trident boats by my July, 1992,
visit, and the place was bursting with pride. While Bangor, Washington, had
already received its full complement of eight Trident submarines, those car-
rried Trident I SLBMs rather than the Trident IIs that were carried by the final
ten SSBNs. Kings Bay was also home to the Trident Training and Refit Facility,
making it a very efficient starting point for my education. Dorene and I were
welcomed warmly, and we were accorded every courtesy – not even a hint of
upset or resentment regarding the new command arrangements. Everywhere
we went, people seemed eager to display their knowledge and the capability
of their equipment. I was fascinated, for example, as I witnessed a crew load
a missile into its tube with exquisite care, precisely the same discipline I had
witnessed hundreds of times in Strategic Air Command. More importantly, I
learned for the first time the true capabilities of the SSBN communications
suite, which had been maligned perennially by the Air Force as making the
subs “less responsive” to NCA direction. That proved to be pure nonsense. I
also paid extremely close attention to the receipt and verification procedures
that governed how the crew responded to an execution order, as well as to
descriptions of the latitude accorded SSBN commanders under certain circum-
stances of duress or lost contact with the NCA. By the end of the visit, I was
absolutely persuaded of the advantages that would now flow from our having
progressed from centralized nuclear targeting – long institutionalized in the
JSTPS – to centralized command and control of the nation’s strategic nuclear
forces under a single operational authority, that is, under CINCSTRAT.

Two subsequent trips cemented my relationship with the submarine com-
community. The first was to the Naval Submarine School in Groton, Connecticut,
where I talked to the resident crop of ensigns and lieutenants junior grade who
were training for their future assignments as nuclear submariners. I gathered
the students in the base theater, opened the dialogue with a bit of my back-
ground, and assured them that from an operator’s perspective the transition
to the STRATCOM era would be virtually unnoticeable – except for one very
important initiative. As they moved to the edge of their seats, I said, “Once
I get all of these boats painted Air Force blue, it will be mostly hands-off.”
Stunned silence, followed quickly by raucous laughter. With the ice broken,
we had a very useful exchange about the new international security environ-
ment and what it meant for the U.S. armed forces. Once again, I was deeply
impressed by the intellect and devotion of these young people; I was honored
to be in their chain of command.

The third visit was to Bangor, Washington, home to the Pacific fleet of SSBNs, the first eight Ohio-class boats. Here I made arrangements for Dorene and me to put to sea for five hours in order to observe the initial underway operations. It was an unforgettable look at the exceptional skill required to safely maneuver this mammoth boat in the channels leading from the base to open waters, the teamwork essential to mission accomplishment, and, most notably, the overt change in the demeanor of the crew the moment the hatch was closed as a prelude to submerged patrolling. It was as if by some unspoken command a quiet calm enveloped the interior of the boat, slowing the pace of movement, lowering the register of conversation, and initiating a private code of interaction that is mystical to the outsider.

I returned from Bangor with the reins of nuclear command, control and planning now firmly in hand, fully prepared to exploit the unprecedented opportunity to reshape the entire nuclear enterprise, that is, how intelligence was collected, analyzed and distributed, how deterrence and war-waging strategies were devised, how potential targets were assessed, designated and assigned to various delivery systems, how warheads and delivery systems were designed and produced, how war plans were formulated, and how force levels and arms control goals were set. Transforming this vast universe required a considered plan for engaging its population of theorists and physicists; intelligence analysts, strategists, and policymakers; industrialists and operators; security specialists, maintainers, and communicators. Each needed to hear from me – in their unique language, and with respect for their individual histories and cultures – why their familiar world was about to be transformed.

The new command arrangements had given me the authority to initiate that process, but now I knew it had to accelerate under the formidable pressures of looming budget cuts and the need to create an orderly, coherent set of U.S. objectives for the U.S.-Russian START II negotiations. On the latter score, STRATCOM was now perfectly positioned to evaluate future nuclear threats, to devise a set of guiding principles, or “rules of thumb,” for managing the response to these threats, and to translate those principles and rules into targeting plans and realistic force structure requirements. That work was accomplished in three major phases: 1991’s “Phoenix Study” had done the pioneering; a summons to prepare and deliver a briefing on its issues to the Secretary of Defense in November, 1992, had made us think even more cogently; and a follow-on STRATCOM study known as “Sun City”
had then fleshed out the implementing details. Taken together, those three documents set the stage not just for the negotiation of START II, but for all the other nuclear policy and posture reviews conducted over the remainder of the decade. The new round of arms control talks had begun in mid-June just after the establishment of STRATCOM and was given new impetus by the defeat of President Bush in the November, 1992, elections. The President was determined to sign a START II Treaty before leaving office, and the new Clinton Administration would inevitably conduct a Nuclear Posture Review its first year in office.

My principal concern on both counts was to bring badly needed order and stability to the nuclear force posture in the wake of a year and a half of turbulence generated by reorganization, formal arms control negotiations and ad hoc, unilateral reciprocal initiatives by President Bush and President Gorbachev, and then by President Bush and President Yeltsin – the so-called Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs). Step one was to get Secretary Cheney and General Powell to accept my preferred force structure, which Bob Linhard and I laid out in the November presentation. Here is how Hans Kristensen, Director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists and a meticulous scribe, portrayed the November 1992 briefing to the Secretary of Defense:

The findings of the Phoenix Study were prominent in the minds of STRATCOM officials when they went to Washington to brief Secretary Cheney and General Powell on the implications of the Washington Summit Agreement signed by President George H. W. Bush and President Boris Yeltsin in June 1992. After President Bush’s unilateral cuts in September 1991 and January 1992, the nuclear posture was in turmoil. With the START II Treaty on the horizon, long-term stability was at stake, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense wanted an in-depth study of the strategic nuclear forces. The Joint Staff and the Air Force, both traditionally strong players in shaping the nuclear posture, considered a formal study to be STRATCOM’s responsibility. After all, bringing nuclear planning together under a single command was what had motivated the creation of STRATCOM in the first place. In a number of conferences with the Joint Staff, the Air Staff, and the OPNAV Staff (Office of the Chief of Naval Operations), Air Combat Command and the commanders of the surface and submarine fleets in the Atlantic and Pacific, STRATCOM developed a “preferred U.S.
STRATCOM force structure” to guide the Clinton Administration. STRATCOM’s recommendations to Cheney and Powell included these main points:

- Retain weapon platforms to preserve flexibility
- Accelerate the nuclear certification schedule for the B-2
- Transition the B-1 to a purely conventional role
- Remove internal Air Launch Cruise Missile (ALCM) capability from forty-seven aircraft and external ALCM capability from the remaining aircraft scheduled to receive the upgrade
- Assign Air Reserve components to nuclear bomber missions
- Modernize and extend the life of the Minuteman III missile
- Maintain Peacekeeper ICBM until 2001
- Transfer W87 warheads from retired Peacekeepers to Minuteman III
- Maintain a two-ocean SSBN force with full target coverage in oceans, large operating areas, and maximum reconstitution capability
- Retain the SSBN force at eighteen boats
- Protect MIRV on SLBMs, as land-based ICBMs will be single warhead

This preferred force structure in the “Sun City” study subsequently shaped the 1994 Nuclear Posture Review and, in turn, the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review. In preparing for the briefing, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy (ASD/ISP) stressed to the Secretary of Defense that the study “highlights the importance of identifying, in the near term, the force structure with which we will want to move into the 21st century.”

This study was also STRATCOM’s first chance to prove its worth since replacing the split Air Force-Navy nuclear planning structure from the Cold War. By centralizing all nuclear command and control in a single command, the hope was to ensure a more impartial and realistic nuclear planning. Indeed, in undertaking the study, the ASD/ISP told Cheney after visiting Offutt Air Force Base prior to the briefing, STRATCOM had “filled the void that we sought to eliminate through the establishment of the Command: provide a
single voice that could analyze impartially the full range of strategic force issues, integrating force structure, targeting, operational, and arms control considerations; speak to these national security requirements in programmatic and budgetary terms; and bring them forward for your review.”

As I was putting these sea-legs under my new command (while also acquiring a nautical vocabulary) and preparing for the critical arms control events on the horizon, Dorene and I were also tracking another milestone: Lisa and Mike had set an October 2nd wedding date, affording us a welcome trip to San Francisco for the event. We stayed at the Presidio, the Army’s historic post overlooking the bay, a short drive from St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, a gorgeous setting for our beautiful daughter and her handsome young husband.

A month later, my sense of confidence in the future of the nuclear forces turned to deep concern with the results of the November 1992 presidential election, when the nation in its disconcerting wisdom decided to replace George Herbert Walker Bush with William Jefferson Clinton. Whatever history may decide with respect to this outcome, from my perspective it levied a heavy price, especially due to the ensuing disruption in U.S.-Russian relations. More importantly, civilian-military relations between the White House and the Department of Defense were chilled by a pervasive loss of respect for the Commander-in-Chief by the men and women whose lives he was empowered to put at risk.

While any change in the Oval Office brings unavoidable turbulence, in this case the effects were compounded by the long hiatus between Democratic presidents; bad blood between the parties in Congress, leading to confirmation fights that prolonged vacancies in key policy billets; and Clinton’s abysmal lack of experience in Washington politics and understanding of military culture. On the latter point, picking a fight with the Pentagon over gays in uniform was ill-advised, driving a wedge between himself and the troops and exacerbating the ill-feeling of senior members on the Hill from both sides of the aisle. Had it not been for General Powell’s intervention and the adoption of the “don’t ask, don’t tell” compromise he brokered, the Clinton presidency could have failed in its national security dimension shortly after leaving the starting gate.

The national security team he assembled was weak, beginning with the new Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, my interlocutor from the House Armed Services Committee. A reasonably able legislator, Aspin was devoid of management skills, leaving the bureaucracy rudderless in an era when strong
leadership was essential to deal with the aftermath of upheaval in the international security environment. A few professionals remained on board, most notably my valued colleague Frank Miller in the International Security Policy shop, but newcomers faced a steep learning curve. Fortunately, one of those was Frank’s new boss, Professor Ash Carter from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, a brilliant guy by any measure, and with whom I had a strong relationship. He had an ambitious agenda with regard to nuclear policy and posture that I supported. He later took the time to fly to Offutt, where we sat at my kitchen table and crafted a joint strategy for dealing with the prospect of future strategic nuclear arms reductions.

As I had anticipated, Secretary Aspin directed a so-called “Bottom-Up Review” of U.S. defense policy, which was conducted between April and July of 1993. Shortly thereafter, Deputy Secretary of Defense John Deutch and Ash Carter conducted a separate review of U.S. nuclear policy and posture, the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which concluded in early 1994. As I noted earlier, in anticipation of this sweeping review, I had tasked Major General Bob Linhard to undertake an in-house analysis that we dubbed “The Sun City Study,” in order to lay out what I considered to be a reasonable array of alternative force structures beginning at the START II level of 3,500 strategic warheads and scaling down to 2,000 in increments of five hundred. Here is Hans Kristensen’s take on the outcome:

The incoming Clinton Administration endorsed the strategic nuclear posture enshrined in the START II Treaty signed on January 3rd, 1993, by Presidents Bush and Yeltsin, thus approving STRATCOM’s preferred force structure. This undercut the effort by the new Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, to fundamentally reform the posture through the Bottom-Up-Review and Nuclear Posture Review (NPR). Instead, STRATCOM ended up playing a central tutor function in the NPR process. STRATCOM had conducted a study called “Sun City” of alternative force structures that examined nine different options, six of which were at the 3,500 START II accountable limit. Option “1” was the “preferred” force level briefed to the Secretary of Defense in November 1992. The three remaining options were “well below” 3,500 weapons, and are likely among the options that are currently under consideration by the 2001 review.

What now remained were two equally important objectives. The first was to complete the overhaul of the SIOP-building process in order to reduce the
time required for construction from eighteen months to six, thence to weeks and finally to hours, that is, to a virtual real-time response to presidential direction. With the help of experts on the Scientific Advisory Group and the genius of Rich Mies, this process moved along with remarkable swiftness and its success was assured by the time I retired in 1994.

The second objective went hand in glove with the first, that is, to position STRATCOM to absorb the nuclear planning responsibilities of the regional combatant commanders. This was no easy task, as these four-star commanders had for years controlled that process themselves, relying on their staffs to do nuclear target planning and force application for their theaters. My reasoning was that these small, local staffs suffered from frequent turnover and inadequate training, and that their procedures varied from theater to theater—I had found that to be the case with the Atlantic and Pacific SSBN planning staffs. Consolidating these tasks at STRATCOM would save money and, by standardizing planning, ensure strict adherence to guidance issued by the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

I assigned responsibility for building the case for this expansion of STRATCOM’s mission to Bob Linhard, who responded with his usual brilliance. The “Silver Book” process he created laid out an approach to regional nuclear planning that took full advantage of the massive computing power and years of experience at our disposal in the JSTPS and now on the STRATCOM staff. Once this product was fully in hand, we saddled up Casey 01 and began a tour of the regional command headquarters. The trip produced decidedly mixed results, including an episode that put Dorene on the front page of the New York Times, details to come.

Our test case for the Silver Book concept was the Pacific theater, beginning with United States Pacific Command, headquartered in Honolulu, Hawaii. Dorene and I were accompanied by Bob Linhard and two other targeting experts, as well as Bob Smith and my new Navy aide, Tom Thompson. The PACOM commander was Admiral Chuck Larson, who, though we had known each other for some time, was guarded in his reaction to my proposition. Well attuned to its many ramifications, I am sure he wanted to see how his contemporaries in other regional commands responded before making a decision.

The next stop was Seoul, South Korea, to visit with General Bob RisCassi, my former colleague on the Joint Staff, who was now wearing a fourth star as the Commander of United States Forces Korea. Bob was most interested in the Silver Book approach, offering his full support in bringing STRATCOM into the regional nuclear targeting and strike planning business. With his experience and reputation for jointness, he would be a powerful ally as I worked my
initiative through the Pentagon bureaucracy in the months ahead.

At my request, Bob arranged a visit to the DMZ, or Demilitarized Zone, the two-and-a-half-mile-wide no man’s land that serves as the border between North and South Korea. The one remaining flash point from the Cold War, this acutely contentious strip of territory is witness to bizarre rituals and barbaric history. Guarded by barbed wire, land mines, machine guns, observation towers, and foot patrols, every inch of its surface is mapped, and every movement within it closely observed. The most well-known point along its 155-mile length is Panmunjom, where the 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement was negotiated. That agreement replaced the Korean War’s large-scale hostilities with the relentless tension of a truce that is still in uneasy effect, as no peace treaty has ever taken its place. At Panmunjom, heavily armed soldiers stand guard around the clock, peering menacingly at each other through binoculars, guns always at the ready. In the center of this “Village” is a small, one-room structure housing a long negotiating table, positioned such that it is bisected by the boundary line between North and South Korea. A short drive to the northwest of Panmunjom is a small city built by the North Korean government, ostensibly to showcase the thriving economic health of the region. In reality, the city is a complete sham, a collection of empty facades where loudspeakers blare fake traffic noise and broadcast endless streams of propaganda. Thousands of mock city lights are illuminated and extinguished simultaneously, like clockwork, morning and night. This is truly the twilight zone, an alien land where time stands still, unreality reigns, and war leans heavily into its restraints.

Despite the armistice, the DMZ is subject to constant probing from the North to find weak spots. Tunneling is a favorite technique, one at which the North Koreans are past masters. Indeed, throughout the North, they have put a large number of their military facilities and operations underground, to include shelters for thousands of their one million-man army, along with their tanks, trucks, artillery pieces, and the like. Of special concern are such underground facilities arrayed within a few miles of the DMZ. Artillery shells and rockets fired from just outside those caves would reach the South’s capital, Seoul, in minutes, hundreds of combat aircraft could strike the city shortly thereafter, and tank-heavy ground forces could be rapidly poised to continue the assault. For that reason, the northern third of South Korea is an armed camp, where intentionally-widened lengths of highways are designed to serve as alternate runways and giant arches straddle many roads, containing massive metal gates that can be dropped to block them instantly. The airspace over Seoul is overlaid with keep-out areas, where a stray plane can expect to be shot down without warning.
Commander-in-Chief, United States Strategic Command (1992–1994)

The young people who serve in the DMZ Command are handpicked and rigorously trained. We got an insight into their devotion to this duty as Dorene, Bob and I stood next to a stalwart soldier in his observation tower overlooking Panmunjom. Joshing, I said to Bob, “If shooting starts, you and I are going to switch caps,” since the four stars on mine would mark me as a high-value target. Instantly, our valiant U.S. Army host, who had missed the humor, said, “That won’t be necessary, sir. My job is to step in front of you and your wife.” I wanted to hug him.

I had one other adventure during my stay on the peninsula that I recount only because it portrays the occasional hazard that can arise during visits to our allies. General RisCassi had arranged a short courtesy call on the South Korean Army’s military academy, about an hour’s helicopter flight from Seoul, where the staff made certain that my visit was minutely planned, precisely executed, and completely pro forma. The mission briefing filled only a handful of slides, and I quickly learned that my questions were not welcome – this was all about keeping on schedule. The second and final event was a parade on a vast grassy field, where the cadets stood arrayed in several companies, along with the obligatory band. My role was to inspect the troops prior to the march in review, a duty that I would perform while standing behind the driver’s seat in a highly polished convertible that would carry me along the line of well-starched young officers-to-be. This turned out to be a bigger challenge than I had anticipated, if only because the driver and I were not a well-coordinated team. As I stepped into place and was reaching for the chrome floor-mounted bar I would use for stability, my eager chauffeur popped the clutch and damn near threw me out the back of the car. I managed to get just enough fingers of one hand around the bar to avoid ending up flat on my back while the highly motivated driver pressed on. We were a Korean version of the Keystone Kops.

My visits to the other regional commanders went well enough to give me some hope for the eventual consolidation of regional nuclear forces at STRATCOM. There was, however, an incident that occurred during the trip to Europe for my session with the CINCEUR and his component commanders that would come back to torment Dorene and me. Since I would be gone all day, the senior wives had arranged a shopping trip for Dorene to one of their favorite haunts, located two hours from Ramstein Air Base, Germany, where we were lodged. I saw her off at six in the morning from the front of the VIP Quarters, wanting to personally thank her hosts and also to ensure that, per my instructions, no military vehicles or personnel were involved in her excursion. Once I had seen what were, by all appearances, a civilian van
and driver, I kissed her goodbye and went on about my day. Alas, as was later revealed, things were not at all what they appeared, setting the stage for a piece of skullduggery that left us both emotionally battered in the closing months of my career.

Ironically, the Silver Book initiative went essentially for naught, falling considerably short of its most ambitious objective, that is, reaching agreement with the regional CINCs that STRATCOM – instead of nuclear planning cells of their relatively small staffs – would exercise responsibility for nuclear target selection and strike planning, as well as for oversight of nuclear execution. But Admiral Rich Mies, my successor as CINCSTRAT six years after my retirement, tells me that changes in the national security environment, reorganizations of nuclear forces, and a dramatic expansion of STRATCOM’s missions rendered the Silver Book objectives moot, and properly so.

As I put together the final pieces of the transformed United States nuclear enterprise, I began to focus more sharply on the nuclear policies and programs of our British and French allies. The Brits were very forthcoming, as our close relations in the nuclear arena dated back to the Manhattan Project. There were really no secrets between us, and, thanks to a Frank Miller initiative, I had a British liaison officer in my headquarters whose job it was to keep our targeting activities fully coordinated. Within a short time, I knew their war plans and capabilities as well as I knew my own.

The French were another matter. Although at least one French scientist had made important contributions to the Manhattan Project, France’s post-war governments had shared neither their planning nor their capabilities with the United States. Because they maintained a capable nuclear Triad of land-based missiles, fighter aircraft, and SSBNs, this was a matter of great concern to me; the likelihood of policy and targeting conflicts was very high. Here fate again provided me an unprecedented opportunity: just as I assumed my role as CINCSTRAT, one of my closest colleagues from the attaché world during my days as the Joint Staff J-5 became the commander of France’s nuclear air forces.

This serendipitous eventuality proved invaluable. Within days came an invitation for Dorene and me to visit the irrepressible General Jacques Deveaud and his charming wife Michelle, with whom we had spent many happy hours on the Washington social circuit during his days as the French Defense Attaché. A career fighter pilot, Jacques was a bundle of high-voltage energy, great fun and – as we had observed during a dinner at their Maryland home – unflappable. When the power went out just as the entrée went into the electric oven, a phone call brought a dozen pizzas to the door. They were consumed by
candlelight, complemented by a French wine that would have made any main course taste like a million francs.

It was early May of 1993 before I could take advantage of Jacques’ invitation, and the visit far exceeded my expectations. Jacques treated us like royalty, even arranging for me to be awarded the National Order of Merit by authority of President Mitterrand. Much more important, however, the timing proved fortuitous for my work to overhaul the nuclear war plan. In addition to arranging a flight in the Mirage 2000B and a visit to his underground command center nestled among the missiles buried on the Albion Plateau, Jacques accorded me the privilege of an unfettered look at the French version of the SIOP, to include the supporting policy guidance. I was enthralled to study this sensitive material, and I gleaned numerous insights from it, the most important of which was that, given its far more limited resources, France adopted a “minimum deterrence” policy that threatened virtually automatic city-busting nuclear retaliation. Hence, from a Soviet perspective nuclear war would have been “all-out” from the inception, with no incentive for “intra-war bargaining” with the United States. Here was one more piece of evidence to dispel the monumental illusion that so vast an enterprise as a global nuclear war conducted by multiple players could be rational or controlled. Sheer folly.

By the end of June, 1993, with Congressional hearings behind me, I had concluded that STRATCOM was fully launched, allowing me to pass the baton to my successor, Admiral Hank Chiles, who was due to arrive in early September. I had accomplished all of the objectives I assigned myself at the outset of my tenure as CINCSAC in early 1991, an agenda greatly expanded by the transition of SAC to STRATCOM. Apart from that organizational transformation, my staff had completed a wholesale reform of the SIOP. Persuaded that what I had seen as my duty with respect to the nuclear weapons enterprise had been properly discharged, I sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Aspin advising him of my conviction and my desire to retire forthwith. That drew a phone call in reply. “Lee,” asked my longstanding friend, “would you mind staying in position until the President and I are ready to choose Colin Powell’s replacement?” The obvious implication was that I was a player in this decision, which came as a surprise given my close identity with the nuclear mission – not the best of credentials in an era of increasing brotherhood between the United States and the former Soviet Union. At any rate, that was the way the hand was dealt, except that it included a wild card. The Secretary had selected two candidates from each of the military services as prospective Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The other Air Force candidate was none other than General Tony McPeak, setting the stage for the torment visited on Dorene and
me that I alluded to earlier.

Someone apparently hoping to advance Tony’s candidacy at the expense of my reputation leaked to the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* a EUCOM (European Command) Inspector General’s report of an investigation into an allegation that Dorene had used a government van to go shopping while she was accompanying me on that trip to Europe I mentioned earlier. The news accounts made no mention of the fact that she had nothing to do with the choice of transportation, nor that I had given specific prior instructions that any form of conveyance put at her disposal would be commercial, to include a civilian driver. While that had appeared to be the case when I saw her off before dawn the day she was picked up, unbeknown to either of us, the van was an unmarked government vehicle, driven by a security police specialist in civilian clothes. The local commander had countermanded my directions in the interest of security, due to the threat level at the time. The EUCOM commander’s car had recently been attacked by terrorists, and concern was running very high in Germany regarding possible follow-on attempts on high-profile Americans, military or civilian. But at the moment, none of that mattered. The allegation had been made, triggering a follow-up DoD Inspector General investigation that dragged on for months, required ungodly amounts of our time for depositions and file searches, put our integrity in question, and found absolutely nothing. Indeed, the IG team chief apologized during his outbrief.

The rather bitter irony is that this despicable assault on my integrity and Dorene’s peace of mind was for naught. Neither Tony McPeak nor I were ever going to be the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The story of the selection process has been told in a riveting piece of journalism by David Martin in the November 1993 issue of *Vanity Fair* magazine. Entitled “Landing the Eagle,” it gives an account of the behind-the-scenes maneuvering that characterized the succession to the JCS chairmanship. Here is how Martin described my candidacy:

There was one certified innovator on the list of eight possible contenders Aspin had sent over to the President: Air Force General Lee Butler, 54, commander of the Strategic Command, which controls the nuclear missiles, bombers and submarines. While serving on the Joint Staff during the Bush Administration, Butler had been the informing mind behind the cutbacks in nuclear forces ordered in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. In retrospect, the cuts looked like the least the Bush Administration could do, but in the glacial world of nuclear strategy it was considered
revolutionary at the time.

There was, however, a ... fundamental problem with Butler. He did not pass the warrior test. As a captain during the Vietnam War, he had flown the F-4 out of Cam Ranh Bay, but as his career progressed he had spent most of his time planning and training for the unthinkable—nuclear war. Thankfully he had never had the occasion to demonstrate his ability to lead in that kind of combat.

In any event, I was quite unaware of any these considerations when the selection process culminated at a White House dinner on Tuesday, the tenth of August. After my role in the Wage and Price Freeze twenty-two years earlier, I was no stranger to these surroundings, nor was this my first opportunity to dine with a President and First Lady. That privilege came in the spring of 1992 when President George H. W. Bush and his wife Barbara, in the aftermath of Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm, invited to the White House the ten combatant commanders, four service chiefs, the Chairman of the JCS, General Powell, and his Vice Chairman, Admiral Jeremiah, and all of their spouses. That had been a warm and gracious affair, with dinner served in the Rose Garden under a soft evening sky. We were seated at four tables of ten, hosted in turn by the President, First Lady, National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, and Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney. My host had been Brent Scowcroft, who was called away for some minor crisis as dinner began—not that it much mattered since social chit-chat is not his long suit. Dorene, however, drew Barbara Bush, whose effervescent personality made the evening all the more special. When Dorene asked how Millie and her new puppies were faring, the First Lady, who was obviously waiting to be prompted, leaped to her feet and announced to her husband that despite his private veto, the dogs should be brought forth in response to a guest’s request. Dorene was aglow for days afterwards.

By contrast, our moment in the spotlight with the Clintons a year later was uncomfortable from beginning to end. Their greeting was distant and cold, and the atmosphere was thick with tension. Most of the sixteen four-stars in attendance had been there the year before, but the change in administration had brought a new Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, and National Security Advisor, Tony Lake. We were again arrayed in tables of ten, with Dorene at the Secretary’s table, and me with President Clinton. I was positioned directly across from my new Commander-in-Chief, who talked from the moment we sat down until the dinner concluded two hours later. Rather than engage his table guests, he went on and on about himself, his activities and issues he found presently interesting. Finally, just before the meal concluded, he looked
across at me and asked, “General Butler, are you a runner?”

I replied that I was a middling jogger who had never run more than ten miles at a crack. “Well,” he continued, “I am thinking about training for a marathon and wondered if you’d like to take on the challenge with me.” I could hardly believe what I was hearing. Trying to be courteous, I said, “Mr. President, my duties would hardly permit that sort of time and dedication, and I would be surprised if yours did either.” There followed an awkward silence, blessedly ended by the chiming of the bell calling us to coffee and dessert on the terrace.

By the end of the evening, I knew that I was not going to be the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. There was no whisper in my ear to stay after and talk with the President. In truth, I came away with mixed feelings about this son of Arkansas, with his splendid intellect and insatiable appetite for high office and fast food. In the end, the question was moot; the following day General John Shalikashvili appeared in the Rose Garden beside the President as his nominee to succeed Colin Powell. He was without question the perfect choice for this President.

With this bit of drama behind me, I now turned attention to the end game of my tenure as CINCSTRAT, beginning with the task of bringing my new Navy Vice CINC, three-star Admiral Hank Chiles, up to speed as my replacement. Hank reported in on the first of September from his post as Commander of Submarine Forces Atlantic. A lean six-footer, he was bright, articulate, confident and quite taken aback when I told him shortly after his arrival that he could expect to fleet up behind me in six months when I retired. After watching him in action over the next several days, I quickly gained confidence in his abilities and went ahead with planning for the final trips I wanted to make prior to turning over the reins of command.

I also made two phone calls to friends in the community, the first to Leo Smith to ask if he would serve as master of ceremonies for my retirement dinner, to which he readily agreed. The second was to Walter Scott, chairman and CEO of Peter Kiewit Sons, a privately held Omaha-based construction, energy and communications conglomerate, one of the city’s several Fortune 500 companies, and one of the world’s top ten construction firms. Walter had replaced Mike Harper as chairman of the Consultation Committee and we became close friends, as did our spouses. Walter was a man of great wealth, and he and Sue were the most influential couple in Omaha or in Nebraska for that matter. A brilliant business man, Walter sat on numerous boards, including Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway, whose headquarters were located in Kiewit’s home office building. Walter had grown up in the
company he now headed, rising from a line surveyor to replace the dying Peter Kiewit in 1979. He was the driving force behind an array of notable projects in the metropolitan area, including a strategic vision and strong financial support for the Henry Doorly Zoo that moved it to the top tier of such attractions around the world. Walter and Sue were one of the most generous couples in the region, giving tens of millions annually to wide-ranging causes that passed their rigorous scrutiny. They lived in a penthouse atop the Kiewit Building, making Walter’s daily commute about ten yards. They were unpretentious, accessible, caring and unstinting in the time they devoted to people and institutions in need.

When I told Walter that I was going to retire early in the coming year, he asked what I planned to do, and I told him I had not as yet given any thought to the matter. He then inquired if I had considered staying in Omaha – something none of my predecessors had done. I said, “No, not really, but since I have to keep making a living for a few more years, Washington probably looms largest on my horizon.” After a moment’s pause, he said, “Lee, would you think about joining Kiewit?” I was completely nonplussed. “Walter,” I replied, “my expertise is making plans to blow things up with nuclear weapons. I am not sure how that translates into your line of business.” “Well,” he replied, “it’s not so much your immediate expertise that interests me, but the way you think.”

With that, I told him I would discuss the proposition with Dorene and get back to him. When I related the conversation to my bride, she had only two questions: “What job does Walter have in mind, and did he mention compensation? We have to buy a house.” I said that neither of those issues had come up and I did not feel comfortable asking. My instincts told me we could trust him to be fair. She agreed, delighted by the opportunity and the fact that we would be staying in a city she loved. With that, I called Walter and said, “Dorene agrees to your offer,” to which he replied, “I knew she was a very smart woman.”

My life after the Air Force now decided, I still had a couple more unprecedented pieces of business to attend to during my final months in uniform: successively hosting two of the most senior officials from the former Soviet Union. In order to keep momentum behind the arms control process, the Bush Administration invited General of the Army Igor Sergeyev to visit the United States and tour selected STRATCOM facilities. He commanded the Russian Rocket Forces, that is, their land-based ICBMs, the most prestigious and capable leg of the Russian version of the strategic nuclear Triad. This initiative was very much akin to the Crowe-Akhromeyev interaction of 1988, with the added feature of allowing some access to the highly secretive nuclear arena.
I was delighted with the prospect of forming a professional and perhaps personal bond with a man who would know full well the complexities and stresses that attend command of an arsenal that holds the fate of hundreds of millions of people at risk. My delight faded a bit when I was informed that the producer of the widely-viewed CBS show “60 Minutes” had, on learning of the visit, made a bid to cover the trip from start to finish, devoting a full hour of air time to do it justice. Told that it was my call to make, I got the producer on the phone and laid down the following conditions for their participation. First, I insisted that Ed Bradley host the segment, as opposed to their first choice of the more senior Mike Wallace, my critic at the Moscow press conference in June of 1989. Second, until I had made a judgment regarding the conduct of Bradley and his team during General Sergeyev’s visit to my field units, I would withhold permission to allow the STRATCOM headquarters portion of the trip to be filmed. And, third, I would see and approve in advance the questions Bradley wanted to ask me during a one-on-one interview in my office.

The producer was aghast, protesting that these conditions were unheard of, that such latitude had never been given in the history of the show. I replied that they were non-negotiable, take it or leave it. This trip was too important and the stakes too high to run the risk of subjecting Sergeyev or me to the show’s ambush tactic of springing off-the-wall questions designed to lure the interviewee into a verbal misstep. After clarifying that this meant he would not know until the last minute whether or not Bradley could accompany Sergeyev from his final stop in the field to my headquarters for the wrap-up session, he said he would have to get back to me, which he did within the hour. They bought it, no more ifs, ands or buts.

The day General Sergeyev arrived in the United States, I inadvertently introduced a complicating factor into the agenda: during one of Dorene’s and my favorite diversions, doubles tennis, I tore the meniscus in my left knee. The injury was sufficiently severe as to require immediate surgery, which I was loath to undergo with my guest due to arrive two days later. But the operation went well enough, and after a day of rest, I decided that I would forego the crutches insisted on by my doctor. Instead, I would gut it out by minimizing the amount of walking I would have to endure. Whatever the discomfort, with an audience of tens of millions at home and abroad, I was determined to appear physically as well as intellectually vigorous during the crucial two-day visit. Finally, as a bit of added distraction which later proved serendipitous, my mother arrived for a week-long stay, requiring some delicate reshuffling of the seating arrangements for the dinner we had planned to honor our Russian
guest.

With reports from the field positive – I had sent my superb three-star Chief of Staff Dirk Jameson, a career missileer, along to bird-dog Bradley and crew – I gave the green light for CBS to film the headquarters visit. They sent in an advance team to record the arrival at Offutt which, much like my first moments with Anatoly Bolyatko four years earlier at Dulles Airport, were very promising. General Sergeyev was about my height, but stocky and fully grey. In a word, he looked grandfatherly, with a warm smile and an engaging personality. By now he was well acclimated to a nation he had previously seen only through the lens of a reconnaissance satellite, and he had acquired a respectful appreciation for the quality of the professionals in my command. We went immediately to my conference room, where, through an interpreter, I introduced the senior staff and personally briefed him on the inner workings of STRATCOM, for which the Soviet Union had no counterpart. Their land-based ICBMs, SSBNs and bombers were all in autonomous organizations, much as our land- and sea-based missiles had been for over thirty years. He was highly intrigued with, probably envious of, the U.S.’s newly-unified combatant command arrangements through STRATCOM. He also paid careful attention to my presentation on the reduction in the number and type of strategic nuclear modernization programs currently underway, especially in the ICBM force.

Following the presentation, I dismissed the staff, allowed CBS to come in and take some footage, then shooed them out so that General Sergeyev and I could have some private time. The conversation that followed was as memorable as any I had had in my thirty years of active service. Igor’s first question was, “General, why have you made such drastic cuts in your plans for the future of your ICBM force?” That query was not unexpected, given his own expertise and responsibilities, and the fact that he probably knew my missiles about as well as I did. I said, “If your country and mine get our relations right over the next ten years, we should have no use for these forces. If we don’t, I have preserved some options, but shame on us for failing in the most important opportunity fate could possibly have afforded after forty years at the brink of mutual nuclear annihilation.” He smiled and said, “I understand your point completely and fully agree with your reasoning.”

The dinner that evening was a grand success. My mother was her usual charming self in these settings, in full Southern Belle mode. With her to his left and Dorene at his right, Igor was completely disarmed. At Dorene’s private request, he made the gracious gesture of presenting the exquisite cloisonné egg he had brought as a gift for her to my mother instead, after eloquent words
for both ladies. The members of my Consultation Committee present were, I am sure, enthralled by the spectacle of two senior Cold War adversaries chatting amiably about family, profession, and their hopes for a world where their children and grandchildren would not have to live under a nuclear sword of Damocles.

Our respective interviews with Bradley the following day were remarkable in every respect, not the least of which was that, although we had not discussed one word of what we might say, General Sergeyev and I sounded almost mutually rehearsed in our replies to the questions posed. When Ed sat down in my office, I had no idea what Igor had said, but I knew exactly what I was going to say, having spent hours crafting my replies for maximum effect, not just on an American audience but more importantly for whoever in Russia might have an opportunity to see the interview. My central message was that the long, dark nightmare of the Cold War was over, mankind had been spared a nuclear holocaust by some combination of skill, luck and divine intervention, and we had been granted a wholly unanticipated chance to reset the relationship between our two nations. No aspect of that relationship was more important than communication between the keepers of the strategic nuclear arsenals, and General Sergeyev and I had found common ground on the issue that mattered most: reducing the dangers posed by arsenals that had long since passed any rational level of destructiveness.

This was a defining moment in my career, an intimate meeting between military professionals who had to that point seen each other only through the distorted glass of nuclear deterrence, the central actors in J. Robert Oppenheimer’s analogy of mutual assured destruction: two scorpions locked in a bottle, each knowing instinctively that neither would survive if either struck first. That said, we were not purely instinctual antagonists. Rather, we were but flesh-and-blood human beings caught up in an apocalyptic drama. If that drama was not of our making, it was ours to manage for the period we were cast in the role of central actors. I drew deep comfort from now knowing that, like me, General Sergeyev was seized with the enormity of his responsibilities, the delicate balance of terror that was ours to maintain and the fact that we held in our hands not just the fate of our respective countries but the future of life on this planet. I came away from our meeting more determined than ever to scale back what I had come to believe was nuclear folly, to break down the walls of alienation between our two nations, and to build the bonds of understanding and respect that hold at bay the dogs of war.

A few weeks later, a more spontaneous opportunity arose to engage with an even more senior member of the former Soviet hierarchy: the new Defense
Minister of the Russian Federation, who replaced General Moiseyev after the August 1991 attempted coup that failed to drive President Gorbachev from power. General of the Army Pavel Grachev was visiting the United States for the first time and was being given a grand tour, to include a stopover at United States Strategic Command en route from Washington to the west coast. Only 45 years old, he had been jumped over dozens of more senior officers by President Yeltsin, first to head the Russian ground forces and then to the post of defense minister. To my knowledge, Grachev had never traveled in the western world.

He arrived early in the afternoon with a large contingent of subordinate commanders and staff officers for a two-hour visit. I took them directly to my command center, put Minister Grachev in my large leather chair at the front of the room and arrayed the rest of the group to his left and right where my staff usually sat during our periodic missile threat conferences. I was wired with a walking microphone, had a laser pointer in hand and positioned myself directly in front of my senior guest with the wall of giant briefing screens just behind me.

In the patient cadence required to allow for translation, I began my presentation by advising the minister that he was sitting in the seat I would occupy in the event of a nuclear crisis involving our two nations and where I also participated in the exercises simulating such a crisis. I said, “You are free to examine anything you see at my position, but I would ask that if the red phone at your right hand rings, please don’t answer it – you might give the President of the United States a heart attack.” Thanks to a superb translation, he got the joke and visibly relaxed, as did the room as a whole. Next, I told him that this was his lucky day – I was prepared to answer any question he might have about United States nuclear policy or operations irrespective of the sensitivity (No, dear reader, I was not about to give away state secrets; I simply wanted to divine what sort of issues might really pique his interest). To my bemusement, he asked, “General Butler, where is your real command post?” I replied, “This is it, right where you are sitting.” Puzzled, he continued, “But this is only a few meters below the surface; it would never survive a nuclear strike.” “True,” I said, “but in the event of an attack, I have an alternate and highly survivable command post aboard the aircraft that would be waiting for me at the end of the runway with engines running. There are also several alternate ground-based facilities which would also be manned and ready to take over my duties if I should not survive.” He seemed incredulous, a reaction I readily understood knowing the extreme measures the Soviet Union had taken to bury their wartime facilities hundreds of meters underground outside of Moscow, accessed
by a dedicated high-speed subway built below the lines that serve the city's
civilian populace. However serious we had been about the prospect of nuclear
war, in many respects our preparations paled by comparison with the mam-
moth projects and *in extremis* policies in Russia. They knew that a nuclear war
might not be winnable, but they were bound and determined not to come out
second best.

After a series of fascinating questions to which I gave very candid answers,
General Grachev asked my opinion about the future of arms control. I replied
that, given the dangers posed by nuclear weapons to the future of mankind,
our two nations had an obligation to lead the way toward reducing our stock-
piles as far and as fast as possible – hopefully one day to zero if the rest of the
world followed our lead. After hauling that on board, he thought for a long
minute and said, “But that is not possible, General Butler. Nuclear weapons
are what make Russia a great nation.” Moving to a point just a few feet in front
of him, I replied, “General, nuclear weapons make you a feared nation. The
fact that you are on a path to democracy is what will someday make you a
great nation.” After letting the translation sink in with this hard-bitten former
paratrooper and the members of his delegation, I announced that it was time
to get them back on their plane and on their way. Sadly, Grachev has died in
infamy, the “butcher of Chechnya”; Russia is still far from a great rather than
a feared nation; and, like my own country, it is still held in thrall by nuclear
weapons.

The Christmas season was now upon us, with the customary rounds of
entertaining, which had strong nostalgic overtones for Dorene and me as we
prepared for the coming transition to civilian life. Quarters Sixteen, the home
of the CINC, never looked more beautiful, thanks to the faithful restoration of
its original luster by Offutt craftsmen working from the plans we had retrieved
from the National Archives two years earlier. Courtesy of the Consultation
Committee, the grounds had also been enhanced with a new social area in the
spacious east yard. We dubbed it the Quarter Deck in tribute to the traditional
location of shipboard naval ceremonies.

For the most part, however, we were focused on the upcoming series of
events associated with my retirement and the change of command it would
entail. Thanks to my experience in running this type of show during my IG days,
we were well-prepared for the mechanics of the four-day operation, which
was in the capable hands of two-star General Gary Curtin, who had replaced
now-retired Barry Horton as my Director of Intelligence. Gary was a seasoned
SAC veteran with broad experience, and I felt very confident in his abilities to
take on the responsibility of closing the book on my military career with grace
and dignity. And in fact, he did a masterful job overseeing four major events: the Farewell Dinner at the officers’ club on Saturday the 12th of February, a service at the SAC Memorial Chapel on Sunday morning, a dinner gathering at the Henry Doorly Zoo indoor rain forest on Sunday evening in honor of Air Force Secretary Sheila Widnall and General McPeak, and the Monday Change of Command and Retirement Ceremony.

I chose the 14th of February as my last day in uniform very deliberately; I wanted to honor my wife on Valentine’s Day in appreciation for the love, devotion, and sacrifice she had invested in my life and career. The single greatest compliment Dorene has paid me over the course of our life together is that she made my dreams her own. I am deeply mindful and grateful that this remarkably talented and able woman would choose to set aside her own aspirations and take up a life that asked everything and promised nothing. Without training or education in the ways of the military, its customs, courtesies, risks and demands, she adapted brilliantly, earning the respect and admiration of my superiors, peers and subordinates; suffering the indignities rendered by incompetent moving companies and unscrupulous general officers; making a home in a grubby trailer and in substandard quarters; entertaining with style and grace; and raising two children who have truly been the lights of our life.

Along the way she left her mark on countless thousands of friends and admirers, founded two businesses, played a leading role in establishing support centers for Air Force families around the world, rubbed elbows with the likes of Bob Hope and Ann Landers, staged Follies at bases across the land, even persuading her four-star husband to play the lead ballerina in the death scene from “Swine Lake,” and, oh by the way, saved the SAC Band from being put out of business in a round of cost-cutting by General McPeak. After my rebuttal got me nowhere, Dorene took him on during a Corona reception with a weapon I had not thought of: tears. He relented immediately and restored funding for our treasured band. She did all of this with no compensation, no preparation, learning mostly on the fly. As I reflect on the path she has trod, guided by my professional compass, I realize that in the closing moment of my career I made a misstep: I should have insisted that the medals be given to her.

We made a final swing through Europe, to cement STRATCOM’s relationships with selected naval commanders in the theater who had oversight of SSBN operations. We also wanted to take up an invitation from Jacques Deveaud’s successor as commander of the French nuclear forces, Air Force General Roger Mathieu, and his wife, Denise, who had some years earlier
replaced Jacques as Defense Attaché in Washington. Roger had a rapid rise through the ranks of the French Air Force, served three Ministers of Defense in the rarified political air of Paris, and was promoted to his fourth star during his three years in Washington. Dorene and I were captivated by this charming, sophisticated couple and spent many happy times with them. Now, they received us in Paris with warm hospitality, treated us to a grand tour, including their comfortable home in Taverny and arranged an elegant dinner hosted by Admiral Laxande, the chief of the French armed forces.

This was my last flight as CINC, ending my time as an Air Force pilot with over 3000 hours in a dozen types of aircraft. On the 1st of February, I made the landing at Offutt after a night flight from Aviano Air Base in Italy, where I had toured a nearby Navy command center. Sleep was difficult – my mind played over thirty-three years of flying, countless emergencies, two ejections, and landings on six continents. There was very little about flying that I had not seen or experienced, as a pilot, supervisor, or chief of safety. People often ask me if I still fly as a pilot, which I do not, nor do I have any desire to do so. I have had about as much of that fun as I can stand.

After a decent touchdown on that cold Nebraska morning, I taxied Casey 01 to the entrance of the large hangar bay, where it would be serviced after the long trip, shut down the engines, and stayed aboard while it was towed inside. I was a bit apprehensive about what would await when I reached the bottom of the mobile stairs used for deplaning. There is a tradition among aviators that the last flight is terminated by a hosing-down, an honor I knew to be inevitable but, with the temperature below freezing, not much appreciated. To my delight, as Dorene and I descended the stairs arm-in-arm, she with a bouquet of roses handed through the door as it swung open, we were showered not with water but with a hail of confetti. Our command photographer, Bobby Pittard, captured the moment perfectly in a picture we will treasure to the end of our days.

Now began the round of farewells, beginning with a moving Wives Club farewell to Dorene, highlighted by the gift of a personalized handmade quilt depicting memorable moments from our 31 years of marriage. Then followed a splendid dinner hosted by the Consultation Committee. Mutual warmth, respect and admiration filled the large banquet room. The ties we had so assiduously built with the community were repaid many times over by the thoughtful words and gifts, given in appreciation for the countless hours of entertaining, speeches, service on a dozen boards, strategic planning for Aksarben, interviews, band concerts and fund drives. Dorene and I had given unstintingly of ourselves to myriad local constituencies, and that investment was being
graciously acknowledged. Best of all, we were now going to call Omaha home.

By Thursday the 10th of February, family and friends had begun to arrive, setting the stage for a very special gathering at Quarters Thirteen on Friday evening. After an intimate dinner, the members of Night Wing, a talented group of musicians and singers from the band, did several of our favorite numbers, joined at one point by Brett and Lisa, who sang, “I’ll Always Be There,” for their Mom and Dad. It just doesn’t get any better than that.

Saturday evening’s farewell dinner was the emotional high water mark of my career. Dorene and I entered a room filled with family, Academy classmates, friends from here and abroad, mentors, colleagues from across the years, and leading citizens from communities around the nation. The setting was a living tapestry, weaving together the threads spun during our thirty-two years together. Every face recalled warm memories, every photograph accompanying the recitation of my life evoked a deeply etched moment, and every gift was beautifully rendered and deeply meaningful. A shadow box of official regalia, to include an American flag that had flown over every former SAC base as well as the United States Capitol and that of the State of Nebraska, incorporated as the centerpiece of a magnificent, hand-wrought coffee table. A painting entitled, *Passing the Torch*, depicting the elevated arm of Lady Liberty illuminating the receding emblem of Strategic Air Command and the advancing crest of STRATCOM. And, to my lasting gratification, a replica of the new street signs being installed that evening, naming the busiest street on Offutt Air Force Base *Butler Boulevard*. As I took the podium for my remarks, which I have included as Appendix C, I felt, in a word, fulfilled, personally and professionally. My course was run, my mark was made, and the people I cared most about in the world had affirmed that I had met their expectations. The speech that followed was, for me, the most personal I had ever penned, one of four I had composed for this and the three events to follow. I talked about who I was, what I stood for, the things I cared about, the privilege of command, and the debt I owed those in the room, especially my family and most especially my wife.

Sunday morning, a host of our closest companions gathered with us in the SAC Memorial Chapel, where longtime friend Major General Don Harlin, now the Chief of Air Force Chaplains, had done us the courtesy of presiding over the last service to be held in this storied edifice during its tenure in Strategic Air Command. Don was very generous in his remarks about Dorene and me, and he captured perfectly how we felt about our service to the nation, our family and each other. It was a marvelous moment, filled with a riot of emotions for all of those present, many who could read the legacy of American
strategic airpower written in the glorious stained glass windows.

The affair at the Henry Doorly Zoo on Sunday evening gave me an opportunity to honor General McPeak, who was the ranking military guest and therefore due appropriate recognition. As the master of ceremonies, it was my job to introduce him. After long reflection, I decided to make my remarks a soliloquy, a musing about my years in uniform, how I approached my profession, and finally how chance put me in formation with General McPeak at a crucial juncture in the history of our profession.

Having conducted countless retirements in my career, I have fashioned a rule about my own: “Don’t get all carried away.” Those of you who know me well understand what I mean by that dictum. It does not convey any lack of appreciation for the extraordinary efforts and outpouring of sentiment on behalf of Dorene and me – far from it. We are overwhelmed by the selflessness and generosity of hundreds of workers and well-wishers.

Rather, I have long since understood, and constantly taught, that in the final analysis, in our business institutions are the bedrock. An institution is just that because it has a character, traditions, convictions, a heart and even a soul. Like a mighty edifice, it is built stone by stone, upon heroes and their epic accomplishments, on genius and perseverance, on innumerable noble deeds. Our military Services are such institutions and in time perhaps STRATCOM will be as well, as epitomized by its vaunted predecessor, Strategic Air Command.

Much of my life has been spent as an Air Force officer. I was socialized into its culture over long years at the Air Force Academy and have profited greatly from three decades of membership among its ranks. I have flown its planes, commanded its wings, mastered its ways, served its purposes, fought its wars, risked my life, wept for compatriots who lost theirs. Yet for all of that, for all of the years, the joys, the anguish, the tears, I have always striven not to become too enamored of this mistress, too beguiled by the lure of flight or the allure of rank or position. I am quite capable of passion, but wary of emotion. Thus, I was always happy to be a creature of the Air Force, but not its captive. Eager to serve, but refusing submission. That by my calculus is the true measure – and constant burden – of the true professional. Because even institutions must occasionally be brought to heel, held up to the light,
disrobed and scrutinized with merciless objectivity. Institutions do not exist in a vacuum, immune to the tides of history, social upheaval or technological advance.

Libraries are filled with mournful tales of kings and kingdoms swept into the dustbin of history, even while loudly proclaiming infallibility or immortality. Such a challenge confronted my Air Force three years ago. Confronted with the consequences of cataclysmic change, its leadership could sense the magnitude of the moment, literally the mandate to adapt or die. Not to die a sudden, apocalyptic death, say at the stroke of a Congressional pen, but rather to suffer the long, slow death of bureaucratic strangulation and lost budget battles, drowning finally in a sea of eloquent but irrelevant prose in defense of outmoded beliefs, capabilities and organization. Such a moment demands a man for the times, capable of stepping back from the commonplace arguments and solutions and surveying the new landscape for a navigable passage. But, more than that, more than simply mapping the journey, to strike boldly, to sally forth, to take an irrevocable decision, to dare greatly. The Air Force had such a man in its midst when the moment came, and nothing about his moment came easily. Neither at the outset, nor now, at the culmination. His will be recorded as a term filled with controversy, roiled by bitter debate. Critics will mutter and fulminate, historians will argue and pontificate, but from my remote corner of the national security cosmos, three judgments are undeniable: he got the organization right, he got the doctrine right, and he got the vision right. Quite frankly, I don’t care much about the ball caps, T-shirts, fight songs, emblems or uniforms. All that mattered to me from the beginning was that we got the institution right for the times.

Bert Lance famously remarked that, “Pioneers get all the arrows,” and, Chief, I know there were days when you felt like General Custer. But history will show that your battles against the long odds of institutional change were won. You came, you acted and you prevailed. You even helped spin the prop of a fledgling Strategic Command and get it airborne – or perhaps I should say, “underway.” For that, our annals will log you in as a hero. And even though you refuse to let us honor you, let us at least show our appreciation by giving you a memento of our organization, one that may someday be worthy to be called an institution, one
Uncommon Cause

as worthy as the United States Air Force.

The morning of February 14th dawned bright but cold as we readied ourselves for the ceremony to come. Dorene was resplendent in a gorgeous red suit and matching hat, a tribute both to Valentine’s Day and to the Nebraska Cornhuskers. Brett and Lisa looked as if they had stepped off the cover of a magazine, their beautiful faces glowing with pride and shining with love. When we gathered at the officers’ club for the briefing by Gary Curtin on the events to come, we greeted General John Shalikashvili, who would preside in his capacity as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Dorene and I held hands tightly in the car during the short ride to the E-4 hangar, awash in emotion as the reality of the moment made itself felt. The bleachers were filled to capacity, the squadrons of troops were at the ready, as was our beloved band. We clung to every moment of the familiar ritual, from the playing of honors to the colors to the march in review. And then it was time for the traditional passing of the flag. Hank Chiles and I faced each other at center stage and completed the time-honored ceremony. General Shali, as he was known, then gave heartfelt remarks, observing that “United States Strategic Command is Lee Butler’s legacy. He made this not only the most powerful strategic nuclear command, but a most powerful conventional force as well. STRATCOM is, in every sense of the word, a two-edged sword, one that adds enormously to our ability to fight and win our nation’s wars quickly and decisively. America always has a way of finding the right leader at the right time. We needed an innovator who could turn a concept into a reality. Lee Butler did just that.”

My own remarks were brief, devoted principally to thanking the men and women who had served in Strategic Air Command and were pioneering United States Strategic Command. Finally there came the moment when my four-star flag was cased, first tightly rolled by two stalwart airmen and then gently en-cased in its leather pouch embossed with my name, rank and four stars. With that, the great hangar doors rolled back, and I watched a stream of the aircraft I had flown and commanded pass down the runway just a few yards away.

The reception following the ceremony is just a blur now. I know that it was splendidly done, that spending a few last hours with our well-wishers was a joy, and that Dorene and I were depleted by the time we returned to our quarters, where we would reside for a few days while the clock wound down to my official retirement date of the first of March. We had many details to attend to, the most engaging of which was responding to the flood of letters from friends dating back my childhood days in Oakland. These notes were filled with
sentiments that greatly enriched my final days in uniform. None touched me more that the missive from my classmate, Hector Negroni, who wrote, “I shall never forget when I singled you out for extraordinary achievement. The event was marked by the thoughtful, timely and inspiring letter you wrote to the class after our Class Ring Dining In. You reminded us that it would be a crime to waste the talent in our class by just getting by and only doing the minimum in an acceptable manner. I have always treasured that letter. It has served to motivate me the many times when I was down and ready to give up. Thank you, Lee, for being the inspiration for many of us.”

Hector, if who I am and what I believe in has been an inspiration to you, then I shall count my career a success on that measure alone. You are the heart and soul of the Class of 1961, the keeper of its lore, guardian of its values and arbiter of its disputes. Your strong encouragement and skillful eye are what kept me at this challenging task of putting down on paper my life’s journey. Your words also remind me that some will record that STRATCOM was my legacy, but it has taken a host of successors to lift it to a premier rank among today’s Combatant Commands. Admiral Hank Chiles, General Gene Habiger, Admirals Rich Mies and Jim Ellis, Generals Jim Cartwright, Kevin “Chili” Chilton, Bob Kehler and now, Admiral Cecil Haney – have all extended its scope, to include the merger I had long anticipated, one that folded the SPACECOM roles and missions into United States Strategic Command while Admiral Ellis was in the chair. Further, I am always moved to remember that some whom I counted among my most able and trusted colleagues in building STRATCOM came to tragic and untimely ends. Major General Bob Linhard went to an early grave from sheer overexertion, and his compatriot Barry Horton could not exorcise his demons before they drove him to take his own life. Other friends have struggled in retirement to find meaningful work, and thousands who served in my employ will always harbor deep resentment over the fact that I cut short their careers.

In sum, Hector, while I am surely proud of having fathered USSTRATCOM, I have long ago learned that legacies based on professional accomplishments alone are slippery, even treacherous stuff. For my part, what I value most about my almost thirty-three years of military service is that, from beginning to end, I never confused who I was with what I was. The perquisites and privileges of rank and position never mattered – to the contrary, they were for the most part barriers to communication that I always worked hard to overcome. My personal mantra, evolved from the Cadet Honor Code and affirmed in the crucible of relentless moral crises, became simply, “Always do and say the right thing.” Doing right by my family, friends, profession and country has been my
most powerful motivation, from Miss Mary Smith’s first-grade classroom to the corridors of power in Washington.

I also now have the perspective of being more than two decades removed from my military career, a tumultuous period during which my conscience and values took me on a course that alienated many of those who had held my temporal legacy in high esteem. That was perhaps the most severe test of my convictions: I was willing to put my reputation in the docket for a cause that the very experience on which my legacy was built compelled me to undertake. Therein lay the arc of my life: pursuit of the uncommon cause, at odds with unwarranted convention, foe of intolerance, champion of decency. But, that arc had not yet reached its terminus, or even its zenith. The most trying years of my life awaited just over the horizon, poised to envelop me in a moral conflict that would draw me back with a vengeance into the very arena I was now departing.
After promotion to four stars in 1991, I took command of SAC, giving Dorene and me the privilege of living in historic Quarters 16, home since 1896 to every senior commander living on the facility that became Offutt AFB after WWII. We retrieved the blueprints from the National Archives and had the interior restored to its early elegance.
While realigning SAC to STRATCOM, I introduced a number of features to jump-start the new joint culture, including a remodeled frontage of the Headquarters building. The Navy provided a Trident missile to serve as a companion to the Air Force Minuteman that had long graced the grounds. The handsome plaza on which it stands soon became a popular location for Navy ceremonies.
With the crew of Casey 01, the aircraft I used for overseas travel. This specially equipped plane, manned by a select crew, was configured for instant contact with the National Command Authority – the President and the Secretary of Defense – and the worldwide strategic nuclear forces.
Dorene and I entering the theater for the annual SAC Missile Competition at Vandenberg AFB, CA, in 1991. We wore matching uniforms given to us by the missileers, hers adorned with four red roses on the shoulders to mirror my four white stars. The audience was elated at this special recognition of their mission.
The emblem of the United States Strategic Command, which I designed, weaving nautical elements into the iconic SAC depiction of a mailed fist clutching lightning bolts and an olive branch. A beautifully crafted metallic version, known as a “distinctive unit insignia,” was worn on the right breast pocket of every member of the command.
Like every combatant commander, I spent hours each year justifying my budget to the Congress, a trying responsibility. As the Cold War wound down, my hearings became contentious over the costs of the nuclear weapons enterprise, affirming my conviction that SAC’s mission had to be profoundly transformed.
Dorene accompanied me on every base visit. We had a carefully scripted itinerary: while I met with operational elements, she met with spouses and toured myriad support activities such as chapels, hospitals, commissaries, exchanges, housing, libraries, child care and fitness centers, and schools.
Dorene often joined me in my review of mission elements, such as intercontinental ballistic missile maintenance. Her presence invariably instilled a sense of pride in the young people who displayed their skills. Here, she is in a mobile “cage” (with a technician) used to access the sixty-foot tall Minuteman III missile in its silo.
We participated in many civic activities on base visits as well as in the communities near my headquarters on Offutt AFB, especially in Omaha, home to six Fortune 500 companies and many remarkable attractions. This office visit was in support of a campaign for the Henry Doorly Zoo, one of the best in America.
Lisa and Mike were married in San Francisco in October of 1992. Smart, disciplined and fun-loving, he was the perfect complement to our daughter. After an auditor stint, he moved swiftly into the CFO ranks, most recently with Pandora Internet Radio in Oakland, CA. They live nearby in the bucolic little town of Orinda, with their boys T.J. and Theo and dog Truman.
We dined twice in the White House, along with fellow combatant commanders and the service chiefs, first with President George and Barbara Bush and then with President Bill and Hillary Clinton. At Dorene’s urging, Barbara Bush brought out Millie and her puppies, to the President’s feigned consternation.
In the cockpit of a Tu-95 “Bear” bomber with the leader of a contingent from the Soviet bomber forces invited to attend the final SAC Bombing and Navigation Competition awards ceremony in November of 1991. The plane was parked on the flight line at Barksdale AFB, LA, among several U.S. B-52s and B-1s.
Soviet General Igor Sergeyev, my counterpart for the Russian ICBM forces, arriving at Offutt AFB during his first visit to the U.S. He toured selected facilities with a strategic nuclear deterrence mission and then spent two days with me. A crew from the CBS show 60 Minutes covered the entire trip, at the end of which Ed Bradley, one of their lead reporters, conducted interviews with Sergeyev and with me.
Dorene received many tributes leading up to my retirement, including this hand-stitched quilt from the Offutt AFB Officers Wives Club depicting anecdotes from our 33 years of marriage. Her regalia reflects her designation as “Queen of Our Hearts,” recognition of her devotion to the welfare of Air Force families.
Two of the most memorable tributes I received were a replica of the street sign that marked the renamed thoroughfare at the south entrance to Offutt AFB and an American flag that had been flown over every one of SAC’s former bases, as well as over the Capitol Buildings in Lincoln, NE, and Washington, D.C.
Dorene in her Valentine’s Day suit, a date I chose for the retirement event to acknowledge her service to the Air Force, its families, and the communities in which we lived. More importantly, I wanted to recognize her as an extraordinary wife and mother who kept our family strong in the face of relentless challenges.
Retirement thrust me into a head-snapping change of venue, touching every aspect of daily life. With no business experience and knowing little about Kiewit, I had two steep learning curves to climb in the next several weeks. More immediate, however, were the practical issues of buying a home and a wardrobe and building a support net of services in Omaha. Dorene began looking at houses; I shopped for suits and ties and processed into Kiewit—including the mandatory drug test. Time was of the essence, because, at Walter’s suggestion, I was leaving on the 5th of March for the three-month Advanced Management Program (AMP) at the Harvard Business School. Happily, the day before I departed, we signed a contract on a house in a bucolic setting on the western edge of Omaha, surrounded by many of the business leaders and their wives whom we knew from our many years of close civic ties.

I found my Harvard stint enriching from the standpoint of my 120 classmates, some 80 of whom were from other nations and comprised a dazzling array of experience and talent. That said, the coursework was of limited practical value: the several score case studies that formed the core of the curriculum were focused on stockholder-owned companies, rather than privately-held, employee-owned entities like Peter Kiewit Sons, Inc. I had read the company history that had been compiled after the death of Peter Kiewit, the youngest son and namesake of the company’s founder, a Dutchman who brought his family to the United States in the late 1800s. A brickmaker by trade, he settled in the middle of the country to take advantage of the construction boom fueled by the land rush. He founded his brick company in 1884 as a modest local venture; as it prospered, he expanded into construction. The younger Kiewit took the helm in 1924. After several high-visibility projects, including the tower of the Nebraska State Capitol, he made a breathtaking leap into the prodigious mobilization program triggered by World War II, winning the contract
to expand the U.S. Army’s Fort Lewis, located near Tacoma, Washington. The terms specified that the huge project, including, for example, *fifteen hundred* new dormitories, had to be completed in ninety days. Peter put together a team of dozens of firms and got the job done on time and on budget.

After this initial success, Peter Kiewit Sons or PKS, as it was known, grew into a global giant, one of the top ten construction firms in the United States, capable of doing horizontal, vertical and underground projects of any scope. It was also known as one of the country’s best-managed construction firms, thanks to Peter’s ironclad discipline, leadership skill, and insistence that the company remain private and employee-owned. The sense of ownership was palpable, and the bottom line reflected the payoff: fifteen percent profit, year after year, making generations of its members millionaires many times over.

Peter Kiewit was also one of Omaha’s most powerful civic leaders, taking an interest in everything that mattered in the city. He was legendary for spotting malfunctioning traffic signals from the vantage point of his penthouse apartment at the Kiewit Building, which sat high atop the hill rising from the center of the metropolis. His sense of civic duty was deeply ingrained in his people as well, to the point of being a condition of employment, and Walter was straight out of that tradition of *noblesse oblige*, sitting on a number of civic boards, chairing fundraising campaigns and giving great sums of money to worthy causes. He also took PKS to new heights of profitability, first by expanding the company’s coal mining operations, then by moving into geothermal power in the early eighties and, most significantly, seizing the opportunity to pioneer fiber optic cable as the future of telecommunications by buying a company named Chicago Fiber. He renamed it “Metropolitan Fiber Systems,” or MFS, grew it nationwide over five years, and then sold it to WorldCom for fifteen billion dollars. That put PKS in the Wall Street record books, and made Walter a billionaire. It also created a crisis within the company. MFS had been built as an entity separate from the traditional construction business, with its own management team and taking its own risks, which had been considerable. Thus when payoff time came, a rancorous debate emerged on how to distribute the profits.

The decision was made just as I joined the company. Kiewit was bifurcated into a “C” side and a “D” side, the first retaining the “construction” portfolio and the other comprising a “diversified” group of businesses, which would become individual profit centers feeding the “D” bottom line. One of the businesses in that group is what Walter had in mind for me. Shortly after returning from Harvard, I was named the President of Kiewit Energy Company (KEC). This chapter is devoted principally to my five years in that role, tending to the
then-existing ventures and searching for a major new opportunity that would put Kiewit at the forefront of a new era in the energy arena. It was hugely challenging, introducing me to the worlds of big oil, automobile manufacturing, gasoline additives, the politics of clean air legislation, and project financing, all focused on the prospect of building and operating a half-billion-dollar plant in Alberta, Canada.

KEC was a new creation whose initial focus was managing Kiewit’s fifty percent partnership with California Energy, or CE, another Omaha-based company, which had been founded by another of Omaha’s favorite sons, David Sokol. Dave was an extremely capable businessman, a born entrepreneur who had at one point worked for Walter. In CE, he had built a successful venture developing the geothermal energy assets of California’s Salton Sea but then abruptly left the company for what he saw as greener pastures on the East Coast. That dream crashed and he came home chastened, a prodigal son who was forgiven by his mentor, took up his prior mantle and began to expand internationally. As I joined the partnership, Dave was in the process of writing contracts with the governments of the Philippines and Indonesia to develop the extensive geothermal reserves of those two island nations, which sit on vast volcanic mountain ranges.

Generating electricity from geothermal power is complex from beginning to end. The steam fields embody very complicated geology, are notoriously erratic in production, and vary widely in quality, which is assessed in terms of the amount of corrosive elements contained in the steam. Locating and scoping a field is also very expensive, requiring a dozen or more wells that run a million dollars apiece, with no guarantee that any of them will be successful. Once a region “proves out,” precise management is essential so that reservoirs of steam will not be inadvertently or prematurely depleted. Throughout, getting the massive drilling rigs into deep jungle areas, finding and training a local work force, building and stocking dormitories and dining halls, and dealing with local civic leaders is a challenging and often frustrating ordeal.

My first trip to the Far East with Dave Sokol was a marathon that tested my mental and physical energies to their limits. The flight from Omaha, through Minneapolis to San Francisco, on to Tokyo and thence to Manila was deadening, but only the prelude to what followed. We transferred to a connecting flight south to the island of Cebu, at whose capital city’s airport we were met by a local CE driver who took us for a two-hour drive in pitch-black darkness over rutted, winding roads to our destination, an upscale resort hotel sitting high in the mountains. We finally got to bed about 2:00 a.m., but had only a four-hour window for sleep before a 7:00 a.m. breakfast with our Philippine
partners and, an hour later, a tee time for eighteen holes of golf. By the time we had worked our way around a very demanding course, I felt like I had been pressed into the Iron Man Triathlon. I was a below-average golfer at best, the heat and humidity were nearly unbearable, and my playing partners were not a ball of fun. At dinner that evening, David, who still looked fresh as a daisy, gave a gracious talk and presented his counterpart with a very spiffy golf club – a driver to be exact – that a pro would have killed for. Just another part of doing business in the Philippines.

Our visit to the energy fields the next day was equally arduous; the four-wheel drive vehicles were tested to their limits as we climbed treacherous roads to the base camp. After lunch with the troops, the CE project boss took us through a riveting account of his progress in finding a work force, horse trading with local mayors for rights of way, mapping the field, and siting the foundation for the giant turbines that would form the heart of the electricity generating plant. I could only shake my head at the extraordinary effort and risk entailed in making a go of this business. This particular project was financially viable only because the Philippine government had signed extremely generous fixed-term contracts that allowed a sizable return on Kiewit D’s investment. That generosity was itself a reflection of the nation's desperate need for electricity, where even the capital city suffered daily power outages.

We returned to Manila for a conference with the retired U.S. Army one-star general in charge of California Energy operations in the Philippines. He and his wife were in tall cotton, living an upscale life in a swell apartment with live-in help. He played the “general” bit to the hilt, with his one-star flag on prominent display in his office, along with all manner of memorabilia on the walls.

Our next stop was Indonesia, which was, if anything, more challenging. Jakarta was much like Manila: impassable streets, ubiquitous filth and grinding poverty. Our hotel was again an oasis with luxurious rooms and world-class service. From the perspective of our business, the principal difference from our prior stop was that the government here was more corrupt, which is saying something in a part of the world where public figures see holding office as a path to personal enrichment. Some readers may remember that the film The Year of Living Dangerously was set in mid-60s Indonesia. In that time of unrest, on the outskirts of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam’s wars, President Suharto had overthrown his equally unsavory predecessor (Sukarno) at the point of a gun. Subsequently responsible for the deaths of millions of communists and Indonesians of Chinese ancestry, Suharto continued to rule with an iron fist during my own adventures recorded here. His cronies had a piece of the action
in every major activity in the country, especially foreign ventures such as CE. There were countless ways around the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, and Suharto knew them all, including giving his children a stake in every joint venture signed by the government. It was disgusting.

On the other hand, again much like the Philippines, the people were warm, talented and, given the chance, worked extremely hard. Our geothermal engineers were all locally recruited and top-notch. The steam fields, then in early stages of development, were found in two widely separated locations and in two very different geological surroundings. One was at Bandung, about 100 road miles east of Jakarta; the other was on the island of Bali, a 600-mile flight from the capital. That field was the more memorable, as it was situated in a national preserve with breathtaking vistas and challenging terrain, requiring great inventiveness to locate and extract the steam. All in all, the region looked very promising, but the risk here was clearly more political than geological, a concern that would loom increasingly large on my radar screen over the next several years.

I had pretty much bonded with Sokol by the end of our trip, but the same could not be said for my relationships with any of my compatriots at Kiewit proper. To help ease me into the culture, Walter had me attend Kiewit Construction’s traditional Saturday morning meeting for a few weeks. This was the key management venue for the regional bosses who were responsible for finding, bidding and executing the hundreds of jobs that kept PKS profitable year after year. Most lived in Omaha, spent five days a week on the road, returned on Friday evening, convened on Saturday morning, and departed Sunday night. In my view a miserable existence, but for them it was simply the price of poker. The long-term payoff, if one survived – and some did not – was the amassing of a small fortune.

I found the meetings fascinating. Walter presided, while his right-hand man of many decades, Bill Grewcock, sat monk-like, carving intricate designs in Styrofoam coffee cups. Each district manager stepped briskly through the jobs in his purview that were in trouble, and his peers offered advice based on their collective hundreds of years of experience. After a month or so, a few of the managers invited me along to look at some of their more interesting projects, some of which involved billion-dollar contracts and excruciatingly difficult work in awful conditions. I came away with a thorough respect for these men, the risks they took, and the lives they endured. They were as much a brotherhood as any unit I had seen in the military and just as professional.

The next test of my acceptance in the company came when Walter moved me to the executive suite, six rooms on the top floor, encompassing a reception
area, four offices and a conference room. The décor was magnificent, with rich mahogany paneling, sumptuous furniture and exquisite appointments. Here resided Walter, his secretary, my nominal boss Rich Jaros, another longtime citizen of Kiewit, and now novice me. Rich was Walter’s “go to guy” for tough jobs. When Sokol walked away from California Energy, Walter had sent Rich over to keep the company afloat, a task at which he excelled. When a chas- tened Sokol returned, Rich moved back to Kiewit, and now had inherited me, which I am sure he viewed as yet another novel challenge. Some ten years my junior, with a strong “Type A” personality, Rich liked results now, but I had a steep curve to climb, not to mention the daunting charter of searching out a productive new venture for the company. Further complicating the matter, I was, to my knowledge, only the second person in the history of PKS to be brought in at an executive level from outside the company, and my close relationship with Walter was well known. With all that in mind, I tried to make things as easy for Rich as possible, deferring to him as appropriate, keeping him informed and asking his advice. But in the final analysis, his judgment of me was secondary to the fact that Walter was my boss as well as a good friend. My role in our relationship was to avoid any appearance of trading on that friendship.

The first opportunity to make a buck for the home team came completely out of left field. Walter received a letter from the Russian Federation inviting Kiewit to take on the challenge of converting a former Soviet naval base on the Far East coast of the country into a thriving commercial port. With the radical downsizing of the Russian military, the naval facility was deemed sur- plus, while the concomitant expectation of launching a major new economic development surge in Siberia made converting the port to transship oil and other commodities a priority. Walter asked me to explore the feasibility of the proposed deal, kicking off as strange an adventure as I had ever undertaken.

My first step was a trip to Moscow to talk with old friend Andrei Kokoshin, a Deputy Minister of Defense, to verify that this proposal was for real. He assured me it was, then arranged a series of follow-on meetings with other Russian government officials who had a controlling interest in the project. With this end of the puzzle seemingly in place, I contacted the mayor of the city of Sovetskaya Gavan (Soviet Port), the host community to the naval base, to arrange a visit. He assured me we would be warmly received and that he would set up a tour of the naval facility for me. I then put together a team of experts from Kiewit who knew the port business, commandeered a company plane and was off to the region.

True to the mayor’s word, we were accorded a grand welcome, put up in
the best hotel, which was not saying much in this pitiful town that time had forgotten, and accorded excellent hospitality, including an interpreter. In its prime, Sovetskaya Gavan had been one of the Tsar’s favorite summer places in the Russian Far East, but construction of the naval base in the Soviet era had put the port city off limits to foreign trade. While the local fishermen could come and go at will, foreign vessels were not permitted access. The economy of the town became completely dependent upon supporting the base, providing its work force and maintaining the elements of the country’s Pacific Fleet. I was most interested to see this naval facility at first hand — and then the agenda hit a snag. The morning of our scheduled tour of the base, a very chagrined mayor came to my hotel room to tell me that permission for the tour had not been received from Moscow. Furious, I told him that our visit and the deal were terminated. To ensure he knew I wasn’t kidding, I called my pilot and told him to get the plane ready for departure and to file a flight plan. The mayor blanched, begged for an hour’s grace and bolted for his office. Sixty minutes later, as my team was walking out the door with bags in hand, he arrived to report that the tour was back on.

As our rickety bus rolled through the front gate of the former naval base, it was starkly evident that at ground zero, the place was a mess. I could hardly believe my eyes. Everything was in disrepair, windows in every building were broken, cows were grazing on the overgrown lawn of the headquarters — in short, the place looked like a slum. Worse, the so-called port facilities were nothing more than a handful of floating piers. There were no fixed wharfs, even for attending the two mini-aircraft carriers home-ported at Sovetskaya Gavan. I was shocked not only by the bare-bones support facilities for elements of a major fleet, but also by the huge additional expense that would be required to create a proper port from scratch.

My reservations about the project were further exacerbated when, at my request, the mayor arranged a helicopter flight along the single-track rail line that served the port. My first observation was that there was a second, larger port located not twenty miles away, clearly a prospective competitor; and that the rail line ran straight through its heart — meaning that it could be shut down on a whim by the authorities there, thus completely cutting off Sovetskaya Gavan. Finally, it was also obvious that the terminus of the line, in the provincial capital, was equally vulnerable to government meddling, and so could serve as a lever to extract bribes. A visit with the provincial governor did nothing to assuage my concerns; he said all the right words, but I could sense his disdain for the central government. Ergo, I knew that we could not expect effective cover from Moscow to prevent double dealing. At this remove from
the nation’s capital, the local bureaucrats could not care less about what functionaries in the Moscow ministries ten time zones away might think or direct.

The final obstacle was the fact that there was no single entity at Sovetskaya Gavan with which to deal. Rather, I found a host of organizations, ranging from independent owners of port-related businesses to labor unions and fishermen associations. Sharing no common interests, they were competitive, and one of them was probably criminally controlled. The day before my departure, I called them all together for a very terse meeting, during which I laid out the minimum essential elements of any deal that Kiewit might seriously consider. At the top of the list was their formation of a common entity possessing all the authority requisite to creating a single port operation, negotiating construction contracts, and making commercial arrangements with shipping companies they expected to use the port facilities. I also needed to see a business plan for an up-and-running port, a plan that as well depicted expected profit as a function of projected commercial activity. To my surprise, one member of the group, who seemed to carry some real weight, stepped up to the challenge.

The long and short of this story is that they made a valiant try, but at the end of the day, the obstacles proved too great. This would be a multi-billion dollar project which remained far beyond Kiewit’s means and risk tolerance. So, after a second round of visits between Omaha and Russia, lots of vodka and tons of paper, I terminated the venture. It turned out to be a side-show for the main event: my venture into the world of clean gasoline.

Like the defunct port initiative, the next opportunity also came out of the blue, in the form of a knock on my door by the new “D” Group’s Chief Financial Officer, Ann McCollough, a young woman who had built a terrific reputation as a money manager. A key aspect of her portfolio was searching out opportunities, and she was about to take a briefing from an entrepreneur who was pitching a novel approach to producing additives to make gasoline burn cleaner. The link to my energy focus sounded tenuous, but I elected to listen. And, listen I did, with a consequence that would dominate my tenure at Kiewit, take me deep inside the Machiavellian universe of global oil refining, automobile mileage standards and the tangled politics of ethanol production. The confluence of these powerful issues would lead me to spend several million dollars of PKS money, and to take the initial steps toward building that half-billion-dollar plant in Alberta.

Concurrently, with Dorene, I spent two years soliciting eight million dollars for the Salvation Army of Omaha (just the two of us, no staff); served on two high-profile commissions, one national, the other international; benefitted from financial good fortune beyond all expectation; and created the Second

Chance Foundation (SCF) with the self-appointed mission of reducing the dangers posed by legacy nuclear weapons stocks and policies. In retrospect, it seems almost unimaginable that all of these events and outcomes transpired in just five years. All but one, creating SCF, were the consequence of my employment at Kiewit and, more specifically, my relationship with Walter and his wife, Sue. As always, Dorene was very much involved in that relationship, as a traveling companion to Southeast Asia, my fund-raising partner, a director on the board of a half-dozen Omaha service organizations, an officer in the Second Chance Foundation, and president of our family charitable foundation. The associated stories continue to be very much hers as well as mine. Although they took place in parallel, I will treat them in separate chapters to ease the burden on the reader. The balance of this chapter traces without interruption the rise and fall of my energy venture from its inception in mid-1994 to its termination four years later.

The presentation I took at Ann’s behest was the work of one David Hallberg, who cut a less than imposing figure. Looking to be in his mid-30s, casually dressed and clad in cowboy boots, David did not immediately inspire confidence; his appearance and manner were the antithesis of what I had come to expect in the halls of Kiewit. However, once he launched into his pitch, which required intense concentration simply to grasp the essentials, it was clear he was not only very intelligent and knowledgeable but also deeply passionate about his subject. Dave was a pioneer of the clean gasoline era, having helped author the 1990 Amendments to the Clean Air Act that had set challenging new standards for tailpipe emissions from cars and trucks. The burden for meeting those standards fell on the automobile industry and the oil companies, who had for years individually and collectively resisted every effort to impose such standards, sometimes as co-conspirators, sometimes as mortal enemies. With the handwriting on the wall, they were finally being forced to come to grips with finding new technologies to meet the mark. Some were in hand, albeit concealed from public knowledge; others required a whole new approach, either to changing the composition of gasoline, or altering how it was burned in a combustion chamber and its residue processed.

Dave’s interest was in changing the composition of gasoline by blending, into refined gasoline, additives that would cause the mix to burn sufficiently cleanly to meet EPA standards. The most well-known oxygenates were three in number: methyl tertiary butyl ether, or MTBE; ethyl tertiary butyl ether, or ETBE; and ethanol, an alcohol product derived from breaking down the starch in corn, sugar cane, saw grass and other organic substances through a fermentation process that is used in making moonshine. Congressmen from
corn-producing states had a well-worn homily about ethanol – “drink the best and drive the rest.”

The heart of Dave’s pitch was a process dubbed “Multiple Oxygenate Production,” or MOP, that he had invented and patented. Using two principal feed stocks, natural gas and corn, MOP produced ethanol, methanol, isobutylene, MTBE and ETBE in a single industrial complex. Dave’s patent (US 5070016 A, for you engineering buffs) was premised on a stroke of great ingenuity. He perceived that by integrating the syntheses of ethanol, methanol and isobutylene, three disparate processes, these primary products, together with various byproducts of their individual synthesis such as carbon dioxide and hydrogen, could be further combined to produce MTBE and ETBE. With the prospect of surging demand for the three oxygenates, and the already lofty price of methanol and isobutylene, the profit potential of a MOP complex looked enormous.

By the end of the meeting, Dave had captured our interest, to the point that Ann and I agreed to go to the next step, which was hiring a consultant to examine the strength of the patent, the validity of the technology and the rigor of Dave’s financial spread sheets. When the answers came back positive on all three scores, I began exercising due diligence in earnest, delving deeply into the history of clean gasoline, assessing the downsides and flying to Scottsdale, Arizona, to meet with Dave and the four financial partners who had backed him with the cash required to put a fledgling company together. I found them to be a very mixed bag, and it was not clear to me what value they would bring to the venture, with the exception of one quiet young man who, I felt, showed promise.

Once I had a good grasp of the essentials, I briefed Rich Jaros, who was intrigued enough to bring Walter into the picture. He, in turn, was taken with the scale of the prospective venture, and with the fact that it had promise of making Kiewit a ground-floor player in a vast new economic field. With his blessing, I had Dave come back to Omaha for a meeting to explore terms. My proposal was that Kiewit buy out his four partners, buy the patent, and form a new company, Kiewit Fuels Inc. (KFI), with me as the CEO and Dave as the president, salary to be negotiated. Dave was receptive to all of that with the exception of dumping his partners, to whom he showed fierce loyalty. His argument was that they had had a lot of skin in the game early, and they therefore deserved a chance to profit from potential success. Struck by his passionate support of his partners, I proposed to Rich that we bring them on board and see how they performed, with a buy-out clause viewed as fair by all parties. He agreed, as did Walter, a contract was drafted and signed, and we had the beginnings of a worthy partner to a California Energy joint venture.
The PKS lawyer opined it was time to create a new entity to house this nascent corporate empire, and thus was born Kiewit Energy Group. My orbit was expanding, but I had yet to make a dime for PKS. To the contrary, I was about to begin spending house money at an accelerating rate.

That process began with moving Dave to Omaha, along with his crew, only one of whom came on a permanent basis. The other three elected to take temporary residence, signaling less than full confidence in the ultimate outcome of the venture. Within a year, those three had taken the buy-out and disappeared. I replaced them with two terrific young men from Kiewit Diversified, to bolster Dave and his last remaining partner. Despite some internal squabbles and personality clashes, this proved a fairly tight-knit group. With the added help of consultants, we were able to push forward this hugely complex undertaking, whose principal moving parts would take me back to the halls of Congress, into a multitude of corporate board rooms at home and abroad, and in front of countless audiences as a pitch man for not just Kiewit Fuels, but the clean fuels effort as a whole. Along the way, in addition to necessarily becoming something of an expert in the complex chemistry of oil refining, I was occupied with reading voluminous financial spreadsheets, dealing with canny Wall Street investment houses, negotiating with greedy construction firms and oil companies, and networking with the vast universe of players in the global gasoline business.

In the early days I felt that I was in a bit over my head, and I probably was, but I had enough expertise at my fingertips to stay out of real trouble. I was now up to my eyeballs in a classic business task known as “project development,” an undertaking that was familiar in concept but wholly foreign in execution. In this case, it first entailed finding guaranteed feedstock suppliers for grain and butane, both situated near robust transportation nets; a pool of skilled labor close by the plant location; product buyers willing to sign contracts that would protect our pricing exposure; an engineering and construction firm that would build the plant within our budget; and an investment house to arrange financing without charging extravagant fees. In parallel, we were lobbying to create and sustain government support for construction and product subsidies; putting the fledgling company name, Kiewit Fuels Inc., in front of the constituencies who could make or break our venture; and diligently tracking what I thought were the most important risk factors. At the outset, I thought these to be competing technologies, unfavorable trends in feedstock and gasoline pricing, and loss of political support. As it turned out, the fate of our project turned on a much more mundane consideration: the integrity of existing storage tanks.
Feedstock supply was the long pole in the tent, because of the huge quantities of grain and natural gas required to feed the ravenous MOP process, which would operate around-the-clock except for periodic maintenance. This would entail a large dedicated gas line direct to the plant, as well as a road network that could accommodate an unbroken stream of huge grain trucks. Furthermore, the labor force essential to run such a complex refinery could not be hired off just any street, thus demanding proximity to a significant metropolitan area. After long analysis, every prospective location in the United States proved unsuitable because of unsolvable siting issues and prohibitive costs. That left us with two suitable locations in Canada, Montreal and Alberta. Both were very attractive, but Alberta had the edge because of its geographic proximity to what proved to be our most promising market: California. Alberta also had abundant supplies of corn and natural gas, was very progressive in promoting clean gasoline, and had a strongly supportive provincial governor who staged an elaborate public ceremony to announce the site selection.

California became our prime marketing target for some of the same reasons, most importantly its mandate that oxygenates be incorporated into a percentage of gasoline sold in the state, and its projections for population growth and fuel demand. This decision drove the list of potential buyers who might partner with us: Arco, Sun and Ecofuel, the last a huge conglomerate based in Milan, Italy. We spent many hours courting each of them, one of the most elaborate kabuki dances in which I have ever engaged. The global oil business is as competitive as any on earth, the players are brutal and, if the circumstances require, wholly immoral. Of the three companies we pursued, Ecofuel was the most compatible and, had our venture succeeded, the most likely to come onboard. We exchanged home-and-home visits over the course of two years, during which we developed strong mutual confidence that gave promise of an agreeable set of terms.

Lacking expertise in the agricultural sector, and mindful of the prodigious amount of grain required to feed the ethanol production, I turned to ConAgra, the Omaha-based food giant, with which the reader is already familiar. They became willing partners, as did CalEnergy, with whom we had an existing 50/50 joint venture partnership in geothermal power and who thus had experience in building large industrial facilities. With David Sokol in harness with me and Kiewit’s far-reaching construction experience, I had imagined that selecting an engineering and construction firm would be the least difficult of our challenges. Dead wrong. It proved the most frustrating and disappointing piece of the entire puzzle. Again, after interviewing a number of possible contractors, we narrowed the list to three: Kiewit, Bechtel and Fluor Daniels. Kiewit seemed...
a natural choice, but the construction side could never get comfortable with
the project, having never built a refinery. Bechtel was also attractive, since the
company was already in a joint venture with Kiewit Diversified. Finally, Fluor
Daniels was as experienced as any firm in the world in building plants similar
to ours, and therefore should have been able to give us a fixed-price estimate
with little difficulty. Instead, both Bechtel and Fluor chose to game us, starting
with outrageous bids, hiding their calculations and dragging out the negotia-
tions to try and put us under time pressure. After a secretary in the Bechtel
negotiator’s office inadvertently emailed us a copy of their game plan that
showed they intended to stiff us, I crossed them off the list. Fluor thus be-
came the sole remaining prospect, but Dave and I were not having success in
negotiating what we considered a reasonable price, one that fit our business
model’s estimate. Hence, our prospects began to dim, and the ensuing tasks
did nothing to brighten them.

Indeed, choosing an investment partner was much the same story. It in-
volved interviewing all of the big Wall Street money firms, poring through
thousands of pages of fine print to tease out the show-stoppers, pounding
down their fee proposals, assessing the strength of their sector analysts, and
settling on a project manager we felt we could trust. While important, this
was not an immediate priority; to avoid a misstep, I went about the task at a
measured pace.

David Hallberg was a past master of the government support game. He
knew the Hill inside and out, had drafted key legislation and owned one of the
most voluminous Rolodexes I had ever seen. His networking skills were unsur-
passed, and after watching him in action over several months, I felt very com-
fortable on this score. His mentor was none other than Senator Tom Daschle,
a leading figure in the Democratic caucus. He and Dave steered me in all of
the right directions, in and out of Congressional offices, behind the lectern at
the right conventions, and even into the role of president of the Clean Fuels
Foundation, the new public entity we created to bolster my profile.

In the end, the fate of the venture came down to risk management, a
process that was moving beyond my control on two fronts: plant construc-
tion, as noted above, and an entirely-unanticipated eventuality. The problem
arose in California, which was well along in introducing MTBE into its gasoline.
Unfortunately, a small but significant number of storage tanks in the state were
in poor condition and began to release MTBE into the soil and, in some cases,
into ground water, where it was immediately and noxiously detectable. MTBE
was already in the docket for its potential health risks, and the ensuing public
outcry, fanned by shock radio jocks up and down the West Coast, spurred the
lawmakers into banning the product altogether. The blow to our business plan was fatal. In mid-1998, I went to Walter and told him it was time to pull the plug. This was hardly the outcome I expected at the outset of my employment with Kiewit, but it fell into the “nothing ventured, nothing gained” column, and the sums entailed were but a fraction of the company’s annual revenue.

On the geothermal side of my duties, I had become alarmed by the political climate in Indonesia, whose deterioration I observed during recurring trips to the region. The warning flag went up on a visit to Jakarta, when the driver of a taxi I had taken for a short in-town trip began to openly criticize the Suharto regime, taking a risk that heretofore would have been unthinkable. To me that meant that the government was in big trouble. This and other trouble signs prompted Walter Scott to rethink the joint venture, leading him to sell our fifty percent share to our partner. The proceeds from the sale went toward the capitalization of a new Kiewit Diversified start-up called Level Three, a follow-on communications venture to the highly successful MFS. That decision to divest and reinvest proved prescient in both of its aspects. First, chaos soon enveloped Indonesia, leading to the downfall of the Suharto regime, whereupon the energy contracts blew up, sparing Kiewit the long, messy unwinding of its assets and a bruising court battle to get the insurance company to pay for the huge losses. Second, Level Three became an overnight success, with the stock price quickly soaring past a hundred dollars a share. This was of significant import to me, as I had been allotted “D” stock options as part of my compensation. With my impending departure from Kiewit, due to the demise of Kiewit Fuels and sale of the joint venture, it became prudent to exercise those options at what proved a very opportune time.

Our financial good fortune was accompanied by welcome news on the family front. We had celebrated the birth of granddaughter Colleen Nicole in April of 1995. She greeted the world in Portland, Maine, where Brett and Lee had relocated from Cincinnati to take advantage of a job offer from Idexx, an up-and-coming company specializing in veterinary pharmaceuticals. That opportunity lasted less than two years; true to his values, our son left Idexx in early 1997, after the company pushed him into an ethical corner. He landed on his feet in a marketing position with Lexmark, the printer manufacturer, located in Lexington, Kentucky. Lisa and Mike also enriched our family with the birth of Thomas Jackson (T.J.) Herring, in March of 1998 in San Francisco, where Mike was starting up the corporate ladder as an auditor with Ernst and Young, one of the Big Six accounting firms. They had taken a small but charming apartment in the middle of a city where Mike had deep roots and his family lived close by.
In brief, as the 1990s drew to a close, we had relatively few cares, a great deal to be thankful for and a strong desire to follow the long Omaha tradition of giving back to the community. As with so many others, Walter and Sue Scott made a transformative change in our lives, giving us financial security, the opportunity to pursue the passion chronicled in later chapters, and the immensely gratifying chance to give back to those in need. After discussions with our advisors, we elected to take a share of our assets and create the Dorene and Lee Butler Family Foundation, with Brett and Lisa joining us as directors. Although small by Omaha standards, the income from the endowment allows us to support a wide range of service organizations, guided by our shorthand purpose of “Helping others to help themselves.” For reasons I will touch on in the next chapter, we selected the Boys and Girls Club of Omaha for our first major gift, a grant of one million dollars. As I write this, that seed corn has helped elevate the family of clubs in the metropolitan area to the first rank of the region’s many sister services, and to national acclaim. Equally gratifying was the club board’s decision to name the main campus for our family. The story of this mutual love affair, how it expanded into broader civic roles at the local and national levels and eventually drew me back into the nuclear weapons arena, now follows.
PART THREE:

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Humanist
In keeping with the rich Kiewit tradition of serving the public interest through participation on local and national boards, Dorene and I joined a number of organizations, supported fundraising campaigns and became welcome new donors by virtue of our charitable foundation. Dorene, who was already well known in the service arena through her membership on the Omaha Community Playhouse and Salvation Army boards, now burnished her volunteer credentials by joining several other boards, including those of the Joslyn Museum, the Western Heritage Museum, and the Aksarben Guild. I include our experiences with these organizations because they illuminate why we came to hold Omaha in such high regard and relished making it our first and what we thought would be our last hometown.

While still in uniform, my role had been limited to serving as an Aksarben governor and a member of the United Way board, but that orbit now expanded greatly, beginning with Sue Scott’s request that I assess the effectiveness of the Boys Club of Omaha, as it was known in 1994. She also asked me to consider joining her as a director, but I asked if I could reserve my answer until I had done my evaluation. After a hard look, I gave her my report, which concluded with five actions I deemed essential to the future of the organization and to my coming on the board.

The first stemmed from the fact that, following a laudable decision of the national board a decade earlier to open the clubs to girls, every other chapter in the United States save ours had changed their clubs’ names to Boys and Girls Club (BGC). While our three clubs had dutifully opened their doors to girls, the chapter had perversely failed to fall into line with the name change. In my view, that sent a deprecating message to the many girls now participating. Second, the director had to be replaced: it was clear to me that his drive and vision had greatly diminished over the course of his long tenure. Third,
board had to commit to a major upgrade of the club’s facilities at each of its three locations, all being in poor repair. Fourth, the qualifications and salaries of the staff needed to be elevated. However devoted, they were ill-trained and underpaid for the needs of club members, many of whom had deep-seated emotional issues requiring expert intervention. And, finally, the club needed to expand its membership – by a lot – to head off a growing gang problem in Omaha. Sue agreed with all of these recommendations and put her considerable clout behind getting the board’s approval. The moment the name was changed and the search for a new director initiated, I joined the board and took the lead in meeting the remaining objectives.

Of these, the most challenging was upgrading the facilities, a task that led me into negotiations with the head of Boys’ Town, the world-renowned operation on the western outskirts of Omaha, to buy an eighteen-acre charter-school campus situated in the northern reaches of the city, in the heart of the black community where the most vulnerable children lived. With its athletic fields and 200,000-square-foot main building, the facility was perfectly suited to house both the North Omaha Boys and Girls Club and the headquarters that managed all three locations. The school had been established by Father Val Peter, the Director of Boys Town, in answer to criticism that he had become too enamored of expanding his operations nationwide at the expense of Omaha’s needs. Its status as a charter school had made it a novelty when its doors had opened ten years earlier, but the Nebraska legislature subsequently required that every child receive an education by whatever means were most appropriate, whereupon charter schools became more common, and Father Val let it be known that he wanted to get out of that business. With the BGC board’s approval that we undertake to buy the campus, I approached him in the fall of 1994. His asking price was $11 million, which I considered greatly inflated, so I decided to wait until the following spring, when he would have to face a decision about remaining open for the fall semester. As teachers and parents began pressing to know their fate, he thought better of his position, and we settled on a price of $3 million. After the deal was done, I struck an agreement with the Omaha Public Schools to keep a charter-school operation on the campus from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. during weekdays, so that at the end of the school day the kids most in need could remain at the campus and participate in club activities. As I noted earlier, the several clubs in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area became models of excellence, winning top national honors. To this day, I draw immense satisfaction from the monthly reports that chronicle their steady progress and record of service.

My more demanding test as a fund-raiser came in the fall of 1994 when
Walter asked me, together with Dorene, to lead a $10-million fund-raising campaign for the Salvation Army. He and Sue had been asked to take on the job but, as was often the case, their community service plate was full at the time. Since Dorene was on the Salvation Army board and we had both earned Walter’s confidence, we were their logical surrogates. Although we lacked their standing in the community and their personal wealth to make up any shortfall, we were equally strong believers in the Salvation Army mission and had great respect for the staff, perhaps the most able and dedicated of any service organization in the region.

We began by sitting down with the Colonel in charge of the local operations, responsible not only for Omaha but also a district encompassing all of Nebraska and parts of South Dakota and western Iowa. He walked us through the needs he wanted to address with the proceeds of the capital campaign, which he in fact envisioned as ten million dollars. I saw immediately that this was too ambitious; it put the goal on a par with the annual United Way drive, a huge undertaking with which this initiative would compete. I held my counsel until Dorene and I had completed an assessment of the twenty-one Salvation Army programs and its facilities. Most of its services were based at a one-acre campus dominated by a multi-story building that until the previous year had housed a hospital. When the hospital moved to a new facility, the campus had been offered to the Salvation Army for one dollar. That bargain allowed the consolidation of most of its activities and programs, but the aging infrastructure needed major work to upgrade it and tailor it to Salvation Army operations. Additionally, the organization had debts to retire and was in dire need of an endowment to free it from constantly appealing for money to cover operating costs. In short, the campaign needed to be reduced in scope and to have its funding goals reprioritized.

After winning the Colonel’s agreement, we took our revised campaign targets to the board. I told them I had five conditions that must be met before Dorene and I could take on such a major responsibility. First, to reduce the goal to $8.5 million dollars; second, to defer new construction in favor of upgrading the existing facilities; third, to pay off all existing debt; fourth, to build an endowment to support recurring expenses; and, finally, to change the name from Salvation Army to Salvation Air Force. I got most of my bargain: they agreed to the first four conditions and I caved on the fifth.

The campaign was a grinding, two-year slog that introduced us to many of Omaha’s most well-to-do citizens. In the process we sorted out the givers and the takers, the movers and the shakers. We were also exposed to the city’s dark underbelly as we observed Winter Nightwatch, a meals-on-wheels
service that provided hot food to Omaha’s least well-to-do when temperatures plunged. I shall never forget the evening I tailed the driver into dense brush below the Western Heritage Museum, mushing through deep snow to an abandoned U-Haul trailer sheltering a family of three. They sat huddled in torn blankets, candles flickering, a girl perhaps six years old holding a scrap of a doll. Nightwatch also visited derelicts in wretched tenement apartments, prostitutes in back alleys and sad-eyed kids in the mean streets of North Omaha. Dorene had a memorable meeting over the mobile food counter with a tough old bird named Sally, who asked for two servings of the night’s entrée. She explained that the other was for her husband, who had been stabbed and was immobile. Shocked, Dorene asked who had attacked him, to which Sally cackled in reply, “Well, hell, Darlin,’ I did!”

These experiences, and many more, reaffirmed our devotion to the Salvation Army and the campaign. We decided to undertake its direction by ourselves, foregoing the usual practice of creating a committee, appointing sector heads and bringing in experts to devise a strategy for approaching donors. Instead, we invited couples to my office for lunch, during which we talked about what we had learned by walking in the footsteps of the dedicated Salvation Army professionals in their irreplaceable role serving the area’s most needy citizens. Those intimate conversations, in conjunction with several anchor gifts from Omaha’s largest corporations, such as ConAgra and Union Pacific, put us within $2.5 million dollars of our goal, at which point the going got very tough. We were forced to play our hole card, undertaking a solicitation we had been husbanding until crunch time: the Lied Foundation. Ernest Lied, long deceased, had made a fortune running an Omaha car dealership and later moved to Las Vegas. The administrator of the foundation was Christina Hixson, an Iowa-born high school graduate who in 1944 had borrowed $600 from an uncle and moved to Omaha, where she joined Lied’s dealership as a switchboard operator. She moved up the ranks as his secretary, accountant, assistant and business consultant. When Lied died, he put his entire fortune in her hands, which she then multiplied many times over by shrewd investment in Las Vegas real estate. She was a tough lady and a hard sell.

To our relief, she accepted our invitation to come to Omaha from her Nevada headquarters and review the Salvation Army’s work first-hand. We prepared for her visit as if she were the SAC Inspector General, planning every step and every minute of the eight hours she had accorded us. Christina was a slight woman, iron-willed, extremely bright and deeply expert in scoping out the worth of organizations that came knocking on her door. She stayed at a Motel 6, put on no airs, and was all business. Over the course of the day, as
our Salvation Army team went through its carefully rehearsed paces, she became increasingly taken with their devotion and professionalism. As the last slide came down, she smiled, thanked her hosts, and committed to the full amount of our request, bringing the campaign to a close. All that remained was a round of recognition ceremonies for the major donors, especially the Lied Foundation, whose name went up on the façade of the beautifully renovated main building. The Salvation Army later honored Dorene and me with its Others Award, making us feel embraced by a city that had taken us into its heart. We were enveloped by a sense of belonging, of having found the perfect community as we settled into our twenty-ninth address.

Over the years from 1994 through 1998, we were active in many other organizations. I worked with my fellow Bellevue University board members to get the school through its accreditation process and into long-distance learning, did a strategic planning review to help guide the Omaha Community Playhouse board in fixing a debilitating governance problem, chaired a multi-million dollar grant program for Children’s Hospital, and helped raise $30 million to build a permanent home for the SAC Museum. Dorene and her friends, Barbara Call and Debbie Trowbridge, became valued civic function planners and organizers, in the forefront of the talented ladies making good things happen in Omaha. As a measure of her standing, Dorene was chosen to be the city’s representative to Colin Powell’s nationwide “America’s Promise” campaign, which has done so much to give disadvantaged children hope for a brighter future.

Her most gratifying contribution came as a member of the regional committee to plan Nebraska’s four-day-long celebration of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, part of a nationwide initiative sparked by President Bush. At the request of Bob Daugherty, the venerable founder of Valmont Industries and chairman of the World War II commemorative undertaking, she agreed to chair an effort to create a permanent memorial situated in Heartland of America Park, adjacent to the ConAgra International headquarters in downtown Omaha. This entailed another daunting fund-raising effort, one that greatly benefitted from the generosity of one of Nebraska’s unsung heroes, Lee Seeman, the state’s most decorated World War II vet. He was brought to our attention by Bob Daugherty, one of Lee’s high school classmates who, like Lee, had returned safely from the war and gone on to make a large fortune through dint of hard work and smart investing. Lee lived a very quiet, almost reclusive life with his wife of fifty years. While not known as a philanthropist, he accepted our invitation for lunch at Kiewit Plaza, where Dorene had arranged for a mock-up of the planned memorial to be displayed by the sculptor, John Lajba. His concept, inspired by Dorene’s vision, encompassed seven
life-size figures cast in bronze: a returning soldier embracing his young son and daughter; a lad pulling a wagon filled with scrap metal, commemorating the drive that won the Pulitzer Prize for the *Omaha World Herald*; Rosie the Riveter, a tribute to the women building bombers at Offutt; and a farmer and his wife – a Gold Star mother – clutching an American flag.

Lee Seeman was seized with the sculptor, the memorial and its planned location on a rise overlooking the 15-acre lake at the center of the park. He told us we could count on his support and then recounted two astounding war stories from his days as a fledgling B-17 pilot. The first was a gripping tale of the flight of twelve brand-new aircraft that set off for England by way of Greenland. On the final leg, the formation encountered a blizzard that scattered the planes and forced Lee’s ice-laden craft down to a few feet above the waves. Miraculously, the spray from the salt water cleared the ice and allowed him to make landfall, one of the six bombers that survived the storm. The second story, even more harrowing, was about the February day that Lee ditched his B-17 into the frigid waters of the English Channel. He saved his crew by bringing them forward to the nose section prior to touching down, at which point the tail broke off the fuselage. The wreckage stayed afloat long enough for the ten men to launch their one remaining life raft, which could hold only nine without risk of foundering in the choppy seas. Lee stayed in the icy water, strapped to the raft by bootlaces. Help arrived in time to save the entire crew, and Lee was none the worse for wear, save for the broken ankle he had suffered when the rudder pedals violently cycled as the tail departed. After the war, he returned to Omaha, built a business, invested wisely in a budding entrepreneur named Warren Buffett, and over the years watched his stock grow in value to hundreds of millions of dollars.

My public service extended to the national level as well, on three fronts. The first deepened my engagement with the Council on Foreign Relations. The Council imposed on itself a limit of three thousand members, many who lived in New York or D.C., with the rest scattered across the country. I had been a member going back to 1976, when Perry Smith had sponsored me into this exclusive organization. Council President Les Gelb invited me to attend the first of a newly-instituted series of annual meetings aimed at bringing to the New York headquarters a cross-section of members from around the nation. I was happy to attend, as Les is one of God’s great people, erudite, eloquent and insightful, and we developed a close friendship. His initiative proved very popular, and I became a fixture when, at Les’ urging, I gave an extemporaneous talk about America’s post-Cold War role as a world power. The audience seemed to appreciate it, and as a consequence Les soon asked me to participate in
another Council initiative, this one a formal Council on Foreign Relations Commission established to examine the question of NATO’s role after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. The group was jointly chaired by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and former Defense Secretary Harold Brown, and we held our first session in March of 1995. As was his wont, Dr. Kissinger tried to highjack the proceedings by predetermining the outcome—a cheeky move, even for him, given the stature of his co-chair and a group of high-profile players including the likes of the noted investor, George Soros. Kissinger began with a monologue asserting NATO’s “irreplaceable” role as an integrating force in Europe. He allowed that some tweaking of its charter might be appropriate, but otherwise NATO wasn’t broken and didn’t need fixing. He then went around the table asking for comment; there was none until he got to me.

Put off by the notion that we were there to rubber stamp a foregone conclusion, I was not in a mood to be circumspect. “There is,” I began, “a little-known corollary to George Santayana’s famous dictum that those who fail to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them. The flip side of that homily is that those who learn history’s lessons too well are also doomed to repeat them.” Kissinger gave me a puzzled look. “From that perspective,” I continued, “I believe there are several reasons to not only fundamentally rethink NATO’s purposes, but to consider standing it down and starting over with a clean sheet of organizational paper.” Kissinger’s look now suggested mayhem. “For openers, NATO’s raison d’être, fielding military capabilities to deter the Warsaw Pact and its sponsor, the Soviet Union, has mercifully evaporated. Second, therefore, Western Europe’s principal challenge now is to begin integrating its former enemies, especially Russia, into the web of social and economic organizations that have brought union to states that had warred for hundreds of years. Third, on that count, perpetuating, let alone expanding, NATO is the worst possible signal to send to Russia, a defeated foe whose sensibilities are rubbed raw and which retains an arsenal of nuclear warheads numbering in the thousands. Fourth, as long as the United States continues to prop up NATO’s military capabilities, our European partners will have no incentive to do what they have never done, even at the height of Cold War tensions: build a fully integrated force with standardized equipment and policies. Fifth, NATO will become an albatross around our neck, dragging its heels when confronted with intractable new threats and quarreling with the U.S. when our policies and views conflict. Finally, it is time for Europe to get on with becoming a more advanced union, with a common currency and ultimately a constitution. In that light, NATO is at best a sideshow and at worst a distraction
that will only hinder the pursuit of these larger strategic objectives.”

When I relinquished the microphone, the mood in the room had markedly changed. A majority of the commission sided with my view, whereupon Dr. Kissinger became apoplectic. He called a break, packed his briefcase, walked out of the room and into Les Gelb’s office, where he tendered his resignation as co-chairman. A nonplussed Harold Brown was left to pick up the pieces and try to find some consensus among a now thoroughly-discombobulated commission. To his credit, he did just that, guiding the group to a unanimous report that gave a very balanced “pros and cons” recitation of how to think about the question of NATO’s future rather than trying to prescribe a definitive answer.

A second stint as a commission member at the national level was more consequential and garnered wide notoriety from the outset. It was prompted by the more ardent of the Stars Wars supporters, who saw emerging Third World missile threats as a way to pressure the Clinton Administration on missile defense. Fuel was added to that spark by anger in the Republican-dominated Congress over suspicions that the Administration had played politics with a CIA National Intelligence Estimate, or NIE, that projected ballistic missile threats to the United States out to the year 2015. The driving concern among many members was that, because the State Department was engaged in delicate diplomacy with North Korea, the White House had downplayed the threat from Pyongyang in NIE 95-1, as it was known. After stormy partisan debate, a compromise was struck to establish a commission of nine members, four appointed by the Democrat minority, four plus a chairman appointed by the Republican majority. Don Rumsfeld, back in the private sector as the CEO at Searle, agreed to serve as chairman. I was named by Senator Tom Daschle, as were Barry Blechman, Chairman of the Stimson Center; Dick Garwin, an eminent nuclear physicist; and Jim Woolsey, a conservative Democrat and former CIA Director. In addition to Chairman Rumsfeld, the Republican choices were my former mentor, now retired Air Force General Larry Welch; Paul Wolfowitz, my erstwhile adversary from Joint Staff days, who had joined the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies; Bill Graham, a former Reagan Science Advisor and a staunch conservative; and Bill Schneider, another well-worn conservative, who had been in the Washington arena for decades, serving on numerous boards and commissions. I knew all of my fellow members save Graham and Schneider, both of whom I soon came to hold in high regard. This was a very smart, experienced and able group whose patience was immediately tested by the very reluctant target of our attention.

Our first meeting was held in January of 1998 in the Old Executive Office Building, across from the White House. We received an initial round of briefings
from the CIA, most of which I found useless to our purpose. I held my tongue for the moment, however, except to say that we really needed to be meeting a few miles away, at CIA headquarters, where we would have immediate access to the material and experts relevant to the question we were exploring. Don Rumsfeld agreed: when we assembled again the following week, we had a new venue at the CIA Headquarters Building in Langley, Virginia, much to the dismay of Agency personnel who correctly viewed us as the enemy. The second meeting was filled with more briefings, some of the three hundred we would take over the next eight months. Again, they were mostly Pablum. In light of the commitment I had made, flying from Omaha every week for an all-day session, I was angry and I was not about to put up with any more of this nonsense. As the end of the meeting approached, I pulled Rumsfeld aside and told him I thought we were getting the idiot treatment. The Agency intended to stiff us as long as possible in the hope that we would dry up and blow away, and I was not going to be a party to such chicanery. He had begun to feel stirrings of the same concern, so when we reconvened he polled the group and got the same reaction. With that, Don picked up the phone, called CIA Director George Tenet and asked him to join us – now.

Director Tenet blew into the room, cigar in hand, full of himself until Don Rumsfeld poured cold water over his act. “George,” he said, “At this point in our deliberations, my next step is to call the Republican and Democratic leadership in the Congress and tell them that we are disbanding the commission because of lack of cooperation from the CIA. That will, I strongly suspect, be the headline in tomorrow’s Washington Post.” With that, the director told us we had his undivided attention, listened hard, and fixed the problem. From that point forth, we got every clearance and access to every briefer essential to our mission.

As the months rolled by, despite the strong ideological differences among some of its members, the Rumsfeld Commission began to jell. We were served by a competent staff, headed by Dr. Steve Cambone, who became Rumsfeld’s alter ego. I found him a bit presumptuous, acting as if he were on an equal footing with the commissioners and overtly trying to shape the outcome of our study to his preference. However, since we had also become very efficient, I held my counsel, waiting for the end game.

Our analysis covered nearly two dozen countries, three of which, given the era, moved to the center of attention: Iraq, Iran and, of course, North Korea. The first proved very difficult to fathom because of a complete lack of human intelligence and the unfortunate termination in 1993 of the United Nations inspection regime imposed after Operation Desert Storm. In the late 1990s,
Saddam Hussein was trumpeting a renewed capability to build nuclear weapons, and we members of the commission were disposed to believe him. We also found hard evidence that Iran was receiving significant help from A.Q. Khan, the rogue Pakistani physicist who had brought his country to the threshold of nuclear superpowerdom. Most disturbing, however, was what turned up in our insistent probing of the data on North Korea that had informed NIE 95-1. We saw compelling evidence of Dr. Khan’s hand-feeding Pyongyang’s ambition to create a nuclear arsenal with ballistic missiles able to deliver warheads over intercontinental ranges. Worse, we concluded that the White House had indeed chosen to downplay and ignore this evidence, thus giving credence to the suspicion that had prompted the formation of the commission.

Further, by the end of our term, I had become dismayed at the loss of professionalism in the Agency in the four years since my retirement. The young analysts who briefed us were well below the standard I had come to expect during the many years that I had been engaged with the intelligence community. Their language, viewgraphs and thinking were imprecise, and their manner often bordered on insolence. In front of a group with a great deal of knowledge and extensive experience, this was not just unprofessional; it was foolish. The final straw for me was the Agency’s response to a task levied by the commissioners to estimate the likelihood of India and Pakistan conducting a nuclear test in the foreseeable future. The answer was, “highly unlikely.” One week later, the two nations conducted dueling tests. This was a completely unacceptable intelligence failure, one that augured very poorly for our nation’s security. If we did not know what our friends were doing, God help us in probing our enemies’ intentions. In my estimation, the Agency was suffering from successive body blows: twenty years earlier, as a result of President Carter’s extremely ill-advised decision, it had lost its covert intelligence arm; and over the last few years, as a result of equally ill-advised Clinton-era budget cuts, centuries of its surviving experience had been driven into retirement.

With the information and assessments provided by Agency’s experts consistently falling short of our expectations, we turned to outsiders to assist our thinking. Boeing, for example, provided a prescient set of engineering drawings as to how North Korea might use modestly-upgraded existing technology to build a three-stage long-range missile. A former Israeli general gave us invaluable insights into Iranian strategic planning and how his nation would likely respond to an attack by weapons of mass destruction. We did our own interpretation of photographic evidence of a Pakistani cargo aircraft on the ground in Pyongyang. Finally, we built a matrix of disparate pieces of data and distilled from it a vast international web of black-market transactions that
went far beyond anything the CIA had imagined.

After seven months, we began the drafting process, which became increasingly contentious as the language became more precise. The rub came in finding consensus with respect to our own projected threat timeline. As the debate became more and more protracted, I slipped away from the table one morning, commandeered a word processor and created a proposed one-page summary of our findings. The key element was an estimate that “selected Third World countries could build and deploy a ballistic missile threat against the United States in as little as five years, a threat against which we would have little or no warning.” The group rallied around this formulation, allowing Steve Cambone to set about putting together a final report.

The commission created a second document in the form of a side letter, running twenty single-spaced pages, to the Director of the CIA detailing our concerns about the deficiencies we had observed during our deliberations. In addition to the CIA Director, we provided copies to the chairmen of the House and Senate Select Committees on Intelligence, before which we would shortly testify. Finally, we created an unclassified version of our report to satisfy the media demand for what was now a widely anticipated body of work, and a carefully-crafted public relations strategy encompassing group and individual interviews with the press. All of that went off like clockwork, beginning with closed testimony to the Senate committee, chaired by Senator Shelby of Alabama. Rumsfeld presented a summary of the report and then asked each of the commissioners to make a personal statement, leaving me to the last. Following are my comments:

Mr. Chairman, I have been retired from active duty for four and one-half years and was therefore most interested to revisit a subject which formerly commanded my attention on a daily basis. I will summarize my observations from this commission in three conclusions, in reverse order of concern. First, I was shocked to see the precipitous decline in the Russian strategic nuclear enterprise, especially the upkeep and security with respect to their warheads and stocks of fissile material. I trust the committee is equally aware of and attentive to the obvious implications. Second, I was even more taken aback by the considerable strides made by a handful of countries in the Third World in moving toward a long-range ballistic missile capability with the clear potential for delivering weapons of mass destruction. Finally, and most urgently, I was dismayed by the erosion I witnessed in the professionalism of
the nation’s intelligence community. If the several hundred briefers who appeared before the Rumsfeld Commission had been in my employ at STRATCOM, I would have fired half and sent the rest back to school. This, in my view, is by far the most clear and present danger to American security in the post-Cold War world, and if not swiftly rectified will have consequences none of us in this room can presently imagine.

The members of the committee were disquieted, to say the least. Finally, Senator Glenn spoke. “That is a very dismaying commentary on the state of our intelligence community, General Butler. What do you propose should be done?” Having anticipated his query, I had a ready reply: “Senator Glenn, that is a reasonable question, perhaps one for some other commission; this one has fulfilled its charter. However, in my view the answer lies right here, within this committee. You have the responsibility, the authority and the resources to correct this state of affairs.”

And with that, the hearing ended, the first of several over the next few days, including an invitation to address an informal session of the entire House of Representatives – an unprecedented event, I believe. That visibility generated a wide debate and controversy. The conservatives loved it, while the liberals charged that the commission was a tool of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) crazies – a not unreasonable criticism, recognizing that Rumsfeld, Graham, and Woolsey were in fact ardent Star Wars advocates. However, anticipating this tactic, we ensured that our report contained not one word about ballistic missile defenses. Further, Barry Blechman had convinced Rumsfeld to persuade Speaker Gingrich to eschew any mention of SDI at his press conference releasing our report. The focus was entirely on potential threats, on which score the North Koreans did us the timely favor of testing a three-stage Taepo-dong II missile with intercontinental range ten days after our work was published. That cemented our credentials and the apparent validity of our estimate. Unfortunately, the Clinton Administration was not about to act on either our report or the recommendations in our letter regarding the sorry state of the intelligence community. Those chickens came to roost a few years later, when the most costly lapse in the history of the Central Intelligence Agency – and the FBI – was first exposed in the twisted ruins of the World Trade Center, and then again in the non-existence of the purported weapons-of-mass-destruction programs that the Bush Administration seized upon as _casus belli_ against Saddam Hussein.

A final tour of service at the national level took me back into the world
I had left hardly a year earlier, and to which I had no intention of returning. In April of 1995, I received a letter from Professor John Holdren, one of UC Berkeley’s leading lights, inviting me to join the Committee on International Security and Arms Control, or CISAC, one of the arms of the National Research Council, which itself operates under the aegis of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). The Academy, housed in one of the magnificent marble structures lining Constitution Avenue in the nation’s capital, is a private, non-profit institution with a charter from the Congress dating to 1863 to advise the U.S. government on scientific and technical matters. CISAC had been established in 1980 to “bring the Academy’s scientific and technical talent to bear on crucial problems of peace and security.” Its reports ranged from the highly technical, such as methodologies for managing the toxic residue of nuclear reactors, to the political, such as the U.S.-Soviet nuclear relationship. The committee was limited to sixteen members with a rotating chairman; it included some of the most eminent nuclear physicists in the nation, most notably Professor Wolfgang “Pief” Panofsky, of the Linear Accelerator Center at Stanford University. One of the original nuclear weapons designers on the Manhattan Project, he had advised presidents beginning with Dwight Eisenhower. The group also included two military members in mufti, Rear Admiral (retired) Bob Wertheim, whom I knew as a member of my Scientific Advisory Group from STRATCOM, and Army Major General (retired) Bill Burns, a respected colleague from the 1984 CAPSTONE joint training program for new one-stars, who had gone on to the State Department for two years and after military retirement had become Director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

John Holdren was the committee’s chair, and while I was flattered by his invitation to join this prestigious group, I accepted only because of my growing concern over the Clinton Administration’s management of relations with Russia, which I regarded as dismal. The hard-won opportunities that I and others had helped to create at the end of the Cold War were being squandered on both sides: the START II Treaty was languishing in the Senate and the Duma, the rush to expand NATO into Eastern Europe was creating friction with Moscow, and support for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was eroding. While the United States showed little interest in making good on its obligation under Article VI of the Nonproliferation Treaty to eliminate its nuclear arsenal, I should note that Administration officials led by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott had, late in President Clinton’s second term, begun exploratory talks regarding START III. Their objective was to convince Moscow to combine START III reductions with revision of the ABM Treaty that would accommodate deployment of a limited nationwide defense against the emerging
missile threats from North Korea and Iran. Sadly, but in my estimation predictably, that was a non-starter with Moscow, which only increased my unease over what I considered to be the misplaced priorities, lack of emphasis, and absence of imagination that were draining the momentum from the nuclear arms reduction process. So I accepted Holdren’s offer, seeing it as an opportunity to bring to bear my still-considerable knowledge in this arena through the vehicle of an esteemed group of distinguished scientists, scholars and patriots. The consequences of that decision were of great import for me and my new colleagues. Although I was not immediately aware of it, I would be joining a long-smoldering committee debate regarding nuclear deterrence and the role of nuclear weapons.

The committee typically held two meetings a year, a spring session in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with the annual meeting of the NAS board of directors, and one in the fall, at Woods Hole, in the town of Falmouth, Massachusetts, home of the world-famous Oceanographic Institute. My first session was the May, 1995, D.C. gathering, where the key agenda item was to decide the subject of the next CISAC study. After listening for some time to the somewhat contentious discussion, I interjected that to me the answer seemed obvious: the end of the Cold War called for a wholesale review of U.S. nuclear weapons policy. The Clinton Administration’s efforts in that regard had foundered on the shoals of DoD internal politics, any number of critical force structure issues were left in limbo, and billions of dollars hung in the balance. That struck me as being at the very heart of CISAC’s charter and in fact was what had prompted me to join the committee. Further, I could not see my way clear to remaining a member if this were not to be the subject of its next study. Technical issues such as excess plutonium disposal were beyond my expertise and, while urgent, were of secondary importance to the overarching issue of putting U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons policies on a new course designed to reduce the residual dangers of their massive Cold War nuclear arsenals.

That argument was embraced by John Holdren and Bill Burns; John Steinbruner from the Brookings Institution; Spurgeon Keeny, President of the Arms Control Association; and of particular import, Paul Doty, founder of the Harvard University’s Belfer Center who, like Panofsky, was a veteran of the Manhattan Project, a distinguished scientist, a passionate advocate for arms control, and a mentor of, among many others, John Holdren. All of those titans had for many years endorsed conclusions that I had reached relatively recently. Holdren, for example, had written eloquently on the flaws of deterrence in a 1977 tome co-authored with Paul and Anne Ehrlich. A number of other members, despite some reservations, agreed to my proposal, precipitating a study

group headed Bill Burns and including Doty, Panofsky, Steinbruner, Keeny, a few others, and me.

Our first requirement was to establish terms of reference that would point the group toward its core recommendation. That triggered a candid, no-holds-barred debate that I found exhilarating, one that spoke volumes about the collective intellect, character and mutual respect within this extraordinary group, which represented some of the best minds to grace our nation. I normally would have been more circumspect in my early participation, but my passion for reducing nuclear dangers was building rapidly and I still had a business to run back in Omaha, so time was for me of the essence. With virtually no verbal foreplay, I suggested that the central objective should be to show the way toward the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons around the globe by delineating rigorous guidelines and conditions that would meet the obligation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) without compromising America’s security. Setting a timeline for the worldwide elimination was not important; indeed, trying to do so would create distraction. All that mattered was getting the process underway, thereby altering fifty years of thinking about nuclear deterrence, defusing the arguments of the critics, and setting an example for the other four countries in the so-called P-5, the states permitted by the NPT charter to lawfully retain their nuclear arsenals on the condition that they be eliminated at some unspecified point in the future.

That proposal quickly drew battle lines for the debates to come. Many of our number were passionately devoted to what they saw as the efficacy of deterrence and the irreplaceable role of nuclear weapons as a bulwark against the prospect of future nuclear tyranny. Others had an even more visceral attachment to these devices, having helped give them birth and maintaining a lifelong association. To my mind, the most passionate opponent of nuclear abolition was Michael May, an emeritus director of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. He was a renowned figure in the worlds of nuclear weapons and nuclear arms control and had been a highly-respected member of CISAC for many years. The notion of eliminating America’s nuclear arsenal was incomprehensible to him, notwithstanding the pledge made by the United States in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. He was a perfect example of the powerful emotional sway these weapons had over a generation of scientists, policy-makers, defense-policy specialists, and citizens who had been present at the outset and lived through the long nightmare of the East-West nuclear confrontation. I elected to take on his objections, sparing my colleagues that sensitive task, by virtue of perspective as an insider who had had unprecedented sway over every aspect of the nuclear weapons enterprise. I founded
my case on the argument that, as the preeminent weapons of mass destruction, nuclear devices are by definition immoral and therefore anathema to societies premised on the sanctity of life. To his credit, Michael saw that he was increasingly isolated in his positions. He subsequently resigned from CISAC, to the regret of its members but thereby paving the way for finishing the study during the summer of 1997. The vast majority of the remaining committee members supported both a sharp critique of deterrence and the need for the United States to genuinely embrace its treaty obligations with respect to the ultimate elimination of its nuclear arsenal.

My first public presentation of these views was at the 1996 spring meeting of the National Academy of Sciences, where Pief Panofsky and I had been asked by the committee to give an interim report on the progress of the study to the Academy’s board of directors. Pief went first, describing the key elements of our work, touching on the rationale for choosing our subject, on current U.S. policy, and on the emerging “regime of progressive constraints” that we were devising to serve as nuclear reduction guidelines. Then I made the case for elimination or “prohibition” of nuclear weapons throughout the world, as we had elected to call the path’s final step. The reception was very warm, even enthusiastic, many in the audience standing as they gave their applause. I found that extremely heartening, certainly for the work of our committee, but more importantly for the future of a parallel enterprise in which I was by then – most improbably – engaged. That story begins with a phone call to my Kiewit office late in the afternoon in mid-October, 1995. “General Butler,” intoned a woman’s voice with an unmistakable Australian accent, “one moment for the foreign minister.” And so opened the next, most unanticipated and tumultuous chapters of this memoir, a six-year saga whose repercussions will follow me to the end of my days.
Chapter 29

Reluctant Activist

“General Butler, Gareth Evans, thank you for taking my call, and here is the nub of it. Prime Minister Paul Keating is convening a commission to explore the elimination of nuclear weapons and he would be delighted if you could participate.” This went immediately to the top of a list of conversations I never expected to have. Struggling to get my head in the game at the end of a long day, I inquired of the foreign minister, “You are aware of my responsibilities in my last position on active military duty?” Without hesitation he replied, “General, yes, of course, but I am not so much interested in what you were then as who you are now. My sources tell me your thinking about the role of nuclear weapons has continued to evolve since your military retirement.” The man was obviously a pro who had done his homework, probably with one of my colleagues from CISAC. Without confirming his surmise, I asked, “Who might you have in mind as other members of this commission?” The list was impressive, which is why I began to take his offer seriously:

- Ambassador Celso Amorin, former Brazilian Foreign Minister: Permanent Representative to the United Nations from Brazil
- Ambassador Richard Butler, arms control expert: Permanent Representative to the United Nations from Australia
- Field Marshal Lord Michael Carver, British Army (Ret.): former Commander in-Chief Far East, former Chief of Defence Staff
- Captain Jacques-Yves Cousteau, writer and film producer renowned for his depiction of life in the world’s oceans (appointed after work began)
- Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala, arms control expert: senior representative in the United States from Sri Lanka
Uncommon Cause

- Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, Swedish diplomat: former Executive Chairman of the United Nations Special Commission to eliminate Iraq’s WMD programs
- Ambassador Nabil Elaraby, arms control expert: Permanent Representative to the United Nations from Egypt
- Professor Ryukichi Imai, former Ambassador to Kuwait and to Mexico from Japan: Counselor to the Atomic Energy Commission of Japan
- Ronald McCoy, President of the Malaysian Medical Association and member of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War
- Robert McNamara, former U.S. Secretary of Defense and former President of the World Bank
- Professor Robert O’Neill, Oxford University and former Director, International Institute of Strategic Studies, London
- Ambassador Qian Jiadong, arms control expert and former Chinese Representative to the United Nations Conference on Disarmament in Geneva
- Professor Joseph Rotblat, winner of the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize, President of Pugwash, and member of the Manhattan Project
- Professor Roald Sagdeev, Department of Physics, University of Maryland, former science advisor to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev
- Dr. Maj Britt Theorin, former Swedish Ambassador for Disarmament and former Chairman of the UN Commission of Experts on Nuclear Weapons.

Only a handful of the names were familiar, but their résumés were notable, testimony to the care that had gone into the screening process. I was particularly intrigued by the choices of McNamara and Rocard, the latter having a long history as a card-carrying nuclear policy maven. I was equally struck by Joe Rotblat’s participation, as he was one of history’s most distinguished nuclear physicists and a founder of the Pugwash meetings that had long sought to reduce national nuclear arsenals. Still and all, this was not a decision I could take on the spot, and Minister Evans understood that. I promised to get back to him after I had talked with Dorene. She and I thought through the consequences of lending my name to this initiative, how it would affect the parallel work I had argued so strongly for with my CISAC colleagues, and how it might
conflict with my Kiewit responsibilities. We decided that if Walter Scott was amenable, I would accept. He was, and I did, thus setting in motion a train of events that would make me one of the most widely known and perhaps most controversial figures to enter the debate over nuclear disarmament.

The first of four commission meetings was held from the 21st through the 28th of January, 1996; to give the group wide visibility throughout Australia, we held the initial sessions in three separate locations. We began in Sydney, moved two days later to Canberra, the national capital – from which we took our designation as the “Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons” – and concluded with a three-day meeting in Melbourne. I was no stranger to Australia, having in my days as a C-141 pilot made cargo runs across its vast interior. But I found that I was now something of a celebrity there: the participation on the commission of a former Commander-in-Chief of the United States Strategic Command had not gone unnoticed. That visibility is of course why I had been invited to join the commission in the first place, but it was also why I was determined to shape its work to my preferred result.

That would be no easy matter, in light of the powerful personality of the chairman, Richard Butler, and of two of the commissioners, Robert McNamara and Michel Rocard. McNamara always spoke in absolutes, gesticulating forcefully and exuding an energy that belied his age. At first blush, Rocard reminded me of how I had come to view a French intellectual during my tenure at Sciences Po, that is, distant and disdainful, but that judgment proved wrong. Our leader, and my namesake, was a force to be reckoned with – big, bluff, hugely self-confident, fiercely determined to make a success of our charter, whatever the obstacles. It was evident that he had the complete confidence of Prime Minister Keating and Foreign Minister Evans, and an open checkbook as well. The arrangements were superb, from the hospitality, lodgings, amenities and sumptuous food to the personal attention from our individual handlers, travel arrangements and carefully-crafted agenda. Equally evident was the symbiotic relationship between the prime minister and his foreign minister, each extremely bright and visionary, embarked together on a course guaranteed to make Australia’s long-time patron, the United States Government, very unhappy. While nearby New Zealand had a long history of opposing nuclear weapons, Australia was a staunch ally that had never wavered from the U.S. foreign policy line. This abrupt departure from that tradition did not augur well for the reception of our work by the only nation whose reaction really mattered – my own.

After two days of rest and socializing, and a press conference in Sydney, we departed for Canberra for the initial round of discussions. Its Capitol is
a marvel, a beautiful structure with large open rooms, all air and light, built completely with indigenous materials and showcasing memorable works by native artists. We found ourselves arrayed around an expansive open-square table, equipped with the usual microphones and signaling buttons, an array of beverages, and writing materials. After covering the basics, Richard gave a well-crafted overview of how he saw our purpose and how he intended to guide the work. He was aided by a large staff of professionals primed for every conceivable task, from conducting research to turning around drafts at a moment’s notice. He took his lead from the eloquent and thoughtful remarks presented to us two days earlier in Sydney by Keating and Evans; they had left no doubt about their sincerity and commitment to the commissioners. The mandate establishing the initiative had laid out specific objectives, with a deadline of August 31st, seven months away, that would allow the prime minister to submit our report to the opening session of the 51st United Nations General Assembly in New York in September.

It soon became apparent, however, that there was a fly in this ointment: not all of the commissioners were persuaded that nuclear weapons elimination was possible or even desirable. As Richard went round the table after his opening remarks, the reactions ranged from complete assent to sharp disagreement, most notably on the part of McNamara and Rocard, who cited the usual arguments, that is, not being able to “disinvent” nuclear weapons, or to verify complete destruction, or prevent cheating. For my part, as I was already persuaded of the necessity to rid the world of these devices, I signaled my support of the commission’s goal, with the caveat that, as reflected in the concerns registered by McNamara and Rocard, to make total elimination plausible and palatable required overcoming daunting obstacles. Clearly, a great deal of work needed to be done, away from the table, if a consensus report was to be produced by this group. I was prepared to take on the task, beginning at dinner that evening. I first took Michel Rocard aside and engaged him in French, which established an immediate bond. I talked about my days at Sciences Po, where he had studied in the late 1940s, before his rise to the top ranks of the Socialist Party, culminating in his three years as President Mitterrand’s Prime Minister. He and I began an association that over the course of our deliberations would lead to a strong friendship and a gradual merging of our views on achieving nuclear weapons elimination.

Bob McNamara was a more interesting challenge. He was even more imposing than Rocard; however, he had great respect for my expertise and my long experience in the nuclear arena. Moreover, he delighted in engaging me in prolonged conversation about his tenure as Secretary of Defense. I was well
versed in the events of this era and was able to probe beyond the surface of his anecdotes to better understand his thinking. Given his hyperkinetic and voluble personality, I had to muster all of my faculties to stay engaged. Even ignoring those barriers to communication, I still found it difficult to warm up to the man. He was devoid of humor and intimacy, relentless in argument, and thought more like a number-cruncher than a policy-maker. That said, he was also in a life-changing transition with regard to his thinking about nuclear weapons, and for the next seven months I would help catalyze that journey.

By our second meeting, in April in New York City, Chairman Butler had a draft outline which in my view was unbalanced. It failed to address the criticisms raised by Bob McNamara and Michel Rocard, which I knew were only faint echoes of the fierce attacks the report would receive from our critics. I proposed that, in addition to making the case for elimination, we devote just as much intellectual energy to honestly and objectively answering the expected opposing argument. If we could not rebut the heartfelt concerns of our opponents as strongly as we stated our own convictions, then how, I asked, could our report stand up under the withering fire it would meet from the moment it became public?

That argument carried the day but it also set the stage for a heated debate over the steps we would recommend to define a path toward elimination. At the outset, most of the members wanted an agenda that I knew to be far too ambitious. It failed to account for immensely difficult verification considerations, as well as for the international security conditions to be met before the nuclear weapon states would seriously consider destroying their arsenals. We finally agreed to propose three stages, each with a set of practical steps already well understood by arms controllers, that moved progressively toward zero – while acknowledging the equally well-known difficulties and uncertainties. For me, the first two stages – Immediate Steps and Reinforcing Steps – were critical. The initial stage focused on ending the dangers posed by nuclear-armed forces on hair-trigger alert; the second laid out a path toward a credible verification regime. This reasoning proved persuasive, and by our third meeting – held in Vienna, Austria, in July, 1996 – we had the makings of a solid product. However, an acerbic debate then ensued that split the group and threatened our success.

At issue was the matter of whether we should put forward a specific date for achieving the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. I led the minority, including McNamara and Rocard, in opposing any notion of a mandated deadline, knowing from my experience in nuclear arms control that it was an absolute non-starter. The counterargument was that, absent the pressure
supposedly imposed by an “X” on the calendar, the nuclear weapon states would continue to drag their bureaucratic feet. While recognizing the merit of this concern, I contended that dramatic progress in arms control was event-driven: it had never advanced with the ticking of an arbitrary clock, but rather had been triggered by serendipitous eventualities, witness the unexpected ascent of Mikhail Gorbachev to the pinnacle of Soviet power at the very moment that a former Hollywood actor named Ronald Reagan set out to end the Cold War with a whimper rather than a bang. The process was far more about creating mutual trust than clever tactics or deadlines, about scripting a conversation for players yet unnamed who would break through seemingly impenetrable barriers and redefine the possible.

In the end, the minority view proved persuasive with our chairman, perhaps in part because I advised my fellow commissioners that I could not endorse a report that posited an explicit year for achieving total elimination. My individual credibility was at stake, knowing that experts in the business would consider such a postulation naïve; worse, it would seriously depreciate our work if not completely discount it. Chairman Butler then brokered language that mollified those on the other side of the issue, packaged our findings as a one-hundred-page final report and distilled it to an eloquent one-page summary.

Alas, it was all largely for naught: our report was dead on arrival with the very government that chartered it. In a twist of fate, political power in Australia had changed hands two months after our first meeting. Paul Keating had been swept out of office by John Howard, a colorless career politician who savaged his opponent, calling him arrogant and elitist and accusing him of focusing on peripheral issues of no consequence to the man in the street, a shot directly aimed at our commission. Thus, when we returned to Sydney in late August to present our report, Howard damned it and us with faint praise, as did his Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, whose last name could not possibly have been more fitting. Richard Butler, out of a job the moment we stood down, landed on his feet, becoming the successor to Rolf Ekeus as head of the UN inspection team in Iraq. In that role, oddly, he trumpeted the Bush Administration contention that Saddam Hussein was covertly conducting WMD programs; some even accused him of conducting electronic eavesdropping for the CIA. However, when America and Britain began conducting air strikes to tamp down Iraq’s violations of the no-fly zones, Butler withdrew his team, resigned his post, and took a position as Diplomat-in-Residence at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Here again, in another odd turn, after the 2003 invasion of Iraq he became a vocal opponent of the incursion,
calling down thunderbolts on both the Bush and Howard Administrations, the latter for its support of the United States.

After the closing session with Prime Minister Howard, I was on an airplane to Hong Kong, where Dorene would shortly arrive from the States to join me in celebrating our 34th anniversary. This was a wonderful interlude, highlighted by a stay at a jewel of a hotel, the Mandarin Oriental, managed by one of my Harvard Business School classmates. However, our return home was threatened when Dorene took violently ill the evening before our flight. With some trepidation, we called the concierge, who arranged a 2:00 a.m. room call by a local physician. He administered some unknown potion through an intimidating needle, calming my suffering wife sufficiently to carry on with the departure, but it was a long, miserable journey back to Omaha.

Meanwhile, the Canberra Commission report was receiving modest play in the world press, just enough to goad some heavyweight in the Clinton Administration to take off the gloves. U.S allies were urged to join in dismissing the report as “pie-in-the-sky” and of no help to policy-makers in the “real world.” At that point, my anger began to build – not overtly, but deep in my gut – as I watched one of the last, best hopes for standing down from fifty years at the nuclear brink summarily brushed off by the very people I believed could have benefited most from our groundbreaking efforts.

As my indignation smoldered, I was tendered yet another unanticipated and fateful opportunity: former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev inviting me to give the keynote address at the October, 1996, gathering of his State of the World Forum, or “SWF.” The forum was a gathering of some five hundred leaders from around the globe, representing a wide array of disciplines, who had come under the sway of the irrepressible Gorbachev. They had first been called together in 1995 at San Francisco’s famed Fairmont Hotel, where the UN Charter had been negotiated fifty years earlier. The SWF mission was ambitious: to create a new, multi-dimensional way of thinking about and acting on problems of global scale and consequence by educating and energizing the planet’s most able citizens. I don’t know why he invited me even to attend, much less give a keynote address; my guess is that the suggestion came from Bob McNamara.

After reviewing the list of attendees and the positive press the SWF had generated in its inaugural year, I accepted the invitation. It seemed a perfect opportunity to give greater visibility to the Canberra Report and to generate support from these well-traveled opinion leaders. I decided to revise and extend my 1996 remarks to the National Academy of Sciences, beginning with a summary of my years of experience in the nuclear arena, then dwelling on the
conclusions I had drawn about the immeasurable dangers posed by nuclear weapons, the fragility of the policies and practices presumed to control them, the economic and moral costs they exact upon society, and the ethical imperative to bring the nuclear-weapons era to a close. While I was confident about how the SWF members would respond to this approach, I was much less certain regarding my host, President Gorbachev.

My speech was scheduled for the morning of October 3rd, which was the day after my day job called for me to testify at a hearing in D.C. sponsored by Senator Lugar on clean fuels and the potential for oxygenates to reduce the nation’s dependence on imported oil. After a mad dash to Dulles Airport and a long flight to San Francisco, I checked into the Fairmont, where I was given five-star treatment at every turn. The following morning I took my place at a long, elevated head table, seated just to the right of the podium. To its left sat President Gorbachev, flanked by his trusted interpreter from Kremlin days, who had followed him into retirement. The session was called to order by Jim Garrison, president of the Gorbachev Foundation and the SWF, a sublimely intelligent, cultured and gracious human being who had the daunting task of giving life to Gorbachev’s expansive visions. After extensive introductions, he finally got around to me. As I stepped up to the microphone, a wonderful calm enveloped and sustained me for the duration of the twenty-minute speech. At the conclusion, the audience rose as one and burst into applause that rolled across the dais in waves. Suddenly, as the last words of the translation reached his ear, Gorbachev stood, embraced me in a crushing bear hug, called for quiet and then spoke for forty-five minutes. He said my words had touched his soul, recalling his own dismay at the extravagant nature of the nuclear enterprise in the former Soviet Union, the insane risks and heart-pounding crises that could arise in an instant. It was an unforgettable moment, but only one of many I experienced as I was steadily drawn back into public life over the next two years.

At the conclusion of the morning session, I was mobbed by well-wishers and media representatives from television, radio and print. I took their cards and promised to get back to them after I had had a chance to sort out the competing requests. Then, Jim Garrison took me aside and asked if I could come to his suite for a private conversation with two special friends. The first was Alan Cranston, the former four-term Senator from California; the second, Tom Graham, a program director for the Rockefeller Foundation. Senator Cranston’s political run had ended after being admonished by the Senate Ethics Committee for having accepted large campaign donations from the notorious Lincoln Savings & Loan head, Charles Keating. He had then become an impassioned nuclear abolitionist, eventually joining with Gorbachev to push
his agenda with the help of deep pockets like the Rockefeller Foundation.

Senator Cranston and Dr. Graham were seized with my speech. They wanted to enlist me in their joint effort to garner the support of hundreds of former senior military officials from around the world for a declaration calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. The role they envisioned for me was that of a global spokesman, joining retired Army General Andrew Goodpaster, former advisor to President Dwight Eisenhower, in making a personal, public appeal on behalf of abolition. The venue was the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.; the time, early December, just two months away. I was taken aback but intrigued on two counts: General Goodpaster was a highly respected figure in U.S. military annals, and the National Press Club was a very prestigious setting, one that would certainly draw a large contingent of domestic and international press.

Meantime, Les Gelb, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, had seen the coverage of my SWF remarks in the San Francisco papers and asked me to do an evening Council Roundtable in Washington on the 30th of October. The session was moderated by my former mentor, retired Air Force Chief Larry Welch, who would have no sympathy for my pitch. Nor, for that matter, would any of the two dozen attendees, whom I had known and worked with for many years and whom I knew to be among the most hard-bitten scholars and practitioners of the nuclear art. Welch’s introduction was generous, however, and the audience courteous. Because of the importance of getting it right, and knowing my energy level would be low because of the travel and the late hour, I departed from my usual practice of talking without notes, reading instead from a modestly edited version of my SWF remarks. At the conclusion, the room was enveloped in silence, most of my interlocutors not knowing what to make of my statement. The question and answer period that followed was strained, and I was not in top form, but I did well enough to expand and clarify my views. If nothing else, it helped prepare me for the main event just over a month away.

The same can be said of a second warm-up opportunity, a speech to a group called Parliamentarians for Global Action. I spoke to them at the behest of my Canberra Commission colleague, Celso Amorin. As Brazil’s Permanent Representative to the UN’s Committee on Disarmament, Celso and several dozen of his likeminded fellows had created an “action subcommittee” to push a common agenda in the large UN arms control forum. I flew to New York on the front end of the D.C. trip for the National Press Club speech, arriving at the UN on Monday, the 2nd of December. The setting was a bit awkward, and the very eclectic audience was hard to read because of
the wide array of nationalities represented. But they turned out to be quite appreciative, and I left for Washington heartened and well-practiced. That confidence was essential – my next audience would be worldwide, and the questions I would face in the give-and-take following my presentation would be unsparing. There are few media leagues more major than the one that I stepped up to on December 4th, 1996.

The National Press Club (NPC) dates to 1908 and since then has become one of the world’s premier journalistic organizations. It occupies the 13th and 14th floors of the National Press Building, located at 15th and G Streets in the nation’s capital, and it hosts several luncheons a year. The speakers have included every president since Theodore Roosevelt as well as kings and queens, prime ministers, premiers, politicians of every stripe, diplomats, scholars, entertainers, business leaders and athletes. Noted TV commentator Eric Sevareid called the club the “sanctum sanctorum of American journalists, the Westminster Hall, Delphi, Mecca, Wailing Wall for everyone having anything to do with the news business.”

On this bright, early winter morning I would stand at its podium facing an overflow audience and tier upon tier of national and international television cameras arrayed at the back of the cavernous dining room. Dorene and I were greeted at the door by the president of the club, ushered to the waiting room, and introduced to the notables who would occupy the head table. They included, of course, General Goodpaster, whose role would be to make brief remarks in advance of mine and to highlight the roster of international flag and general officers whose names were being made public after my speech. His presence was confidence-inspiring, as he was a man of great dignity and commanding presence, tall, silver-haired and exceedingly gracious.

When the time came to go to the banquet hall, we began a five-minute walk that was rudely interrupted by a man I recognized as a former colleague, now with the National War College. Stepping directly into my path, he said, “General Butler, I hope you understand the consequences of what you are about to do. Are you not concerned that you will give comfort to our enemies and insult the men and women you used to command?” My host was aghast, but I simply replied, “Yes, of course I am concerned, on both counts. I thought long and hard before taking this course. And, in the end, I decided to follow the dictates of my conscience. Now if you will excuse me, I have a speech to give.” With that, he stepped aside, having ruined my appetite but reaffirmed my determination to get this right. My reputation and credibility were on the line, not to mention the case for standing down from the nuclear era. It was all on the line.
After interminable introductions, lunch, and Goodpaster’s prelude, my voice was a bit tight when I was finally given the podium. However, by that time I was completely comfortable with my remarks and needed only to speak in measured tones during the opening paragraphs to gain my stride. By the close, some twenty-five minutes later, I was fully in command of my subject and the audience, who reacted with thunderous applause. The question period was expertly handled by the host, who took written queries, selected the most useful, and teed them up for me. Having spent many hours preparing for what would be the most likely issues, I used the session to give a series of mini-remarks covering points that did not appropriately fit into my oral presentation (Appendix D). These responses also seemed to sit well with my listeners, and I was buoyed by the implied validation of my convictions – not that there weren’t any number of people who sat on their hands with very sour faces. As the following months and years would attest, I came to be viewed as both an icon and an iconoclast, alternatively praised and condemned, a hero to a new army of advocates, and the anti-Christ to some of my former colleagues in the nuclear weapons enterprise. This was a rhetorical volley heard round the world that would echo in the halls of governments, be widely propagated by the media, and serve as a clarion call for the peace movement as well as a call to arms for the defenders of the nuclear faith. The repercussions would dominate my life for years to come, even as of this writing, and cast me in a role that even now seems almost unimaginable: nuclear abolitionist.

Those repercussions were quickly felt. As I left the room, I was informed that Leon Fuerth, Vice President Al Gore’s national security advisor, had called to ask if I could drop by his office in the Old Executive Office Building for a discreet chat. When I finally disengaged from the press, Dorene and I worked a subterfuge in the cab line that kept the attention focused on her and allowed me to leave unnoticed for the Old EOB. There, I was whisked through security, ushered along hallways still familiar from Wage and Price Freeze days, finally arriving at Fuerth’s large corner office.

Leon Fuerth is an archetypal Washington insider, smooth, clever and always working an agenda, in this case trying to dope out whether I was someone requiring the administration’s attention. He had watched my performance on his office television, gauged the reaction, and wanted to take a personal sounding of my intentions. Having earlier swatted aside the Canberra Report, he was likely annoyed that I was trying to give it new life. We talked for a half-hour, at a highly classified level, delving more deeply into my concerns about nuclear policy and force posture. He bade me an abrupt farewell and I returned to Omaha, where I was greeted by a flood of mail and phone messages.
from every point of the compass. The publicist engaged by the National Press Club, Barbara Webber, had indeed served up a global audience. Judging by the volume and scope of my correspondence, the impact of my speech had exceeded anything I could have imagined.

It was equally clear that my case for nuclear weapons abolition generated no middle-ground response. If ever there was a speech to love or hate, this one fit the bill perfectly. Most interesting to me was the split among my professional colleagues, some of whom were genuinely outraged and others who confessed that they shared my distress over the dangers of the nuclear age. Among my new admirers were a host of organizations that fell under the banner of the “Peace Movement,” a broad-based agglomeration of groups such as Greenpeace, Ploughshares, the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, and even Grandmothers for Peace – who sent a T-shirt proclaiming me their Sweetheart of the Year. The vast majority I had never heard of, nor was I the least bit interested in hearing from them. I had made my case and I planned to get back to the business of, well, business – I had a fledgling company to run.

That was not to happen. I was now in the public eye big-time, and countless new constituents were not about to let my National Press Club speech become a one-shot wonder. Among the admirers was Barry Blechman, chairman of the board of the Stimson Center, based in Washington, D.C. This “think tank” on international security issues was named for a two-time U.S. Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, who had been a key figure in the decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan. Barry had earlier read a copy of my May, 1996, remarks to the National Academy of Sciences and had written to express his strong support for my National Press Club remarks. He also asked if I would accept the Center’s annual award for excellence in public policy, with me using the occasion to elaborate on my NAS speech. The award was designed both to applaud my views and to publicize the Center’s “Project on Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction,” a major effort to integrate the work of dozens of groups working independently.

I had declined the offer, as I had no intention of speaking publicly on this issue, but after reviewing the spectrum of reaction to my National Press Club speech, I was of a different mind. I wanted to answer the critics, most of whom failed to do justice to me or my arguments. Some of their comments were blathering nonsense; others either deliberately misconstrued my position or made rebuttals that I felt could not go unanswered. Serendipitously, Michael Krepon, the co-founder of the Stimson Center, wrote to remind me of the earlier offer of a platform. This time I seized the opportunity, because it perfectly
suited my purpose. Barbara Webber had again been engaged to do the publicity, giving me confidence in the reach of my remarks. That confidence was affirmed when she arranged for a major CNN piece to be shot the day before the event and to air on February 9th, with the seasoned Bernard Shaw.

And so, on Wednesday, the 8th of January, Dorene and I walked through the doors of the Historic Car Barn in Georgetown, D.C., and once more joined the fray. My eclectic audience included Washington friends and professionals, a wide variety of media outlets, Stimson Center staff and scholars, and one of my CISAC colleagues, John Steinbruner, whose attendance would later prove vital to the outcome of our National Academy study. My remarks struck home, and I felt that I had added greater substance to my National Press Club address. The question period further extended that opportunity and at the conclusion of the event I allowed myself to believe this would be the end of it. All that remained was to wrap up the CISAC report in the next few months, and I could return to the blessed anonymity of private life. What is clear in retrospect, however, is that this was a turning point. The fallout from the CNN interview and the Stimson presentation exceeded all expectations. I was back in the arena to stay.

The tidal force of the debate I had engendered was overwhelming, and over the next several months I began to feel its relentless tugging. My transition to more robust advocacy began after the Stimson Center remarks, with several interviews followed by a trip to the Hill to meet with Congressman John Spratt (D-SC), who had read an advance copy of my remarks, found them appealing and wanted to chat. Additionally, Joe Cirincione, the Center’s senior associate in charge of the WMD Project, wanted to enlist me for his Committee on Nuclear Policy, as did Mort Halperin from the Twentieth Century Fund, who was leading a parallel Council on Foreign Relations study. These were very credible initiatives, led by Washington insiders, so I accepted both, despite the demands on my time and the onerous travel involved. Even more telling as to the impact of my remarks was an invitation from President Jimmy Carter to come to see him at his center in Atlanta. The request came by way of former Ambassador to India Harry Barnes, the director of the Carter Center’s “Conflict Resolution and Human Rights” programs. Harry confirmed the former President’s keen interest in my two public speeches. He also confided that he was doing work on nuclear non-proliferation on the Indian subcontinent, in collaboration with Tom Graham of the Rockefeller Foundation, who had been instrumental in helping Alan Cranston stage the National Press Club event.

I flew to Atlanta on the 17th of March and began my meetings the next morning with a presentation to the center’s staff. I was then joined by another
visitor, David Cortright, who had come at Barnes’ invitation so that the three of us could meet privately. David, like Tom Graham, would become a key figure in my life in the turbulent months ahead. After lunch, I met with President Carter for an hour. He is intense in person, just as he appears on camera, with laser-like focus and a strong sense of purpose. He grilled me on reducing nuclear dangers, most particularly de-alerting – the act of removing nuclear forces from prompt-launch readiness to less-threatening postures by selectively increasing the time required to reestablish full alert status. He ended by asking why I believed total elimination of nuclear weapons was feasible and expressed strong sympathy with my views. When he asked what kind of response I had received from the White House, I told him about the Fuerth meeting and the reaction to the Canberra Report, which visibly angered him. He then asked me where General Sergeyev, now the Russian Minister of Defense, stood. I told him that by all reports Sergeyev was ready to propose a much lower warhead ceiling than that in the START II Treaty. At that, he jumped to his feet, went to his phone, and called Sandy Berger, President Clinton’s National Security Advisor. He recounted our conversation and said he would be dispatching a letter to the President forthwith, urging him to be receptive should a Russian table a proposal for lower numbers, and to get on with de-alerting U.S. strategic nuclear forces.

That impromptu intervention caught me off-guard; it was the last thing I needed at this point, but, true to his word, the former President faxed the following letter that very day:

03/18/97

To President Bill Clinton

Having been through the experience myself, I know that as you approach the summit with President Yeltsin you are inundated with suggestions and briefing papers. It also seems obvious that the discussion about expansion of NATO will be an important issue on the agenda.

I have a suggestion that may be of interest to you, based on my knowledge of the highly publicized efforts by retired General Lee Butler to address the subject of nuclear disarmament.

His statements have confirmed the publicly expressed policies of all presidents since Eisenhower that nuclear arsenals be abolished. He is calling more specifically for removing all land- and sea-based ballistic missiles from nuclear alert status. Under President Bush, this action was taken five years ago with those
that are air-borne.

While president, I frequently called for a penultimate agreement to reduce total warheads to 1000 and for the launchers to be deployed in completely invulnerable sites.

To partially defuse the fear of Russians about NATO and for you to seize an initiative that would be bold and globally popular, you and President Yeltsin might agree to establish a blue-ribbon commission to make recommendations on how best to a) quickly remove all missiles from alert status and b) work toward the more drastic penultimate START III goal described above.

I have discussed this with General Butler, who informs me that General Sergeyev (Chief of the Russian rocket forces whom General Butler knows very well) may propose such an initiative to the Russian side. It is uncertain whether they will broach it. General Butler, as a proper military leader, has been reluctant to bypass his former superiors, but has not opposed my sending you this message.

Best wishes,
/s/

Jimmy Carter

I doubt that my “opposing” the sending of the letter would have deterred the former President, who is a force of nature, but based on many years in Washington and in the arms control arena, I knew that nothing would come of it. As for “bypassing former superiors,” at this juncture my views were about as public as they could get, and my former superiors were the crux of my concern with respect to the future of nuclear arms reductions. In the end, I decided it was worth having a former president of the United States in my court, but the real value of the trip proved to be my introduction to David Cortright and his link with Howard Brembeck and the Fourth Freedom Forum.

Shortly after my return from Atlanta, the indefatigable Alan Cranston was back in contact, to ask my help in appraising Sergeyev of Alan’s campaign to reduce nuclear dangers by drawing down alert forces and warhead inventories. He had written a letter to Sergeyev and, wanting to protect its sensitive nature, circumvented the general’s staff by having the missive (Appendix E) hand-delivered. That delicate task was performed by CBS journalist George Crile, with whom Sergeyev had a personal connection and whose name jogged my memory. I had briefly met George when I was CINCSTRAT; he was a twenty-year CBS veteran who had produced the 60 Minutes show covering Sergeyev’s
Uncommon Cause

visit to my headquarters. Crile had attended my National Press Club speech and was deeply moved, approaching me afterward to re-introduce himself, express his keen interest in helping to advance what he thought was a cause I was undertaking, and make me aware of a project he was pursuing to document the nuclear dimensions of the Cold War from a Soviet perspective. I listened courteously, but at that point had no interest in his assistance or his project. George, however, persisted; after reading my Stimson Center speech, he wrote an impassioned letter pleading for me to reconsider a collaboration. I again rebuffed his request, but was sufficiently intrigued to look more deeply into his credentials.

George Crile in fact had an impressive résumé that included Peabody and Emmy Awards for his work as a correspondent and producer for 60 Minutes. He had earned wide notoriety for his searing indictment of retired Army General William Westmoreland in a segment entitled, The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception. The former theater commander sued CBS over his portrayal in the piece but later withdrew the suit when it became obvious he was merely compounding the damage to his reputation. In short, George was the real deal. As further testimony to his qualifications, he had garnered an invitation from the Russian Rocket Forces' chief, seconded by our mutual friend Sergeyev, now elevated to Defense Minister and soon to wear Marshal’s rank, to do a 60 Minutes-style documentary on the history of the Soviet nuclear program. Even more astonishing, he had been promised unlimited access to people, archives and facilities. He had built a game plan and had engaged Russian journalist Artyom Borovik as a partner. As yet, however, he had no funding for his initiative; finding no support among the major media outlets, George was shopping the project. That led him to Cranston and Gorbachev, who agreed to help. In turn, Cranston enlisted Crile – and now turned to me – to help reach out to Sergeyev.

Crile’s role in this affair and his standing as a journalist persuaded me to assist Cranston, which I did through a letter updating him on my own post-retirement efforts to reduce nuclear dangers. My letter is at Appendix F, and in subsequent Appendices I have included his replies to me and to Alan, as well as a letter to me from Sergeyev’s advisor and confidant, Major General Vladimir Dvorkin, whom I had by chance met in 1993 at a conference at the University of San Diego on nuclear weapons policy. This correspondence is important to understand why I became increasingly drawn back into the arena of nuclear arms control and elimination. Sergeyev’s warm reply and candid words of support, as well as General Dvorkin’s even more forthcoming remarks about his beliefs and future plans, gave me greater confidence that my unique voice

could help reinvigorate action on issues about which I cared deeply.

Returning now to the aftermath of my Atlanta meeting with President Carter, I only belatedly realized how fateful those few hours would become. On the one hand, they produced yet another incentive to my becoming a full-time activist for nuclear weapons elimination. On the other, it set in motion a series of events that would prompt me to reconsider the worth of my involvement. The incentive resulted from a follow-on meeting with yet another remarkable man, Howard Brembeck, of Goshen, Indiana, founder of the Fourth Freedom Forum (FFF). Our encounter came at the prompting of David Cortright, with whom I had talked briefly at the Carter Center. David was president of the FFF, while also holding a research chair at Notre Dame’s Joan Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. A genteel academic and prolific author, he was a fixture in the nuclear abolition movement, having headed The Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy in the mid-eighties. Now, at Howard’s direction, he had come to Atlanta to take my measure. That led to an invitation for Dorene and me to visit with Howard and his wife in their winter home in Atlantis, Florida. I knew nothing about Howard, but I had high regard for David, so I accepted the offer.

Howard Brembeck was an American original, a self-made man who built an agricultural equipment manufacturing business into an international corporation. Along the way he developed a consuming interest in the cause of conflict between nations, an abhorrence of war and a passion for promoting incentives such as “strategic trade” and “smart sanctions” as alternatives to armed violence. He had packaged his thoughts in a piece called “The Civilized Defense Plan,” and in 1992 created the Fourth Freedom Forum to pursue its implementation. Then in his early 80s – he lived to be 100 – he was vibrant, visionary, and blessed with an infectious enthusiasm and unquenchable spirit. Dorene and I were captivated by Howard and his wife of sixty years and were astonished by his offer of financial assistance, even proposing that we join forces. While gratified by his offer, we were not ready for this type of commitment; we thanked him and promised to give his proposals serious consideration.

In May of 1997 I accepted another request from Senator Cranston, this time to come to San Francisco for a meeting with former Secretary of State George Shultz as well as a session at Stanford to talk about reducing nuclear dangers with a small group at the Stanford Center for International Security and Arms Control. I met with Secretary Shultz over breakfast, in the hotel suite where he was overnighthing. Much like President Carter, he listened intently to what I had to say, probed a bit and thanked me for coming. Afterward, I wondered why Cranston thought talking to Shultz was a good idea, but it
simply took a while for that thoughtful man to fully process the notion of nuclear abolition – ten years to be exact. As I was writing these words in July of 2007, George Shultz, along with former Defense Secretary Bill Perry, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and former Senator Sam Nunn, who were collectively dubbed by nuclear hardliners the “gang of four,” published a joint editorial in the Wall Street Journal advocating that the United States honor its obligation under the NPT to completely eliminate its nuclear arsenal. Patience is a great ally in this arena.

The Stanford meeting convened a number of notables from the center staff, including old friend Scott Sagan, who had authored a book entitled The Limits of Safety, a gripping recitation of nuclear accidents and incidents. Also in the group was the ubiquitous Tom Graham, who was now sending me voluminous memos, brimming with advice and wisdom regarding the unfamiliar journey on which I was embarked. Tom’s incessant tutoring primed me for the next momentous phase of that journey, set in motion by the final deliberations of my National Academy of Sciences fellows on U.S. nuclear weapons policy.

These concluding encounters turned extremely contentious, nearly as much as our opening debate over whether to recommend the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. This time the storm was over how we would treat the central element of nuclear weapons policy and practice: deterrence. My thinking about the justification for and effects of this concept had evolved over the years, from unquestioning acceptance to moral repugnance, for reasons I had begun to lay out in the Stimson Center speech. When we reached this crucial topic in our CISAC study on the future of U.S. nuclear weapons policy, I laid down a marker: the concept and practice of deterrence needed to be rigorously reexamined, with its contributions and consequences catalogued and critiqued. My goal was to make the case that deterrence had driven the Cold War arms race, prompting worst-case planning, immense expenditures, extremely dangerous force postures and monstrous war plans whose destructiveness threatened all life on the planet.

At first, mine was a very lonely voice; my colleagues must have thought me a bit daft. However, John Steinbruner had heard my opening shots in this battle in my remarks at the Stimson Center and he now began to move toward the more complete arguments I set forth. His support was enough to win extensive, but, to my thinking, woefully incomplete treatment of deterrence in a section of our report covering “Problems and Prospects.” There was no critique per se, just a delineation of subtleties that had crept into the concept over the years. Even so, one of our number, a retired admiral, came under strong pressure from the Chief of Naval Operations to dissent from the report. However,
the president of the National Academy of Sciences insisted on unanimity, and that carried the day. As for me, while I was disappointed on one level, I was on the whole pleased with our work. In my judgment, given the credentials of its members, the CISAC effort was superior to that of the Canberra Commission. Given our stature and our quasi-official status, the Clinton Administration received our report in more circumspect language than that accorded the Canberra Commission, but with the same result. Once again, a few behind-the-scenes contacts, most likely emanating from the White House, with surrogate critics created a brief wave of disparaging media commentary, and within days our offering was buried alongside that of our Canberra colleagues. For me, that was a declaration of war. I was determined to get our initiative in front of a larger public. All I needed was a pulpit and an expert to help me navigate the media shoals; both became available within a month.

The pulpit was offered in a letter from the New Zealand chapter of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), inviting me to give an address known as the annual Erich Geiringer Oration. I was familiar with the IPPNW from another collaboration I had accepted after the Stimson Center speech. I had been approached by three gentlemen from the Physicians for Social Responsibility, a Nobel Peace Prize-winning organization pursuing the elimination of nuclear weapons on both medical and moral grounds. I found them thoughtful, serious-minded and deeply devoted to their cause. I accepted their invitation to be on their board of advisors, later gave a talk at their annual meeting in Washington, and in the process learned a great deal about their global umbrella organization, the IPPNW, which I found to be equally reputable.

A public affairs expert for this foray surfaced in the person of George Crile. He was suggested by Alan Cranston, whom I had called to check my impressions about the IPPNW, its New Zealand chapter and the Australian chapter from which I had also received an invitation. George was thrilled to be a part of this, proposing not only to stage-manage the media, but also to film the New Zealand portion of the trip from start to finish, put it in a can, and see where things might lead in the future – if he could get his documentary on the Soviet nuclear history off the ground. I agreed with his proposal, trusting in his journalistic skills, but was uneasy about being on camera for such an extended period in a new setting.

Cranston also filled me in on Erich Geiringer’s exceptional legacy. He was a Wellington physician who became a passionate anti-nuclear activist and a prominent member of the IPPNW. In his last decade, Erich joined fellow New Zealanders spearheading the World Court Project, whose purpose was to elicit
from that body an opinion constraining the threat or actual employment of nuclear weapons. The movement achieved its goal in a July 1996 opinion of the Court, an outcome Geiringer did not live to see, having died a year earlier. His admirers founded an annual gathering in his honor, highlighted by an “oration” by a noted speaker from the abolitionist ranks – a role in which I now cast myself.

Dorene and I set off for New Zealand in late September, 1997, for the scheduled October 1st address. This was our first venture outside the United States in the service of my self-appointed mission, and we were not at all sure what to expect. To our delight we were received with rich ceremony and hospitality by our hosts, Dr. Jim Methven and his wife, Kate, and Dr. Ian Prior and his wife, Elespie. As we deplaned after a long journey from Omaha, along with Crile and his omnipresent cameraman, Neeraj Khemlani, who would be in our face relentlessly, we were greeted by a large delegation that included a sizable media contingent and a troupe of Maori dancers. After a round of the traditional nose touching as a gesture of welcome, the indigenous people treated us to a short program showcasing their singing and dancing skill. From there we were off to our hotel to recover before an evening of food and camaraderie.

The following day I kept our activity to a minimum, to gather my energies for that night’s oration, which was held in an exquisite hall in central Wellington. The house was packed, and the opening ceremony was, once again, rich with beauty and native culture. I was introduced by a local television personality, Ian Fraser, a man of extraordinary eloquence who captivated Dorene and me with his grasp of the nuclear age and the role that I had staked out for myself. He set the stage perfectly for my remarks. In a life spent behind a lectern, I count this “oration” as my most important professional pronouncement, distilling decades of experience as a strategist and practitioner of nuclear deterrence. The depth of my feeling about the horror of nuclear weapons and their corrosive effects on human sensibility was fully evident, in the tenor of my voice and the intensity of my delivery. I had chosen this venue to test the reaction of a lay audience to my critique of deterrence, a precept so simple in formulation but so complex and treacherous in application. Therefore, I was deeply moved as this room of complete strangers from a different culture expressed their reaction in prolonged applause.

My esteemed colleague, Ted Warner, by now well known to the reader, urged me to include these remarks in the text. I will do so by revising and extending my “oration” with a preface drawn from my aforementioned speech to the Stimson Center in January of 1997 (and lightly editing each), in order to construct a singular expression of my convictions regarding the imperative
to eliminate nuclear weapons and my critique of the central tenet of nuclear weapons strategy: deterrence.

In a memorandum from Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson to President Truman, dated September 11th, 1945, Stimson presciently observed, “If the atomic bomb were merely another though more devastating military weapon to be assimilated into our pattern of international relations, it would be one thing. We could then follow the old custom of secrecy and military superiority, relying on international caution to prescribe the future use of the weapon. But I think the bomb instead constitutes merely a first step in a new control by man over the forces of nature too revolutionary and dangerous to fit into the old concepts. I think it really caps the climax of the race between man’s growing technical power for destructiveness and his psychological power of self-control ... his moral power.”

This remarkable insight at the dawn of the nuclear age gives perfect expression to the growing sense of alarm which, over the course of my long experience in the nuclear arena, evolved ultimately to a singular goal: to bend every effort within my power and authority to promote the conditions and attitudes which might someday free mankind from the scourge of nuclear weapons.

To my utter astonishment, and profound gratitude, the opportunity to advance that agenda came in the form of two wholly unanticipated and unlikely eventualities. One, of historic consequence, was the end of the Cold War; the other, of little moment, was my appointment as the commander of America’s strategic nuclear forces. I was electrified by the prospects presented by the sudden shattering of the Cold War paradigm. And on entering my new office as Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Air Command (SAC), I was seized by the opportunity to introduce fundamental changes in nuclear weapons policy, force structure, planning and operational practice. Two days after taking the helm of SAC, I called together my senior staff of 20 generals and one admiral, and over the course of what I am sure for all of them was a mystifying and deeply unsettling discussion, I presented my case that with the end of the Cold War, SAC’s mission should fundamentally change. I began to prepare them for a dramatic shift in strategic direction, to think in terms of less rather than more, to argue for
smaller strategic nuclear forces, fewer targets held at risk, reduced
day-to-day alert postures and accelerated conclusion of strategic
arms reduction agreements.

This was a wrenching readjustment. It prompted angry de-
bate, bruised feelings and ultimately the early termination of a
dozen promising careers. But in the final analysis, I could have not
been prouder of a staff that over the course of a few short months
endorsed the cancellation of $40 billion of strategic nuclear force
modernization programs; that supported my recommendations to
convert the B-2 to a primarily conventional role and to stand the
entire bomber force down from 30 years of alert; that did pio-
neering analysis in developing notional nuclear war plans num-
bering down to hundreds of targets; and perhaps most notably,
unanimously supported my decision to recommend that Strategic
Air Command itself be disestablished after 46 years at the nuclear
ramparts, to be replaced by the U.S. Strategic Command.

This was an extraordinary period, a promising start to a
wholesale realignment of America’s national security policy and
practice. And in the ensuing years there has been much to record
and to applaud, thanks to a host of people, agencies and initia-
tives. Conversely, there is yet no cause for celebration or satisfac-
tion. The harsh truth is that years after the end of the Cold War
we are still prisoner to its psychology of distrust, still enmeshed
in the apocalyptic vocabulary of nuclear deterrence based upon
mutual assured destruction, still in the thrall of the nuclear era.
Worse, strategists persist in conjuring worlds which spiral toward
chaos and fixating on threats they assert can only be discouraged
or expunged by the existence or employment of nuclear weapons.

It is well that Secretary Stimson did not survive to see this
folly. I can readily imagine his dismay at witnessing mankind’s mi-
raculous reprieve from nuclear holocaust, yet continuing to risk
losing the race between self-destructiveness and self-control, in
thrall to technological prowess and shackled by abiding distrust.
For my own part, I found it unconscionable, and for that reason I
felt increasingly the moral imperative to reenter the public arena.

That resolve was crystallized by an invitation from the govern-
ment of Australia in late 1995 to join the Canberra Commission on
the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, a group that included a for-
mer prime minister of France, a former U.S. Secretary of Defense,
a number of ambassadors from a host of nations, another 4-star retired officer from Great Britain, and highly respected academics, to include a Nobel Prize winner. I was deeply moved by Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating’s forceful condemnation of the resumption of French nuclear testing and his courageous effort to bring focus to the ensuing international outcry by sponsoring an international conclave of experts to explore a serious-minded, responsible path toward realizing the ultimate objective of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty: the global elimination of nuclear weapons.

I came away from the Canberra Commission experience with decidedly mixed feelings. On the one hand, I was enormously enriched by this year-long association with men and women of great stature. I was equally gratified by the unanimity of view and the forceful logic of our report, which in my view captured in measured, balanced and reasoned terms the essence of my own conclusions about the risks and penalties associated with nuclear weapons. Most importantly, it set forth a practical, realistic blueprint for working toward their elimination, which, for those interested, can be readily accessed through the resources of the internet.

Subsequently, however, I became increasingly disturbed that the report failed to ignite the interest and debate which its subject so urgently warranted and continues to warrant, thus faring little better than the four-year Stimson Center project on “Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction” on this critical issue that had come before it. After long reflection I concluded that, because of my unique experience, if our message was to be heard it would require a very direct and public intervention on my part. That decision ultimately led me to the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., where in December of 1996 I gave an intensely personal expression of my views on the case for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

After a lifetime of public service, that was a defining moment for me and by extension, for members of my family who, as always, were caught up in the consequences of my beliefs. But, as always, they understood the demands of conscience that compelled my actions. They also shared my sense of wonder at the reaction that my views, joined with those of dozens of respected
military colleagues such as General (retired) Andrew Goodpaster, provoked. As I surveyed the response of a rather astonished world, I was, by turns, encouraged, disappointed, distressed and dismayed.

Encouraged by the flood of supportive calls and letters I received from every corner of the planet; because the issue had been widely joined, with great interest and intensity; and because I could discern the makings of an emerging global consensus that the risks posed by nuclear weapons far outweigh their putative value.

Disappointed by the quality of the debate that ensued, by those pundits who simply sniffed imperiously at the goal of elimination, aired their stock Cold War rhetoric, hurled a personal epithet or two, and settled smugly back into their world of exaggerated threats and bygone enemies.

Distressed by critics who attacked my views by misrepresenting them, such as suggesting that I was proposing unilateral disarmament or a pace of reductions that would jeopardize the security of the nuclear-weapon states.

And finally, dismayed, that even among more serious commentators the lessons of fifty years at the nuclear brink could still be so grievously misread, that the assertions and assumptions underpinning an era of desperate threats and risks prevailed unchallenged, that a handful of nations clung to the untenable belief that the power of nuclear weapons is so immense their use can be threatened with impunity, yet their proliferation contained.

Albert Einstein recognized this hazardous but very human tendency many years ago, when he warned that “the unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking, and thus we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe.”

How else to explain the conviction that nuclear weapons deter major war, in a world that survived the Cuban Missile Crisis no thanks to deterrence, but only by the grace of God? How else to accept the proposition that any civilized nation would respond to the act of a madman by adopting his methods? How otherwise to fathom a mindset that can witness the collapse of communism but fail to imagine a world rid of nuclear weapons? Or finally, how to account for the assumption that because we are condemned to live with the knowledge of how to fabricate nuclear weapons,
we are powerless to mount a global framework of verification and sanctions that will greatly reduce the likelihood or adequately deal with the consequences of cheating in a world that has chosen to be free of nuclear weapons?

Many well-meaning friends counseled me that by championing complete elimination of nuclear weapons I risked setting the bar too high, providing an easy target for the cynical and diverting attention from the more immediately achievable. My response was that elimination is the only defensible long-term goal and that goal matters enormously. First and foremost, all of the declared nuclear weapon states are formally committed to nuclear abolition in the letter and the spirit of the Nonproliferation Treaty. Successive presidents of the United States since Dwight Eisenhower have publicly endorsed the elimination of nuclear weapons. A clear and unequivocal commitment to elimination, sustained by concrete policy and measurable milestones, is essential to give credibility and substance to this longstanding declaratory position.

Such a commitment goes far beyond simply seizing the moral high ground. It focuses analysis on a precise end-state; all force postures above zero simply become way-points along a path leading toward elimination. It shifts the locus of policy attention from the numbers of nuclear weapons possessed by the various nuclear-weapon states to the security climate essential to permit successive rounds of reductions. It conditions government at all levels to create and respond to every opportunity for shrinking arsenals, cutting infrastructure and curtailing delivery systems and nuclear weapons modernization. It sets the stage for rigorous enforcement of nonproliferation regimes and unrelenting pressures to reduce nuclear arsenals on a global basis. I say again, the goal matters enormously and the only defensible goal is the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

But let me say clearly, and unreservedly, that no one is more conscious than am I that realistic prospects for elimination will continue to evolve over many years. I was in the public arena for too long to ever make the perfect the enemy of the good. I hasten to add, however, my strong conviction that we are still far too timorous in imagining the good that is substantial reduction in nuclear arsenals. We are still too rigidly conditioned by an arms control
mentality deeply rooted in the Cold War. We fall too readily into the intellectual trap of judging the goal of elimination against current political conditions. We forget too quickly how seemingly intractable conflicts can suddenly yield under the weight of reason or with a change of leadership. We have lost sight too soon that in the blink of an eye the world we knew for a traumatic half-century was utterly transformed.

How better then, to proceed? As I noted earlier, my own prescription was carefully detailed in the report of the Canberra Commission. It began not with a call for greater reductions, but rather to initiate immediate multilateral negotiations toward ending the most regrettable and risk-laden operational practice of the Cold War era: land- and sea-based ballistic missiles on constant nuclear alert. Why is it that twenty years after removing bombers, the most stable element of the Triad, from day-to-day alert — fueled, armed with nuclear weapons, capable of immediate launch — we maintain that readiness for ground- and sea-based intercontinental-range ballistic missiles? What can possibly justify this continuing exposure to the associated operational and logistical risks? What could be more corrosive to building and sustaining security relationships built on trust with former adversary nations? What could undercut more overtly the credibility of our leadership in advancing a Nonproliferation Treaty premised on a solemn obligation to fully eliminate nuclear arsenals?

There are a host of other measures outlined in the Canberra Commission report drafted more than fifteen months ago that I believe merit more considered attention. In my view, they are still a valid guide for reducing the residual dangers posed by nuclear weapons. But from my present perspective, one I have held and advocated since my retirement from active military duty in 1994, what matters more is the much larger and defining question upon which the debate must ultimately turn: above all nations, how should the United States see its responsibility for dealing with the conflicted moral legacy of the Cold War? Russia, with its history of authoritarian rule and a staggering burden of social transformation, is ill equipped to lead on this issue. It falls unavoidably to us to work painfully back through the tangled moral web of this frightful 50-year gauntlet, born of the hellish confluence of two unprecedented currents: the bi-polar collision of ideology, and the
unleashing of the power of the atom.

As a democracy, the consequences of these cataclysmic forces confronted us with a tortuous and seemingly inextricable dilemma: how to put at the service of our national survival a weapon whose sheer destructiveness was antithetical to the very values upon which our society was based. As nuclear arsenals multiplied on both sides and the rhetoric of mutual annihilation grew more heated, we were forced to think about the unthinkable, justify the unjustifiable, and rationalize the irrational. I find it distressing that, in a world transformed, nuclear weapons retain an aura of utility, of primacy and of legitimacy that for many justifies their existence well into the future, in some number, however small. The persistence of this view lies at the core of the concern that stirs my very soul. I live with the knowledge that this abiding faith in nuclear weapons was inspired and is sustained by a catechism instilled over many decades by a relatively small cadre of theorists and strategists who speak with great assurance and authority. I was for many years among the most avid of those keepers of the faith in nuclear weapons, and for that I make no apology. Like my contemporaries, I was moved by fears and fired by beliefs that date back to the earliest days of the atomic era. We lived through a terror-ridden epoch punctuated by crises whose resolution held hostage the saga of humankind. For us, nuclear weapons were the savior that brought an implacable foe to his knees in 1945 and held another at bay for nearly a half-century. We believed that superior technology brought strategic advantage, that greater numbers meant stronger security, and that the ends of containment justified whatever means were necessary to achieve them.

These are powerful, deeply rooted beliefs. They cannot and should not be lightly dismissed or discounted. Strong arguments can be made on their behalf. Throughout my professional military career, I shared them, I professed them and I put them into operational practice. And now it is my burden to declare with all of the conviction I can muster that in my judgment they served us extremely ill. They account for the most severe risks and most extravagant costs of the U.S. - Soviet confrontation. They intensified and prolonged an already acute ideological animosity. They spawned an endless cycle of new and more destructive nuclear devices and delivery systems. They gave rise to mammoth bureaucracies with
gargantuan appetites and sweeping agendas. They incited primal emotions, spurred zealotry and demagoguery, and set in motion forces of ungovernable scope and power. Most importantly, these enduring beliefs, and the fears that underlie them, perpetuate Cold War policies and practices that make no strategic sense. They continue to entail enormous costs and expose all mankind to unconscionable dangers. I find that intolerable and therefore cannot stay silent. I know too much of these matters, the frailties, the flaws, the failures of policy and practice.

At the same time, I cannot overstate the difficulty this poses for me. No one who ever entered the nuclear arena left it with a fuller understanding of its complexity or greater respect for those with whom I served its purposes. I struggle constantly with the task of articulating the evolution of my convictions without denigrating or diminishing the motives and sacrifice of countless colleagues with whom I lived the drama of the Cold War. I ask them and you to appreciate that my purpose is not to accuse, but to assess, to understand and to propound the forces that birthed the grotesque excesses and hazards of the nuclear age. For me, that assessment meant first coming to grips with my experience and then coming to terms with my conscience.

That experience began in the classroom, as a young cadet and some years thereafter as a professor at the U.S. Air Force Academy. I knew the moment I opened my first textbook of nuclear issues I had been thrust into a world beset with tidal forces, insane risks, towering egos, maddening contradictions, and alien constructs. Its arcane vocabulary and apocalyptic calculus defied comprehension. Its stage was global and its antagonists locked in a deadly spiral of deepening rivalry. I later came to see it as a modern-day holy war, a cosmic struggle between the forces of light and darkness. The stakes were national survival, and the weapons of choice were eminently suited to this scale of malevolence.

The opposing forces created vast enterprises, each giving rise to a culture of messianic believers infused with a sense of empowering mission and schooled in unshakable articles of faith. As my career progressed, I was immersed in the work of all of these cultures, either directly in those of the Western world, or through penetrating study of Communist organizations, teachings and practices. My responsibilities ranged from the highly subjective,
such as assessing the values and motivation of Soviet leadership, to the critically objective, such as preparing weapons for operational launch. I am steeped in the art of intelligence estimates, the psychology of negotiations, the interplay of bureaucracies and the impulses of industry. I was engaged in the labyrinthine conjecture of the strategist, the exacting routines of the target planner and the demanding skills of the aircrew and the missleer. I have been a party to their history, shared their triumphs and tragedies, witnessed heroic sacrifice and catastrophic failure of both men and machines. And in the end, I came away from it all with profound misgivings.

Ultimately, as I examined my life’s journey, as the lessons of decades of intimate involvement took greater hold on my intellect and my conscience, I came to a set of deeply unsettling judgments. That from the earliest days of the nuclear era, the risks and consequences of nuclear war have never been properly understood. That the stakes of nuclear war engage not just the survival of the antagonists, but the fate of mankind. That the prospect of shearing away entire societies has no politically, militarily or morally acceptable justification. And therefore, that the threat to use nuclear weapons is indefensible.

These judgments forced me to confront a related litany of inescapable questions. If this be so, what explained the willingness, no, the zeal, of legions of Cold Warriors, civilian and military, to not just to tolerate but to multiply and to perpetuate such risks? By what authority do succeeding generations of leaders in the nuclear weapons states dictate the odds of nuclear proliferation, terrorism and war? Most urgently, why does such breathtaking audacity persist at a moment when we should stand trembling in the face of our folly and united in our commitment to abolish its most deadly manifestation?

These are not questions to be left to historians. The answers matter to us now. They go to the heart of present-day policies and practices. They convey lessons with immediate implications for both contemporary and aspiring nuclear states. As I distill them from the experience of three decades in the nuclear arena, these lessons resolve into two fundamental conclusions.

First, I have no other way to understand the willingness to condone nuclear weapons than to believe they are the natural
accomplice of visceral enmity. They thrive in the divisive, emotion-charged climate born of alienation and isolation. The unbounded wantonness of their effects is a perfect companion to the urge to destroy completely. They play on our deepest fears and pander to our darkest instincts. They corrode our sense of humanity, numb our capacity for moral outrage, and make thinkable the unimaginable. These fears and enmities are no respecter of political systems or values. They prey on democracies and totalitarian societies alike, shrinking the norms of civilized behavior and dimming the prospects for escaping the savagery so powerfully imprinted in our genetic code. That should give us great pause as we imagine the task of abolition in a world that gives daily witness to acts of unspeakable barbarism. So should it compound our resolve.

The evidence to support this conclusion is palpable, but as I said at the outset of these remarks for much of my life I saw it differently. That was a product of my citizenry and of my profession. From the early years of my childhood and through much of my military service I saw the Soviet Union and its allies as a demonic threat, an evil empire bent on world domination. I was commissioned as an officer in the United States Air Force as the Cold War was heating to a fever pitch. This was a desperate time that evoked on both sides extreme responses in politics and policy, in technology and in force postures: bloody purges and political inquisitions; covert intelligence schemes that squandered lives and subverted governments; atmospheric testing with little understanding or regard for the long-term effects; threats of massive nuclear retaliation to an ill-defined scope of potential provocations; the forced march of inventive genius that summoned the capacity for wholesale extermination; reconnaissance aircraft that probed or violated sovereign airspace, producing disastrous encounters; and the menacing and perilous practice of airborne alert bombers loaded with nuclear weapons.

By the early 1960s, a superpower nuclear arms race was underway that would lead to a ceaseless amassing of destructive capacity, spilling over into the arsenals of other nations. Central Europe became a powder keg, trembling under the shadow of Armageddon, hostage to a bizarre strategy that required the prospect of nuclear devastation as the price of alliance. The entire world became a stage for the U.S. - Soviet rivalry. International
organizations were paralyzed by its grip. East-West confrontation dominated the nation-state system. Every quarrel and conflict was fraught with potential for global war.

This was the world that largely defined my life as an American citizen and as an officer in its armed forces. The threat was omnipresent, it seemed total; it dictated my professional preparation and career progression; it very nearly cost me my life in the skies of Vietnam. Like millions of others, I was caught up in the holy war, inured to its costs and consequences, trusting in the assertions of the nuclear priesthood and the wisdom of my seniors. The first requirement of unconditional belief in the efficacy of nuclear weapons was early and perfectly met for me: my homeland was the target of a consuming evil, poised to strike without warning and without mercy.

What remained was the lifelong task of mastering the intellectual foundation of America’s military response, the strategic underpinning that today still stands as the central precept of the nuclear catechism. Reassessing its pervasive impact on attitudes toward nuclear weapons goes directly to my second conclusion regarding the persistent willingness to tolerate the risks of the nuclear age. That conclusion also brings me to the focal point of my remarks, to my purpose in coming to this forum, and to the resolution of a moral conundrum I can no longer leave unaddressed. For all of my years as a nuclear strategist, operational expert and public spokesman, I explained, justified and sustained America’s massive nuclear arsenal as a function, a necessity and a consequence of deterrence. Bound up in this singular term, this familiar touchstone of security dating back to antiquity, was the intellectually comforting and deceptively simple justification for taking the most extreme risks and the expenditure of trillions of dollars. It was our shield and by translation to forces, our sword. We extolled its virtues and bowed to its demands. Allies yielded grudgingly to its dictates though decrying its risks and costs. We brandished it at our enemies and presumed they embraced its suicidal corollary of mutual assured destruction. We ignored, discounted or dismissed its flaws and cling still to the belief that it obtains in a world whose security architecture has been wholly transformed.

But I now see it differently. My change of beliefs came not in some blinding revelation, but at the end of a journey, in an age of
deliverance from the consuming tensions of the Cold War. Now, with the evidence more clear, the risks more sharply defined, and the costs more fully understood, I see nuclear deterrence in a very different light. Appropriated from the lexicon of conventional warfare, this simple prescription for adequate military preparedness became in the nuclear age a formula for potential catastrophe. It was premised on a litany of unwarranted assumptions, unprovable assertions and logical contradictions. For me, commitment to mutual nuclear deterrence flies in the face of the most vital goal of national security: to ensure the survival of the nation.

How is it that we subscribe to a strategy that requires near-perfect understanding of enemies from whom we are often deeply alienated and largely isolated? How can we pretend to understand the motivations and intentions of leaders with whom we may have little or no substantive personal association? In the case of the former Soviet Union, why did we ever imagine that a nation that had survived successive invasions and mind-numbing losses would accede to a strategy premised on fear of nuclear war? Nuclear deterrence in the Cold War setting was fatally flawed at the most fundamental level of human psychology in its projection of Western reason through the distorted lens of a paranoid foe. Little wonder that intentions and motives on each side were consistently misread. Little wonder that deterrence was the first victim of a deepening crisis, as with Cuba in 1962, leaving the antagonists to grope fearfully in a fog of mutual misperception. While we clung to the notion that nuclear war could be reliably deterred, Soviet leaders derived from their experience the conviction that such a war might be thrust upon them and if so, must not be lost. Driven by that fear, they took Herculean measures to prepare to fight and survive no matter the odds or the costs. Nuclear deterrence between the United States and the Soviet Union was a dialogue of the blind with the deaf. In the final analysis, it was largely a bargain we in the West made with ourselves.

Nuclear deterrence is flawed equally in that the consequences of its failure are intolerable. While the price of undeterred aggression in the age of solely conventional weaponry could be severe, history teaches that nations can survive and even prosper in the aftermath of unconditional defeat. Not so in the nuclear era. Nuclear weapons give no quarter. Their effects transcend
time and place, poisoning the earth and deforming its inhabitants for generation upon generation. They leave us wholly without defense. If used in substantial numbers, they expunge all hope for meaningful survival; they hold in their sway not just the fate of nations, but the very meaning of civilization.

Deterrence failed completely as a guide in setting rational limits on the size and composition of U.S. and Soviet nuclear forces. To the contrary, its appetite was voracious: its capacity to justify new nuclear weapons, new delivery systems and larger stocks of each was unrestrained. Nuclear deterrence carried the seed, born of an irresolvable internal contradiction, that spurred an insatiable arms race. Nuclear deterrence hinges on the credible capacity to mount a devastating retaliation after suffering the first blow under the most extreme conditions of war initiation, that is, a large-scale, surprise, would-be disarming first strike. Perversely, the redundant and survivable strategic nuclear forces required to meet this exacting test are readily perceived by a darkly suspicious adversary as capable, even designed, to execute such a disarming first strike. Such advantage can never be conceded between nuclear rivals. It must be answered, reduced, nullified. Fears are fanned, the rivalry intensified. New technology is inspired, together with new nuclear weapons designs, and soon new delivery systems roll from production lines. The correlation of forces begins to shift, and the bar of deterrence ratchets higher, igniting yet another cycle of trepidation, worst-case assumptions and ever-mounting levels of destructive capability.

Thus it was that the treacherous axioms of nuclear deterrence made U.S. and Soviet nuclear weapon stockpiles numbering in the tens of thousands seem reasonable. Despite having witnessed the devastation wrought by two primitive atomic devices, over the ensuing decades the superpowers gorged themselves at the thermonuclear trough. A succession of leaders on both sides of the East-West divide directed a reckless proliferation of nuclear devices, tailored for carriage by a vast array of delivery vehicles to a stupefying array of targets. They nurtured, richly rewarded, even reveled in the industrial base required to support production of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems at such levels.

I was part of all of that. I was present at the creation of many of these systems, directly responsible for prescribing and justifying
the requirements and technology that made them possible. I saw the arms race from the inside, watched as ICBMs and SLBMs deployed by both sides ushered in mutual assured destruction and the deployment of nuclear-armed multiple, independently-targeted reentry vehicles (MIRVs), again by both sides, exacerbated serious fears of a nuclear first strike. I participated in the elaboration of ICBM basing schemes that bordered on the comical and strategic nuclear force levels that, in retrospect, defied reason. I was responsible for nuclear war plans with some 12,000 targets, many planned to be struck with repeated nuclear blows, some to the point of complete absurdity. I was a veteran participant in an arena where the most destructive power ever unleashed became the prize in a no-holds-barred competition among organizations whose principal interest was to enhance rather than constrain its possible application. And through every corridor, in every impassioned plea, in every fevered debate rang the rallying cry, “deterrence, deterrence, deterrence.”

As nuclear weapons and actors multiplied, nuclear deterrence took on too many names, too many roles, overreaching an already extreme strategic task. Surely nuclear weapons summoned great caution in superpower relationships. But as their numbers swelled, so mounted the stakes of miscalculation, of a crisis spun out of control. The exorbitant price of nuclear war quickly exceeded the rapidly depreciating value of a tenuous mutual wariness. Invoking deterrence became a cheap rhetorical parlor trick, a verbal sleight of hand. Proponents persist in dressing it up to court changing times and temperaments, hemming and re-hemming to fit shrinking or distorted threats.

Nuclear deterrence is a slippery conceptual slope. It is neither stable, nor is it static; its wiles cannot be contained. It is both master and slave. It seduces the scientist yet bends to his creation. It serves the ends of evil as well as those of noble intent. It holds at risk the innocent as well as the culpable. It gives easy semantic cover to nuclear weapons, masking the horrors of employment with siren veils of infallibility. At best, it is a gamble no mortal should pretend to make. At worst, it invokes death on a scale rivaling the power of the Creator.

Is it any wonder that at the end of my long journey embedded in the U.S. nuclear enterprise, I am moved so strongly to retrace its

path, to examine more closely the evidence I would not or could not see? I hear the voices long ignored, the warnings muffled by the still-lingering animosities of the Cold War. I see with painful clarity that from the very beginning of the nuclear era, the objective scrutiny and searching debate essential to adequate comprehension and responsible oversight of its vast enterprises were foreshortened or foregone. The cold light of dispassionate scrutiny was shuttered in the name of security, doubts dismissed in the name of an acute and unrelenting threat, objections overruled by the incantations of the nuclear priesthood.

The penalties proved to be severe. Vitally important decisions were routinely taken without adequate understanding, assertions too often prevailed over analysis, requirements took on organizational biases, technological opportunity and corporate profit drove nuclear force levels and capability, and narrow Congressional interests impinged on calculations of military necessity. Authority and accountability were severed, policy was dissociated from planning, and theory wilted in the heat of crisis. The narrow concerns of a multitude of powerful interests intruded on the rightful role of key policymakers, constraining their latitude for decision. Many officials with oversight responsibilities in this area were simply denied access to critical information essential to the proper exercise of their office.

As a consequence, planning was increasingly distanced and ultimately disconnected from any sense of scientific or military reality. In the end, the nuclear powers, great and small, created astronomically expensive infrastructures, monolithic bureaucracies, and complex processes that defied control or comprehension. Only now are the dimensions, costs, and risks of these nuclear netherworlds coming to light. What must now be better understood are the root causes, the mindsets and the belief systems that brought them into existence. They must be challenged, they must be refuted, but most importantly, they must be let go. The era that gave them credence, accepted their dominion, and yielded to their excesses is fast receding.

But it is not yet over. Sad to say, the Cold War lives on in the minds of those who cannot let go of the fears, the beliefs, and the enmities born of the early years of the nuclear age. These people cling to nuclear deterrence, clutch its tattered promise to their
breast, shake it wistfully at bygone adversaries and balefully at new or imagined ones. They are gripped still by its awful willingness not simply to tempt the apocalypse but to prepare its way.

What better illustration of misplaced faith in nuclear deterrence than the persistent belief that retaliation with nuclear weapons is a legitimate and appropriate response to post-Cold War threats posed by weapons of mass destruction? What could possibly justify our resort to the very means we properly abhor and condemn? Who can imagine our joining in shattering the precedent of non-use of nuclear weapons that has held for over fifty years? How could America’s irreplaceable role as leader of the campaign against nuclear proliferation ever be re-justified? What target could warrant such retaliation? Would we hold an entire society accountable for the decision of a single demented leader? How would the physical effects of the nuclear explosion be contained, not to mention the political and moral consequences? In a singular act, we would martyr our enemy, alienate our friends, give comfort to the non-declared nuclear states and impetus to states who seek such weapons covertly. In short, such a response on the part of the United States is inconceivable. It would irretrievably diminish our priceless stature as a nation noble in aspiration and responsible in conduct, even in the face of extreme provocation.

Thus, I am unshakably persuaded that as a nation we have no greater responsibility than to rethink our reliance on nuclear deterrence, however unpalatable that may be intellectually or politically. I fully appreciate the magnitude of that challenge. I spent much of my military career serving the ends of such deterrence, as did millions of others. I fervently believed that in the end it was the nuclear forces that I and others commanded and operated that prevented World War III and created the conditions leading to the collapse of the Soviet empire. But, in truth, I do not and I cannot know that. It will be decades more before the hideously complex era of the Cold War is adequately understood, with its bewildering interactions of human fears and inhuman technology. Nor would it much matter that informed assessments are still well beyond our intellectual reach – except for a crucial and alarming fact. Forgetting the desperate circumstances that gave it birth, and long after their miraculous resolution, as we continue
to espouse nuclear deterrence as an irreplaceable element of our security strategy, others are listening, have converted to our theology, are seeking to build or enlarge their nuclear arsenals, are poised to rekindle the nuclear arms race – and to reawaken the specter of nuclear war.

What a stunning turn of events. In the insightful words of my friend, Jonathan Schell, we face the dismal prospect that “the Cold War was not the apogee of the age of nuclear weapons, to be succeeded by an age of nuclear disarmament. Instead, it may well prove to have simply been a period of initiation, in which not only Americans and Russians, but Indians and Pakistanis, Israelis and Iraqis, were adapting to the horror of threatening the deaths of millions of people, were learning to think about the unthinkable. If this is so, will history judge that the Cold War proved only a sort of modern-day Trojan horse, whereby nuclear weapons were smuggled into the life of the world, made an acceptable part of the way the world works? Surely not, surely we still comprehend that to threaten the deaths of tens or hundreds of millions of people presages an atrocity beyond anything in the record of mankind? Or have we, in a silent and incomprehensible moral revolution, come to regard such threats as ordinary – as a normal and proper policy for any self-respecting nation?”

Thus it is that our present policies, plans and postures regarding nuclear weapons make us prisoner still to an age of intolerable danger. We cannot at once keep sacred the miracle of existence and hold sacrosanct the capacity to destroy it. We cannot hold hostage to sovereign gridlock the keys to final deliverance from the nuclear nightmare. We cannot withhold the resources essential to break its grip, to reduce its dangers. We cannot sit in silent acquiescence to the faded homilies of the nuclear priesthood. We won through Herculean courage and sacrifice the opportunity to reset mankind’s moral compass, to renew belief in a world free from fear and deprivation, to win global affirmation for the sanctity of life, the right of liberty and the opportunity to pursue a joyous existence. Now our task is to reassert the primacy of individual conscience, the voice of reason, and the rightful interests of humanity.
Now, dear reader, think back with me once more to my introduction to Chapter 23, “Masters of the Nuclear Weapons Enterprise.” Recall that I appended the word “Puzzle” to the latter three words in titling my tutorial on the thirteen “pieces” comprising this vast array of actors and activities. Now fast forward to my reflection on the roots of the disconnect between policy guidance and war plan construction as I undertook my own target-by-target review of the SIOP. With that in mind, and armed with the logic of the foregoing opus, I trust that you have intuited the import of the “puzzle” analogy, an insight that I came to understand only after decades of experience: this is a puzzle that cannot be solved. The pieces do not, cannot, fit to make a coherent picture. There was never one puzzle master who knew enough, who had the visibility and the authority to make the pieces mesh. As I described in the foregoing remarks, the nuclear weapons enterprise grew too rapidly, under the cloak of deep secrecy, to keep in check. Each piece of the puzzle expanded to encompass its own universe of organizations, eventually taking on a life of its own, operating autonomously, giving rise to risks and costs that stagger the imagination.

As their size and influence grew, so did the disconnects among them, fueled by the clash of competing agendas and the quest for status, not just between policy makers and planners, but equally among strategists with sharply differing views of deterrence, the military services battling for nuclear primacy, and within the mushrooming “intelligence community,” whose name belies the incessant internal conflict over missions and threat estimates. The reader is acquainted from Chapter 15 with the bitter struggle between the Air Force and Navy for strategic nuclear supremacy, but should also know that the Army competed with equal passion for a role in the employment of nuclear weapons, leading to the absurdity of nuclear artillery shells and land mines. The nuclear weapons laboratories competed ferociously for missions and dollars, but their squabbles paled by comparison with the contests among legions of powerful companies comprising what President Eisenhower described as the “military-industrial complex.” The largest fraction of the trillions of dollars expended on the enterprise in this country alone was consumed by the fabrication facilities that commercial self-interest and Congressional pressures ensured were planted in every single state. Industrial lobbyists plied the Congress ceaselessly to sustain or to overturn defense program decisions that advanced or threatened their contracts and more importantly, their profits.

In the operational world where I once held sway, where came to bear all of the products of strategy, intelligence, policy, programs, funding bills, weapons and systems manufacture, facility construction and specialist training, the
challenges to coherence mounted still higher. They spanned the entire scope of operational readiness, from the reliability of communications connectivity to the countless individual actions required to employ ten thousand warheads once the order was received. Despite all of the attention to safety and security, and all of the rehearsals, the SIOP was plagued by a pervasive and irresolvable uncertainty: the most ambitious war plan ever devised could never be adequately tested. Hence, its outcome was entirely problematic. However demanding our no-notice exercises, they could never realistically replicate the equally problematic circumstances of an actual attack, during which men and machines would be tested under the most demanding and terrifying conditions imaginable. As the weapons began to rain down, the final truth would be laid bare. There would be no winners in this merciless exchange; once deterrence failed there was nothing left to fight for, only retribution to be exacted. Now the only certainty was that, in the face of utter desolation, the living would surely envy the dead.

After three decades of military service, during which I became increasingly engaged with the nuclear weapons enterprise, I finally reached a vantage point that allowed me to see the puzzle across all of its pieces, to grasp fully its incoherence, its demands, its immeasurable risks. I realized that this was only one of half a dozen or more puzzles, as each nuclear weapon state had its own, each with its unique set of perils. These were the deeply unsettling lessons I took from my military career and that had now cast me into a role that I would never have imagined.

Which brings me back to New Zealand, where we spent another two days, for a talk at the University of Auckland, a meeting with the Prime Minister, two media appearances and a night at Ian and Elespie’s country home in the magnificent mountains to the north of Wellington. Then we were on to Australia, for a major address arranged by the IPPNW chapter in Canberra, who also treated us to first-rate hospitality. Following my remarks at the city’s National Press Club, we did a bit of touring and then returned to the United States with very positive feelings about our two-nation sojourn. By the time we reached Omaha, reaction to the speech had begun to spread, primarily through IPPNW channels, throughout the global peace movement. I assumed that word had also reached Jim Garrison at the Gorbachev Foundation, as he called to ask if I would agree to being named as one of four people to receive a Global Leadership Award at the upcoming SWF annual convention, three weeks away. I was not keen to travel again so soon, but at least this trip would allow us to see Lisa and Mike, who lived in nearby Oakland. The event was again first class, and the award ceremony quite touching. I found myself on
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the stage with Doctor Jane Goodall, the renowned primatologist; Muhammad Yunus, a leader in combating poverty; and Theo Colborn, a senior director at the World Wildlife Fund. The award itself was an exquisite blown glass piece by Dale Chihuly, the foremost artisan in his field. More important, we had a delightful interlude with Lisa and Mike, our first visit since she had informed us in August of her impending motherhood. As we sat in their company during dinner, my thoughts turned to a concern Dorene and I had discussed many times as I contemplated returning full-time to the public spotlight: the impact on our family. We had had an early reminder of how intrusive the media can be after the December 1996 National Press Club speech. Dorene’s luncheon companion, a writer from *Time* magazine, used information he gleaned from their ostensibly casual conversation to track down Brett at his home in Maine to probe his thoughts about my controversial new role. Although caught quite unaware, Brett kept his usual aplomb. With respect to my activism, he offered that I was simply adhering to the standing Butler rule: “Always follow your conscience; never mind the consequences.” When asked if the conversation around the Butler dinner table during his younger years ever turned to nuclear weapons, he laughed and said, “No, nothing that exciting. It was mostly about family stuff.”

In retrospect, we need not have worried ourselves about our children. They had been through the wringer with us during crises dating back thirty-four years, and we were all the stronger for it. The more important concern was how to posture ourselves for the growing demands on our time and energies, the mundane but important considerations such as properly managing honoraria, reimbursements, and the voluminous correspondence that had attended the aftermath of my public appearances. It was time to pull the plug or get organized. The impetus for that decision came in the form of two intriguing requests. The first was yet another call from Alan Cranston, who had persuaded the National Press Club to offer me a second turn at the podium, this time to reprise my Geiringer Oration. The second, even more unexpected, came in the form of a phone call from *Washington Post* reporter Jeff Smith, with whom I had parted company on a distinctly sour note eight years earlier, in the aftermath of my negotiations with the Soviet military. Jeff had seen the text of the Geiringer Oration and had persuaded his editor to run a “one year later” cover story in the Post’s *Sunday Magazine* following up on my response to the fallout from the December 1996 National Press Club event. I was taken completely aback, having no love lost for Jeff or his newspaper. On further thought, and after discussion with Dorene, I saw the value of such a high-profile piece as a stage setter for the Press Club invitation, which I decided to accept. I called Jeff
and asked him to come to Omaha for a face-to-face discussion. Betting on the outcome, he brought a photographer, and after agreeing on the ground rules, spent two long days getting an interview on tape and countless photographs. I was pleased with the article, which traced the arc of my career and underscored the responsibilities and insights that over many years had evoked my deep antipathy toward the nuclear enterprise. The story ran in the December 7th edition of the magazine; my picture on the cover and Jeff’s masterful prose provided the tinder that would create a firestorm of interest in the forthcoming Press Club speech.

My mindset as the year 1998 dawned is reflected in a January 8th letter to Les Gelb at the Council on Foreign Relations, in reply to a package of material he had asked me to review. Les had an initiative in the making to help frame the issues that he believed should be the focus of the two-year period running up to the 2000 presidential election. His plan was to tee up the debate in the form of alternative “mock” presidential speeches, each with a different take on the set of foreign and security policy questions he wanted to highlight. As my letter makes clear, I was not happy with the draft speeches:

Dear Les:

I have read the speeches you sent and in all candor I must say I was keenly disappointed. I found little to choose among or differentiate them. The purported distinctions were, in my view, virtually all at the margins. Fundamentally, they all struck me as part and parcel of the Cold War thinking and rhetoric that continues to infuse and inform national security policy and what passes for debate.

To wit, they depart from a simplistic threat-based view of the world and America’s role therein. We have just escaped a prolonged era dating back to the early years of this century in which the United States was confronted with a series of related crises and challenges to democracy that genuinely threatened our vital interest if not our survival. The period in which we now find ourselves certainly has its own unique as well as familiar tests, but all pale by comparison with the risks and dangers of what has been called the era of tyranny, now closed.

But to our discredit and perhaps to our peril, we have been incapable of shedding the mindsets, habits, vocabularies and policies born of a century of unrelenting nation-state confrontation wherein the fate of civilization arguably hung in the balance. We
continue to think in terms of zero-sum outcomes rather than co-operative regimes or mutual security, of deterrence rather than assurance, of so-called rogue states rather than rogue regimes, and of threats rather than diplomatic and economic initiatives designed to change the context of longstanding adversarial relationships.

Perhaps nowhere is this more evident, and of obvious concern to me, than the pedantic, unimaginative and wholly unsatisfactory language with respect to the future role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security policy. What could possibly require more serious and considered treatment among the panoply of issues confronting our nation in the post-Cold War era? Who can accept with equanimity the current prospect that ten years from now the U.S. and Russia will still have nuclear arsenals numbering in the tens of thousands, with several thousand warheads on hair-trigger alert postures? One of the most striking intellectual failures of the current debate is that we have come to regard two thousand deliverable nuclear warheads as a small number. It is a grotesquely large, indeed, preposterous number that makes no political or military sense and is morally indefensible. The intellectual cover for this nonsensical perpetuation of Cold War policies and practices is a simplistic reaffirmation of “deterrence,” which is echoed in the unacceptably shallow treatment of the mock speeches. I am sufficiently concerned on this score to make a critique of deterrence – past, present and future – the principal focus of the National Press Club Speech I will give on the second of February.

Equally dismaying to me is the tacit and I must say surprising acceptance of what you know I believe is the most tragic strategic mistake of this Administration: NATO expansion. This is a failure of vision and statesmanship of the worst kind. We have forsaken a priceless opportunity to restructure European security by clinging to the familiar and comfortable, rather than doing the hard intellectual and diplomatic work of imagining and building a new paradigm based on the rapidly emerging social and economic relationships that represent the defining global phenomenon of the modern era. We have jeopardized what I consider the most critical priority of the post-Soviet security environment: normalizing relations with Russia and facilitating her entry into the web of binding international commitments that give the best hope
of establishing the rule of law as the basis for resolving conflicts among nation-states. The speeches treat it as simply a foregone conclusion. As for the role, composition and structure of the U.S. armed forces, here again, what are offered as alternatives strike me as being marginal modifications to an establishment that is the product of decades of reaction to a global threat, bureaucratic turf wars, prodigious sums of money, technological opportunism and Congressional meddling. There are profound, systemic and doctrinal problems resident in the Department of Defense, to include the layering of staffs; the ponderous PPBS [Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System] process; crucial, unresolved and largely unaddressed issues affecting service roles and missions; and most importantly, the role of military forces in the coming century. The speeches touch on this cursorily, but the issues are far more consequential than they have been portrayed. It matters enormously how we choose to see the world, whether we view China as a “threat” and dwell on the simplistic notion of “reversal” in Russia, whether we persist in trumping up the dangers posed by a handful of marginal states that represent worrisome but far from vital concerns.

Les, I applaud the initiative. Something like this is badly needed. But in its present form I think it does a great disservice to its professed intent: to engender and inform meaningful public discourse and debate on critical national security choices. I think there is a trap in couching the mock speeches as presidential; in so doing they have wittingly or unwittingly adopted current administration thinking and positions on issues that I, and I believe many others, consider to be egregiously wrongheaded. I urge you to reconsider this approach and what I find to be the lack of scope and depth it reflects in the alternative speeches. Forgive the harshness of my tone; accept that it reflects deep personal experience with these issues, a genuine sense that you are ill-serving your own purpose, and quite evidently the fact that I have strongly held views on the principal issues that differ sharply with current policy.

One can correctly take from the rhetoric and tone of the letter that my mood was very grim in the wake of the Canberra Commission and CISAC Report efforts, and what I saw as continuing drift in Clinton’s foreign policy. For that reason, the second National Press Club speech, now scheduled for
early February, 1998, took on even greater importance, further enhanced by Alan Cranston, who had been hard at work compiling yet another list, this time of past and present high-ranking politicians from around the world who were lending their names to nuclear abolition. The intent was to announce the names as a prelude to my remarks, which would be covered by a broad swath of national and international media, with an extended question and answer period to follow. As the 2 February date drew nigh, the stage was set for what I hoped would be the beginning of meaningful, substantive debate on the critical issue of United States nuclear deterrence policy and practice. Unfortunately, while the speech did come off as scheduled and garnered considerable publicity, this time the White House had found a new way to distract attention from what anyone in Washington was saying about national security policy: the Monica Lewinsky affair. The scandal broke in mid-January, burned all of the oxygen in the Washington air for months thereafter, and destroyed the President’s credibility. Worse, as the two parties squared off over the impeachment process, it was the death-knell for any hope of bipartisan politics in the Congress.

Nonetheless, the impact of the speech spread quickly. This was a major, expert critique of deterrence, and it generated a groundswell of reaction, the vast majority of it positive, at least in the public domain. Based on the volume of requests for interviews and speaking engagements I was receiving, it also served to rekindle interest in the nuclear abolition debate that had waned after the swift dismissal of the CISAC report.

The response also made painfully obvious that I needed some interim business status and limited staff assistance to manage these growing demands professionally. After consulting our family lawyer, in July Dorene and I created Dorene and Lee Butler, and Associates, LLC, as a small business, and we hired Peggy Kruse, my secretary from Kiewit Fuels, as an assistant. By this time, the incessant remodeling of our home had reached the point where space for a two-person office could be carved out of its lower level, so Peggy and I set up shop there. This proved to be an efficient and economical arrangement that tided us over until, with Kiewit in the rear-view mirror, I could see the path ahead more clearly, but as yet I had no plan to guide my missionary work in the nuclear policy arena.

Clarity began to emerge with an invitation from President Gorbachev to attend a conference at his headquarters in Moscow on the 13th of February, 1998. The subject was “Global Security on the Threshold of a New Century”; the attendees were a mix of some three dozen Russian notables and a smattering of Americans. They included the likes of Ambassador Tom Graham from...
U.S. arms control circles, now president of a group called “Lawyers Alliance for World Security” (LAWS), of which more later; Joe Cirincione from the Stimson Center; Jonathan Schell, (whom I quoted in my Stimson Center speech) a writer for *The New Yorker* magazine for twenty years, who taught in a number of prestigious universities and was widely published (his best-selling 1982 book *The Fate of the Earth* won numerous awards); Senator Alan Cranston; and two or three others. I accepted the invitation, wanting to keep the tie to President Gorbachev and gain a fresh perspective on Russian foreign policy.

I had visited Moscow in May of 1996 as part of a Carnegie Corporation-sponsored conference designed to bring twelve Americans and a like number of Russians together once a year to discuss the evolving relationship between the two nations. This had proven a very worthwhile venture for my purposes, as the sides included an eclectic mix of political notables, leading scholars and journalists, and business leaders. Among the U.S. members was Senator Bill Bradley, with whom I had struck up a budding friendship and whose insights I found particularly useful. As for the setting, while I had been initially heartened by evidence of economic revival in the city, spurred mostly by Western investment – there were long lines at McDonalds – I was dismayed by the glumly negative tone of the Russian side, particularly regarding the state of relations with the United States under the Clinton Administration. The START II impasse, the expansion of NATO, growing criticism among U.S. hawks of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the ABM Treaty, and a pervasive condescension toward all things Russian were taking a severe toll, confirming the concerns I had expressed to Les Gelb and earlier to Dr. Kissinger.

Those concerns were multiplied by what I now, two years later, heard from the Russian contingent at the Gorbachev Conference, especially the strong declaration from most of the military professionals present that Russia was more reliant on nuclear weapons than ever, particularly nuclear weapons of the tactical variety, because of the sorry state of its conventional forces. I came away from the conference with a compelling sense that I needed to deepen and broaden my engagement on the future role of nuclear weapons, a conviction that was strongly reinforced during a quiet dinner meeting that evening with Major General Vladimir Dvorkin to follow up our correspondence the year before.

George Crile, who happened to be in Russia at the same time, was there; he had asked if he could film a portion of the meeting, to which Dvorkin had agreed. Dvorkin, who greeted me warmly, was by then head of the powerful Russian 4th Institute, which conducted analyses in support of Russian space and missile programs. We were joined by two of his senior colonels, rather
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fresh-faced for their rank, representative of the youth movement that Marshal Sergeyev had initiated to clean the deadwood from the senior ranks of the Russian military. We had a deeply meaningful conversation: it revealed on the one hand how progressive General Dvorkin’s thinking was compared to the party line emanating from the Kremlin and on the other how poorly he understood the state of play in the Washington defense bureaucracy. After Crile finished filming and departed, I gave Vladimir a player-by-player, blow-by-blow picture of what was happening behind the scenes in the Clinton Administration. He then gave me a candid recitation of his personal position on arms control, including full support for U.S. help in securing Russia’s nuclear arsenal, de-alerting Russian and U.S. strategic nuclear forces, and full elimination of global arsenals. His two colonels listened in utter fascination, having never been privy to such a conversation. Afterward, they both expressed to me their appreciation for allowing them to sit in on the intimate gathering and assured me of their sympathies for my views and appreciation for my efforts. At the conclusion of the dinner, General Dvorkin gave me a wristwatch emblazoned with the emblem of the Russian space program, asked for copies of my speeches, and told me of his desire to collaborate closely following his retirement a year hence.

The final brush strokes on my picture of the dismal state of U.S. – Russian relations were applied during the second annual meeting of the Carnegie group, this time in Washington at the end of February. While there were growing investment opportunities in Russia and expanding interaction between the two nations at many levels, under newly reelected President Yeltsin’s erratic leadership the financial climate was eroding, and the Clinton Administration was losing confidence in Yeltsin’s ability to deliver anything requiring Duma approval.

At this juncture in 1998, I was forced to take time out from these activities in order to deal with the wind-down of Kiewit Fuels, the sale of the PKS share of the geothermal power business, and terminating my employment with PKS. In August, as my calendar began to clear, I received a very appealing speaking invitation from the Young Presidents Organization, or YPO, as it is more commonly known. The group was holding its annual conclave in Madrid, Spain, and wanted Dorene and me to join them for the week, with all expenses paid, all for the price of a one-hour talk. This struck me as an optimal audience for my message about reducing nuclear dangers. The qualifications for membership were twofold: be the CEO of a business with net assets of at least ten million dollars and be forty-five years old or younger — in other words, relatively young entrepreneurs geared to think outside the box and to make
things happen. That assessment was right on the money. The reaction to my presentation was very enthusiastic and action-oriented: what can we do to help? This was a question I was not yet fully prepared to answer, but one that became compelling over the course of the next month. After a fast-paced and fascinating week, filled with well-managed outings and a number of private conversations with very engaging people, we returned to Omaha encouraged by the response but unsure about how to exploit the obvious opening. That all began to change very quickly.

Shortly after our return, Dorene fielded a call from movie star Michael Douglas’ agent, advising that Michael was going to be visiting Omaha for a fund-raising event in late August and wanted to meet privately with me. Dorene suggested he come to dinner at our home in Tomlinson Woods, and that we also invite Warren Buffett, who had recently expressed interest in my public statements and wanted to help. The evening was memorable – unforgettable, really. Michael was quiet, fun, self-effacing, surprisingly knowledgeable about nuclear dangers, and hit it off perfectly with Warren. Probe as we might, he would not talk about himself but stayed intently on point, which was to listen, learn and offer his services to my “cause,” such as it was at that moment. The most intriguing aspects of this novel interlude for me were that Michael was widely respected inside and well beyond the entertainment community, having been named a UN Ambassador for Peace, and that Warren was strongly committed to the goal of sharply drawing down nuclear arsenals.

Hard on the heels of these insights came one more illuminating and persuasive experience that informed my looming decision to become a full-time player in the public policy arena: an invitation from my Canberra Commission colleague, Michel Rocard, former Prime Minister of France, to come to Brussels to address a session of the European Parliament (EP), of which he had become a member. The EP, and its companion body, the European Council, form the legislative arm of the European Union. Rocard was trying to push the EP to take a more aggressive stance on the issue of reformulating NATO nuclear policy and posture in the wake of the Cold War, and he sensed an opening among a number of Western European nations. Out of respect for Rocard, I agreed, and in early September I found myself at the podium in one of the Parliament’s grand meeting rooms. I began my remarks in French, one of the official languages of the EP, citing my years of experience in European matters, beginning with graduate work at Sciences Po, and continuing interaction during my tours as Director of Strategic Plans and Policy on the Joint Staff and as CINCSTRAT. Next, I outlined the concerns that had prompted me to push so ardently to reduce nuclear dangers in my professional and then
private life. I then developed the rationale that led me to support total elimination of nuclear weapons throughout the world, and I closed by stressing the moral underpinnings of my convictions, that is, the very serious threat posed by nuclear weapons to the very existence of mankind. The reception was truly astounding, this very eclectic audience on its feet, evincing a deep connection across a wide array of nationalities and political parties.

Following an intense and instructive question period, Michel and I departed by train to Paris. That evening, he hosted a private dinner party at his home with several senior officials from the French government, who talked openly about where the current administration and the French public stood on France’s nuclear arsenal. While their forces were destined to shrink, for reasons of cost if nothing more, nuclear weapons were still at the core of the nation’s claim to first-tier status on the world stage. That said, I could read between the lines an acknowledgment that, beyond symbolism, their arsenal had no practical use. It simply kept them at the same table with the Americans, the Russians, the British and the Chinese as nations owning the ultimate trump card in international one-upmanship.

The following day, with Michel Rocard as my host, I gave a talk to a small audience of leading intellectuals at a prestigious think tank, the Centre d’Analyse Politique, and then engaged my interlocutors in an extended discussion period over lunch. As I took my leave, Michel took me aside to thank me for my efforts on his behalf. Curiously, in the same breath, he suggested that I dial back on the emotional and moral overtones of my presentation and simply rely on the strength of my experience and insights. I nodded politely, recognizing his unspoken preference for the “just the facts, Ma’am” style of oral explanation taught at the Institut d’Études Politiques, our mutual alma mater. I was nonetheless surprised that after our experience on the Canberra Commission he, above all people, failed to realize that the foundation of my argument was anchored in the power and the passion of my moral convictions. But, to his credit, Michel had shown great political courage in reversing his stand on nuclear armaments and arguing publicly for elimination. I admired him greatly for that. A good friend with a superb network of contacts throughout Europe, he would be a powerful ally in the years ahead.

I had one more important stop before taking my leave of this beautiful city. I had been contacted by another friend from Sciences Po days, Marc de Brichambaut, a brilliant diplomat and jurist who headed the Foreign Ministry’s Legal Division. He was also an intimate of the Prime Minister and kept his finger on the pulse of many issues, including the debate over the legitimacy of nuclear weapons. At his request, I joined him for a private, late-evening talk in
his office in the Elysée Palace, a most pleasant and stimulating engagement. He understood exactly my arguments regarding the intolerable risks and moral failure of the nuclear enterprise, and he made no bones about the pretense of the French arsenal. I drew great comfort from our brief interlude, finding yet another person of towering intellectual and moral strength whose humanity had not been compromised by the intoxicating allure of weapons of unbounded destructiveness.

The intellectual table was now set for the menu Alan Cranston moved to put in front of me. When word of the European Parliament’s response to my remarks reached him in San Francisco, he asked to bring a small delegation to Omaha in early October in order to put a proposition to me about my future participation in the cause of nuclear abolition. Given his labors on my behalf, I agreed, although I was about ready to start scaling back our association. Alan was using me to work his own agenda, and we both knew it. Further, his personality and methods were not a good fit for me. Alan’s advanced age, thick political skin and consuming passion for his mission inclined him toward an abrasive disdain for those with opposing views or a less-aggressive approach to activism.

He brought a very interesting group to our meeting in the Kiewit conference room, which I borrowed for the occasion: David Cortright, president of the Fourth Freedom Forum; his assistant, Alistair Millar; Jonathan Schell, the noted author and ethicist whom I met at the SWF; the ever-present Tom Graham and George Crile; and by phone, George Perkovitch, Program Director for the W. Alton Jones Foundation, headquartered in Charlottesville, Virginia. Each was very competent in his own right. George Perkovitch was a first-rate India scholar, in addition to managing a multi-million dollar grant program. As noted earlier, David was also a scholar, hired by the octogenarian founder of the Indiana-based FFF to run his peace program. Most intriguing was Tom Graham, whom I now knew to have a powerful intellect, boundless energy, and a good heart as well as a very responsible position at one of the nation’s leading foundations. Tom believed that the hardest questions involved whether it would be desirable or feasible to abolish nuclear weapons, and he believed that subject matter experts outside of government should address these fundamental questions. He had a superior grasp of the details of the nuclear enterprise and an encyclopedic knowledge of the foundation world and of the multiplicity of organizations that populated the peace movement.

Their pitch to me was well thought out and forcefully presented: enter the nuclear abolition arena full time, create an organization to support my activities, raise the money essential to become a leading player, and build a strategy
to capitalize on the global impact of my speeches at the National Press Club, the Stimson Center and in Wellington. Dorene and I listened for the better part of a weekend as they sketched out a suggested approach, tentatively dubbed “The Omaha Project.” We then spent several days thinking through the implications of such a dramatic change of direction. After consulting with Brett and Lisa and talking with our lawyer and accountant, we made the momentous decision to take on the challenge of my becoming a professional nuclear activist: creating a public, non-profit foundation, finding and equipping an office, hiring staff, designing a strategy, raising tens of millions of dollars, and committing to a life of relentless travel, speaking, debating, corresponding, engaging with the press, being castigated by critics, questioned by friends, and lauded by supporters, most of whom did not know me, made unwarranted assumptions about my motivations, and wanted to cast me in the role of leader of the Peace Movement.

As I look back on that fateful September 1998 meeting and try to capture the dizzying array of actions it set in motion, I can see clearly, even painfully, that it triggered the most physically-demanding, intellectually-challenging and emotionally-stressful period of my life. Thanks to the unbending efforts of my secretary, Peggy Kruse, who was my first hire, I have complete, detailed files of the events I describe in the next chapter. What must be noted here is that this adventure imposed the same demands on Dorene as it did on me. It also levied on her the same unrelenting physical, intellectual and emotional toll. Neither one of us was particularly well-suited to the course on which we now embarked. While we had both weathered our share of crises and criticism and well understood life in the public eye, during most of those trials we had enjoyed the benefit of a highly-professional support net and a keen grasp of our environment. Not so on this adventure. There was no road-map, the terrain was treacherous and unfamiliar, the players mostly unknown to us and our resources were limited. I was now sixty years of age, Dorene a year behind. The Kiewit years had been extremely demanding on every front. Now the penalties for a misstep were more severe, personally and for the cause I was advocating. Further, for Dorene there was no upside. I needed her every step of the way but, much like our life in the military, this was virtually all about me. She would share all of the difficulty with no personal reward and little recognition. She signed on for the same reason that sustained her through the previous thirty-six years: she believed in me, trusted my judgment and shared my convictions about what was right.
Chapter 30

President, Second Chance Foundation (1999 – 2001)

With the die cast, we moved swiftly to create an organization that I envisioned would grow in mission and resources to become the preeminent player in the field. Our first step was to hire Tom Graham, who was ready to leave Rockefeller, and his able assistant, Rebecca Rittgers, who helped keep him organized. Because of their family obligations, we agreed that they could work from New York City, where they leased a modest workspace. We called our endeavor the Second Chance Foundation (SCF), drawn from a line in one of my speeches: “Mankind escaped the Cold War without a nuclear holocaust by some combination of diplomatic skill, blind luck and divine intervention, probably the latter in greatest proportion. If we now fail to step back from the nuclear abyss, if we persist in courting the apocalypse, we will have squandered our Creator’s gift of a ‘second chance.’”

SCF was a Nebraska-chartered 501(c)3, empowered to disburse and receive funds as a charitable foundation. We set up shop in an office near our Omaha home and then I put Tom Graham to work outlining a strategy while I focused on the first major hurdle: raising operating cash. Dorene and I started by putting our own money where our mission was, committing a half-million dollars from the Butler Family Foundation. Tom Graham engineered another half-million from the Rockefeller Foundation as he bade farewell. I paid a call on Warren Buffett, walked him through a detailed brief of the approach Tom and I had crafted, and gratefully accepted his pledge of a quarter-million a year for three years. Finally, David Cortright invited us to Goshen, Indiana, to talk about SCF with Howard Brembeck, who had earlier invited me to join forces with his Fourth Freedom Forum. After an afternoon discussion with him and his wife, Myra, we had dinner with his board, who by evening’s end approved a grant for a half-million and invited me to join the FFF board.

With some serious financial legs under us, we accelerated to a whirlwind
pace. We flew to San Francisco for my third appearance at the State of the World Forum, where I participated in an internationally-broadcast roundtable with Ambassador Richard Butler, my leader on the Canberra Commission, and a number of other notables. This session also introduced me to my first “groupie,” Bianca Jagger, Mick’s former wife, who latched on to me as I left the stage and had to be pried off by my bodyguard, Dorene. The next morning, I met with a group of SWF financial backers who wanted to better understand the SCF mission. The businessmen present included George Zimmer, chairman and CEO of the “Men’s Wearhouse” line of clothing stores, and Vin Ryan, an entrepreneur from Boston, flanked by others with very deep pockets. A probing discussion translated into a check from Zimmer and several promises of support. By the close of the forum, I was convinced that we had the makings of a viable strategy, that we could persuade heavyweight donors to underwrite our mission, and that we could operate on a world stage.

Our opening act on that stage was crafted by a collaborator who had preceded me in the nuclear arena by just a few months: Ambassador Doug Roche, the founder and chairman of the Middle Powers Initiative, or MPI. Doug already had had a thirty-five-year career in the peace and security field, including a long stint as Canada’s Permanent Representative to the U.N. Committee on Disarmament. A prolific author, noted academic and tireless promoter of nuclear elimination, he had initiated an NGO-led diplomacy campaign in support of a drive by seven influential middle-ranking non-nuclear nations to build international pressure on the P-5 countries (the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council: the U.S., Russia, China, Britain and France) to eliminate their nuclear arsenals as required by Article VI of the Nonproliferation Treaty, to which they were all signatories. As I came into the field, Doug was focused on winning approval for a provision of United Nations Resolution 48 that encouraged the nuclear weapon states to take their missiles off alert and then to get on with shrinking their arsenals. The U.N. vote was due in early 1999, and Doug’s upcoming step was a mid-October, 1998, meeting with Canada’s Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, and its Foreign Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, whom he hoped to persuade to head an effort to thwart U.S. opposition to the Resolution.

Roche, who had learned about SCF from Alan Cranston, reached out to us to join that meeting. I was otherwise occupied, but I agreed to send Tom Graham to represent me. Tom in turn signed up Alan Cranston and Michael Douglas to attend what proved a remarkable conclave. Chrétien agreed to take on Washington provided a second influential NATO government would join him in the fight. The most promising was Germany, with its new “red-green”
government headed by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, a Social Democrat, with the Green Party’s Joschka Fischer as Foreign Minister. Roche went to Bonn for an exploratory meeting, where he received a positive reception. Thus encouraged, Axworthy flew over from Canada and by all reports struck a bargain with Fischer that did not sit well in Washington. As with the Canberra Report, the Clinton Administration responded to what it saw as possible defections with such a heavy-handed campaign in NATO capitals that I was prompted to enter the fray. I dispatched letters to Fischer and NATO’s other Western European Foreign Ministers, as well as to several Defense Ministers. It spelled out my belief that the end of the Cold War meant that nuclear weapons were largely irrelevant; that the threat of their use on the modern battlefield was not only morally repugnant, but also undercut nonproliferation; and in any case was neither practical nor credible.

The letter (Appendix J) may or may not have had an effect on the outcome of the vote, but I was pleased in any event: 87 nations voted in favor of the Resolution 48 provision, 40 opposed, and 15 abstained, among them Canada, Germany and 10 other NATO countries. These Allies’ unwillingness to oppose the provision outright amounted to a shocking rebuke to Washington’s leadership on nuclear policy matters within the alliance, creating an opening that I decided to exploit early in the coming year. More to come.

My agenda for 1998 concluded with a speech at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, at the behest of Ambassador Tom Graham, who had persuaded me to accept his organization’s annual Averell Harriman Award. As I noted earlier, Tom headed up LAWS, the Lawyers Alliance for World Security, a very reputable outfit with global standing. I accepted because the occasion would afford my first opportunity for a major address after founding SCF. With Barbara Webber once more handling the media outreach, I was confident it would be worth the time and effort entailed, which proved to be the case. A crowd of over 500 attended, and wide media coverage was assured by the presence of movie star Pierce Brosnan, of James Bond fame, as award-presenter. The speech (Appendix K) was a synthesis of essential elements from the Press Club and Stimson Center remarks, plus additional material drawn from the Kennedy years in the White House and the Cuban Missile Crisis. While much of my text was familiar, I worked hard to sharpen the focus and, in acknowledgement of negative reactions to my earlier statements, to draw my arguments even more finely. All in all, it was a satisfying conclusion to a year of dramatic transition in my life and inevitably, my family’s as well. Thanks to Michael Douglas, Dorene and I had a year-ending opportunity for a bit of welcome fun in our private life. We received an invitation to a Christmas party at Michael’s gorgeous New York
City apartment, which occupied a full floor of a building fronting on Central Park. That was too good to pass up, so off we went for a fabulous evening of food, drink, and hobnobbing with a few dozen of Michael’s friends. Picture Dorene singing Christmas carols at the piano with Bette Midler, while I chatted up old friend Ed Bradley. Priceless.

This would not be the last time Michael Douglas would play a memorable role in our lives, although the next occasion would give a whole new meaning to the word “bittersweet.” Thankfully, however, at the close of 1998, we were blissfully unaware of what awaited us in the year to come. For the moment, the journey ahead seemed clear, informed by a smart strategy, bankrolled by a generous infusion of funds, and impelled by unswerving conviction. However, before I plunge the reader into the events of 1999, I should describe better the considerations that prompted me to establish a foundation rather than continue to freelance and that conditioned my thinking about how to engage the tangled array of issues and players comprising the global nuclear enterprise. This contextual overview will sketch how nuclear arms control unfolded over the past fifty years, provide a backdrop for the political realities that had constrained and shaped the nuclear arena, and thereby help to illuminate the logic that drove the SCF game plan.

Dating from the signing of the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT), which prohibited all nuclear tests except those conducted underground, the dynamic of arms control was driven by a complex mix of international pressures on the superpowers to freeze and reduce their arsenals, combined with serendipitous alignments of leadership and vital interests in the United States and Soviet Union and, later, in Russia. That dynamic had led to major advances. In every administration – Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Reagan, Bush and Clinton – significant steps were taken along the path toward reducing the testing, numbers, posture, and capabilities of nuclear weapons. Those presidents’ Russian counterparts – Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev and Yeltsin – were a decidedly mixed lot, but each played an important role in sustaining the dynamic. The results were impressive: the LTBT, followed by SALT I and II (albeit the second was never ratified), the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, START I and II, and the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). These instruments brought the world a long way from the unbounded arms race, atmospheric testing and the prospect of weapons being launched into space.

With the end of the Cold War, there was every reason to believe, as I did fervently, that this beneficial dynamic would not only continue but accelerate and broaden to include all of the nuclear weapon states, declared or de facto.
It seemed reasonable to imagine, in time, a new, hopefully interim scenario of small, equitable, immobilized arsenals, internationally-monitored, located solely on the territories of individual owner states. This outcome would drastically reduce the dangers of contemporary nuclear arsenals: surprise attack, accidental launch, launch on warning, and diversion of warheads or fissile material. It would also pave the way for serious thinking and discussion about the prospects and modalities of total elimination and the safeguards essential to the final steps toward that goal.

Instead, for all of the reasons I have elaborated in the foregoing chapter, the arms control dynamic slowed, then ground to a halt and, in many respects, actually reversed. The seeds were sown when NATO began expanding without regard for Russia’s palpable apprehension, fed as it was by humiliation over the collapse of the Soviet Union and the chaos that followed. In consequence, the Yeltsin government and, in lock-step response, the Clinton Administration, began to reemphasize the importance of nuclear weapons as vital to their national security, to drag their feet on START II ratification, to denigrate the provisions of Article VI of the NPT, and to pay insufficient attention to the patently obvious efforts of Pakistan and India to join the nuclear club. As a result, funding began to dry up for the “peace and security programs” that sustained the many non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, that had worked diligently for decades to keep pressure on the two superpowers to meet their treaty obligations. Further, public interest and attention began to wane, political parties in the U.S. and Russia became deadlocked over nuclear issues, most leading universities left the field, and the global media networks stopped covering what they considered a moribund subject.

So the challenge that faced the Second Chance Foundation as it came into the field was to revitalize the arena and, ultimately, to become its key participant. This political paralysis also explains why I needed Tom Graham. Prior to the mid-September meeting in Omaha, I had asked him to craft a strategic overview of the recent history of the nuclear abolition debate, focusing on where each of the major sectors and constituencies stood. The product revealed the breadth of his knowledge, the depth of his thinking, and what Tom whimsically referred to as his “MIT nerdiness,” that is, his penchant for exacting detail. This overview guided the deliberations of what I noted in Chapter 29 as the Omaha Project, the forerunner to SCF, and was the foundation of our strategy and the accompanying briefing. This briefing became our bible, the core of our pitch to prospective donors and the basis for allocating time and resources. We long debated the opening slide, Purpose, leading to a critical decision: replacing the word “abolition” in all of our discourse with
“elimination.” The former was ever an emotion-laden term, made in this case the more pejorative by the strident militancy of the peace groups that had made it their mantra – many now rallying around me as their putative leader. While they formed an important constituency, I needed to keep most of them at arm’s length; their support would make my role only more difficult. Fairly or not, the peace movement of the ‘90s had been linked to those scruffy ‘60s agitators, their methods and their symbols. I knew that images from Vietnam-era protests were still fresh in the minds of policymakers. The fate of my efforts would be decided in Washington, not on the streets of America.

These strategic documents also illustrated the wide range of constituents, in terms of the nations and, within them, individual actors, comprising the nuclear arena, as well as the scope of the networking that was required to be an effective agent of change. To optimize our expenditures of time, energy and dollars – especially at the outset, when we were minimally staffed and funded – priorities had to be established among all these sectors and within each of them. We eventually set our asset objective in the neighborhood of $100,000,000, a breathtaking figure to be sure, but possible if we could get in the door of the best-endowed organizations and individuals, such as the Rockefeller Foundation and Warren Buffett, and persuade them of our purpose and objectives. That accounts for my choice of speaking opportunities over the following year, in small meetings with the boards of selected foundations and at larger gatherings instigated mostly by the Young Presidents Organization, which I knew to be very receptive to the cause. I also carved out a large block of time for executive and legislative constituencies in a dozen key nations, beginning with the United States, Russia, Great Britain, France, and China. To that list I added selected NATO allies, India and Pakistan, and North Korea, by far the hardest nut to crack, but the most urgent and volatile of the lot. Finally, I made early provision for the peace groups, to take their measure and to introduce them to me, to my message and, not least, to my critique of their modus operandi.

Against that backdrop, in early January Dorene and I flew to Palm Beach for a board meeting with our earliest and most important ally, the Fourth Freedom Forum, which would put Project Omaha under their administrative wing until the state of Nebraska awarded our charter and the IRS approved our 501(c)(3) status. The board meeting was a casual affair, held at the Hilton Oceanfront Resort. It included several members we had not met, including retired Admiral Stansfield Turner, a former CIA director who had just published his book, *Caging the Nuclear Genie*; retired Rear Admiral Eugene Carroll, a vocal proponent of nuclear abolition employed by the Center for
Defense Information (CDI); and a familiar face, Alistair Millar, the talented Brit with expertise across a wide range of security issues, NATO in particular. Tom Graham presented the SCF strategic plan, which won unanimous endorsement and stimulated a very useful discussion about the road ahead. Most importantly, we agreed that I should immediately undertake a visit to certain NATO capitals to try to persuade those governments to support a wholesale review of alliance nuclear policy at NATO’s upcoming 50th Anniversary Summit, to be held in Washington in April. Alistair agreed to take on the task of planning the many-faceted trip, working with a colleague named Dan Plesch, head of the London-based British American Security Information Council (BASIC), a group akin to the CDI.

By the time we arrived home from Palm Beach, the latest edition of U.S. News and World Report was on the stands with a titillating little article entitled “Checkbook Diplomacy,” to wit: “Renowned investor and billionaire Warren Buffett is close to announcing the creation of a new foundation devoted to disarmament and nuclear issues paid for with a personal check for $1 billion. ‘The Omaha Project’ – its tentative name – would be based in the Nebraska city that is home to Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway Inc. Retired Air Force General Lee Butler, an advocate of cutting nuclear weapons, and the former head of U.S. Strategic Command based near Omaha, is the leading candidate to head the project…”

This grossly inaccurate story was doubly distressing: I needed to immediately assure Warren that I had nothing to do with it and to make certain that it did not drive away prospective donors. When I called Warren, he shrugged it off, wise to the ways of errant reporting. But he inadvertently exacerbated my second concern a few weeks later, with these off-the-cuff remarks to Ted Koppel on the “Nightline” show:

“The number-one problem of mankind is the spread of nuclear knowledge, the fact that more and more people will know how to build weapons of incredible destruction. There is an organization being formed by Lee Butler, who was the former Commander-in-Chief of STRATCOM. He calls it Second Chance and I am devoting some money to working on that problem. There’s nobody better qualified than Lee to be working on it.

Next followed our first plunge into international waters: a twelve-day swing through five Western European nations that were bellwether states in the NATO alliance: Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and the U.K. On arrival in Oslo, Dorene and I were joined by Alistair Millar, Tom Graham,
and John Rhinelander, a former U.S. diplomat who had helped negotiate the 1972 ABM Treaty, now Vice Chairman of the Arms Control Association. The purpose of the trip was to gauge the degree of support for German Foreign Minister Fischer’s call for a broad review of NATO nuclear policy and to give me an opportunity, in small meetings out of the public eye, to speak on my agenda of reducing nuclear dangers. We touched down in Oslo on the weekend of the 6th of February, spent a pleasant two days touring and dining with a charming, eclectic group of representatives from the peace movement, and then joined in a round of meetings with officials from the Foreign Ministry and from the Prime Minister’s staff. I found them to be quite forward-thinking on the policy-review question and sympathetic toward my proposals to get on with greater reductions and de-alerting. The Norwegians, who had a long history of dealing with Russia, were expert at working behind the scenes, had strong reservations about the U.S. plan for ballistic missile defenses and intended to support Fischer’s initiative.

Our plans for an evening flight to Amsterdam were thwarted by the weather, so we holed up in the Oslo airport hotel for the night and got out the next morning. My handlers scrambled to reset the schedule, which called for meetings at The Hague, the seat of government in the Netherlands. After a round with the Vice Prime Minister and staff, and another with selected parliamentarians, it was clear the Dutch had no stomach for taking on the United States, certainly not on nuclear policy issues. Staunchly pro-NATO, they listened politely but were not interested in rocking this particular boat. With that, we were off to the train station for a high-speed dash to Brussels.

The next day was spent at NATO Headquarters, in the heart of Brussels. My first meeting was a warm reunion with an old friend from J-5 and STRATCOM days, General Klaus Naumann, now Chairman of the NATO Military Committee. Klaus was – in my book, at least – the German Colin Powell, a quintessential military professional, a highly skilled player in the political arena, a man at home on the global stage. We were close friends, as were our spouses, and we had exchanged visits during my term as CINC. He gave me a valuable tutorial on the NATO nuclear policy issue, in the course of which he made it quite clear that he was not sympathetic with my stand on elimination and de-alerting. He had an abiding hatred of the Russians, did not trust them, and viewed NATO as an essential barrier to future Moscow mischief. It was a sobering reminder of the steep hill I was climbing and of how difficult would be the task of eventually integrating Russia into Western European political and economic institutions.

After a long day, we left by van for Germany, chauffeured by a husky, bearded driver from the Green Party who pushed our conveyance to autobahn
speeds I never thought possible. The following morning I attended a large meeting in Bonn with representatives from the German peace movement, during which they spent two hours debating how hard to push the Schröder-Fischer government to follow through on its initiative to review NATO nuclear policy. Sessions like this one showed me how fractured and disorganized these groups were, locally and globally. It underscored the importance and the difficulty of my self-appointed objective to bring greater coherence to this crowd. That afternoon, I was once more in the company of a skilled diplomatic professional, Ambassador Rudolf Hartmann, the Special Representative of the German Federal Government to the Conference on Disarmament. He underscored his and the Foreign Minister’s support for my view and aims, and then asked an interesting question: “Tell me, General Butler, if you were General Sergeyev, what would be your recommendations to President Clinton to help reconcile the U.S. and Russian differences on arms control?” I told him there would be three: revise the START II warhead level down to 2,000, introduce a “pause” in NATO expansion while working work hard to reduce anxieties in the Duma about that expansion, and negotiate amendments to the ABM Treaty that would allow additional limited deployment of interceptors rather than threatening, as Clinton was then doing, to abrogate the entire arrangement.

The following day, we flew to London for the final leg of what was becoming an exhausting venture. We caught our breath over the weekend, and I then spent two days meeting with senior officials of the Foreign Office, the Treasury, the Ministry of Defence and the Chiefs of the Defence Staff. These discussions served only to highlight the degree to which the Brits followed the U.S. lead on nuclear issues. The only difference between the two nations’ policies was over the issue of Ballistic Missile Defenses and the upset that Star Wars was causing in relations with Russia. Otherwise, I might as well have been in Foggy Bottom or the Pentagon.

In sum, the trip was enlightening on several scores but mostly confirmed what I already knew: the United States could essentially have its way with NATO on almost any issue. Germany would come under increasing pressure to get in step as the alliance approached its 50th Anniversary Summit on April 4th, and any meaningful review of U.S. or alliance nuclear policy was not going to happen soon. The approach for the longer term was to patiently sort through the key constituencies Tom had identified, forge alliances with selected people and organizations within each, carefully elevate my profile in the nuclear weapon states I had not visited – India, Pakistan and China, raise some additional operating funds, and prepare to make the reduction of nuclear dangers a “must address” item in the 2000 presidential debates. This was a very tall
order, one that set my agenda for the next two years.

A few weeks later, Dorene and I flew to New York for a late-February round of meetings, most important of which were a dinner with Jonathan Fanton, president of the New School for Social Research, and a gathering of some sixty members of Doug Roche’s Middle Powers Initiative from around the world. The dinner with Fanton, soon to be named head of the MacArthur Foundation, was one of several I would have with foundation heads over the next two years. Jonathan provided very helpful insights into the politically-charged world of big-time philanthropy, the rarified atmosphere of organizations endowed with hundreds of millions of dollars. While some of those operate under strict guidelines laid down by their founder, others with greater latitude allocate according to the preferences of their governing bodies, which are typically composed of powerful egos with strong ties to causes and constituencies. The MacArthur Foundation, for example, had long been a leader in the peace and security field, but was losing interest in the nuclear dimension because of the lack of recent progress. That reality also accounted for Tom Graham’s departure after a decade at the Rockefeller Foundation— to my good fortune. He brought to SCF encyclopedic knowledge of the history, players and politics of the foundation world.

Tom hosted the Middle Powers Initiative meeting at the Rockefeller Foundation building on 5th Avenue. It ran for two days, over the course of which I was introduced to the principal players in the international peace movement. A few were familiar to me from my New Zealand trip in 1997 and my recent swing through Europe, but most were not. I soon learned, however, that whatever their nationality and affiliation, they all shared a visceral abhorrence of nuclear weapons, a strongly moralistic compulsion to see the world rid of them, a disdain for anyone on the other side of the issue, and a hopeless naïveté about how nuclear weapons policy is made, controlled and implemented.

And so, for the most part, I listened, making copious mental notes about how to deal with this group. In a panel closing the two-day conclave, I was very candid with them about the stark difference between our styles of engaging the nuclear weapon states. This was a vital point, one I would expand on two months later in a speech to the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, one of the leading players in the peace movement, whose founder, David Krieger, was present at the meeting and wanted to enlist me in his version of the cause. More to come.

The next outing was right in the heart of our strategic envelope: a trip to Ottawa to engage the Canadian government on the issue of a meaningful
NATO review of its nuclear weapons policy. The trip was again at the behest of Doug Roche. It was an outgrowth of the recent North Atlantic Council meeting in New York, where we concluded that the NATO summit agenda was a key target for shaping the future of the nuclear enterprise in an alliance that included three of the five “recognized” nuclear weapon states. The issue was being forced in Canada by a recently-released report from its Parliament’s Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Treaties (SCFAIT). The report was the work of its chairman, Bill Graham; it included fifteen recommendations which, if accepted, would put Canada squarely on the side of a full NATO policy review, as well as the elimination of nuclear weapons. In light of the prior year’s joint Canada-Germany initiative on NATO policy, which had brought the full force of the U.S. government down on Bonn and had forced a retreat there, embracing the SCFAIT report would surely put Ottawa in the U.S. crosshairs again. While in earlier years that might have been intimidating, in 1999’s domestic political climate Prime Minister Chrétien was not about to be bullied by Washington. He had signaled to Roche that he would welcome a delegation from the United States to testify before Parliament on the report prior to its decision on which of the recommendations to adopt and forward to the Prime Minister for final consideration.

Given the issue’s urgency and its importance to my agenda, I accepted Doug’s invitation to testify, along with Ambassador Thomas Graham and Robert McNamara, whose company I did not particularly want, but who, in Doug’s eyes, added weight to the delegation. We arrived in Ottawa on March 9th and the next morning had a round of meetings with senior Defence officials, before lunching with Foreign Minister Axworthy and his key staff. In mid-afternoon, we testified before a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the House of Commons and the Senate for an hour and a half, in a room filled with television cameras. Our testimony had the desired impact; soon after our departure, the report was adopted in full and forwarded to the Prime Minister for comment.

After meeting with Chrétien later that afternoon, I left with considerable uncertainty about how he could square the circle of assuaging the deeply-rooted anti-nuclear sentiment in Canada while protecting his government from the inevitable blowback from Washington. That answer would not come for five weeks, as he pondered his response to the report. But I still had work to do, with four more stops scheduled in Ottawa: a dinner with a mix of officials, academics, NGOs and the media; a televised seminar the next morning with forty representatives from the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons; a meeting with the Defence Minister, Art Eggleton; and a press
conference with Foreign Minister Axworthy just prior to my departure. The dinner was most instructive. It introduced me to the Canadian government’s practice of soliciting public feedback on important issues through mandated town-hall meetings held each year across the nation. This highly democratic process had in fact given rise to the SCFAIT study, and it now prompted a large turnout for my remarks at the following day’s televised seminar.

Prime Minister Chrétien’s response came on April 19th; it was a cleverly-crafted statement that trod a fine line between bowing to Canadian abolitionist sentiment and stepping on Washington toes. In calling for NATO to review its nuclear policy and for the United States and Russia to stand down their nuclear forces from alert, it made some bold departures from Canada’s history of allegiance to its neighbor’s wishes. However, in a fit of caution, it called for negotiated reductions in nuclear arsenals rather than their outright elimination. Predictably, this dodge failed to temper the U.S. reaction. Within a week the State Department announced it had removed Canada’s favored status as a defense and aerospace trading partner, a move that put in jeopardy Canadian exports valued at five billion dollars. This was a take-no-prisoners fight that the United States did not intend to lose. I was now more determined than ever to force this issue to closure, whatever the outcome.

In late April, we flew to California for a series of meetings, the most insightful of which was at Stanford with Bill Perry, Scott Sagan, China expert George Lewis, and a visiting scholar, retired Pakistani General Jehangir Karamat, until recently the Chairman of his nation’s Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and head of its army. Karamat had retired under pressure from the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who was angry about the general’s proposal to form a “national security council” to address Pakistan’s debilitating political and economic disorder. Karamat had resisted a call from several quarters to depose Sharif and take over the government, a move he strongly opposed because he knew it would jeopardize his nation’s fragile democracy. Ironically, Sharif’s ouster of Karamat backfired. He replaced Karamat with General Pervez Musharraf, who did not share his predecessor’s reluctance to overthrow civilian authority and who did so forthwith. I had an illuminating and chilling conversation with Karamat about the visceral animosity between India and Pakistan, as well as the acute risks posed by their mounting nuclear arsenals. His comments stayed with me during the following months; as I will relate shortly, they prompted me to undertake an initiative, through the auspices of SCF, to open channels of communication between former military leaders from these two nations locked into a frightening pattern of recrimination and conflict.

Dorene and I then drove down to Santa Barbara, home to David Krieger,
President, Second Chance Foundation (1999 – 2001)

president and founder of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAPF). Several months before, I had agreed to accept its annual award, one that had been given some cachet by such previous recipients as my Nobel Laureate friend from the Canberra Commission, Joseph Rotblat; Carl Sagan; the Dalai Lama; another Nobel Laureate, Dr. Linus Pauling; and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. While I certainly did not see myself in that company, the occasion served my purpose on two counts: first, to participate in a colloquy David had arranged as a prelude to the evening’s award dinner that would bring together all of the leading abolitionist organizations in the United States; and second, in my acceptance remarks, to make a gentle but firm critique of the methods of the peace movement. However odd that might seem, given the occasion, I wanted to put my audience on notice that I thought they were poorly organized, unfocused and employed self-defeating tactics. I suppose the risk I ran was that, at the conclusion of my speech, David might be overcome with presenter’s remorse, but I needed to test his willingness to listen and learn in order for me to make an informed decision about how much interaction I could risk with him and his equally well-intended fellow abolitionists. Again, while I rather admired their fervor I had my own agenda and modus operandi.

Arriving the day before the award dinner, Dorene and I had lunch with David and his wife in their rustic home nestled in the bucolic countryside of Santa Barbara. They were a devoted couple with three children, well-educated and completely absorbed in the peace movement. David had created the NAPF in 1982 and thereafter embarked on a peripatetic life devoted to writing, speaking, advising, serving on boards, giving and receiving awards. He struck me initially as a flower child with a Ph.D. Pleasant, articulate and unabashedly messianic, he exuded an aura of righteousness and depended on the support of an army of well-heeled supporters, several of whom we met at a dinner that night at the grand estate of NAPF board members Yoel and Eva Haller. Eva, who is Hungarian by birth, had fought the Nazis in the Second World War, losing her older brother as he stood at her side. She later immigrated to the United States, survived on her wits, married well, made a fortune with her husband in marketing, and became a life-long activist. She was drawn to Krieger like a moth to flame. At David’s request, I gave a talk after the meal about the events that had brought me into the arena, my strategy for reducing nuclear dangers, the obstacles and opportunities I saw, and the challenge of melding my operating style with the more strident activism of NGOs such as the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.

The talk led to several offers of funding support that I gently declined, wanting neither to step on David’s financial toes nor to get in bed with people
I did not know. My reservations were affirmed the following day during seven hours with a roomful of grim-faced abolitionists, gathered ostensibly to begin crafting a joint strategy, but seemingly much more intent on personal agendas and tactics. To David’s credit, he had faithfully reiterated the points I had made the night before about the difficulties ahead: secrecy, inertia, Cold War fatigue, lack of political will, declining foundation support, lack of interest by the media and the public, and antipathy generated by radical activists. After long, heated debate, David volunteered to take the lead in crafting a “Strategic Plan to End the Nuclear Threat,” vowing to circulate successive drafts until consensus could be found. Based on the fractious exchanges I had just witnessed, I did not harbor much optimism on that score.

The award dinner served both David’s purposes and mine. Michael Douglas was the master of ceremonies, ever gracious and happy to see Dorene and me. My remarks (Appendix L) were on balance well received, although I could see the fringe elements stiffening as they listened to my criticism of radical protest and its chilling effects on the attitudes of the very people it was designed to influence: nuclear policymakers like me in my earlier life. In any event, I had much bigger fish to charm, in Washington and in the capitals of the other nuclear weapons states. Over the next several months, I would travel to Paris, New Delhi and Beijing, reengage with my former colleagues in the United States nuclear policy bureaucracy, and begin to pay calls on U.S. senators.

The Paris trip was a reprise of my visit in September the previous year, this time at the behest of Georges Le Guelte, a close associate of Michel Rocard whom I had met over dinner at Michel’s home. Georges was a rather charming French intellectual who had close ties to yet another highly-regarded think tank, the Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (IRIS). The Institute was devoting its 1999 annual conference to the subject of nuclear weapons as an element of national power, and Georges had written me a long letter pleading for me to come and make my case to an audience of senior policy officials, defense intellectuals, other leading lights and the media. IRIS picked up the tab for the trip, including a room at the pricy Hotel Crillon, just off the Place de la Concorde in the heart of Paris. The afternoon of my May 4th arrival, I had cocktails at the hotel with Peter Goldmark, the publisher of the International Herald Tribune, who had taken a fancy to my cause and reprinted an excerpt from my second Press Club speech in a recent edition of his highly respected newspaper. We hit it off immediately and had a wonderful exchange. Peter was urbane and polished, exuding the sophistication of a seasoned media veteran and world traveler. He promised me op-ed space in
the *IHT* whenever I thought it useful and pledged his personal and financial support to the Second Chance Foundation.

The presentation at IRIS provided a number of useful insights, especially because one of my two panel mates was Vice Admiral Stephane Legrix de la Salle, the French equivalent of the J-5 in the Pentagon, who was responsible, as I had been, for helping devise and implement nuclear weapons policy and plans. In a candid private conversation, Stephane reaffirmed that France’s attachment to its arsenal was rooted in culture and politics, that is, nuclear arms secured a leading role on the Continent, and as a counterweight to Great Britain in European security matters. Georges was pleased with my performance, but in truth it had precious little influence on French thinking; this proud nation, like all of the other nuclear weapon states, saw in these devices not so much military prowess as national stature. Their arsenal conveyed a message to the world: “We are a first-tier nation and therefore our voice cannot be ignored.” This hubris is central to the debate over nuclear elimination; so long as it prevails, the P-5 will never fulfill their obligations under Article VI of the Nonproliferation Treaty.

After returning to Omaha, I had barely a week to catch my breath before departing on a long trip that began at the University of Pittsburgh, paused for two days in Berlin, and then moved on to my ultimate destination, Bangalore, India. The stop in Pennsylvania was to honor a commitment to give the keynote address at a conference on “Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction: Why Not Nuclear Abolition?” The event was sponsored by several schools within the university, the Stimson Center and several other interested organizations; and the invitation was seconded by Wes Posvar, my former mentor from the Air Force Academy, who had recently retired after a long and highly productive stint as chancellor of the university. Wes had become a man of considerable influence after rescuing the institution from the brink of bankruptcy and then, over twenty-four years, transforming it into one of the nation’s leading educational and research facilities. His introduction for my after-dinner keynote was very gracious and set just the right tone for my remarks (Appendix M). While much of the presentation will again ring familiar to my long-suffering readers, I added elements that updated my critique of President Clinton’s foreign and security policy and continued to sharpen my response to critics of my assertions. In a follow-up letter, the conference chairman, Daniel Fine, noted that the editors of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, with whom I had done an editorial board prior to the event, “found your ideas immensely persuasive, and decided to devote a large segment of the editorial section of the Sunday, May 23rd, edition to your address, rather than just printing it as a synopsis. Even
Jack Kelly [the paper’s national security writer], who is not usually sympathetic to nuclear disarmament, seems to be convinced of the merit of many of your proposals.” This was helpful feedback, another affirmation that my message had resonance with diverse audiences, at home and abroad. Or so I thought, until I arrived in India four days hence.

With my CISAC colleagues, I spent a two-day interlude in Berlin, a venue that accommodated our cash-strapped Russian counterparts. They were embarrassed that they could not afford to travel all the way to Washington for our alternating home-and-home conferences and were equally dispirited by Moscow’s continuing economic slide and loss of clout. Their discomfort was likely made more intense by being immersed in the booming economy in a city that had suffered for over four decades under brutal Soviet repression. Given these gloomy political and fiscal circumstances, the meeting accomplished little. The dividend for me was meeting Susan Eisenhower, granddaughter of the late President, a fellow at the Center for Political and Strategic Studies (a Washington-based think tank) and wife of Russian scientist Roald Sagdeev, my colleague from the Canberra Commission. We shared an immediate chemistry, and forged a personal bond that would lead to a number of fruitful interactions in the coming months.

After these talks, our CISAC delegation departed for India, for the first of a newly-instituted series of joint meetings with counterparts from the sub-continent. This liaison had been hotly debated by the trustees of the National Academy of Sciences, the concern being that we might lend an aura of legitimacy to India’s emergence as a nuclear weapon state. Although India’s leaders had never acceded to the NPT, the world had held out a faint hope that they and Pakistan’s leaders might resist compounding their enmity by introducing nuclear weapon capabilities into their volatile relations. CISAC argued that this reality was now upon us, and it was therefore better to try to shape the nuclear policies of the two antagonists rather than to carp from the sidelines. That argument ultimately prevailed, clearing the way for us to make the inaugural engagement in the city of Bangalore, India’s Silicon Valley, in the southern reaches of the sprawling sub-continent.

This meeting actually had its roots in the fertile brain of Tom Graham, who had deep India expertise. He was also a proponent of “Track-Two” diplomacy, quasi-official channels of communication, typically between nations with strained relations, intended to foster dialogue among security experts away from the glare of the media. Tom had provided Rockefeller funds to support CISAC’s periodic meetings with Russian counterparts, and he had found seed money for the inaugural round of India talks, which would take place over two
days at India’s National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), an organization akin to the National Academy of Sciences in Washington. NIAS’s charter was to conduct multidisciplinary research and to bring together leaders in a variety of fields for discussions on India’s future. The director, Professor Roddam Narasimha, was held in high esteem in India’s scientific and governmental circles. He would head India’s 18-person delegation, a formidable group that represented the first rank of the nation’s nuclear and foreign-policy intelligentsia. At the top of that list would come K. Subrahmanyam, India’s leading voice on nuclear strategy and policy. “Subu,” as he was known (he died in 2011), wore his nationalism on his sleeve and deeply resented what he considered hypocrisy in the U.S.’s nuclear dealings with nations other than Russia, China, the U.K. and France – its P-5 partners – and its client states, which he identified as Israel and Pakistan. Whatever his manner, I thought Subu to be largely correct in his analysis of United States nuclear weapon policy. India, more than any other nation, has been both beneficiary and victim of glaring contradictions in our dealings with countries aspiring to nuclear capability. Our message to New Delhi was, in essence, “Do as we say, not as we do; nukes are good for us but bad for you.” Ironically, in commercial dealings, the U.S. had provided India with the core technology that put it on the path toward building nuclear weapons.

Perhaps most distressing to our Indian interlocutors, however, was the blind eye the U.S. had turned for years toward Pakistan’s nuclear weapon program, an anomaly driven by Islamabad’s irreplaceable support of America’s covert war against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. That piece of skullduggery was premised on the creation of the Taliban, using the Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) organization as our intermediary. In the short term, the U.S. winning that covert war may have helped to hasten the demise of the USSR. Since then, its consequences have been disastrous.

Our effective abandonment of Afghanistan after it had been “liberated” from the Soviets resulted in the establishment there of a horrific fundamentalist Islamist government that, apart from imposing a particularly brutal and pitiless form of sharia law, also provided then-obscure Osama bin Laden a remote haven from which he masterminded assaults on U.S. personnel and facilities overseas, culminating in the 9/11 attack on our homeland. That, of course, set off more than a decade of U.S. intervention, whose outcome in Afghanistan appears to be a venal government that is both ineffectual and hated, with a resurgent Taliban working their lethal will to regain power.

More relevant to this narrative, however, is the fact that our unwillingness to curb Pakistan’s nuclear ambitions in the late ‘90s poisoned the U.S.’s
already-tense relations with India. Who could blame India for feeling both outrage and apprehension as it watched China transfer with impunity critical nuclear weapons technology to Islamabad, while the United States conspicuously chose to look the other way, even while singling out India as threatening peace and stability in South Asia? The indignity of having successive U.S. administrations chastise and preach to India about the risks and costs of its nuclear weapons program, and impose economic sanctions, made the proud country only more determined to achieve its nuclear ambitions. Tom Graham, a passionate advocate of strong U.S.-India relations, wanted desperately to encourage the U.S. to change its nuclear policy toward India and took personally the fact that his warning of an impending Indian nuclear test had been ignored by NSC and State Department officials. He was now lobbying me hard to make the Second Chance Foundation a vehicle for promoting a tripartite nuclear reconciliation on the subcontinent.

Given my beginner’s grasp of the issues and knowledge of the players, I was not eager to take on that role. My conversation with General Karamat at Stanford had made a deep impression, however, and I intended to use the CISAC meeting to gauge SCF’s potential to make a dent in this cosmically-complex, emotion-laden problem. I vividly remembered how wrong the CIA experts had been when the Rumsfeld Commission had asked for their best estimate of whether India and Pakistan were likely to conduct nuclear tests in the spring of 1998 – and those experts got it wrong even having spent a lifetime working on the problem. The more I looked at the India-Pakistan security relationship, characterized by incessant conflict and open warfare going back at least as far as their common Independence Day in 1947, the more convinced I became that this eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation was the most dangerous on the planet, surpassing in many respects the Korean peninsula standoff. Despite brave words on both sides about never letting a conventional war escalate to a nuclear exchange, nothing I subsequently saw or learned persuaded me that, in some future crisis spinning out of control, India and Pakistan would be able to contain the gut-level enmity attending their acute religious and territorial differences.

But, at the moment, when we touched down in Mumbai, I was in the uncomfortable position of being well known to our Indian counterparts, but abysmally ignorant of them; expert in U.S. nuclear weapons policy and operational practice, but woefully uninformed about the current state of India’s programs and plans; deeply knowledgeable as regards other nuclear powers, but a neophyte with respect to New Delhi and Islamabad. I was, however, comfortable with my two presentations, one on nuclear disarmament, to be given on the
first day, and the second an elucidation of my views on international security in the 21st century, to be delivered later. At the moment, I was simply dead-tired, numb with jet lag and fatigue after the long journey from Omaha to Pittsburgh to Berlin and then to Mumbai, where we arrived around midnight, sleeping for a few hours at a nearby hotel before boarding our flight to Bangalore. After making our way along Mumbai’s crowded, dusty streets, teeming with a roiling sea of India’s poorest, through a wretched airport lined with beggars and charlatans, and onto an Air India flight whose pilots were less than inspiring, I had to fight to stay mentally engaged with our broader purpose. I shall never become inured to the grinding poverty, pervasive corruption and maddening inconveniences endemic to the Third World. At moments like this, I knew I was no Mother Teresa. My goal was simply not to be an Ugly American.

We arrived in Bangalore before 8:00 a.m. and, after a short bus ride to a well-appointed hotel, arrived at the NIAS for the opening session. The institute was situated in a dusty compound on the outskirts of the city but had decent facilities, including a dining room and a spacious conference room with banked seating. The initial presentations were a bit stiff, the air of correctness tinged with suspicion across the room; neither side knew quite what to expect of the other. Some of our delegates were less than tactful, and our interlocutors were more than capable of answering in kind. However, both our chairmen had set a moderate tone in their opening remarks, and we got through to lunch without a blowup. I was first up in the afternoon, and my presentation was eagerly awaited by my Indian audience: my views were well known, highly controversial and very unsettling to the nuclear mafia gathered here, who hung on every word.

As he listened, Subu could barely contain himself, and he was the first to respond. In reply to my contention that the U.S.-Soviet Cold War confrontation was driven and intensified by misreadings and misjudgments on both sides, he haughtily asserted that he was well aware of this history, and that “India would not make the same mistakes.” With that, he paused and looked at me as if waiting for a reply, an opportunity I could not resist. “My dear friend, I have no doubt you have the sagacity to avoid repeating our errors. However, what I know for an absolute certainty is that you will make new ones, unique to the more acute nuclear circumstances in which you find yourselves. In fact, you could not pay me sufficiently to command your nuclear forces because there is no way I could ever claim to meet my responsibility of ensuring deterrence against Pakistan, much less China. With your complete lack of warning, wholly inadequate command-control infrastructure, and force vulnerability, your posture places a premium on first strike, the most unstable and dangerous
circumstance imaginable. Deterrence is premised on a commitment to spend limitless amounts of national treasure to underwrite the astronomically expensive and relentlessly demanding capabilities that give operational meaning to a highly theoretical construct. To that point, I would simply note that the U.S. lost during launch yesterday a nuclear command and control communications satellite whose cost exceeds your entire defense budget. In sum, my greatest concern for the force objective you have described is that it will not only diminish your national security but threaten your national survival.”

With that, the moderator called a break, because the pretense of the Indian nuclear program had now been revealed. It was really about national pride and place, about demonstrating technological prowess and throwing off the psychological yoke of colonialism. That reality was driven home later in the day by retired three-star General Satish Nambiar, a learned and soft-spoken man who made the following astonishing revelation:

I am presenting my personal views because the Indian government has not articulated a nuclear policy and because as a military man I have never been made privy to the number and types of nuclear weapons India has available. However, from my perspective, these are not instruments of war, that is, weapons that a nation would use to achieve a solely military objective, and India cannot simply integrate them into its arsenal of weapons. Indeed, one of the reasons why a nuclear policy has not yet been formulated is that the military was not involved in the decision to test India’s nuclear weapons and had no plans for how to utilize them if they were available.

My immediate thought after hearing this astonishing revelation was, “My God, these are children playing with nuclear matches,” but then it occurred to me that my interlocutors probably thought the same about us. I next recalled that in teaching me the history of India’s nuclear weapons program prior to the trip, Tom Graham had underscored the incredible fact that the military’s civilian masters had never seen fit to involve the people who would employ these weapons in the decision about what types and number to acquire, much less how to target and deliver them. This perplexing reality was made all the more bizarre by the fact that the situation in Pakistan was precisely the opposite – the military had complete control of nuclear weapons production and employment policy, with absolutely no civilian oversight. I had trouble believing this could be the case until I heard confirmation from the lips of a man who, in retired life, had finally been brought into the inner circles of civilian
policy making, although he still was not privy to the details of force levels and capability. At any rate, I found Nambiar to be highly credible, engaging and a potential ally if I decided to insert myself into the India-Pakistan nuclear relationship.

The next day, the presentations were more technical, and the personal ties were much improved, thanks to informal conversations during breaks and longer discussions over dinner. At the end of the day, at the request of our hosts, John Holdren, John Steinbruner, Steve Fetter and I formed a panel to speak more broadly to United States security and foreign policy, giving purely personal views and opinions. I gave a version of my “Tides, Trends and Tasks” lecture, updated to account for global events during the eleven years since my initial presentation at the National War College. For the most part, the international security environment had unfolded exactly as I had envisioned, and the trend lines were largely unchanged. My remarks, and responses to the questions that followed, garnered close attention, especially from the several media representatives who had been invited to this closing session. I was besieged by requests for interviews, some of which, with Narasimha’s guidance, I accepted. Most gratifying though, was the moment when Subu took me aside and extended an invitation to return sometime in the coming months for a solo turn with other audiences he would be pleased to assemble. I assured him I would take his offer very seriously, thanked him for his presentation and promised to stay in touch. With his close ties to Prime Minister Vajpayee, this might prove to be a valuable channel.

Tom Graham had joined our delegation on the final day, and after the meeting concluded, he and I departed for New Delhi for a series of one-on-one sessions he had arranged with selected contacts from his Rockefeller Rolodex. That agenda was extended by an unanticipated invitation from the U.S. Ambassador to India, Dick Celeste, to come by for a breakfast meeting on Friday morning, the 21st of May. Alerted by the National Academy of Sciences to the fact that CISAC would be on his doorstep, he had read some of my early speeches and wanted to talk privately. Tom Graham was thrilled by this opportunity. And with good reason. The meeting with Celeste was very cordial and highly gratifying. He told us that he was deeply sympathetic with my views, was acutely concerned about the India-Pakistan nuclear relationship, and had gone so far as to publish my second National Press Club speech in the monthly State Department magazine that was circulated and read throughout India – a copy of which he gave me as a memento.

Here was yet another affirmation of the power of the global media and the almost unimaginable extent to which my public pronouncements had
resonated. That illustration was followed by another during lunch with retired Air Chief Marshal S.K. Mehra, whose name I had been given by General Nambiar when I had told him I was going on to New Delhi. Mehra was cut from the same cloth, a decent, highly intelligent and articulate man with a distinguished military career and a profound concern about India’s nuclear weapons program. After a creative conversation with Tom during our flight from Bangalore, I broached to Mehra the idea of the Second Chance Foundation hosting a meeting in Omaha of retired senior military officers from India and Pakistan and their spouses. The objective would be to elicit insights regarding their perceptions of each other, their societies, and most importantly, their nuclear weapon programs and intentions. If that were successful, my hope would be to create a dialogue between the armed forces of the two nations facilitated by retired senior officers. Mehra embraced the idea and offered to find two colleagues, one from the Army and another from the Navy, to join him. I suggested General Nambiar, whom Mehra knew and agreed would be a splendid choice. Tom then got on the phone with General Karamat in Islamabad, advised him of the initiative and got his agreement to select and head a similar delegation from Pakistan, for an early September date in Omaha.

Tom had one other meeting arranged, at the Rajiv Gandhi Institute, with the director and senior staff. The institute was created by its namesake, a hallowed figure in India. The eldest son of Feroze and Indira Gandhi, he became the nation’s youngest prime minister at the age of forty, following the assassination of his mother in 1984. He made great strides in advancing the economy, improved relations with the U.S., made a memorable speech to the United Nations General Assembly decrying nuclear weapons, and was himself assassinated in 1991 while campaigning in Tamil Nadu. His devoted followers sought to perpetuate his beliefs through the vehicle of a namesake institution, which Tom envisioned would be one of our key contacts in India. Our meeting with the director was intriguing; after a few minutes of conversation, he asked me, “General Butler, if you were the Prime Minister, what speech would you make to the Parliament and to the public about the role of India’s nuclear weapons?” I talked for several minutes about the momentous consequences of the decision to become a nuclear weapon state, the forces it set in motion, the daunting challenge to maintain control of the enterprise, the effects on not just neighboring nations but the world at large, and the consequential array of decisions that had to be confronted about policy and posture. He made many notes, and I knew this had not been a casual exercise. Indeed, not long after my return to the United States, I was contacted by a counselor to the Prime Minister. He asked me if I would agree to serve as a discreet advisor to
the inner circle of decision makers responsible for shaping India’s nuclear program. Tom was ecstatic; this was exactly the outcome he had been hoping for.

The trip significantly altered my assessment of the global nuclear enterprise and how to engage it. I decided that, however well-meaning the NGO community, their methods were antithetical to my purposes. The negative connotations of the word “abolition” made it a cross I should not bear – promoting “phased, stable elimination” was burden enough. It was now clear that any meaningful progress would have to come from the governments of the nuclear weapons states, declared and undeclared. That called for cautious, prolonged networking with policy elites in the handful of nations whose decisions would determine the course of the nuclear era. It was going to be a long, expensive and exhausting slog, one that would test the limits of my physical, emotional and financial reserves.

I returned to the United States pretty much at those limits, tired and strung out by the demands of the long trip, and weighed down by the prospect of what the future held in store. In two weeks I would pass my 60th year on a planet for which I was strapping on considerable responsibility, with absolutely no guarantee of moving the needle of nuclear dangers one iota. I had already dug myself into a hole by consorting with the abolitionist camp, while failing to seek the counsel of people whose opinions I would have to sway if I were to have any influence on the course of nuclear weapons policy. To complicate matters further, U.S. electoral waters were already stirring in advance of the 2000 presidential campaign, whose outcome would bring new challenges, irrespective of the winning party. While the Democratic candidate would almost surely be Al Gore, the Republican race was wide open, with some pundits even mentioning the name of George W. Bush, the governor of Texas, who had good political genes but no experience in Washington and lots of personal baggage. And therein lies another tale worth telling.

By chance, I had met the future commander-in-chief briefly during a trip to Abilene at the invitation of a friend from Dyess days, in the latter’s capacity as president of the Texas Philosophical Society, a venerable institution created by Sam Houston to provide a forum for the state’s leading minds to debate the issues of the day. I gave the opening address and served as moderator for the two-day session, keeping the several speakers on time and on target. Midway through the morning, I was passed a note at the podium informing me that Governor Bush was in the audience, had been intrigued by my comments about U.S. nuclear weapons policy and would like to chat during the break. I took Dorene by the hand, and our host escorted us to see the governor, who was holding forth to a thoroughly-charmed circle of admirers. When
he spotted us, he stopped, shook my hand and hugged Dorene, who said, “I sure do like your momma.” Bush, eyes sparkling, replied, “Well then, I think I’d rather talk to you. Do you know what my momma said to me yesterday? I called to tell her that in a presidential straw poll, the Mississippi Republican Party faithful voted me their top candidate. She said, ‘Son, I like your strategy with those folks... you still haven’t let them know who you really are.’” Dorene winked and said, “You’ve got one smart momma, and everyone says you take after her.” With that, the grin on his face got bigger, and he finally turned to me. “General, I don’t understand much of what you were saying, but I know enough to understand how important the subject is, and that my daddy agrees with you. If you don’t mind, I’d like to call on you occasionally as I start reading into it more.”

That was a pretty obvious clue the man was getting serious about a White House bid, a prospect that left me with very mixed feelings. While he was certainly likeable and apparently effective in the Texas political arena, I had a very difficult time imagining him on the national stage, much less in the Oval Office. But stranger things had happened in American politics – or so I thought before the 2000 election ran its bizarre course. Incidentally, he never called.

With the U.S. political scene in upheaval as the Clinton era descended into ignominy, I turned my attention to Russia, where matters were not much better, but where my friend Sergeyev was still in the Defense Minister chair. I wrote him a long letter describing my recent activities, my decision to create SCF, and my observations from discussions in London, Brussels, Paris, Berlin and India. I ended by asking if I could come to Moscow for a visit, to hear his views on U.S.-Russian relations and the future of superpower arms control, which in my view were both very bleak. His thoughtful reply, dated 14 August 1999, reached me in early September by way of the U.S. Defense Attaché in Moscow, a friend from Air Force Academy days, one-star General Frank Klotz, now a retired three-star and Undersecretary for Nuclear Security in the Department of Energy. Frank had taken the time to include a greatly improved translation from the English version that had accompanied Sergeyev’s letter and thoughtfully offered assistance in making good on the invitation Sergeyev had extended in response to my request for a meeting. The letter was by turn strongly supportive of my efforts and deeply regretful of several U.S. actions which Russia viewed as an affront to its sovereignty and obstacles to further progress in arms control. I was particularly struck by his comment that “With your side we are prepared, within the framework of the future START III treaty, to reduce nuclear warheads down to a level of 1,500.” It would take twelve years and three presidential elections in the United States before President
Barack Obama would sign the New Start Treaty enshrining a limit of 1,550 warheads (albeit with each bomber counted as one warhead).

Meantime, after catching up with office matters, Dorene and I embarked on a round of travel that would fill the final three weeks of June, 1999, beginning with two days in Raleigh, N.C., two in Washington, D.C., two in New York, a brief break, and then to Rome, Italy, for a week-long gathering of the YPO University, which I had addressed in Madrid a year earlier. We finished the month at a Fourth Freedom Forum board meeting in Goshen.

The New York leg of the journey was the most intriguing. Tom Graham had arranged a private encounter between the two of us and M. K. Narayanan, the advisor to Prime Minister Vajpayee who had contacted me in New Delhi. He again assured me that the Prime Minister was keenly interested in my views and opinions and asked if I would give him a tutorial on those elements of managing a nuclear weapons enterprise that posed the greatest risks, specifically, those that had motivated me to create SCF. I spent the next several hours at a blackboard mapping out the complex linkages among nuclear weapons theory, intelligence, strategy, policy, planning, command-control-communications, daily operations and crisis management. My student paid rapt attention, taking several pages of notes. I have it on good authority that my cautions were given directly to the Prime Minister. I could only hope my counsel might help persuade him and his successors to moderate India’s nuclear ambitions.

My final get-together in New York had been arranged by George Crile, who was still chasing his vision of putting together a definitive documentary about the history of the Soviet nuclear enterprise in order to dramatize the disconnects and the dangers of the Cold War confrontation with the United States. After failing to find funding for an independent venture, George had returned to “60 Minutes” and convinced Dan Rather to sponsor an hour-long segment. I had grown impatient with George, who drifted in and out of my life unannounced with lots of promises but no closure. When I called him upon arriving in New York, I had expected we would hash out the details of putting together a game plan with Dan Rather and mapping out how we would approach the shoot for “60 Minutes.” Once again, however, George had failed to communicate exactly what he had in mind. When I asked for the time and place for our meeting, he was nonplussed. “This isn’t a meeting; it’s the actual filming of the segment. Dan is waiting at the studio for us.”

I exploded with anger, reminding George of our first filming encounter when I was CINCSTRAT and my insistence on choosing the venue, the interviewer and knowing the questions in advance. I reminded him what was at stake for me and the issue to which I had committed my reputation, and that
I was not about to risk either on an open-ended encounter with a person I did not trust all that much to begin with. George protested that Rather had flown back from Europe, and he himself had cut short a meeting with Sergeyev in Moscow, in order to make this filming date. I told him I didn’t care if he had just returned from the far side of the moon, there would be no filmed interview on this trip. Further, if he expected my continued participation in this project, which I still believed had merit, then he needed to put down on paper exactly where he was, where he was headed, what he expected of me and the likelihood of all that could get done. To his credit, he did just that, so after an exchange of terse emails I agreed to start anew, but on a very cautious basis, with me in control every step along the path of our future collaboration.

SCF spent the month of July preparing for the joint India and Pakistan military-to-military meeting scheduled for early September. Generals Mehra and Karamat had been successful in assembling delegations that represented each branch of their nations’ military services and that also embodied the requisite expertise and influence in nuclear weapons issues.

By August, things were well enough in hand for me to visit D.C. to meet a number of Washington hands, including Brent Scowcroft, who had formed his own consulting firm after leaving the White House in 1993; Mort Halperin, Director of Policy Planning at the State Department; Ted Warner, then an Assistant Secretary of Defense; Steve Cohen, one of the best India minds in the business; Bob Gallucci, Dean of the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown and the lead U.S. negotiator during the tense 1994 nuclear crisis with North Korea; and Strobe Talbott, the Deputy Secretary of State for South Asia, who handled the State’s India and Pakistan portfolios.

All of these meetings were designed to ensure that these important players were aware of my military-to-military initiative, and they all proved productive, especially the hour with Brent and his principal deputy, Arnie Kantor, whom I had known for many years. They were surprisingly receptive and sympathetic to my views, offering to stay in contact and to read the various position papers Tom Graham was writing to inform our strategy. Gallucci, whom I also knew from my earlier Washington tours, was complimentary of my efforts and urged me to work North Korea in the near term: in his view, the regime, however odious, needed “Track-Two” channels of communication. The session with Talbott simply confirmed what Ambassador Celeste had told me in New Delhi – hard-line U.S. government policy was driving India more and more rapidly toward achieving a full-up nuclear weapons capability. That meeting reinforced my conviction that the unofficial military-to-military forum I was hosting in Omaha was an essential counterweight to this self-defeating policy. My goal of creating a small
but potentially valuable opening between two completely-isolated military establishments loomed increasingly large among our objectives.

This conclusion was reinforced by a blowup over Kashmir on the 10th of August, when India shot down a Pakistani naval surveillance plane, killing sixteen people. The incident touched off yet another round of violence in the region, feeding off deep-seated tensions rooted in the controversial national boundaries drawn (or left undecided) by Britain in 1947, as it rushed to meet deadlines at the end of the colonial era. The resulting morass lay at the heart of the bad blood between the two nations. The name Kashmir is shorthand for the Indian state of “Jammu and Kashmir,” home to some eight million people. The departing British ordered that the subcontinent’s 562 landed maharajahs opt for inclusion in one of the newly independent nations, India or Pakistan. Hari Singh, Kashmir’s Hindu maharajah, dithered past the deadline, but when tribesmen from Pakistan’s northern frontier forced his hand, he decided to cast the lot of his predominantly Muslim domain with predominantly Hindu India. That created a festering sore that has never healed, and recurring violence became the norm. In May, 1999, fighting had erupted in the snow-capped peaks of Kargil, dragging on for ten weeks and sending tensions off the chart.

And so, now, on the threshold of my mil-to-mil initiative, the pot was again at full boil. It took a flurry of email exchanges to the delegation leaders, Karamat and Mehra, to keep the meeting on track, but it obviously had to remain very discreet. Any mention in the press would put the participants at risk in their native lands and end what I now considered the centerpiece of SCF strategy going forward: quiet, behind-the-scenes diplomacy through a global network of collaborators carefully selected and cultivated, and positioned to influence nuclear policy decisions within the councils of their respective governments. Many of these key contacts would be retired military officers, building on the worldwide constituency I had pieced together over the past ten years in and out of uniform. The objective would be to work toward what I labeled “Stable Global Nuclear Balances,” that is, regional arms control arrangements that would fit within the broader framework of the NPT and CTBT. Tom Graham had put all this together in two memos. The first went to Mort Halperin as a read-ahead for our meeting in mid-August, the second to me and Dorene to clarify our objectives in the military-to-military forum. If the meetings went well, I would have taken a giant step along the path ahead, one that capitalized on my strengths and drew on the considerable resources of like-minded people around the world.

Happily, the gathering did serve its purpose well. The six military participants were as professional, knowledgeable and gracious as I could have asked,
and the five spouses who were able to attend melded perfectly. Dorene and her friend from Dyess days, Robin Matthews, put together a social program that greatly facilitated the bonding among the men and among the women. We began the interaction on Friday, the 3rd of September, with a relaxed itinerary that included the Henry Doorly Zoo, the new and magnificently-realized SAC Museum, and dinner at Robin’s lakeside home. By the time the men gathered for our first business session on Saturday, personal chemistry had begun to work its magic.

The two days of discussion were held in the SCF conference room, where we were joined by retired Admiral Chuck Larson, the former CINCPAC who had been a colleague during my four-star days and had a deep working knowledge of the operational intricacies of both Indian and Pakistani military forces. Smart and smooth, he lent an additional air of authority. I opened with a personal talk about my family background, my military career, the lessons I had taken away from my many military-to-military activities in dozens of countries, and most especially the Dangerous Military Activities negotiations with the former Soviet Union. I underscored my conclusion that even in the tensest political relationships it is possible – indeed, essential – to find avenues for personal interaction that can avert disaster. Ultimately, peaceful conflict resolution depends on establishing a modicum of trust between the warring parties, some meaningful contact that breaks down the walls of alienation, suspicion and misguided assumptions. I then asked each of my guests to give a similar appreciation of their personal and military experience, and their responses took the remainder of the morning. After lunch at the conference table, I opened the afternoon round with a long dissertation about my decades of experience in the nuclear arena, focusing on my growing dismay as I came to understand more fully the disconnects, risks and dangers at every level, from the theoretical to the operational. My guests paid rapt attention, and this intellectual table-setter had precisely the desired effect. They were eager to probe me about the anecdotes I had used to make my points, and in the course of those discussions they began to voice mistaken assumptions and misunderstandings not only about each other’s nuclear plans and arsenals, but also about their own!

By the end of the two days of formal talks, such stunning revelations had led to just the outcome I was looking for: a mutual recognition of how poorly the two sides understood each other professionally, the frightening misperceptions they had harbored throughout their careers about each other’s actions and intentions and, most importantly, the dangerous path they were on with respect to their nuclear planning and force postures. Indeed, the single
The most important outcome of the conference was the Pakistani critique of the recently-leaked contents of India’s draft Nuclear Weapons Policy, a document I had read carefully and was myself determined to challenge. As it turned out, my Pakistani colleagues were eager to take the lead, and the debate, at times very heated, had the salutary outcome of opening the eyes of two of the policy’s authors – who were seated at the table – and who were in a position to amend its worst aspects before it was made final.

The meeting ended Monday evening with a dinner at our home, where we were joined by Warren Buffett. He was his always-gracious self, and he lent great credibility by his presence. As he witnessed the extraordinary camaraderie that filled the room, he could see the worth of his investment in SCF. My sense of accomplishment was reinforced by the glowing letters of appreciation that followed the event, expressing the participants’ desire to go forward. A key piece of SCF strategy was in place.

After several intervening trips, Dorene and I returned once more to D.C., where I had agreed to speak to a regional conference of the Young Presidents Organization (YPO), this global band of successful entrepreneurs organized in urban-based chapters, several of which I had already addressed. The departure point for my remarks was the U.S. Senate’s shocking rejection, two days before, of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, one of blackest days in the history of arms control. No one had seen this coming, certainly not the Clinton Administration, which, as analysis would later show, had been blindsided by a very clever cabal of conservative staffers who worked clandestinely for months with powerful sponsors inside and outside the Congress to derail the treaty. Ironically, the day before my YPO talk, George Colis, a friend from the Chicago chapter I had spoken to recently, had worked an appointment for me with freshman Senator Peter Fitzgerald of Illinois, son of a longtime family friend. He listened intently to my tutorial about nuclear dangers, during the course of which he realized how badly he had been misled in voting with the majority of Senate Republicans and a handful of Democrats to reject the CTBT. Here was proof positive of the crying need for SCF involvement on the Hill. While it was highly unlikely I could have headed off this disaster, it was emblematic of the damage that could be done by the amateurish interventions of the NGO community, abetted by an egregious lack of attention from the Clinton White House and State Department.

The speech to the YPO was the most comprehensive talk I had yet given covering the broad sweep of American foreign and security policy from the dawn of the nuclear age to the present era, the major currents shaping that policy in the aftermath of the Cold War, and the price we were paying for failing
to understand and intelligently respond to the cascading consequences. The audience was keenly interested, and we engaged in a question and answer session that went on until Dorene and I had to depart for Dulles Airport for a long-planned China trip. Because of the trip’s complexity and the tenuousness of U.S.-Chinese relations at the time, arranging it had taken months. Rebecca Rittgers, Tom’s assistant, put the itinerary together, as China was her area of expertise. She had lived there, spoke Mandarin and knew her way around Beijing; however, none of us had direct personal connections with the most senior people, and we were relying on China experts in our stable of contacts to advise and assist us in scheduling appointments. As a consequence, we viewed this as an exploratory first step in building relationships and future lines of communication in what in diplomatic circles is called the “side door” approach—using cut-outs or surrogates who speak for key officials who prefer not to meet directly with foreigners.

The other difficulty was that the visit was coming in the aftermath of the erroneous bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade by a U.S. plane while conducting air strikes in support of our campaign to bring pressure to bear on Serbia’s President Milosevic. Actually, I was surprised that we were still being allowed to visit, much less to keep our ambitious agenda, which included the following calls:

- Gu Gouliang, Director of the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Studies, China Academy of Social Studies
- Ambassador Sha Zukang, Dept. of Arms Control and Disarmament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Diane Cheng, Institute of Human Ecology
- Yang Jike, South-North Institute
- Li Hechun, Defense Science and Technology Information Center
- Professor Jia Qingguo, School of International Studies, Beijing University
- Brigadier General Karl Eikenberry, U.S. Defense Attaché
- Li Ben, Institute of Applied Physics and Computational Mathematics
- Wang Zibang, Institute of Contemporary International Relations

We arrived at Beijing Airport at nine on Sunday morning, where Rebecca met us. I was dumbfounded by the change in the city since my first visit in 1973, when I had flown my C-141 into Shanghai and Beijing. The place was unrecognizable, the streets flooded with cars, trucks and buses, towering new office buildings, high-end stores brimming with expensive goods, and well-dressed people crowding the sidewalks. Beijing had become a replica of the
typical Western metropolis, complete with an infusion of smog that made the air almost unbreathable. The bicycle as sole transportation, the spotless streets and the unhurried pace – all had been relegated to a forgotten corner of China’s history, swept aside by the powerful force that I had described in my “Tides, Trends and Tasks” primer as “the compelling quest for a higher order of economic well-being.” China was clearly on the march. I could feel the rhythmic beat of a billion aspiring entrepreneurs moving in government-directed unison toward the Holy Grail of conspicuous consumption. God forbid that this rising tide of expectations should also translate into a quest for nuclear superpower status. This was just the nightmare I hoped to forestall by getting into the minds of their indigenous nuclear priesthood before they could lead the country down the ruinous path of Mutual Assured Destruction vis-à-vis the United States, Russia or India.

By chance, Pat Edgerton, from the W. Alton Jones Foundation, was also in town, to oversee progress of several environmental grant programs they were underwriting, and we took the opportunity to talk over lunch. Her extensive history dealing with China made her a valuable ally in mapping out the almost impenetrably dense thicket of government bureaucracy. Our schedule began in earnest the following morning at the Academy of Social Studies, where began my education into the sophistication of Chinese thinking about international relations and nuclear arms control. Gu Gouliang, who spoke perfect English and had lived in the United States as a Stimson Center Fellow, was now the deputy director of the Academy’s Institute for American Studies. I learned very quickly that the better part of wisdom for me on this trip was simply to listen; it was going to take years to understand the ins and outs of the Chinese nuclear hierarchy, and longer to develop the mutual confidence that would be essential to influencing their policies and practices. This was the first step on my thousand-mile journey, but the payoff from doing more listening than talking came quickly, in the form of two invitations for meetings that had not been on our agenda: the first was from Lieutenant General Xiong Guangkai, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, dual-hatted as the Chief of Military Intelligence; the second, from the director of the China Bank of Agriculture, a very powerful man in both political and economic circles. This was a fortuitous breakthrough, signaling that I was being taken seriously and that my “learn not preach” approach was winning points.

These invitations came in the aftermath of my meeting with Ambassador Sha Zukang, China’s ambassador-at-large on arms control and disarmament, known for his excellent English and equally for an abrasive style that made him something of a celebrity on the Western social circuit. His reputation as
a policy insider who did his homework gave him considerable clout; I have no
doubt he had thoroughly researched my background and public commentary
before asking me to his office. We had a cordial conversation, one that I began
by commenting on the exemplary nature of China’s nuclear weapon posture
and policies: a relatively small force with no warheads on alert, and a strategy
of minimum deterrence underscored by a public declaration of “no first use.”
To my mind, that was exactly where the two superpowers needed to gravitate,
and I voiced my hope that China would be patient enough to work toward
that outcome, rather than migrating to a more aggressive stance. Sha seemed
pleased and gratified, assuring me that China had no intention of wasting
its precious capital on nuclear capabilities that were excess to its perceived
needs, and my instincts told me he was sincere. Mao had initially got into
the game for prestige, and his successors were content to continue playing by
the original ground rules, which kept the nation’s nuclear arsenal below the
threshold of a credible first-strike capability.

Of the remaining meetings, the most memorable were with Lieutenant
General Xiong, Dr. Yang at the South-North Institute, Brigadier General Karl
Eikenberry, and a teaching opportunity with a graduate seminar at Beijing
University. Yang was particularly interesting because of the personal ties
he had developed over the course of many trips to North Korea. He was a
key figure in maintaining channels of communication that had kept negotia-
tions over North Korea’s nuclear weapons program from going completely
off the rails when the 1994 agreement had begun to unravel. His work was
so compelling that I decided to make some SCF grant money available to
underwrite his efforts. General Eikenberry was most engaging; he was en-
ergetic and passionate about his responsibility to keep tabs for the U.S. on
China’s burgeoning conventional military capabilities and the evolution of
their operational art and practice. He, like me, was seized by the boundless
energy surrounding him daily and was therefore worried about the future of
the regional balance of power as this “incipient hegemon” evolved toward
regional supremacy. Following his retirement from the military, Karl’s skills
earned him the role of U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, where he served
with distinction.

By request of Professor Jia, my lecture at the university was on deterrence
theory and practice. I was quite concerned that it might be too technical for
the students, a worry that proved unfounded. On the contrary, their ques-
tions, rendered in impeccable English, were as probing and thoughtful as one
might expect from Harvard’s best and brightest. When Rebecca explained the
rigor of the screening process for aspiring university students, especially for
the Beijing academic mother ship, my astonishment receded somewhat, but what I had witnessed was still remarkable. It left a lasting impression as to China’s potential, once its vast reservoir of brainpower and ambition was harnessed – or let loose.

By far the most useful session of the trip came at the office of Lieutenant General Xiong, where I arrived after penetrating several levels of security. He let me cool my heels for fifteen minutes to signal China’s continuing upset over the Belgrade bombing incident, but the interlude was filled by yet another extraordinary episode: my conversation with his aide-de-camp, a razor-sharp young Army major who had just returned from a sabbatical at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. He asked me about my own experience at the JFK School during the 1986 Summer Program, specifically if Professor Graham Allison had been one of my lecturers. I just about fell over. Here I was in the equivalent of the Pentagon’s Joint Staff, about to call on some combination of our Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the J-2 Intelligence Director and I am chatted up by his aide about a mutual friend on the Harvard faculty! When his boss finally let me out of jail, our conversation proved equally fascinating. I went into the meeting primed to query him about a remark recently attributed to him in Western intelligence circles, reportedly made during cocktail party chatter, about the prospect of a U.S.-China confrontation over Taiwan turning nuclear. The putative statement was, “I wonder if Washington would be ready to trade Los Angeles for Taipei,” a chilling suggestion that Beijing might be willing to commit national suicide over the issue and would inflict as much punishment as possible on its way to nuclear incineration. Given his responsibility as Secretary General of the Central Leading Group for Taiwan Affairs, this comment was not to be taken lightly.

As it turned out, after a bit of obligatory stiffness, the opening did present itself, and he was very forthright in his answer. No, he said, he was not trying to be provocative but wanted simply to underscore the danger resident in the Taiwan issue, which in his mind rivaled that of the U.S.-Cuban-Soviet lash-up in 1962 and could lead to a similar confrontation with potentially catastrophic consequences. I was very taken by his candor and intelligence. Here was a man who had openly urged closer China-U.S. relations, who spoke fluent English, German and Japanese, who was a prolific writer, and whose wife had a chemistry degree from Beijing University. At the end of the day, I did not see him as some dangerous, shoot-from-the-hip artist, but as an urbane sophisticate who took his duties very seriously, and who might well be a voice of moderation in decision circles.

Our final interaction, no less intriguing and insightful, was with the director
of the well-capitalized Bank of Agriculture. He served a feast on the bank’s premises and entertained us like royalty. Rebecca explained that this was the government’s way of signaling its pleasure regarding our visit and its desire to continue the dialogue. This was truly a world of mirrors.

While it was demanding, the trip was not all business. Rebecca had carved out time for informative visits to the Great Wall, the Imperial and the Summer Palaces and the Temple of Heaven, each fascinating in its own right. They reflected China’s deeply-rooted sense of vulnerability, compulsion for social order and preference for powerful central authority. I left with a sense of wonder that such a nation could be made to work at all, an abiding respect for its achievements and potential, and a profound unease regarding the looming challenge it posed to the global dominance of the United States. If the twentieth century was marked by American dominance – and it would be hard to argue otherwise – I am not sure of the odds that we will hold similar sway in this one. China’s huge domestic problems notwithstanding, if its government can create a new economic and political model that continues to meter democratic freedoms while dictating the pace and direction of economic growth, I certainly would not bet the farm on who sits atop of the economic heap come the year 2100.

On return from Beijing, I had but a week before I had to make good on a self-inflicted wound: flying to Tokyo to support Ambassador Doug Roche who, after months of effort, had opened some key doors in the Japanese government in order to sell his Middle Powers Initiative. He had already enlisted Robert McNamara for the trip but wanted me to balance Bob’s more vociferous presentations. Since Japan was on the SCF list of two dozen strategic nations, I had agreed, reluctantly. My concern was not only the fast turnaround after the China venture, but a YPO speaking commitment in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on the 11th of November. With the four days in Japan, I would have only forty-eight hours to repack before Dorene and I headed halfway around the world in the other direction.

I did not fully understand Doug’s agenda until the strategy session the morning after my arrival; his goal was to persuade Japan to support yet another Middle Powers Initiative resolution before the U.N. that would yet again urge the P-5 to get on with eliminating their nuclear arsenals. This bit of wishful thinking was premised on Japanese angst over recent U.S. foreign policy errors, such as the Senate’s failure to ratify the CTBT and the bellicose reaction to North Korea’s long-range missile tests, one of which had overflown Japanese waters. Japan was also trying to carve out its own security accommodation with China, an effort made difficult by its security guarantees with the U.S.,
especially the American nuclear umbrella that ostensibly shielded Japan from aggression – presumably Chinese or North Korean.

Despite these concerns, I knew it was a pipe dream to expect Japan to split publicly with the United States on such a sensitive issue as eliminating nuclear weapons. I decided to stake out my own agenda in the talks with senior officials that began after the morning meal. As opposed to “elimination of nuclear weapons,” I would instead speak to the SCF mission of “reducing nuclear dangers” through phased, responsible steps that preserved stable deterrence and U.S. guarantees to its allies. My purpose was to present myself as a moderate, experienced Cold War veteran who could provide sound, discreet advice on nuclear weapon issues. That approach served me well in the meetings at the Defense and Foreign Ministries, as well as at an evening forum that included mid-level government arms control experts and members of the press. I shared the stage that night with Robert McNamara, whose comments I found rather shrill. In sum, the trip had value, particularly in exposing me to high-level Japanese anxiety about their security relations with the United States. I watched bemused as a senior official in the Foreign Ministry became visibly upset at hearing the suggestion that Japan distance itself from the United States on nuclear weapons policy. The painful memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had clearly been outweighed at this level by fear of losing the American security guarantee vis-à-vis its nuclear-armed neighbors. Japan lives between a rock and a hard place militarily and therefore will not allow resentment, no matter how deeply felt, to risk alienating the very country that nearly a half-century removed incinerated tens of thousands of its citizens in the blink of an atomic eye. Strange bedfellows, indeed.

The trans-Pacific leg of the trip home was long enough to get some fitful sleep, but I returned to Omaha still dead tired, and I was running on only half a tank two days later, when Dorene and I left for Dubai City by way of Chicago and Frankfurt. The well-heeled YPO organizers had booked us into the Jumeirah Beach Hotel. This spectacular, multi-billion dollar structure is the flagship of the emirate of Dubai, whose leaders were building a sparkling metropolis on the sands of one of the world’s most desolate regions. The most-populous and second-largest of the seven emirates comprising the United Arab Emirates, Dubai is the embodiment of an audacious strategic vision that would have made the Pharaohs green with envy. Knowing that Dubai’s oil reserves will not last forever, the head of the Al Maktoum dynasty, which has ruled the emirate since 1833, decided his best course was to create a financial and business hub to rival any in the West, eventually surpassing London and New York to become the future world’s financial center.
After my duties were fulfilled, Dorene and I took time to get a close look at some of the massive construction aimed at that breathtaking goal. Teeming new boulevards already flowed from the city center, lined with gleaming glass towers, the core of a modernization campaign that would not be realized for a decade or more, much of it the fruit of imported labor working under onerous, oppressive and dangerous conditions. Here in plain view were the best and the worst of globalization: stunning advance, enabled by colossal wealth, realized on the backs of laborers from nations desperately poor – an old, old story re-written on ancient sands by a new generation of plutocrats wholly unmindful and uncaring of the human costs fueling their overweening ambitions.

Two final trips in our peripatetic travel over the course of SCF’s first year bear mention, if only because the preparation for the first, an evening session at Harvard with a group organized by Professor Allison, Director of the Belfer Center, helped me get my thoughts in order regarding the future of nuclear arms control. The second was a heartwarming family opportunity Dorene had arranged for her beloved Uncle Morris, a Navy veteran of the Second World War.

I knew most of the participants in the Belfer Center colloquy from my long association with Harvard, or else by their reputations, and the fact that I had read most of their work in the field of national security. Several had served the government in Democratic administrations and were well connected to the Clinton inner circle in some capacity. They were taken aback by my unsparing critique of what I considered the President’s abysmal record on nuclear arms control. I asserted that his eroding stature and clout had effectively left the field to Republican conservatives, who were in the process of dismantling decades of hard-won constraints on the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their associated dangers. My core argument was that they needed to begin rethinking arms control from scratch. The CTBT was dead in Senate waters, as was the START II agreement. The ABM Treaty was under full-scale assault and, in my view, would soon be abrogated, and U.S. credibility regarding the NPT was shredded. While this prompted a scintillating discussion, the weight of evidence was on my side – and, eventually, so has been the verdict of history.

The family trip was, by contrast, a complete joy. Dorene had been plotting for months to celebrate her Uncle Morris’ seventy-fifth birthday by getting him and wife Pat to New York City for their first visit. The idea was triggered by an invitation we had received to attend the annual U.S.O. Ball on board the aircraft carrier USS *Intrepid*. The storied World War II ship that had later served as a recovery platform for the Mercury and Gemini space programs was now berthed at Pier 86 in the Hudson River as a permanent museum. Morris had
served as an able-bodied seaman aboard a destroyer in the waters off New Guinea, and we knew he would relish the opportunity to tour the carrier and participate in the colorful Ball. For that, he would need a tuxedo, and since the trip would begin in Omaha, we fabricated a story about a local U.S.O. Ball in Omaha to ensure he arrived with the correct attire for the NYC affair. The ruse worked perfectly, Morris and Pat were overcome when we told them we were all going to New York, and the trip could not have been better. We stayed at the gorgeous Palace Hotel, ate sumptuous meals, saw three plays, traveled everywhere by limo, and, oh yes, the Ball was terrific. We sat with General Jim Jones, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, who was exceedingly gracious. This was family at its best, honoring our elders, celebrating our service men and women and creating lasting memories. All these years later, I record these events with a smile tugging at my lips and a tear in my eye, remembering Morris’ face as he watched the presentation of the colors aboard one of America’s most-honored vessels.

My last piece of SCF business for the year was a December 20th meeting with Chuck Hagel, Nebraska’s freshman Senator, whom I knew casually and whose views on nuclear issues were still guarded. Chuck was a successful and wealthy businessman, but a political novice who in 1996 had won a surprising victory over Democratic Governor Ben Nelson. I had asked for some time with him during the Christmas recess to test the prospect of creating a bi-partisan consensus between him and Nebraska’s Democratic Senator, Bob Kerrey, on the urgency of reducing nuclear dangers. Both were Vietnam War vets, two of only seven in the Senate, and both wore the Purple Heart for wounds they had suffered in combat. The hour-long meeting went extremely well. Chuck was receptive and forthcoming, remarkably so, in fact. I gave him my take on the state of nuclear arms control in the Senate, which he described as even more dismal than I had portrayed. He painted the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as broken, due to the imperious leadership of Jesse Helms, and its staff as the worst of any committee of which he was a member. Trent Lott, the Majority Leader, was all about cutting deals and woefully ignorant on substance, even on the most important issues. Hagel also confirmed that the Administration had been outflanked on the CTBT vote by a cleverly-orchestrated, highly-covert campaign on the part of arch-conservative Senate staffers. Finally, he went down the roster of his colleagues name by name, indicating who would be most receptive to my message. He closed the conversation with a request for me to speak to two groups he was working to assemble, one with a focus on reviving the CTBT, the other, on repairing relationships with Russia. I left the meeting confident that our Congressional strategy was on the right
track, a long process of consensus-building based on face-to-face meetings with the non-ideologues in the Senate who might rally around a common-sense agenda for reducing nuclear dangers.

And so, as this inaugural year ended, I could begin to see the path ahead with some clarity. All the major constituencies had been identified, a series of critical initial contacts had been made and relationships struck, a tightly-knit organization was in place, the prospects seemed bright for building a solid donor base, and our strategy for consolidating the fractured peace and security arena had been battle-tested. Finally, as a newcomer to the arena, I had avoided most of the pitfalls, shed the abolition label as best I could, distanced myself from the more radical elements of the peace movement, and begun to earn my way back into the good graces of insiders who would ultimately decide the fate of nuclear weapons policies and practices in the United States and around the world. I entered the final year of the millennium cautiously optimistic about the prospects for SCF. Twelve months later, that optimism would be completely shattered.

I spent January of 2000 fleshing out SCF strategy and fine-tuning our operation before plunging into the first six months’ travel schedule, of which I will touch only on what was most consequential for my family and for the fate of my self-appointed mission to reduce nuclear dangers, namely, a fundraiser for SCF hosted by Michael Douglas in Los Angeles, a discussion with Ted Turner and his senior staff at CNN headquarters in Atlanta and with some of his staffers in D.C., and a talk to the Senate Democratic Caucus in Williamsburg, Virginia, in late June.

Dorene and I left the frigid February temperatures of Omaha for Los Angeles and the Douglas fundraiser. We were looking forward to the unique event, which coincided with the premier of his latest movie, “Wonder Boys.” Michael’s generous offer was an outgrowth of his family’s long association with The Ploughshares Fund, with which the SCF would split the proceeds. My role was to make a short pitch to the opening night audience just prior to the screening and then to rub elbows at the reception to follow.

Since this would be a full-blown Hollywood bash, we invited Mike, Lisa, Brett and his wife to join us for a mini-family reunion and what promised to be a memorable night. When we called Brett to get the particulars on his travel plans, his spouse answered the phone. In response to our greeting, she snapped, “Do you know where your son is?” We had no idea what to make of her question; before we could continue, she hung up and would not answer our attempts to call back. Red Alert. We racked our brains trying to imagine what the hell was going on, why Brett would be missing from his own home
and, if this were truly a crisis, whom he might have called or gone to see. We called Lisa, who suggested we contact his college roommate, Scott, who lived in Orange County, California, not fifteen minutes from the home we had just purchased in Laguna Beach. Scott acknowledged that Brett had not only called him but was now at his house – with Madison and Colleen! Our son was too exhausted and still too distraught to talk but planned to meet us, with the girls, at the Beverly Hills Hotel, where we had made reservations for the planned family reunion the following evening.

After a sleepless night and an interminable flight to Los Angeles, we finally arrived at our destination, where Brett had already checked in. He looked haggard and emotionally spent, although he had done a sterling job of shielding the girls from the worst of the trauma he was experiencing. His story was difficult to absorb at one sitting. He began by acknowledging that his marriage had been on the rocks for some time. He had soldiered through an increasingly difficult relationship in the interest of the girls, until his worst fear was abruptly confirmed, one no husband wants to confront. The circumstances were sufficiently compelling that he decided spontaneously to pack up the girls and take them with him to California.

Time to circle the wagons. I knew instantly that our life was on hold until this crisis was resolved, at whatever cost in time, energy and expense. Job one was to help Brett come to grips with the fact that his marriage was over; that the girls’ best interest would be served by as amicable a split as could be brokered; that we needed expert legal advice, which was readily available within our Omaha support net; and that the next several months were going to be extremely trying but, hopefully, not irreversibly destructive. I cleared my SCF calendar except for one near-term commitment that proved even more fateful for the future of SCF than reordering my priorities to deal with a full-blown family crisis.

That obligation grew out of a strategy conference Doug Roche had held at the Carter Center in Atlanta, where the former President had fully engaged and become highly energized. His post-meeting round of phone calls included friend Ted Turner at his nearby CNN Headquarters, who had already been alerted to a decline in peace and security funding by a comment from Tom Graham through Michael Douglas. That led to a call to me from Turner asking if I would come to Georgia and brief him and his senior staff about the SCF mission. At first blush, that did not seem like a productive or even desirable use of my time. CNN was by all measures a roaring success, but not in my view on a par with the major networks, and Turner had a reputation as something of a flake, fueled in part by his marriage to Jane Fonda – the last person I would
want associated with SCF. However, after Tom, Dorene and I had turned the idea over at some length, we decided to take the bait but to remain alert for whatever the mercurial Turner might have up his sleeve.

The meeting took place on the afternoon of March 13th, in Ted’s 14th floor executive board room. It was preceded by a private interlude in his office, where he was at his charming best. Dorene broke the ice by presenting him with a framed editorial cartoon from the *Omaha World Herald* that poked gentle fun at Turner’s campaign to buy up vast stretches of the Nebraska plains. That prompted him to give us a tour of shelf upon shelf of memorabilia he had gathered over many decades of a frenetic, full-on life. He was at once engaging and candid, painfully so regarding his failed marriages – including to the woman widely known as Hanoi Jane among military ranks. It was too much information but provided a fascinating insight into this tortured soul who had striven so desperately to feel worthy of a father who had committed suicide when Ted was twenty-four years of age. We were in the presence of a brilliant, driven and fabulously wealthy man who would never be satisfied that he had done enough or could do enough to fulfill his father’s expectations.

He ushered us into his board room where, true to his word, he had assembled the entire CNN senior staff, some of whom did not seem thrilled to be there. They were the network’s presidents and executive vice presidents, executive producers and directors, accompanied by the director of the Turner Foundation, whose body language signaled he felt very threatened by our presence. I gave my omnibus SCF presentation: challenges and opportunities after the Cold War, the nature of the nuclear enterprise, the impetus for my mission to reduce nuclear dangers, and the obstacles to success. It was greeted initially with some skepticism from this hard-bitten news crowd, until Ted began to weigh in with some of the best questions I had ever heard from a lay person. He had clearly done a lot of homework; he knew the issues far better than I had imagined, and he told his staff it was time to get serious about them and that they could expect some detailed guidance from him regarding future coverage. Then he dropped a bombshell – he was going to enter the nuclear arena with the time, energy and resources to make a difference. His goal would be to abolish nuclear weapons within the next ten years.

Whoa, Nellie. Talk about bait and switch. Turner had seen my bet and raised it, going all-in without even seeing the flop, turn or river cards. With that bit of theater, he ended the meeting and invited Dorene and me back into his office for another private conversation, this one dead-serious. He began by saying he intended to put at least one hundred million dollars on the table, hire a world-class staff and not quit until the job was done. Obviously,
he wanted my help, advice, name, stature and probably services, although I let it be known up front that, whatever his intent, my role would be limited to that of a private counselor. When he asked me to give him my candid reaction, I was very forthright: his off-the-wall entry into the arena could do more harm than good. There was no way to spend that much money productively, but one could easily fritter away ten times that much to no avail. To be taken seriously by the nuclear priesthood, he needed to get off abolition and adopt the SCF mantra of reducing nuclear dangers. Ten years was much too short a time to accomplish anything of consequence. Finally, his was the wrong face to have on the initiative’s activities; he would need a Washington graybeard, someone with extensive knowledge in the field, great stature and unfettered access to the arms control policy process on a global scale.

Turner hauled all that on board without taking offense. On return to Omaha, I crafted a long follow-up letter detailing my advice about how best to position himself in the nuclear arena. I then watched with keen interest as, over the next several months, he took soundings with all the right people; had serious papers written on the prospective goals of his brain child; held several conferences in D.C. (which I and many of the major players in the nuclear arena attended); and persuaded former Senator Sam Nunn to take on the leadership of a new entity yet unnamed. Ted announced all of this in a Press Conference on the 13th of July, and then in a joint presentation with Sam Nunn at the National Press Club on the 8th of January, 2001, made public the launching of the “Nuclear Threat Initiative,” or NTI. I tracked all this with laser intensity, because what I sensed happening was the SCF mission being overtaken by an eight-hundred-pound gorilla. Turner had adopted my charter, underpinned it with exactly the endowment I had envisioned building for SCF and expanded its scope tenfold. I decided to let events emerge over the remainder of the year 2001, to scale back my activities by converting SCF from a grant-making to an operating foundation, to keep the bulk of my work out of the public eye in order not to compete with the standup of the NTI, to assess the outcome of the presidential campaign and to make a judgment about the future of SCF by mid-2001. I advised Howard Brembeck of this decision in a 12 May letter, which he graciously acknowledged.

In early April, the 7th, to be exact, a wonderful ray of sunshine broke through the glum clouds hanging over the Butler clan – the birth of our second grandson, Theodore Herring, who would prove to be a blessing in so many respects – most especially to his older brother when a year later an errant gene would take T.J.’s personality into a parallel universe called autism that only Theo could divine.
August brought a final opportunity to work the Congress, one that came through the auspices of my friend, Senator Tom Daschle, who invited me to talk to the Senate Democratic Caucus at their off-site in Williamsburg, Virginia. The timing was intriguing because both of the presidential candidates had by then been selected and a Gore-Bush face-off had put a fascinating spin on the campaign. Dorene joined me for the trip and for my presentation, which took place in a conference room at the spiffy resort where the caucus was held. As I took the stage, I was advised that I would be interrupted the moment that President Clinton arrived on the scene, which he did, some twenty minutes later, just after I began taking questions. At that point, Dorene and I expected to be escorted out; instead, we were steered to seats in the back of the room.

What followed was by turn enthralling and dismaying, as we watched this group of super egos pander to a president who was dragging his office and reputation through the muck of an utterly foolish sexcapade and then compounding the damage by playing fast and loose with the facts in sworn testimony. Yet here he was in front of an audience that would have to bear the political fall-out from his moral implosion and they were hanging on his every word. To my chagrin, I found myself doing exactly the same. The President began with a masterful overview of the current political climate – without one reference to the impact of his nefarious behavior – and then talked through all of the hot-button issues, with advice on how to handle them, state-by-state. No one called his hand on the fact that his counsel frequently required that his interlocutors take diametrically opposing positions according to their individual constituencies, without the slightest regard for principle or party integrity. This was as crass as politics can get, winning at whatever cost, playing to emotions and the party faithful, without even a head-nod toward educating voters on issues and consequences. Small wonder that so many believed our beloved country had lost its moral compass.

On October 15th, the Crile documentary finally aired – not on “Sixty Minutes,” but on CNN – with Bernard Shaw as the narrator. It was well done, filling the last of four fifteen-minute segments and featuring me either on camera or doing voiceovers for clips that supported my commentary. I received supportive feedback from viewers around the country and around the world. For a brief period, I anticipated this would give added impetus to my SCF mission. However, the brief groundswell of interest was quickly tamped down by the electoral drama that followed. The nation sat mesmerized from November 7th until December 12th, when the Supreme Court finally voted 5-4 to end the agony by ending the Florida recount, allowing the vote to be certified and assuring George Bush the White House.
I slept very little during that seven-week period, being wholly seized by the unprecedented flow of events, the tactical maneuvering by the parties and the stakes. I sensed that a Republican victory would drain most of the impetus out of my mission to reduce nuclear dangers. On the one hand, a Republican victory would return to government many of my former colleagues, to include Dick Cheney and Colin Powell. I trusted their instincts and judgment because we had worked on nuclear issues so closely and productively for the four years of the first Bush’s Presidency. I was certainly not now going to stand on the sidelines and throw rhetorical hand grenades over the transom. I was also encouraged when Condoleezza Rice was announced as the National Security Advisor, with Steve Hadley as her deputy and Frank Miller coming over from OSD to handle the Defense Policy and Arms Control portfolio, and Donald Rumsfeld was named as Secretary of Defense, with Paul Wolfowitz as his deputy. My subsequent contacts with Colin and Steve confirmed my belief that at the least, the issues I cared so much about were back in competent hands and that some further reduction in warheads was likely. Conversely, it was equally likely that zealous pursuit of ballistic missile defenses was in the offing, which would further exacerbate relations with Russia; and there was no likelihood that measures such as de-alerting long-range missiles would be considered. In short, I was concerned that truly meaningful arms control was about to be put on the back burner for years to come.

As the year wound down, I spent long hours reflecting on the extraordinary turn of events over the preceding twelve months: Brett’s family crisis, Ted Turner bursting on the scene, astounding changes at the top of governments in the United States and Russia, my friend General Sergeyev’s loss of influence as a consequence of the Chechnya debacle, and the disarray among NGOs working the nuclear agenda. Much like my decision to inactivate Strategic Air Command eight years earlier, I concluded that my vision for SCF had been overtaken by forces beyond my control. I had done everything in my power to change ingrained patterns of thinking and acting with respect to nuclear weapons policy and practice, with not much to show for it and at considerable cost to myself and my family, financially and emotionally. At this political juncture, with Republicans back in power after eight long years and with a poisonous atmosphere in Congress, my conviction was affirmed that there was little likelihood of near-term movement on nuclear issues. This conjecture was underscored during a late November CISAC meeting in Washington where we were joined by our Russian colleagues, including General Dvorkin, who was deeply depressed over the state of things in Moscow. This outlook was mirrored by many of my CISAC mates, who feared the worst from a Bush
Administration and had little good to say about the new President or his national security team. Once more, I did the math and the sum came up zero. It was time to leave the arena.

And so in January I called Tom and Rebecca and told them that I was going to close up SCF, much to their entirely understandable shock and dismay. I assured them they would be kept whole financially for the time it took to find new employment, and that I would do everything in my power to help them land on their feet. Next, I wrote explanatory letters to Howard Brembeck and Warren Buffett, who accepted my decision with good grace. I told Warren that the third quarter-million dollar slice of his grant was now moot, perhaps the first time in history anyone had turned down his money.

All that remained was to deal with three commitments I decided to keep, the first a day trip to Chicago for a presentation to the staff of the MacArthur Foundation at the request of their new president, Jonathan Fanton. I also elected to travel to Indiana for a final FFF board meeting, to thank Howard Brembeck face-to-face for his support of my efforts during the short life of the Second Chance Foundation. The final obligation I honored was a CISAC meeting in early March. That meeting was novel in two respects: our interlocutors were a group of counterparts from China, and the venue was the University of California at Irvine, located some fifteen minutes from our new California home. Our CISAC leader, John Holdren, asked me to give a lead-off talk about the new Bush national security team, with a view to their foreign policy and arms control agenda. A summary of my comments (Appendix N) provides an assessment of how I saw my former colleagues and understood their world view. Much of that analysis has proven spot on, particularly with regard to arms control outcomes. But I was dismayingly wide of the mark in positing their “openness and honesty...that they understand the need for close consultation, both domestically and internationally...and that they grasp regional complexities and the limits of American power.”

Each time I read these words, I am acutely reminded of the tragedies the Bush Administration suffered and caused, the lost opportunities and self-inflicted wounds, the fleeting victories and enduring miscalculations that cost our nation so dearly in physical and human treasure. Having seen at close hand the crisis management skills of Cheney, Powell and Rice, I had not imagined that the U.S. long-term response to the attack on the World Trade Center would become so strategically flawed. In contrast, given my experience on the Rumsfeld Commission, I was not at all surprised by the intelligence failures that contributed to the fateful decision to invade Iraq. But, however history might judge their ultimate effects, the events of 9/11 and thereafter strongly
reaffirmed my personal judgment to end SCF. My issues were swept off the stage by the mammoth challenge of reorganizing the national security bureaucracy and reshaping the armed forces to cope with global terrorism, the campaign against Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and the fatally flawed decision to invade Iraq without legitimate provocation.

As with Pearl Harbor and the Kennedy assassination, most people alive at the time have a vivid recollection of the moment they heard the news of the events of September 11th, 2001. Dorene and I were asleep in our bedroom in Omaha, dead tired after three long days preparing for the moving van that would carry our worldly goods to our home in Laguna Beach, where we had decided to relocate permanently. After nearly two years of cycling from one house to the other, despite the novelty of having a vacation home, we had grown tired of the logistics of maintaining two residences. Also, with my mother in her late eighties, living closer by her would give us the opportunity to deepen our relationship. Our sleep was shattered by an insistent knocking at the door, which we opened to find our friend Robin Matthews. She barged in shrieking, “Turn on the television, turn on the television,” which I did just in time to see the strike on the South Tower. Understanding immediately that this was no accident, but rather a premeditated attack, we could only watch in horror as the rest of the deadly drama unfolded, in Arlington and in a scarred field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Like the rest of the nation, Dorene and I were in a state of shock for the next several days. We departed for California on Thursday, spent the night at the Dugans’ home in Dillon, and continued to Las Vegas where we took refuge in the Four Seasons Hotel, which, like the city itself, appeared deserted. There was an ironic upside to this local downturn, at least for the two of us. The hotel was holding a drawing for a free weekend package in the Presidential Suite, good for a year. A week after our departure, we were notified that we had won the package – if only because we had been the only guests in the drawing.

We now began the long, tedious process of creating a new network of caregivers, service providers and friends in our little patch of southern Orange County, and the painful process of dealing with the dénouement of Brett’s marriage. After twelve months, it was terminated through arbitration, and our son began the difficult process of healing from a dreadful wound to his psyche.

The year ended on a far more positive note, one that took me completely by surprise. As I sat at my desk in mid-December, the phone rang and a woman’s voice asked for me, announcing herself as Teresa Heinz. It took me a moment to recall that I was talking with former Senator John Heinz’s widow, whose second husband was John Kerry (US Senator from Massachusetts at

President, Second Chance Foundation (1999 – 2001)
the time and later US Secretary of State). She was calling to tell me that I had been chosen as one of six recipients of the eighth annual Heinz Awards, a program she had established as a tribute to her late husband. The selection, recognizing my work in public policy, carried with it a large monetary award. I was completely taken aback, having never been interested in recognition for my work in the nuclear policy arena, nor anticipated remuneration of any kind. But this accolade carried special meaning as a positive measure of my labors in the interest of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The other salutary aspect to the award materialized in the course of the presentation ceremony, which took place on the twelfth of March of the following year. The venue was the Folger Shakespeare Theater in Washington, D.C., where Dorene and I were joined by Brett, Lisa and Mike. The evening was well organized and expertly managed by Teresa, who personally introduced each of the honorees. My five companions on the stage all had impressive credentials, as recounted in the attached press release (Appendix O), and I was genuinely honored to be in their company. As I took my turn at the podium to give my acceptance remarks (Appendix O continued), I was enveloped by a sense of finality, a feeling that this brief ceremony was more than a moment in the limelight. It was time to end my journey spanning six and a half decades, from a birthing room in Columbus, Georgia, to national corridors of power. And I knew, very deep down, that this was a door that needed to be closed. It was time to move on with my life, to find a path toward contentment rather than controversy, intimacy rather than alienation, openness rather than insularity. In short, I set out to build a life rich with the meaning that can only come from family, friends and personal growth.
Relocation to Laguna Beach from Omaha in 2001 and closing the Second Chance Foundation precipitated an abrupt change of pace and direction in our lives. While I had planned to ease gradually out of public life, family and personal considerations prompted me to accelerate the disengagement. As I noted earlier, my mother was approaching her ninetieth year, and I wanted the latitude to visit her in Palm Springs or bring her to Laguna Beach for extended visits without juggling a host of competing demands. On a more urgent note, our grandson T.J. was diagnosed with autism, a devastating syndrome that was poorly understood in 2002 when he began to display symptoms. We misinterpreted the early warning signs simply as a capacity for extraordinary recall: being able to say the alphabet forward and backward at the age of two, memorizing the contents of dozens of videos word for word and action for action, putting puzzles together with lightning speed, and setting up complicated train sets with amazing alacrity. But there were other, troubling signs as well: a growing tendency to “melt down” over seemingly minor issues; increasing reluctance to be around other children—or grownups, for that matter, including us; articulation problems; and an obsessive attachment to curious objects like the letter “W” from his alphabet set. Our understanding came by a fluke. Dorene and I were watching a news segment on “hyperlexia,” a reading disorder whose symptoms sounded something like those T.J. was demonstrating. We called Lisa, whose further research uncovered a link to autism, the characteristics of which were precisely aligned with his behavior.

A clinical diagnosis confirmed the suspicion, and that set our family on a long, difficult journey. I read everything available on autism, trying to understand the world into which T.J. had retreated. Dorene and I helped a remarkable woman, Bonnie Gilman, charter the Grandparents Autism Network, an outreach program promoting research, education and government support.
Lisa and Mike searched for facilities and experts, leading them to Park City, Utah, where they had found the Colby School, a small private operation where T.J. was warmly embraced. They were equally fortunate to successively engage two highly trained young women whose intervention has worked wonders. A final blessing came in the form of sisters Jamie and Jorie Grundstrom, the first Olympic-caliber athlete, who have provided irreplaceable support in dealing with daily challenges. After fourteen incredibly stressful years – studies show that half of all marriages that involve caring for an autistic child end in divorce – our precious grandson is making marvelous progress. Watching him grow in body and spirit, earning his trust, and seeing his parents cope with such dignity and grace, has stirred a new purpose in our lives and unbounded pride in our family.

A personal factor in my decision to step away from public life was my growing dissatisfaction with the state of my emotional and physical health. The strain of carrying a lonely, controversial burden, the relentless travel, and the traumatic events of 2000 and 2001 were taking a heavy toll. I felt disconnected from my family, my friends and my sense of self. After sober reflection, I realized that I had been operating outside my comfort zone for a very long time, ever since 1977, in fact, when promotion to colonel had thrust me back into a position of field leadership that forced me to reassume the persona I had adopted as a cadet squadron commander at the Air Force Academy and as the chief pilot of an airlift squadron. The three previous years on the Air Staff, beginning in early 1974, had allowed me to gravitate back into my natural introversion, working mostly alone or nearly so, lost in strategic thought, mastering the elements of complex issues.

The abrupt transition to operations had forced me back into a world that was actually contrary to my nature, as was adapting to its culture, mastering its professional skills, advancing through its ranks, surviving crisis upon crisis, reaching its pinnacle as Commander-in-Chief of Strategic Air Command, and presiding over the end of SAC’s organizational existence. Here was a seventeen-year saga of epic scope that had ended in simultaneous notes of acclaim and condemnation, later echoed in the reactions to my campaign to reduce nuclear dangers. Although driven throughout by conviction and conscience, I was departing the field with neither a sense of closure nor an affirmation that I had really made a difference, that my lifelong battles with conventional or outmoded thinking had been worth the cost to me, my family and the people whose lives had been redirected by my choices. With respect to my military legacy, while the rapid expansion of the United States Strategic Command’s responsibilities has by now far exceeded my original vision, its nuclear deterrence
mission is still premised on assumptions and policies distressingly reminiscent of the Cold War era, with arsenals of hundreds of warheads still poised for immediate launch from silos and submarines.

That disappointing reality calls into question the value of the Second Chance Foundation initiative. However short-lived SCF, it mirrored the hope that my intense personal engagement might rekindle debate over the role and utility of nuclear arms, ultimately evoking a global commitment to their eventual elimination. I certainly find some solace in the fact that former policymakers such as Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, Sam Nunn and Bill Perry as well as distinguished counterparts in Russia and an impressive roster of other notables have now embraced elimination as both possible and necessary. Somewhat more encouraging were President Barack Obama’s clarion call for a nuclear-free world and the ratification in early 2011 of a strategic arms agreement, the “New START” Treaty that commits the United States and Russia to reduce their strategic nuclear forces by February 2018 to levels I had envisioned twenty years earlier. That said, any sense of urgency for further reductions has been lost, no more than an afterthought to a series of domestic and international challenges that have bitterly divided the nation and brought U.S. governance to a virtual standstill.

How then to put seven decades in the balance, to extract some degree of closure from a life at odds with convention? An initial affirmation has come from my wife, children and a select group of friends who have done me the service of reading through these musings. Their reactions have ranged from astonishment on the part of friends who had little or no awareness of the recurring challenges, crises, successes and failures that marked my journey from its earliest days to gratitude from my family, for whom this recounting is intended. With that encouragement, I returned to page one and strove to see myself through the lens of a dispassionate observer, or better, from the perspective of my family, friends, supervisors, subordinates, colleagues and audiences who knew me only by the conviction implicit in my words.

My first conclusion is that I strove always to act in accord with my core values: telling the truth, doing my best, treating people decently. Those values were underpinned by an iron-clad sense of justice, iron-willed determination and deeply-rooted empathy. From these values and traits sprang an imperative always to do and to say the right thing, to persist no matter the odds, and to accord others dignity and respect. Here is the essence of my character, toughened by recurrent challenges. In some respects, the earliest were the most difficult: coping with the rootless life of a military child; managing a demanding paper route in Oakland, Mississippi; salvaging a failed weigh-in
during my Air Force Academy entrance physical; outlasting a cabal trying to oust me during my freshman year at the Academy; bucking institutional bias against my leadership style as a cadet squadron commander; engaging in a bruising ethical battle as a student pilot; ejecting twice from stricken aircraft; forging a way around a failed entrance exam to Sciences Po; and driving head-on into a collision with General George Brown over battlefield morality.

While in the field-grade ranks of the Air Force, that is, major through colonel, I survived my role as a change agent on the Air Force Academy faculty and as a slave laborer in Washington, D.C. during the wage and price freeze; imposed discipline on an unruly group of aviators as chief pilot of a C-141 squadron; navigated twelve demanding jobs in 39 months in my first Pentagon tour; and then weathered a professionally near-fatal tour in Strategic Air Command, followed by a tumultuous term as head of General Lew Allen’s Staff Group and two harrowing assignments as commander of bomb wings in California and Texas.

As a general officer, beginning in 1984, I came into my own as a one-star SAC Inspector General bent on changing the system; a novice two-star who recovered from an embarrassing stumble in front of a Congressional subcommittee, then earned his spurs as negotiator of a major military agreement with the Soviet Union; a three-star who met the test of initial meetings with General Colin Powell, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, and my counterparts in the Warsaw Pact and who co-authored an historic change in U.S. National Military Strategy.

As a four-star, I pushed for and presided over the inactivation of the Air Force’s most storied command, the Strategic Air Command, and then helped create its successor, the U.S. Strategic Command, in response to a profoundly changed international security environment. I also exploited unprecedented encounters with top leaders of a dying Soviet military establishment, and worked relentlessly to change the course of U.S. nuclear targeting and force posture. After retiring from 37 years in the military, I made a valiant but ultimately unsuccessful effort to create a business venture in the high-stakes energy field. Finally, I reentered the public arena as a controversial activist for a cause that stirred visceral emotions, put my reputation in the balance, cost me innumerable friends, plunged my family back into the glare of the media, and left me to rethink my life’s work.

Weighing all of that in the balance, I believe I served my country, my profession and my humanity well, often in the face of long odds, vehement opposition and difficult circumstances. I did not shrink from what I was called upon – or felt compelled – to do. I am equally persuaded that my considerable part
in the recasting of U.S. national security and military strategy that anticipated the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the transition from SAC to STRATCOM that followed, helped speed the nation’s adaptation to the very different international security demands of the 21st century. As for my efforts to reduce nuclear dangers, only time will tell, but I have no regrets about my commitment to push forward that essential undertaking.

The balance sheet is not so clear with respect to my other constituents: friends and family. The truth is, my Air Force Academy classmate Roger Stringer got it right all those years ago: my insular nature and unbending principles made me less than endearing, and that is something I needed to contend with in a profession where teamwork is highly prized. Camaraderie was not my long suit, but that was no excuse for not making an effort to be more approachable with my peers and my subordinates. And, notwithstanding the success of 13th Squadron under my leadership so many years ago, my future potential as a leader would surely have benefited from a greater capacity to put people at ease.

As for family, it occurred to me early on in the writing of these memoirs that I had never fully understood the price that Dorene, Brett and Lisa were paying as my career unfolded. Even after my son and daughter left the nest, I became caught up in events and activities that consumed my energies and blinded me to their emotional needs. Only after the successive shocks of Brett’s marital crisis and T.J.’s autism diagnosis did I realize that my focus needed to be entirely on helping them to weather these storms. Furthermore, Dorene was experiencing painful withdrawal symptoms due to our relocation from Omaha to Laguna Beach; I never appreciated how much her hard-earned place in Omaha civic and social life meant to her sense of fulfillment. The weight of these family challenges finally led me to a very belated conclusion: I needed to transform my persona.

That was a very tall order: to become more tolerant of people whose behavior and opinions I found wanting, less resistant to activities I did not find appealing, more willing to engage in the routines of social intercourse, and much more attuned to what my family wanted from me. Here was a new journey, not of achievement but of self-appraisal, awareness and growth, one that would allow me to extend the boundaries of the emotional comfort zone I had created in childhood as safe harbor from a world I did not much care for.

The beginning of that renaissance was not all that promising. Dorene and I were constantly concerned about Brett and his two daughters; T.J.’s struggles caused relentless stress for his parents and for us; and my mother’s health was always in the back of our mind. My search for some measure of tranquility was
Uncommon Cause

abeted early on by a near miraculous turn in Brett’s fortunes: his marriage in 2002 to an angel who herself had only been recently released from a particular form of marital purgatory that would make even a bishop think twice about the sanctity of the wedding vows. We like to think that Patti Blake Lybrook, of Versailles, Kentucky, had been put into a stormy holding pattern waiting for celestial control to clear a marriage made in Heaven. In this case, the second time around was truly a charm; money cannot buy the kind of happiness she and her children, Jake and Katie, have brought into our lives.

As my self-assigned makeover proceeded, I got a progress check in August of 2007, when Dorene and I decided to celebrate our 50th anniversary five years in advance. Our entire family and many close friends, some of whom flew from every point on the compass, joined us around the pool for an evening brimming with laughter and good feeling, transported to an emotional high when T.J. took the microphone to say, “I love you Grammy and Granddaddy.” We glowed at the sight of Lisa and Brett immersed in the unconditional love of Mike and of Patti, and we relished the beauty of the sun setting behind Catalina Island. As Dorene and I singled out each friend and family member during the opening round of introductions, we were awash in memories, swimming in a sea of affection. By the end of a perfect night, I was seized with a sense of deep contentment, caught up in the joy of family and friends, wrapped in the arms of my wife.

I am happy to report that my wife and children tell me that I have continued to make laudable progress, although there are times when I think T.J. has made more headway toward sociability than I have. Still, I do believe I am more tolerable as a husband, father, brother and friend. I could not imagine my life without Dorene, our children and grandchildren. I have worked hard to better communicate with my siblings, although in the case of my sister, that came to a bad end. And, while it may not always be obvious, I deeply value the friendship of people who have supported, inspired, mentored and, on more than one occasion, saved me. I must also say that the unqualified acceptance of valued new friends in our community of Irvine Cove, who seem to value me more for who I am than what I was, has been greatly reassuring. I know I am still not all that much fun, but I appreciate it when people I care about pretend that I am.

Our fortunes as a family have also grown apace. As I noted earlier, T.J. is making phenomenal progress, and Theo is becoming a most extraordinary young man-for-all-seasons. Mike and Lisa, you continue to astound us with your parenting skills, business acumen, and social networking. Along with your exceptional quality of life, you are a boon to your community in which you
Seeker of Self-Awareness (2001 – Present)

have made an enduring investment. Park City, Utah, was as fortunate to have you as will be Orinda, California, when you have your civic legs under you once more. T.J., you live in a special world, one that could teach all of us something about living a life of precious innocence. Theo, what can I say? The sky is the limit for someone of your talents and personality. Choose your life’s work carefully, because you are going to make an incredible mark whatever you decide.

Brett and Patti, you are thriving as well, even in the face of Patti’s mother’s noble but losing battle with cancer. You are secure in your love and are now embarked on a bold new venture: establishing a Baptist ministry in Redwood City, California, that has blessedly brought you within an hour’s flight from Laguna Beach. As for our four oldest grandchildren, I take note of how gratifying it was for your Grammy and me to take you, two by two, on those week-long trips to our nation’s capital. We trust it will be the memory of a lifetime for you, because it certainly was for us. You should also know that we have agonized along with your parents as you have dealt with the demons that trail in the wake of divorce, struggled to find your way, and begun to contend with life after high school. Madison, your powerful intellect and determination are now paying off as you open the first of a new chain of restaurants entrusted to you by the investors. Jake, you have talents and abilities still unexplored, but the photography skills you learned in the Marine Corps are already paying great dividends. Katie, you have all the attributes to succeed and are well on your way as evidenced by the sublime pastries you mastered in culinary school. Colleen, your discipline and devotion in learning the art of the dance have found a new focus as you embark on a career as an aesthetician where I am certain you will find great fulfillment.

At this juncture, I am satisfied that my initial purposes in writing these memoirs have been met: to understand the roots of my character, to give my children a larger picture of the settings and events that shaped my persona and my history, and to persuade my wife that I finally get it, that I fully understand and appreciate to the core of my being the work, the sacrifice and the love she invested in me, my ambitions, the successes and failures they entailed – and yes, walking hand-in-hand with me every step of the way as we crafted our life’s story. Of the circle of people outside our family who have done us the service of reading these many pages, my classmate Brice Jones came away with an insight that left me with the most gratifying sense of closure: “Lee, this is, above all, a love story.”
Afterword

Several years have passed since I finished the initial draft of this retrospective, and then, at the encouragement of early readers, elected to make it a more serious historical accounting of the unique events in which I was privileged to participate. That took me down a long path of extensive research and fact-checking to reduce as much as possible the pitfalls of sole reliance on memory. As I acknowledged at the outset, several of the colleagues who helped me on this score also took ownership of the entire manuscript, doing editing service that preserved my voice, as it were, but greatly improved not only the accuracy but the flow and relevance of the contents.

Those intervening years brought their own small joys and challenges. Thanks largely to Dorene’s engagement with Laguna Beach service organizations, we feel much more connected to our quirky little home town, although Omaha will always lay claim to our civic hearts. I greatly reduced the orbit of my own engagement, investing my energies in family and in studies that I have long wanted to pursue. I maintained but two links to the life I recounted in these pages.

The first is giving counsel to the serious-minded politicians, film makers, authors and journalists who sought me out for insights into the nuclear weapons enterprise. In some respects, this book is intended as a public recitation of what I teach them in private, in hopes that my reflections can continue to spur progress toward easing the legacy of the Cold War.

Second, my devotion to the Air Force Academy, the institution that figured so largely in my life, is unabated. I have returned on many occasions to share with the cadets the essence of what my Academy experience and military career taught me about what matters most in serving the nation: integrity and leadership. I have included my observations on each in the Appendices (P and Q) in the hope that they will be of interest to future generations of graduates.

Beyond those life lessons, I had the pleasure of leading a project for my Class of 1961 that, on reflection, serves as a bookend for the journey that began at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, Colorado, on the 5th of June, 1957. Relating it will serve also to bring this memoir to a close. In keeping with a nascent tradition established by the Class of 1959, my band of brothers undertook to
make a gift to the Academy on the 50th anniversary of our graduation. After an abortive first attempt at a very ambitious project, and with time running short, the class settled on what I considered a choice unworthy of our brotherhood and our unique place in Academy history. That unhappy outcome was still nagging me when, over dinner here in Laguna Beach with Dorene and classmate Brice Jones, I had an epiphany. Brice began describing for us a bronze statue he was having sculpted in honor of his Academy roommate, who died in Vietnam. Suddenly, the closing line of the renowned aviation poem, “High Flight,” flashed through my mind: “I put out my hand and touched the face of God.” I asked Brice and Dorene to imagine a similar bronze statue of a young Air Force aviator, posed to evoke this imagery, and they loved the concept. I hired a Laguna Beach artist to bring the vision to canvas, reached out to John Lajba, our talented friend from Omaha, paid a call on the Academy leadership, and won their approval to place a replica of the artist’s concept in a prominent site on the grounds of the Air Force Academy cemetery.

The Academy architect was so struck by the proposal that he asked John to imagine a companion piece that, together with the aviator, would bring a theme to the rather eclectic collection of sculptures located in the cemetery. Shortly thereafter, John showed Dorene and me a breathtaking concept: a pair of eighteen-foot tall wings, rendered in surgical steel, whose design abstracts the essence of the “Eagle and Fledglings” sculpture in the cadet living area, a work of art that watched comfortingly over each of us throughout our cadet days and has done the same for all the Air Force’s fledglings who have followed, many of whom have by now found their final rest at the Academy cemetery. We took John and his drawing back to the Academy, where it drew immediate approval. Working with the class officers, we sold the concept to the class and then embarked on an eighteen-month sprint to complete the two elements in time for the November, 2011, reunion.

The dedication was one of the most memorable and moving events in my long association with the Academy. The ceremony took place on a brisk, crystal-clear November afternoon, on the plaza fronting the beautiful glass and granite Pavilion at the cemetery. Following a musical introduction by a contingent from the Cadet Chorale, I presented the gift on behalf of the class to the Air Force Academy superintendent. Wanting to do justice to the occasion and the setting, I spent a great deal of time crafting my remarks (Appendix R). Following the emotionally rendered acceptance by Lieutenant General Gould (USAFA ’76), and a precisely timed fly-by, we cut the ribbon strung across the threshold leading to the magnificent pair of wings, situated on an adjacent plaza bearing the name “Winged Refuge.” The plaza, surrounded by dogwoods,
contains a number of granite benches for quiet viewing of the statuary.

We then moved a few yards to the exquisite setting created to display the bronze statue of a youthful pilot clad in the flight clothing my all-male class wore at his depicted age. Sculpted at just over life size and named simply “The Airman,” he bears a captain’s rank and his name tag is inscribed with the Latin word for “valor.” The only direct link to the class of 1961 is the perfect replica of our class ring he wears on his right hand, which holds the flight helmet of that era. His left hand is lifted to the heavens, along a sight line that captures the American flag flying in the center of the grounds. Etched in the granite at his feet are the memorable words from “High Flight”: “I put out my hand and touched the face of God.”

The total cost of the gift was just over $900,000, toward which Brice raised almost $400,000 through a relentless effort that achieved 100% participation from the class. The balance came from the Dorene and Lee Butler Family Foundation, as we had guaranteed the costs of the project in order to secure Air Force approval. Thus, our good fortune, due in such large measure to the four years that launched my military career, allowed me to put a perfect grace note on the fifty years that followed.

Actually, dear reader, I should say a second grace note. I began this Retrospective with a “Special Acknowledgment” to Dorene, alerting the reader to her irreplaceable role in my life and why this is very much her story as well as mine. My appreciation of her unstinting devotion was echoed by countless other admirers over the years. Perhaps none was more lovingly penned than the letter she received from her friend Sharol Metzler, which they have permitted me to reproduce here (Appendix S).
Afterthoughts

At the insistence of several reviewers, I have reluctantly put another page or two in my word processor to register some closing thoughts on what the future might hold for the elimination of nuclear weapons, especially in light of the unsettled state of world affairs in mid-year 2015. I will first address the near term, that is, the next decade during which presently discernable factors are likely to drive outcomes; and then muse on the out-years, where estimates are more tenuous and speculative.

On the first count, I see little likelihood for meaningful advance in nuclear arms control within the next ten years. There are simply too many factors that militate against it, beginning with the dismal state of relations between the United States and Russia in the wake of the annexation of the Crimea and continued meddling in eastern Ukraine. This is precisely the kind of outcome I feared some fifteen years ago, when our strategic shortsightedness led us down the path of alienating a thoroughly defeated Russia for little return in security. Our rush to expand NATO and heavy-handed determination to implement ballistic missile defenses in Europe introduced resentment and tension into a relationship that cried out for statesmanship and reconciliation. President George H. W. Bush was keenly aware of the dangers of exacerbating Soviet sensibilities already raw from the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union itself. Irretrievable opportunities were lost as the incoming Clinton Administration stumbled badly out of the gate on several fronts. When the younger Bush reclaimed the office for the Republicans eight years later, he brought with him a coterie of advisers hell-bent on remaking the world in America’s image. In the aftermath of 9/11, the initial success in Afghanistan was frittered away with U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and in a disastrous preemptive war against Iraq, a conflict whose full costs have yet to be calculated, but whose far-reaching consequences have already claimed or maimed tens of thousands of American and Iraqi citizens, saddled us with onerous debt, and badly damaged our global standing. President Obama has made laudable progress in further reducing stocks of U.S. and Russian operational strategic nuclear weapons via the New START Treaty. But, after a productive period of cooperation with Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, he has
also had the misfortune of inheriting Vladimir Putin, the thuggish and entirely predictable embodiment of a Russia wounded badly in pride and in stature.

To this dismal history must be added the burden of seven other nuclear weapon states, and an Iran that has long been pursuing that status overtly and covertly, a reality that we the members of the Rumsfeld Commission documented in 1998. Iran’s leaders may still cling to the belief that this can be a game-changer, but for the next decade they will presumably bow to the provisions of the recently completed multi-nation agreement. In any event, for the good of their populace, as I forewarned my interlocutors in India and Pakistan, becoming a nuclear weapons state simultaneously makes you a nuclear target—or the target of a countervailing pursuit by the nations or nations who feel most threatened. These weapons not only fail to ensure national survival, but rather invite annihilation. Of course, rationality has never been the hallmark of any nation pursuing a nuclear arsenal or thinking about its employment. Such arsenals take on a life and logic of their own, commanding huge budgets and compelling decisions that march at an ever increasing tempo to the beat of fear, technology, status and vested interests. A nation-by-nation analysis of the nine countries known to possess nuclear weapons lays bare all of these motivations and gives me precious little hope that any of them will be able to see past the risks and costs that attend these arsenals in the foreseeable future.

As to the longer-term, I am convinced that outcomes will continue to hinge on Serendipity, Persistence, and most importantly, on Political Outcomes within and between the so-called superpowers. Serendipity, as in the still-astonishing arrival at their respective posts of Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev in the same decade, so different in temperament but enjoying a remarkable chemistry and sharing compatible visions for mankind’s best way forward. While President Reagan’s beguilement with Star Wars precluded a truly historic breakthrough in nuclear arms control—at their 1986 summit in Reykjavik the two leaders discussed the elimination of all U.S. and Soviet nuclear weapons—the trust he kindled with his Soviet counterpart paved the way for an even more extraordinary outcome: the end of the Cold War. Such rare eventualities are impossible to predict, but they must be exploited by Persistence, in the patient cultivation of public opinion, in imaginative thinking and in technological advances that will make the seemingly impossible routine in the face of spontaneous opportunity. I have seen this confluence enough to know that it most certainly can happen again. Hence, the real imponderable lies in Political Outcomes in the relevant nations, and on that score I am profoundly pessimistic.

One need look no further than the United States to see the pernicious
effect of political polarization on the prospects not simply for progress in nuclear arms control but more so for solving the most vexing problems facing our nation. In all of my years in public service, I have never witnessed Congress, or our society, so divided not just on political grounds but equally with respect to race, economic well-being, religious beliefs and morality. For all of our strengths and resilience, we are presiding over the erosion of the very values, the schools, the infrastructure, the environment and the sense of common purpose that have brought us so far in attaining of the ideals enshrined in our founding documents.

As a consequence, the tenor of our political dialogue; tolerance for those who look, speak and think differently; opportunity for access to quality healthcare, education, jobs and the market place; and willingness to compromise are all at an abysmally low ebb. These alarming trends are exacerbated by the manufactured drama of a 24-hour news cycle; the ceaseless yammering of “shock jocks” who fan the flames of ignorance and intolerance; reality shows that promote crass behavior; the relentless hawking of products and services that feed on ego, narcissism, envy, violence and insecurity; and the mindboggling sums of money being pumped into political causes, abetted by a 5-4 vote by the Justices of the Supreme Court. Having watched and counseled serious-minded authors, journalists, film makers and politicians who attempt to penetrate this cacophony, fighting their way through thickets of distraction, I am keenly mindful of the difficulty in capturing public attention on a subject like nuclear weapons policy and postures. Given that a large fraction of Americans still do not understand the difference between short-term weather patterns and the inexorable trends that signal disastrous changes in global climate already upon us; or how to reconcile the vast universe of knowledge opened by science with the religious orthodoxy that guides their behavior, however antithetical to living in harmony; or have no more than a rudimentary grasp of history, geography and the array of cultures that make up the global family – there is nothing here to suggest to me that making a persuasive case for eliminating nuclear weapons will become easier.

To the contrary, I believe it will only become more difficult. In my public remarks, I have credited our escape from the Cold War without a nuclear holocaust to a combination of skill, luck and divine intervention. I created the Second Chance Foundation out of concern that the United States and Russia were failing to grasp the opportunity to move rapidly toward elimination, sharply slashing their arsenals and making major changes in their policies. I was intent on rekindling a sense of urgency, reminding a global audience of the horrific consequences of nuclear war. My deepest fear now is that this sense of urgency may be reborn amid the catastrophic ruins left by a terrorist
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group that finally succeeds in stealing or fabricating a nuclear device capable of decimating an entire city rather than just its iconic towers. In that terrible moment, we may finally come to understand the futility of nuclear arsenals, the destructive power resident in a single nuclear weapon, and the price of misplaced priorities.

None of this is to say, harkening back to the unpredictable role of Serendipity, that from the legions of bright, engaged and responsible young men and women who already populate our world there will not arise just the type of leaders we so desperately need to sound a more harmonious voice in our discourse, instill a newfound respect for science, cradle a rebirth in our schools and most importantly, remind us that what divides us is far less important than our common humanity.

I have no sense as to how this will all play out, but I wholly subscribe to the observation of philosopher Joseph de Maistre, who opined that every nation gets the government it deserves. I believe this is especially so in a democracy such as ours. Hence, if the branches of our government are incapable of compromise, and hence unequipped to deal with issues that threaten who we are as a people – to include our very existence – we have no further to look for blame than inward, to take the measure of the person who decides daily how to live with family, friends, neighbors, colleagues and strangers. Perhaps, to paraphrase Pogo’s trenchant observation, we will find that the problem lies in us, in our frenetic life styles filled with endless distraction and temptation, eager for easy answers and instant gratification. If there was ever a time to again pause and, in Lincoln’s timeless appeal, “heed the better angels of our nature,” surely it is now. That has always been the true measure of our greatness.
Walter Scott and his late wife Sue, Omaha’s most celebrated couple, renowned for their philanthropy and decades of public service. On my retirement, I joined Walter’s company, Peter Kiewit, Inc., one of the world’s top construction, energy and communications firms, where I headed the Kiewit Energy Group.
In 1995, Omaha celebrated the 50th anniversary of victory in WW II. Dorene led a committee to create a permanent memorial, comprising bronze figures of a returning soldier embracing his son and daughter; Rosie the Riveter; a Gold Star mother and farmer husband; and a lad pulling a wagon filled with scrap metal. The sculptor, John Lajba, created the young girl from an early photograph of Dorene.
Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev invited me to give the keynote address to the 1996 symposium sponsored by his foundation, the “State of the World Forum.” This annual gathering brought a host of luminaries from many nations and disciplines to San Francisco to muse on issues of global import.
The *Washington Post Magazine* portrayed me on the cover of the December 7th, 1997, edition, a year after my high-profile speech to the National Press Club. The Sunday weekly carried an extensive interview with reporter Jeff Smith, to whom I had given exclusive coverage of my 1988-89 negotiations with the Soviets.
The members of the Rumsfeld Commission: General Larry Welch, the author, the Chairman, Barry Blechman, Paul Wolfowitz, Bill Schneider, Jim Woolsey, Dick Garwin, and Bill Graham. This was a senior, highly experienced and tough-minded group charged with assessing the ballistic missile threat to the U.S. and, by extension, the ability of the CIA to meet the challenges of the post-Cold War era.
Dorene and I created the Second Chance Foundation (SCF) in 1998. Its mission was to promote reduction of the dangers posed by the legacy nuclear stockpiles and policies of the Cold War era. Here we celebrate the opening of the SCF office, located near our home in Omaha.
Warren Buffett and Michael Douglas were among our strongest supporters. Their generosity, together with a grant from the Fourth Freedom Forum and funds from our family charitable foundation, got us up and running. That took us on a whirlwind of travel, speeches and other public appearances for three years.
The setting is the family room of our first house, after thirty-two years of marriage, located in Tomlinson Woods on the western reaches of Omaha. We spent seven very happy years here following my retirement, giving the house a complete makeover and relishing the company of our wonderful neighbors – and of our second Corgi, Lady Red, who was part of our family for over a decade.
In recognition of our gift to the Omaha Boys and Girls Club, the board of directors put our family name on the building housing the North Club, one of several serving the youth of this great city. We wanted to help raise these clubs to the highest level of performance, a goal that we were proud to see achieved and recognized by the national organization.
Brett and Patti were married in July of 2002. Their blended family of Madison, Jake, Katie and Colleen brought us two more grandchildren and a heaven-sent wife for our son. They met at Lexmark, in Lexington, KY, where Brett worked, and Patti ran the family candle business. They now live in Redwood City, CA, where Brett has embarked on a new life as a Baptist minister.
On the stairs of our Laguna Beach home, purchased in early 2000; our children and passel of grandchildren all fit nicely within its walls. We watched these young ones grow up during frequent visits; they all learned to swim in our pool, a short walk from the beach where they tested their newfound skills in the waters of the Pacific Ocean.
A family portrait on that selfsame beach, its privacy a rare privilege and one that helps make our little community of “Irvine Cove” in Laguna Beach so special. Marking the western boundary of our home town, its history dates back more than sixty years, when the Irvine family, who owned an enormous swath of Orange County, carved out this oceanfront property for their family enclave.
One of two elements comprising a gift from my Class of 1961 to the Air Force Academy during our 50th anniversary reunion. I designed this bronze statue, *The Airman*, in concert with sculptor John Lajba with whom we had worked to create Omaha’s World War II Memorial. The figure wears a replica of our class ring and bears the Latin word for valor on the nametag.
The second element of the gift was designed by John Lajba, a pair of wings rendered in surgical steel, nearly 19 feet tall, located on a plaza in the Academy cemetery a short distance from The Airman. The tree-lined venue is named Winged Refuge inspired by the consoling words of Psalms 91:4 – “He will cover you with His feathers and under His wings will you find refuge.”
With the grandchildren mostly grown and working, or busy with school and travel, Dorene and I now walk these sands mostly alone, except for the company of our beloved pet Oliver, who came to us after Dorene’s sister-in-law passed from cancer. Incredibly intuitive, this bichon has brought great joy to our lives, quickly training us exactly to his preferences.
Glossary

ABM: Anti-Ballistic Missile
ACC: Air Combat Command
AMC: Air Mobility Command
AKSARBEN: social and charitable organization ("Nebraska" spelled backward)
AF: Air Force
AFA: Air Force Academy; Air Force Association
AFB: Air Force Base
ALCM: Air Launched Cruise Missile
AMP: Advanced Management Program
AOR: Area of Responsibility
ASD/ISP: Assistant Secretary of Defense/International Security Policy
AWACS: Airborne Warning and Control System
BASIC: British-American Security Information Council
BGC: Boys and Girls Club
CAPE: Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation
CDI: Center for Defense Information
CE: California Energy (Company)
CENTCOM: United States Central Command
CFE: Conventional Forces in Europe (Treaty)
CIA: Central Intelligence Agency
CINC: Commander-in-Chief
CINCLANT: Commander-in-Chief, United States Atlantic Command
CINCENT: Commander-in-Chief, United States Central Command
CINCEUR: Commander-in-Chief, United States European Command
CINCPAC: Commander-in-Chief, United States Pacific Command
CINCSAC: Commander-in-Chief, Strategic Air Command
CINCSOUTH: Commander-in-Chief, United States Southern Command
CINSTRAT: Commander-in-Chief, United States Strategic Command
CISAC: Committee on International Security and Arms Control
CJCS: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CNO: Chief of Naval Operations
COMSAC: Commander, Strategic Air Command
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COMSUBLANT: Commander Submarine Forces Atlantic
COMSUBPAC: Commander Submarine Forces Pacific
COMTAC: Commander, Tactical Air Command
CONUS: Continental United States
CTBT: Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
DIA: Defense Intelligence Agency
DJS: Director Joint Staff
DMZ: De-militarized Zone
DoD: Department of Defense
DoE: Department of Energy
DPG: Defense Planning Guidance
EMP: Electromagnetic Pulse
EP: European Parliament
EPA: Environmental Protection Agency
ETBE: Ethyl Tertiary Butyl Ether
EUCOM: United States European Command
FOIA: Freedom of Information Act
FORSCOM: United States Forces Command
FFF: Fourth Freedom Forum
HASC: House Armed Services Committee
ICBM: Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
IG: Inspector General
IPPNW: International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War
IPS: Illustrative Planning Scenario
IRIS: Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (in Paris, France)
ISI: Inter-Services Intelligence (Pakistan)
J-2: Directorate of Intelligence (on a joint, or multi-military service staff)
J-3: Directorate of Operations
J-4: Directorate of Logistics
J-5: Directorate of Strategic Plans and Policy
J-8: Directorate of Force Structure, Resources and Assessment
JCS: Joint Chiefs of Staff
JOPS: Joint Operation Planning System
JSPS: Joint Strategic Planning System
JSTARS: Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System
JSTPS: Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff
KEC: Kiewit Energy Company
KFI: Kiewit Fuels, Inc.
Glossary

KT: Kiloton
LANTCOM: United States Atlantic Command
LAWS: Lawyers Alliance for World Security
LTBT: Limited Test Ban Treaty
MAC: Military Airlift Command
MFS: Metropolitan Fiber System
MIRV: Multiple Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicle
MOP: Multiple Oxygenate Production
MPI: Middle Powers Initiative
MT: Megaton
MTBE: Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether
NAF: Numbered Air Force
NAPF: Nuclear Age Peace Foundation
NAS: National Academy of Sciences
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCA: National Command Authority
NIAS: National Institute of Advanced Studies (India)
NIE: National Intelligence Estimate
NCO: Non-Commissioned Officer
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
NMD: National Missile Defense
NMS: National Military Strategy
NORAD: North American Aerospace Defense Command
NPC: National Press Club
NPR: Nuclear Posture Review
NPT: Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty
NSC: National Security Council
NSDD: National Security Decision Directive
NTI: Nuclear Threat Initiative
NUWEP: Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy
OSD: Office of the Secretary of Defense
OWC: Officers Wives Club
P-5: The five nations authorized by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to own nuclear weapons
PACOM: United States Pacific Command
PA&E: Program Analysis and Evaluation
PBAD: Program and Budget Analysis Division
PD: Presidential Decision
PDF: Panama Defense Forces
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PKS: Peter Kiewit Sons
PNI: Presidential Nuclear Initiative
POM: Program Objective Memorandum
PPBS: Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System
ROTC: Reserve Officer Training Corps
ROW: Roundtable on Warning
RV: Re-entry Vehicle
SAC: Strategic Air Command
SACEUR: Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SAG: Scientific Advisory Group
SALT: Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty
SCF: Second Chance Foundation
SCFAIT: Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Treaties (Canada)
Science Po: Institut d’Études Politiques (in Paris, France)
SIOP: Single Integrated Operational Plan
SLBM: Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile
SOCOM: United States Special Operations Command
SPACECOM: United States Space Command
SOUTHCOM: United States Southern Command
SRF: Secure Reserve Force
SSBN: Nuclear-Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine
START: Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
STRATCOM: United States Strategic Command
SWA: Southwest Asia
SWF: State of the World Forum
TAC: Tactical Air Command
TRIAD: The three types of nuclear delivery systems: bombers, ICBMs and SLBMs
UCP: Unified Command Plan
U.K.: United Kingdom
UN: United Nations
USAF: United States Air Force
USAFA: United States Air Force Academy
USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
USSTRATCOM: United States Strategic Command
WMD: Weapons of Mass Destruction
YPO: Young Presidents Organization
APPENDICES

A. Tides, Trends and Tasks: The Strategic Environment of the 21st Century, National War College, late May, 1988
B. Stand-down of the Strategic Air Command Remarks, Offutt AFB Officers’ Club, May 31st, 1992
C. Retirement Dinner Remarks, Offutt AFB Officers’ Club, February 13th, 1994
E. Letter, Senator Alan Cranston to General Igor Sergeyev, March, 1997
F. Letter, General Butler to General Sergeyev, March, 1997
G. Letter, General Sergeyev to Senator Cranston, April 4th, 1997
H. Letter, General Sergeyev to General Butler, April 4th, 1997
I. Letter, Major General V. Dvorkin to General Butler, April 4th, 1997
J. Letter, General Butler to Defense Minister Poncelet, December 10th, 1998
L. Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, Distinguished Peace Leadership Award Remarks, Santa Barbara, CA, April 29th, 1999
P. The Alice McDermott Lecture in Applied Ethics, Air Force Academy, April 26th, 1993
Q. The ABCs of Leadership, Remarks given to Strategic Air Command Squadron Commanders, and to the Air Force Academy Wing of Cadets
S. Letter to Dorene from Sharol Metzler, March 29th, 2011
Mankind stands at the threshold of a global upheaval not seen since the era that opened in August, 1914, when ancient borders were redrawn, kingdoms vanished, the colonial paradigm was shattered and the seeds of enduring enmity were planted in every corner of the globe. The fragile peace that ended World War I only provided breathing room for a renewal of hostilities on a scale not seen in human history. The loose ends set the stage for an unraveling that left Germany bent on revenge, the Mid-East rife with instability, a continuing revolution in Russia that set the stage for virulent communism, and Japan thirsting for conquest. When the inevitable resolution of these immutable forces arrived, the world witnessed a scale of warfare, depravity, and destruction that no one imagined could be exceeded, much less repeated. As in 1918, hopes were high for the establishment of an international regime of institutions and legal strictures that would forever preclude a renewal of resort to such evil motives and violent intent.

And, as had been the case for the League of Nations, the United Nations was quickly rendered ineffective, caught in the crossfire of differing views of sovereignty and security among the five nations comprising the permanent members of the Security Council. As the debate descended into gridlock and Stalin began to impose his will on the shattered nations of Eastern Europe, his momentous decision to block ground travel into Berlin ushered in the Cold War, bringing down an Iron Curtain, in Churchill’s piercing analogy, across the heart of the continent. When the Soviet Union exploded its first atom bomb in 1949, an arms race was set in motion, fueled by an ideological conflict that left no room for compromise. The world was condemned to a half-century at the nuclear brink, thousands of weapons on hair-trigger alert, competing arsenals that in their totality threatened the very existence of life on this earth as we know it.
Appendix A

The costs and risks of this confrontation are virtually incalculable. Expenditures for the nuclear enterprise alone, in all of its complex dimensions, have exceeded six trillion dollars. The inherent danger of forces on high alert, the manifest reality of Mutual Assured Destruction, was graphically exposed in the Cuban Missile crisis, when the world escaped an all-out nuclear holocaust by some combination of diplomatic skill, sheer luck, and perhaps divine intervention. Beyond the recurring crises, however, the human toll of nations in bondage to a soulless communism staggers the imagination. Together with the continuing conflicts and wars triggered by the global competition of the super powers, from Korea to Vietnam; the brutal suppression of uprisings as in Budapest and Prague; the hidden horrors of the clandestine activities of intelligence agencies; and the opportunity costs of monumental resources diverted to either expanding or containing communism, the advance of civilization was halted in its tracks.

For those engaged in ensuring the security of the United States of America in the face of such a daunting enemy, there seemed little prospect of a peaceful resolution in our lifetime. From the outside, the Soviet Union appeared monolithic and endowed with infinite resources, human and physical. Its leadership was passed from one stolid, unresponsive, occasionally antic member of the Politburo to another with numbing regularity once Stalin passed from the scene. And then in March of 1985 the unimaginable happened: Mikhail Gorbachev ascended to power. He arrived with a world view, coupled with an unvarnished assessment of the true state of his nation’s economy, that introduced a sea change in Soviet rhetoric, actions and announced intentions. The extraordinary chemistry between him and President Reagan has created opportunities in arms control, and for open, honest dialogue across a host of other issues of mutual interest. The woeful conditions in Russia, not only economic, but social as well, are now unveiled for the world to see. President Gorbachev has announced plans for both economic and political reform that cannot help but fundamentally reshape the course of his nation and by extension the Warsaw Pact, and most importantly from the standpoint of American national and military security strategy, relations with the United States and its allies.

That brings me to my central purpose this morning: to address my personal study and reflection on this remarkable series of events, and how I see the consequences affecting United States national security over the long term, hence the title of my remarks. In the most succinct expression of my thinking, I see the prospective end of the Cold War, an unthawing of the frozen state of international interaction it imposed, a renewal of forces that were reshaping
the patterns of relations between sovereign states going back some 500 years, and a wholly new set of circumstances, opportunities and threats facing our nation.

In my view, the forces that will reemerge from the relaxation of tensions between East and West can be distilled into two powerful tides, much as the ocean acts upon the land that holds it at bay. The first I describe as the continuing fractionation of mankind into highly ethnocentric entities seeking self-determination within self-defined borders. This is the incoming, on-rushing tide, the destructive force that creates relentless chaos and suffering as alienation overpowers harmony and compassion.

The second force is the outgoing tide, the calming, quieting of the sea that sets the stage for peaceful resolution of conflict, mutually advantageous exchange of goods and services and easing of hatred and distrust. I describe this as the compelling quest for a higher order of economic well-being, but in a world where human and physical resources are capriciously allocated according to the whims of geography, culture and history. The universal appeal of a mindboggling array of products and spectacles is a growing phenomenon, from music to movies, blue jeans to fast food, sporting events to royal marriages. Creating the institutions and protocols essential to facilitate this global interchange will require the best minds in government and business. The potential problems of patent and copyright protection, quality and safety, are enormous, and solutions must keep pace with the unquenchable advance of rising expectations.

That brings me to the trends that will inevitably attend the impact of these two defining tides, the consequences that will present themselves as explicit challenges to strategists and planners, presidents and prime ministers, business leaders and economists.

The first of these trends is the astonishing advent of a second Russian Revolution in our lifetime, bringing with it the very real prospect of the collapse of the Soviet Union as we know it, and by extension the Warsaw Pact. With that, forty years of national security strategy, planning and execution will go out the window, the defense budget will come under immense scrutiny and likely reduction, and those of you in this room who find yourself in the Pentagon in years to come, perhaps in the office where I sit, will be consumed by these cosmic consequences.

The second trend is the prospect for a 21st Century Concert of Europe, but one that takes root this time, a sweeping removal of barriers to travel and trade that creates a new market to rival any on the planet. In its wake will come the requirement to rethink not just national currencies, passports,
and protectionism, but military security and alliances, and foremost among those, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. With the demise of the Warsaw Pact, it makes no sense to me to sustain an organization which was created to respond to Soviet hegemony. That would simply perpetuate suspicion and distrust, forestalling a highly desirable rapprochement with a Russia shed of its imperial trappings.

The third trend is the intensification of intractable conflicts between mortal enemies, a renewal of competing claims, ethnic rivalries, and religious hatreds going back centuries if not millennia. These acute regional enmities will not always engage the vital interests of the United States, but the human suffering and local upheaval will surely engage our sensibilities and our resources.

The fourth and related trend is catastrophic failures in the human condition induced by the four horsemen of the modern apocalypse: virulent nationalism, murderous tribalism, religious fundamentalism and genocidal ethnocentrism. These failures will exacerbate the misery caused by debt, drugs, famine, poverty and disease so tragically prevalent in every dark corner of the earth.

The fifth trend is the prospective rise of new hegemonic powers, most especially China and India, whose burgeoning populations and sense of place in the international community will impose an exponential increase in demand on global resources and bring equally consequential demands for attention and respect in the fora of sovereign nations.

You can, I am sure, already begin to imagine the explicit tasks for strategists that emerge from this litany of trends associated with the twin tides moving through history I have enunciated this morning.

The first is for the United States, which has emerged from the Cold War as the preeminent nation on earth, to lead, to take the initiative, to show the way across the breathtaking array of problems, challenges and opportunities outlined here. When the international community dials 911 in the new era, the phone rings first in Washington, D.C., in the Oval Office to be precise. The demands on our President, his administration, and the Congress will be unprecedented, requiring the very best minds our country has to offer and a degree of cooperation harkening back to the onset of the Cold War, when programs like the Marshall Plan helped rebuild Europe and put in place a bulwark against the grasping ambitions of Stalin and his successors.

The second task is to usher Russia through a chaotic, traumatic transition from failing dictatorship to respected member of the family of democratic nations. As regards United States leadership, this in my estimation is Job One; if we don’t get this right, then the rest of the agenda that awaits will be thrust into limbo, just as it was forty years ago with the advent of the Cold War.
The third task, as I alluded to above, is to rethink the role, indeed, the very necessity for NATO. That will require us to prod our reluctant allies to begin to think seriously about taking charge of their own security, individual and collective, without the overlying security of the United States. Given the financial and cultural barriers to such initiatives, we will have to muster great reserves of patience and fortitude.

The fourth task is to refocus our attention and energies to the two regions where our vital interests are most immediately and deeply engaged: the Mid-East/Persian Gulf and the Korean Peninsula. In the former, the reality of conflict is inevitable given the history and stakes inherent in the sovereign mix of peoples and nations. In the latter, the notoriously unstable leadership and lack of visibility into capabilities and intent will continue to perplex the best analysts and sustain tension between the North and the South Koreans.

The fifth task is to recast our policy as to China and India, which has been notoriously muddled and conflicted. This will take decades of patient dialogue and diplomacy, but over the long term it could well be determining as regards the prospects for lasting global peace.

The sixth task is to repackage, reequip and retrain our armed forces for the new world order. Shedding the ingrained patterns of thinking and acting from a half century of bitter enmity with the Soviet Union will be the greatest challenge we have faced since the onset of confrontation following the Second World War. Trillions of dollars are at stake, not to mention traditional career paths, roles and missions, and relations between the military services. This task is already in my in-box and commands the lion’s share of my attention.

Finally, and most important in my estimation, is to wind down the nuclear weapons dimension of decades at the brink of wholesale war with the Soviet Union. The opportunity to walk back the nuclear cat, to ease the risks inherent in bloated stockpiles and staggering arsenals of weaponry is hard-won and priceless. Nuclear arms control must be at the forefront of our engagement with our former foe, both with respect to our mutual capabilities, but equally important, the potential for proliferation of expertise, fissile material, and deployable weapons.

As your year of study and growth comes to a close, I trust that you are now eager to return to the reality of the security environment I have outlined this morning. It is my fervent hope that you have assiduously prepared yourself for what awaits you. It will demand the very best you have to offer.
Appendix B

Stand-down of the Strategic Air Command
Offutt AFB Officers’ Club
May 31st, 1992

What a splendid audience for a momentous occasion. Much of SAC history is reflected here, in the careers, memories, genius and emotions of this stellar gathering. I would not pretend to try and sum up that legacy this evening. In truth, I am not capable of the task; SAC was already thirty-one years old by the time I joined its ranks, and so my roots are in the latter pages of its storied history, not in the deep reaches of its early growth and maturation. Further, such a summation is not necessary to our purpose here. You all have your own private thoughts and reflections, your uniquely personal sentiments to sort through.

But I will also note for those of us in the room who have been caught up these past twelve months in the extraordinary challenge of wholesale reorganization, I can assure you we got over the emotional part of standing down SAC very early on in the process. From the get-go, we have barely stayed ahead of a cresting tidal wave that is continually transforming bold vision into nearsighted irrelevance. Indeed, visions have turned out to be highly perishable commodities in this environment – we are on number three in less than a year. Yesterday’s dramatic departure quickly proves inadequate in light of tomorrow’s startling turn of events.

Thus, as historic as Monday’s activities will be, they are only the opening chapter in a long saga as America comes to grips with the end of the Cold War. Most of that effort is in front of us because the full impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union is only beginning to be felt. No one here can predict what STRATCOM will look like a year from now, much less five or ten. What I am certain of, however, is that it will continuously evolve to adapt to circumstances we cannot see or even anticipate with any confidence. We charter members of this modern rendition of a thirty-three-year-old strategic institution are under no illusion about what our work entails: continuous rethinking, re-planning, re-posturing and reduction, reduction, reduction. Driven by newly emerging
security imperatives, STRATCOM is faced with “just in time” reorganizing. Our challenge is to keep the pressure even in all of our mission elements: dollars, bases, people, forces, targeting, modernization, alert posture, arms control and new policy implementation.

This is a very full plate, and you might well ask how we are doing. The answer is, splendidly. What proved impossible back in 1959, that is, integrating the nation’s new SSBN capability with its mature bomber fleet and fledgling ICBM force, has proceeded in the present day as a model of interservice harmony and cooperation. STRATCOM will leave the starting line in high gear. All of our key people, essential start-up resources and our operational focus were in place within weeks of the announcement of our charter. Tomorrow’s ceremony will be frosting on the cake for us – we already have our organizational head on straight and a crystal clear picture of our mission.

That said, we have also given the stand-down of Strategic Air Command all the care and attention it deserves. We have had a whole series of ‘last times” and they have all been memorable. Our last SAC Commanders Conference in March was superb. The last Missile Competition was outstanding, won by the first Minuteman II wing to begin deactivation: the 44th at Ellsworth. The last Bombing and Navigation Competition was simply extraordinary: the bombing was all conventional, Fairchild AFB won its namesake’s trophy, and sixty Russian Long Range Aviation commanders and crew members were there to see it.

Tonight’s Tattoo Ceremony puts the finishing touches on this carefully orchestrated farewell to our beloved SAC. It has been months in preparation, and its theme perfectly captures the moment: The Torch is Passed. It is a tribute to the countless men and women whose lives have been defined or touched by SAC and its mission. And, of course, it heralds a new command, a new era and a renewed commitment to keep America free of the threat of nuclear tyranny.

I am honored beyond words to have been the 13th and last Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Air Command. I look forward with keen anticipation to the privilege and challenge of being the first Commander-in-Chief of United States Strategic Command. But, tonight belongs to you, and the best is yet to come.
So many wonderful things have been said tonight. Tom Osborne noted recently at a recognition dinner that, “People are normally dead before such nice things are said,” but Dorene and I feel very alive and much honored. You have created a magic evening, an “E” Ticket ride down memory lane. We are awash in memories, encircled by love, warmed by friendship. Everything that matters to us is present or represented in this room tonight.

There are too many to thank properly, but some clearly warrant special mention. Leo Smith. Though Leo’s retired from active duty, I called him back into service. There is no one in whom I repose greater trust and confidence than this special man, the finest example of an officer, a gentleman, and a friend. Gary Curtin heads up this whole retirement bash and has made the impossible look easy. Rod Gibson, Dorene Sherman and the entire protocol staff, the planning committees and those wonderful escorts. Bill Ross, who got away with thousands of pictures and one video which should never have seen the light of day; Craig Jessop, Craig Jacobs, their wonderful band; Bob Smith, Charlie Chung, the Club staff; and Judy Baker, who gave new meaning to the word discount by donating these gorgeous flower arrangements. My Consultation Committee. The crew of Casey 01. And now I ask seven people to stand. Our house aides Lynn Bader and Steve Jennison, without whom we would have been unable to function; my driver, bodyguard and personal trainer, Luke Brohaugh; my man Tim Titus; my secretary, Dean Brown, and two officer aides to whom I am eternally indebted – Tom Thompson and Don Pettit.

Many of you have stood in our place tonight and had to confront the emotional roller coaster of summing up a career of service to the nation. Bill Ross’s splendid video did a remarkable job of capturing both the principal course and the peaks and valleys that have marked our journey. President Kennedy once remarked that life is a series of small adjustments. That was a delicious piece of understatement; as everyone here knows full well, life is also replete
with periods of wrenching adjustment, of passages, of defining moments, and Dorene and I have had at least our share of those as well.

But when you care passionately about people and about values, you are virtually guaranteed a life filled with relentless challenge to your ideals and to your priorities. In my particular case, when that flame of passion was sparked initially in a shy, introverted, undersize and underweight middle child of a genteelly impoverished Southern military family, the term “challenge” is itself something of an understatement. Picture yourself as that less than imposing 100-pound-halfback trying to penetrate opposing lines whose members routinely exceeded two and a half times my bodyweight. Imagine your dream of an Academy education slipping away because of being two pounds below an arbitrary standard that could never account for desire and determination. Or having miraculously been admitted to the fledgling Air Force Academy, being one demerit from expulsion because a clique of demented upperclassmen decided you were unworthy material for future officership. Or, being unceremoniously ejected from the home of lifelong family friends for denouncing their overly racist attitudes and expressions. Or as a young aide, telling your four-star boss that a proposed plan to bomb friendly South Vietnam villages in order to destroy enemy trucks forcibly hidden therein was morally indefensible. Or, terminating the career of a three-time early promotee colonel who sexually harassed the wife of an NCO in my wing.

You get my drift. I have always cared passionately about people and about values. And, thank God I married a person whose passion and convictions mirrored and reinforced my own, but who also taught me how to temper justice with mercy, and outrage with compassion, where warranted.

Looking back on nearly 37 years of service as a cadet and an officer, weighing the lessons of a hundred bruising confrontations, moral crossroads, anguishiing decisions and campaigns to set right what was unacceptable, I have come to some absolutely unshakable conclusions about what matters in life. For me, it comes down to two things really: principles matter and people matter.

What principles, then?

- Integrity: honesty, ethics, morality, truth, justice. These are the virtues that ultimately make the measure of our life and will render our final accounting.
- Kindness: treating people with dignity and respect is the surest way to unlock their potential, earn their devotion and overcome any obstacle.
Appendix C

- Getting Things Right: learning the basics and attention to detail are not only the foundation of professionalism, they distinguish excellence from mediocrity.
- Open Mindedness: dogmatic clinging to outmoded beliefs has been the ruin of missions and monarchs since the dawn of recorded history.
- Courage: the willingness to stand on conviction, at the risk of fame, fortune, life or limb, gives meaning to principle. The triumph of evil only requires that good men do nothing.
- Faith: a belief in a higher power is the surest path to a selfless life and the salvation of humankind.

Why do people matter? Because for every villain there are one hundred heroes. For every disillusionment a thousand acts of affirmation. For every crisis a solution awaiting an unsung rescuer who steps in quietly to save the day.

My life has been filled with heroes and rescuers and affirmative acts. I have been lifted up, spurred on, saved from failure, been a mentored and tutored son many times, in so many places.

By a mother who got me up, fed me and got me out the door at 4:30 in the morning to deliver 75 newspapers over eight miles of country gravel roads in rural Mississippi, who patched me up when my unwieldy bike went out of control, or kept me going in sports like football where I spent most of my time struggling to get back upright. A mom who made the life of our army family seem almost natural, masking the strain of long separations, keeping the memory of a missing father alive for her children, saving her tears for the midnight hours, weeping softly to spare unwilling ears.

Heroes? Mine are legion. Imagine an anonymous young airman who invested 25 cents in a quart of chocolate milk, knowing that its two pounds of bulk would permit a fiercely determined youngster to have a shot at an Air Force career. Or, the Director of the Institute of Political Studies in Paris, violating his own school’s admission standards to permit a fiercely determined young American who had failed the entrance examination to undertake a master’s degree in a major about which he knew little and in a language he could barely speak, read or write. Or, a chief master sergeant who pushed a general’s aide’s performance report through the bureaucracy at record speed, allowing it to get to a promotion board the day it convened – leading to an early promotion at a critical juncture in my career. Or, a CINCSAC named Russ Dougherty who took a chance by allowing a colonel-select to come to Strategic Air Command without ever having paid his dues as a SAC crew-member or squadron commander. Or, 13 years later, a Chief of Staff named Mike Dugan, who gave a
fourth star and entrusted SAC to the most junior and least experienced contender for the job.

Yes, people matter, because in the final assessment, our lives are judged not in terms of honors and awards, but by relationships; not in giving, but in giving; not in status, but in stature among those who depend on us.

These past few weeks, Dorene and I have spent many evening hours poring through box upon box of photographs and memorabilia from our earliest childhood days – some of which fell into the clutches of Bill Ross, STRATCOM’s answer to Stephen Spielberg and Jurassic Park.

Many of the faces from those 50-plus years are in this room tonight, bringing memories to life, recalling a childhood secret, schooldays, triumph and tragedy, forgotten dreams, the pure joy of friendship. We are surrounded by, embodied within, the reflection of who we were and what we have become: classmates and colleagues, deputies and directors, planners and programmers, doctors and dentists, lawyers and laymen, ministers and musicians, secretaries, aides and execs, civic leaders, and bien sûr, des amis français!

We are so much in your debt. What lessons you have taught us. What joys you have created. What consolation you have tendered. What richness you bring to our lives. You are all members of the Butler Bunch, those drawn so closely into our orbit by chance or position as to be literally our extended family. Selfless, infinitely caring, passionate about people and about values.

Which brings me finally to my real inner circle, my true heroes: my children and my wife.

Here I must confess my envy for the poet and lyricist, because without rhyme or music, words alone cannot express the depth of my gratitude, respect and admiration for their unconditional love; for believing in me even while I was learning to believe in myself; for fighting my fights, sharing my pain; for spending much of their life in the turbulent wake of my career; for their passionate belief in principle and in people.

Brett, you’ve been more than a son; you’ve taught me how to be a father by your own sterling example. Lisa, you’ve been more than a daughter; you’ve taught me how to be a Dad by being my friend.

Most men stumble emotionally at this point, because when giving public tribute to their spouses, they are overcome by both inadequacy and a spontaneous realization of the enormity of what their wives have endured, sacrificed and contributed, virtually without sympathy, preparation or recognition.

And, you know full well that when I stand on the platform Monday, as citations are read and achievements tallied, at best they will get it only half right. Surely, wives warrant their own retirement ceremony, not just a brief
Appendix C

step into their husband’s spotlight. That surely is the case with Dorene Sue Nunley Butler. No wife could be more supportive, no mother more successful, no companion more faithful than this child of Texas. She never met a stranger; she never forgot a friend.

You’ve seen the testimony in Bill’s slide show. I introduced myself to her under false pretenses. Had to get released from confinement to get married. We spent our first three months in a cheap motel in Reno, Nevada, and the next two years in Selma, Alabama, amid civil rights tension and violence. Then I transplanted her to Paris, where we lived the life of an impoverished student in a 700-square-foot unfurnished apartment with a two-year-old child. I left for Vietnam while she bought a house and moved her family. You get my drift.

The point is, Dorene not only made my dreams her own, she adopted the United States Air Force, lock, stock and barrel. She confined her dancing aspirations to Officers Wives Club follies, worked to improve schools and commissaries and chapels, brought comfort to the grief-stricken and advice to hundreds of young wives. She is known and admired around the world as a passionate advocate for the family.

So as you honor me, you honor her – you honor us. Together we thank you for being a part of our lives and letting us be a part of yours. We come to this point in our lives with a sense of profound satisfaction and boundless gratitude. You made it all possible and you made it all worthwhile. So, thanks for the memories, and the good times yet to come. We love you dearly.
Thank you, and good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Let me say first that I am professionally honored and intellectually comforted to share this rostrum with General Andrew Goodpaster. He has long set the standard among senior military officers for rigorous thinking and wise counsel on national security matters. He has been a role model for generations of younger officers and most certainly was for me. His views on the risks inherent in nuclear weapons and the consequences of their use have long been a matter of public record. I found them very compelling as I made the long and arduous intellectual journey from staunch advocate of nuclear deterrence to public proponent of nuclear abolition.

This latter role is not one that I ever imagined or one that I relish. Far from it. I have too much regard for the thousands of men and women who served under my command, and the hundreds of colleagues with whom I labored in the policy arena, to take lightly the risk that my views might in any way be construed as diminishing their service or sacrifice. Quite to the contrary, I continue to marvel at their skill and will always be immensely gratified by their unstinting devotion.

I would simply ask them to understand that I am compelled to speak, by concerns I cannot still, with respect to the abiding influence of nuclear weapons long after the Cold War has ended. I am here today because I feel the weight of a special obligation in these matters, a responsibility born of unique experience and responsibilities. Over the last 27 years of my military career, I was embroiled in every aspect of American nuclear policy making and force structuring, from the highest councils of government to nuclear command centers, from the negotiating table to cramped bomber cockpits and the confines of ballistic missile silos and submarines. I have spent years studying nuclear weapons effects, inspected dozens of operational units, certified hundreds of crews for their nuclear mission, and approved thousands of targets for nuclear
Appendix D

destruction. I have investigated a distressing array of accidents and incidents involving strategic weapons and forces. I have read a library of books and intelligence reports on the Soviet Union and what were believed to be its capabilities and intentions – and seen an army of experts confounded. As an advisor to the President on the employment of nuclear weapons, I have anguished over the imponderable complexities, the profound moral dilemmas, and the mind-numbing compression of decision-making under the threat of nuclear attack.

I came away from that experience deeply troubled by what I now see as the burden of building and maintaining nuclear arsenals: the increasingly tangled web of policy and strategy as the number of weapons and delivery systems multiply, the staggering costs, the relentless pressure of advancing technology, the grotesquely destructive war plans, the daily operational risks, and the constant prospect of a crisis that would hold the fate of entire societies in the balance.

Seen from this perspective, it should not be surprising that no one could have been more relieved than was I by the dramatic end of the Cold War and the promise of reprieve from its acute tensions and threats. The democratization of Russia, the reshaping of Central Europe. I never imagined that in my lifetime, much less during my military service, such extraordinary events might transpire. Even more gratifying was the opportunity, as the commander of U.S. strategic nuclear forces, to be intimately involved in recasting our force posture, shrinking our arsenals, drawing down the target list, and scaling back huge impending Cold War-driven expenditures.

Most importantly, I could see for the first time the prospect of restoring a world free of the apocalyptic threat of nuclear weapons.

That shimmering hope eventually gave way to a judgment which has now become a deeply held conviction: that a world free of the threat of nuclear weapons is necessarily a world devoid of nuclear weapons. Permit me, if you will, to elaborate briefly on the concerns that compel this conviction.

First, a growing alarm that despite all of the evidence, we have yet to fully grasp the monstrous effects of these weapons, that the consequences of their use defy reason, transcending time and space, poisoning the earth and deforming its inhabitants. Second, a deepening dismay at the prolongation of Cold War policies and practices in a world where our security interests have been utterly transformed. Third, that foremost among these policies, deterrence reigns unchallenged, with its embedded assumption of hostility and associated preference for forces on high states of alert. Fourth, an acute unease over renewed assertions of the utility of nuclear weapons, especially as regards response to chemical or biological attack. Fifth, grave doubt that the
present highly discriminatory regime of nuclear and non-nuclear states can long endure absent a credible commitment by the nuclear powers to eliminate their arsenals. And finally, the horrific prospect of a world seething with enmities, armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons, and hostage to maniacal leaders strongly disposed toward their use.

That being said, let me hasten to add that I am keenly aware of the opposing arguments. Many strategists hold to the belief that the Cold War world was well served by nuclear weapons, and that the fractious world emerging in its aftermath dictates that they will be retained – either as fearsome weapons of last resort or simply because their elimination is still a utopian dream. I offer in reply that for me the utopian dream was ending the Cold War. Standing down nuclear arsenals requires only a fraction of the ingenuity and resources that were devoted to their creation. As to those who believe nuclear weapons desirable or inevitable, I would say these devices exact a terrible price even if never used. Accepting nuclear weapons as the ultimate arbiter of conflict condemns the world to live under a dark cloud of perpetual anxiety. Worse, it codifies mankind’s most murderous instincts as a legitimate basis of warfare.

Others argue that nuclear weapons are still the essential trappings of superpower status; that they are a vital hedge against a resurgence of virulent, Soviet-era Communism, that they will deter attack by weapons of mass destruction, or that they are the most appropriate choice for response to such attack.

To them I contend that proliferation cannot be contained in a world where a handful of self-appointed nations both arrogate to themselves the privilege of owning nuclear weapons and extol the ultimate security assurances they assert such weapons convey. That overt hedging against born-again, Soviet-style hardliners is as likely to engender as to discourage their resurrection. That elegant theories of deterrence wilt in the crucible of impending nuclear war. And, finally, that the political and human consequences of the employment of a nuclear weapon by the United States in the post-Cold War world, no matter the provocation, would irretrievably diminish our stature. We simply cannot resort to the very type of act we rightly abhor.

Is it possible to forge a global consensus on the propositions that nuclear weapons have no defensible role, that the broader consequences of their employment transcend any asserted military utility, and that as true weapons of mass destruction, the case for their elimination is a thousand-fold stronger and more urgent than for deadly chemicals and viruses already widely declared immoral, illegitimate, subject to destruction and prohibited from any future production?

I am persuaded that such a consensus is not only possible, it is imperative.
Notwithstanding the uncertainties of transition in Russia, bitter enmities in the Middle East, or the delicate balance of power in South and East Asia, I believe that a swelling global refrain will eventually bring the broader interests of mankind to bear on the decisions of governments to retain nuclear weapons. The terror-induced anesthesia that suspended rational thought, made nuclear war thinkable and grossly excessive arsenals possible during the Cold War is gradually wearing off. A renewed appreciation for the obscene power of a single nuclear weapon is coming back into focus as we confront the dismal prospect of nuclear terror at the micro level.

Clearly the world has begun to recoil from the nuclear abyss. Bombers are off alert, missiles are being destroyed and warheads dismantled, former Soviet republics have renounced nuclear status. The Non-proliferation Treaty has been indefinitely extended, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is now de facto prohibition, and START II may yet survive a darkly suspicious Duma. But there is a much larger issue which now confronts the nuclear powers and engages the vital interest of every nation: whether the world is better served by a prolonged era of cautious nuclear weapons reductions toward some indeterminate endpoint or by an unqualified commitment on the part of the nuclear powers to move with much greater urgency toward the goal of eliminating these arsenals in their entirety.

I chose this forum to make my most direct public case for elimination as the goal, to be pursued with all deliberate speed. I firmly believe that practical and realistic steps, such as those set forth by the Stimson Center study, or by the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, can readily be taken toward that end. But I would underscore that the real issue here is not the path – it is the willingness to undertake the journey. In my view, there are three crucial conditions that must first be satisfied for that journey to begin, conditions that go to the heart of strongly held beliefs and deep-seated fears about nuclear weapons and the circumstances in which they might be used.

First and foremost is for the declared nuclear weapon states to accept that the Cold War is in fact over, to break free of the norms, attitudes and habits that perpetuate enormous inventories, forces standing alert and targeting plans encompassing thousands of aimpoints.

Second, for the undeclared states to embrace the harsh lessons of the Cold War: that nuclear weapons are inherently dangerous, hugely expensive, and militarily inefficient; that implacable hostility and alienation will almost certainly lead to a nuclear crisis; that the failure of nuclear deterrence would imperil not just the survival of the antagonists, but of every society; and that nuclear war is a raging, insatiable beast whose instincts and appetites we
pretend to understand but cannot possibly control.

Third, given its crucial leadership role, it is essential for the United States to undertake as a first order of business a sweeping review of its nuclear policies and strategies. The Clinton Administration’s 1993 Nuclear Posture Review was an essential but far from sufficient step toward rethinking the role of nuclear weapons in the post-Cold War world. While clearing the agenda of some pressing force structure questions, the NPR purposefully avoided the larger policy issues.

Moreover, to the point of Cold War attitudes, the review’s justification for maintaining robust nuclear forces as a hedge against the resurgence of a hostile Russia should now be seen as regrettable from several aspects. It sends an overt message of distrust in an era when building a positive security relationship with Russia is arguably the United States’ most important foreign policy interest. It codifies force levels and postures completely out of keeping with the historic passage we have witnessed in world affairs. And, it perpetuates attitudes that inhibit a willingness to proceed immediately toward negotiation of greatly reduced levels of arms, notwithstanding the state of ratification of the START II agreement.

There you have, in very abbreviated form, the core of the concerns that led me to abandon the blessed anonymity of private life, to join my voice with respected colleagues such as General Goodpaster, to urge publicly that the United States make unequivocal its commitment to the elimination of nuclear arsenals, and take the lead in setting an agenda for moving forthrightly toward that objective.

I left active duty with great confidence that the necessity for this commitment and the will to pursue it were finally in place. I entered private life with a sense of profound satisfaction that the astonishing turn of events that brought a wondrous closure to my three and one-half decades of military service, and far more importantly to four decades of perilous ideological confrontation, presented unparalleled opportunities to advance the human condition.

But now time and human nature are wearing away the sense of wonder and closing the window of opportunity. Options are being lost as urgent questions are unasked, or unanswered, as outmoded routines perpetuate Cold War patterns and thinking, and as a new generation of nuclear actors and aspirants lurch backward toward a chilling world where the principal antagonists could find no better solution to their entangled security fears than mutual assured destruction.

Such a world was and is intolerable. We are not condemned to repeat the lessons of forty years at the nuclear brink. We can do better than condone a world in which nuclear weapons are accepted as commonplace. The price already paid is too dear, the risks run too great. The task is daunting but we cannot shrink from it. The opportunity may not come again.
Dear General Sergeyev,

I write to you as a 24-year veteran of the United States Senate who served on both the Foreign Relations and Intelligence Committees where I dedicated much of my time and energy to nuclear issues. In my current capacity as Chairman of the State of the World Forum, I have asked George Crile and Artyom Borovik to deliver this letter to you along with a note from your former American counterpart, General Lee Butler.

The purpose of writing is to alert you to the significance of a unique and historic movement we have organized to reduce the dangers posed by tens of thousands of nuclear weapons that our two countries continue to maintain on various states of alert.

This movement has no precedent in that it numbers among its key members many of America’s most respected businessmen, foundations and even some major corporations. I would not, however, expect you to be overly interested in this letter if our group represented only the civilian community of the United States. What makes it truly unique and powerful is the range of military and national security officials who have joined our ranks, to wit:

- General Lee Butler, former Commander, USSTRATCOM
- Admiral William Owen, former Vice Chief, Joint Chiefs of Staff
- General Charles Horner, former Commander, NORAD/USSPACECOM
- Morton Halperin, former White House National Security Advisor
- General John Galvin, former SACEUR
- General Andrew Goodpaster, former SACEUR and Presidential Advisor
- Robert S. McNamara, former Secretary of Defense
I have asked Crile and Borovik to deliver this letter because we know they have earned your trust. They can add detail regarding our movement and our desire to establish an unofficial channel of communication to you and the Defense Ministry. Our objectives are to speed the process of drawing down our nations’ nuclear arsenals, address paths to more secure command and control of these arsenals, promote increased communications between our two nuclear commands, and get ICBMs off hair-trigger alert.

Although many in our group seek the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons, all of us are realists who recognize the need to move sequentially with practical steps toward achieving meaningful reductions in our arsenals. To that end, we believe that a reasonable intermediate goal is to reach parity at 1,000 warheads. This is still a substantial arsenal, one that preserves the unrivaled status of our two nations, but represents a significant step along the path toward ultimate elimination as required by Article Six of the Nonproliferation Treaty.

Our assessment of the present thinking in the United States national security bureaucracy leads us to recommend that the proposal for a ceiling of 1,000 warheads come from your side in the next round of Helsinki talks, together with any initiative you might want to propose with respect to further de-alerting. We believe that whatever the reaction of our government, such proposals will strike a positive chord with the American public at large, and its opinion leaders in particular.

Sincerely,

/s/
Alan Cranston
Chairman, State of the World Forum
Appendix F

(Undated)

General Igor Sergeyev
Minister of Defense
The Kremlin
Moscow, Russia

My Dear General,

Our mutual friend George Crile has informed me of his discussions with you, and I have asked him to convey to you the strong sense of urgency I continue to feel about reducing and ultimately eliminating the extreme dangers posed by nuclear weapons. You and I talked at great length on this matter in the privacy of my headquarters. I told you then of my personal commitment to ending the nuclear era, and the steps I was taking in this direction – to include canceling billions of dollars of modernization programs and urging deeper and more rapid cuts in nuclear arsenals. Now, with the Cold War well behind us, I believe much more can and must be done. I believe that so strongly that I have recently made a public statement of my beliefs, concerns and recommendations on this issue. As you can see in the memorandum George gave you, many other senior military and civilian leaders share my views.

Not having had the chance to talk with you, I am uncertain of the state of your own thinking on the future role of nuclear weapons. But I want you to know that no experience in my entire military career was more important to the evolution of my thinking than the hours we spent together. I sensed that you had a profound understanding of the enormous power of nuclear weapons and what a nuclear war would mean not just to our two nations, but to the entire world. I was deeply touched by your words at dinner, by your gift to my mother and your moving expression of the need for Russia and the United States to move quickly toward a closer and more positive relationship.

In my view, that is still our first and most urgent priority. My concern is that both of our countries are doing a poor job of advancing this cause. My belief is that the single most important step we can take in that direction is
to think and act more creatively in reducing the dangers posed by our nuclear arsenals. Surely, we can think in larger terms than cuts that still leave thousands of weapons in our stockpiles, with many on high states of alert – as if the Cold War never ended. I must tell you that in my new life as a businessman in the private sector, the world has a very different look. I and thousands of Americans like me are now visiting Russia looking for business opportunities. Tens of thousands of my countrymen are visiting, living and working in Russia, and the same can be said for your fellow citizens in America. It is unimaginable to think that we still target each other with any nuclear weapons, much less thousands of them. Indeed, it is unimaginable that we ever did.

I am now a grandfather twice over. My second granddaughter is now nearly two years old. I cannot accept that she must grow up in a world where national leaders cling to the notion that it is acceptable to threaten the use of nuclear weapons. We have created an historic opportunity to move away from this world and to create a new one based on shared beliefs and values. I think of you often and the responsibilities you continue to bear. I understand and respect those duties, as I do those of my colleagues who still wear the heavy mantle of nuclear command. They and you must act within the boundaries of established authority. But my experience has been that those of us in uniform can have a powerful influence on the willingness of our civilian leaders to act more boldly, to seize priceless opportunities of the kind which finally lie within our grasp. To that end, I pray you will give serious consideration to the proposal in the memorandum George has conveyed. Both Dorene and my mother send their very best wishes.

Warmest regards,

/s/

Lee Butler
The Honorable Alan Cranston

Thank you for your extremely interesting letter. Together with the story told to me by George Crile, it has helped me to understand how impressive and important the movement is that has been organized and is being led by Lee Butler and you.

After the Helsinki Summit, we have more reasons to hope and feel more confident that many of those (goals) that you write about will be achieved step by step.

The agreed upon levels of 2,000 – 2,500 warheads is definitely progress when compared to the Start 2 Treaty.

Along with you, I share the conviction that upon achieving the ceiling of 2,000 - 2,500 warheads established in Helsinki, as well as other provisions aimed at the deactivation of missiles, it is important for us to maintain forward movement on the reduction of offensive nuclear arms.

I informed my leadership (at the Ministry of Defense) about your initiatives and their reaction is quite positive.

Given the possibility of serious progress in the development of a greater partnership between Russia and the United States, further reduction of nuclear arsenals will definitely help to lower potential threats as well as to provide the opportunity to reduce national spending on these arms.

With sincere respect,

/s/
General of the Army
I. Sergeyev
April 4, 1997
Dear Lee Butler:

Thank you very much for your extremely interesting and substantive letter. The sentiments expressed in this letter and the steps that you have already taken, as described to me by George Crile, along with the letter from Senator Alan Cranston, have produced an extremely strong impression on me.

Much of what you write about the need for Russia and the United States to make rapid movement towards establishing a real partnership and closer cooperation, I totally agree with. I also share your preoccupation with the obstacles that prevent us from moving effectively in this direction.

It is my hope that the results of the Helsinki Summit will give a new impulse for a positive evolution of relations between our two countries as well as to contribute toward the further growth of your movement. Probably some people think that the aims of this movement are too radical, but I’m not one of those.

With great satisfaction I remember our meetings and the very rare mutual understanding that we were able to achieve in recognizing the problems and threats that we face.

Within the limits of my professional capabilities I will do everything possible to convince those who oppose this point of view that it is useful and necessary for us to continue to pursue the mutual reduction of nuclear armaments.

Please send my warmest regards to Dorene and your mother.

Sincerely yours,

General of the Army
I. Sergeyev
April 4, 1997
Appendix I

Dear Lee Butler:

I was present for the conversation between General Sergeyev, George Crile and Artyom Borovik and I have read your letter and Senator Cranston’s.

The information about the movement you have organized has impressed me tremendously and caused me to regret not having been able to meet with you during my visit to Offutt in December of last year. General Habiger informed me, with very few words, of your initiative; but only after my conversation with George Crile did I acquire a reasonably substantive understanding of its scope and significance.

General Sergeyev and I frequently discuss the options and possibilities of achieving further deep reductions of strategic offensive weapons, the problems of anti-missile defense, as well as the prospects for projects calling for Russian-American cooperation in the field of science and technology that have encountered serious obstacles.

It is important for you to know that within the leadership of the Defense Forces of the Russian Federation, General Sergeyev is the most significant advocate for the ratification of the Start 2 treaty as well as other initiatives aimed at working toward mutual reductions in our arsenals.

When delegations from the State Duma visit him, as they do regularly, he always presents them with concrete reasons to explain the necessity and value of ratifying Start 2, as well as the reasons for the need to pursue further reductions of nuclear arms. Not everyone is pleased with Gen. Sergeyev’s positions, but those are his convictions and he defends them before all.

Due to his official position, General Sergeyev’s ability to provide informal cooperation to your movement is seriously limited. It is possible, however, that in the middle of next year he will leave his post, whereupon he will be in a position to cooperate with you on a much more substantive basis.

With great satisfaction I remember our meetings, beginning in 1993 in San Diego and I greatly respect your convictions for their clarity, the strength of their logic and maturity, and for your unshakable resolve.

The photograph of your Mom and wife remind me of those extraordinary and fascinating meetings we had during the stay of our delegation at Offutt.
In April of this year I am finishing my 44-year-long career in the Armed Forces and hope I will then have a greater possibility to participate in discussion of ways to build up our partnership.

In mid-May, in Washington, there will take place a meeting of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy of the Russian Federation and the Aspen Strategic Group consisting of A. Carter, R. Blackville, Senators S. Nunn, R. Lugar and others. If I’m allowed, I will also participate in this meeting. The aims of this group, in many ways, coincide with the task or your movement and I expect that the majority of the participants might join your movement.

The warmest regards to your wife and mom.

Sincerely yours,
Major General
V. Dvorkin
April 4, 1997
Dear Defense Minister Poncelet,

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer’s suggestion that NATO revise its nuclear doctrine is most welcome. As you discuss these matters with your colleagues it may be that my own experience in thinking through this question as the Director of Strategic Plans and Policy for the U.S. Armed Forces during the Gulf War might be helpful. I was equally engaged in the matter of prospective nuclear response to attack by WMD during my tenure as Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Strategic Command during the period 1991 to 1994.

As you are keenly aware, the Gulf War presented us with the very real possibility of confronting such an attack by Iraqi forces. We went through the exercise of imagining how it might unfold and examining a variety of response options. My personal conclusion was that under any likely attack scenario, a nuclear reply by the United States and its allies was simply out of the question.

First, from a purely military perspective, the coalition forces had the conventional capability to impose any desired war termination objectives on Iraq, to include unconditional surrender and occupation. For a variety of reasons, we elected not to go to that extreme but it was clearly an option in the face of a WMD attack.

Second, given our conventional superiority, and the nature of the war zone, the use of nuclear weapons simply made no tactical or strategic sense. General Powell noted in his memoirs that several weapons would have been required to mount any sort of effective campaign against military targets, an option that Secretary Cheney immediately rejected – and understandably so. Further, whatever the immediate battlefield effects, the problems of
radioactive fall-out carrying over into friendly forces or surrounding countries were unfathomable.

Third, the larger political issues were insurmountable. What could possibly justify our resort to the very means we properly abhor and condemn? How could we hold an entire society accountable for the decision of a single demented leader who holds his own country hostage? Moreover, the consequences for the nonproliferation regime would have been severe. By joining our enemy in shattering the tradition of non-use that had held for 45 years, we would have destroyed U.S. credibility as leader of the campaign against nuclear proliferation; indeed, we would likely have emboldened a whole new array of nuclear aspirants.

In short, in a singular act we would have martyred our principal foe, alienated our friends, destroyed the coalition so painstakingly constructed, given comfort to the non-declared nuclear states and impetus to states who seek such weapons covertly.

In the end, we tried to have it both ways, privately ruling out a nuclear reply while maintaining an ambiguous declaratory policy. The infamous and widely misrepresented letter from Secretary Baker to Baghdad was ill-advised; in fact, Iraq violated with impunity one of its cardinal prohibitions by torching Kuwait’s oil fields.

When I left my J-5 post in Washington and took up this issue as CINCSTRAT, I found all of the foregoing cautions to be relevant across a wide spectrum of prospective targets in a variety of so-called rogue nations. I ultimately concluded that whatever the utility of a Nuclear First Use policy during the Cold War, it is entirely inappropriate to the new global security environment; worse, it is counter-productive to the goal of nonproliferation and antithetical to the values of democratic societies.

Please forgive this rather abrupt intrusion into your deliberations. Obviously, I would not take such a liberty if I did not believe it was warranted by the import and the urgency of the issue.

Warm regards,

Lee Butler
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Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, and thank you, Pierce, for your comments. I must confess, however, that I find myself left with decidedly mixed emotions. I’ve never before been introduced by a man my wife is in love with. On that score, my dear 007, I might remind you that in my last position while on active duty I might arguably have borne the title...001.

I should say in the same breath that you have extraordinary taste in female admirers. You could not have a more loyal and devoted fan than Dorene Sue Nunley Butler, this talented, blonde, Catholic dancer from California who chose me over a life of fame and fortune on the stage. Her reward for that fateful decision was to hang curtains in 28 different homes in our 33 years of life together in the Air Force. Our mutual prize was two extraordinary children and three enchanting grandchildren who collectively are the light of our lives.

Dorene and I are delighted to be back in Boston in the company of old friends and many new ones. Our first granddaughter, Madison Anne, was born here while son Brett was earning an MBA at Harvard Business School. I had the privilege of taking somewhat shorter courses at the business school and the Kennedy School and value greatly the memories and the friendships from those endeavors.

It is equally a privilege to be your speaker this afternoon in this magnificent setting. I am indebted to the Lawyers Alliance for World Security for this recognition, and inspired by their intelligent, responsible efforts to reduce nuclear dangers. Those of us who have been in the arena, especially Ambassador Tom Graham, do not take the role of critic lightly. We are keenly aware of the constraints, the obstacles and the frustrations that confront the policy-maker.

At the same time, we are equally seized by a sense of profound dismay, of opportunity lost, of danger prolonged, that the creative dimension of
leadership has been displaced by the cautious under-reach of the bureaucracy. In this 35th anniversary year of the signing of the first nuclear test-ban treaty, who cannot yearn for the vision, the eloquence and above all the sense of personal accountability of a John F. Kennedy? He understood intuitively what legions of experts discounted, or ignored: that the prospect of nuclear war was intolerable.

That is precisely the understanding that compelled me to abandon the blessed anonymity of retired life for the role of public critic of the nuclear weapon states and what I judge to be their irresponsible and potentially disastrous perpetuation of the most acute risks of the Cold War era. This is not a role that I sought, relish or ever imagined. I became an instant icon of the abolition movement, about which I knew very little, in many respects admire, but with some elements of which I have sharp disagreements. I am besieged with invitations to speak, to appear, to write books and to otherwise take on a broader role I did not want and with which I am very conflicted. I frequently remind the more ardent critics of U. S. foreign and security policy who come to me for support that I was the co-author with Colin Powell of a post-Cold War U.S. national military strategy premised on robust conventional forces and an unswerving U.S. commitment to global leadership.

No, this is not about notoriety, which is highly intrusive, or personal income, which I do not need. I have no unfulfilled professional aspirations. My military career was supremely satisfying, my business career was instructive and rewarding and Dorene and I treasure our privacy.

Why then, you may very well ask, do I persist, however reluctantly, in this very public role of critic and in a more private role as advisor to policy-makers who seek my views? Most simply put, because with every passing day I am increasingly convinced and concerned that the world has yet to grasp the elemental truths and the acute penalties that inform my condemnation of nuclear weapons.

I have labored as diligently as time and other responsibilities permit over the past two years to detail these truths and penalties, and more importantly, to understand the powerful forces that lead societies to tolerate, accept, embrace and even to celebrate nuclear weapons.

My efforts have been instructed and encouraged by the responses of both proponents and opponents of my public commentary. Ultimately, however, the several judgments that now follow are the product of deep and often painful reflection on nearly four decades of experience as a nuclear strategist, policy-maker, planner and commander.
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- First, that from the earliest days of the nuclear era the risks, costs and consequences have never been properly understood or calculated by the theorists, the planners and the practitioners of nuclear war.
- Second, that nuclear weapons are not weapons at all. They are insanely destructive agents of physical and genetic terror, whose effects transcend time and space, poisoning the earth and deforming its inhabitants for generation upon generation.
- Third, that the stakes of nuclear war engage not just the survival of the antagonists but the fate of mankind.
- Fourth, that the prospect of shearing away entire societies has no military or political justification.
- Fifth, that the fateful decision of governments to acquire nuclear weapons ushers in a vast enterprise whose scope and complexity will inevitably move beyond the power of any individual or central authority to manage or to control.
- Sixth, that despite the ringing rhetoric of deterrence, the mammoth organizations, with their gargantuan appetites, which make up the enterprise of nuclear weapons capability are powerfully disposed toward greater numbers, enhanced destructiveness, more dangerous postures and first use in a crisis or conflict.
- Seventh, that in the nuclear age, the increasingly convoluted prescriptions of deterrence became a formula for unmitigated disaster. Because the consequences of failure were intolerable, the quest for advantage was relentless, igniting cycle after cycle of trepidation, worst-case assumptions and a reckless proliferation of nuclear devices and delivery systems.
- Eighth, that nuclear weapons prey upon our deepest fears and pander to our darkest instincts. They thrive in the emotional climate born of utter alienation and isolation. They are the natural accomplice of visceral enmity. The unbounded wantonness of their effects is a perfect companion to the urge to destroy completely.
- And, finally, that after decades of accommodating to their hideous presence, we have come to accept them as commonplace, inured to their consequences and perpetuating virtually unchanged the frightful policies, practices and postures of the Cold War. I find this incomprehensible and morally intolerable.

The penalties imposed on the nuclear weapon states have been severe. They have been especially so in our own society, corroding our sense
of humanity, numbing our capacity for moral outrage and undermining the essential mechanisms of the democratic process. As President Kennedy remarked to Dean Rusk after his first formal briefing on the consequences of a general nuclear war, “and we call ourselves the human race.”

Over the long, dark nightmare of the Cold War, the forces of fear, ignorance, greed, power, arrogance and secrecy invaded, weakened and subverted the most basic elements of democratic dialogue, debate and decision-making. From its earliest days, the piercing light of dispassionate scrutiny was shuttered in the name of security, doubts dismissed in the name of an acute and unrelenting threat, objections overruled by the solemn invocation of vital national interests.

I have seen the price of such folly at close hand, been party to it, railed against it, and struggle still to understand its origins. But, I do understand the consequences and they are chilling. Vitally important decisions were routinely taken without adequate understanding, assertions too often prevailed over analysis, requirements took on organizational biases, technological opportunity and corporate profits drove force levels and capability, and political opportunism intruded on calculations of military necessity. Authority and accountability were severed, policy dissociated from planning, and theory invalidated by practice. The narrow concerns of a multitude of powerful interests intruded on the rightful role of key policy-makers, constraining their latitude for decision. Many were purposefully denied access to critical information essential to the proper exercise of their office.

These are harsh lessons. They go directly to the proposition that for me lies at the heart of the matter and underwrites Article VI of the Nonproliferation Treaty: that the dictates of state sovereignty and supreme national interest cannot impose arbitrary limits on the establishment of global norms and sanctions promoting decent, civilized behavior…and prohibiting reckless, destructive behavior that threatens our planetary welfare.

Given this perspective, I want to make clear that for me the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons as legitimate instruments of national power is not an end point, it is a way point. It is an essential precondition to a state of moral grace that, having rejected the wholesale slaughter of human beings as an acceptable resort, is moving instead toward global endorsement of the rule of law. I would argue that goal will remain beyond our moral reach so long as we continue to cloak nuclear weapons as agents of stability, as if their possession somehow conveyed wisdom and forbearance, immunity from the rages of implacable hostility and clarity in the grip of crisis. We cannot at once hold sacred the gift of life and sacrosanct the capacity to destroy it utterly. Otherwise we
Appendix K

fall victim to Stalin’s horrific homily that we live in an age where the death of a single individual is a tragedy and the death of millions is a statistic.

It matters enormously that we finally regard nuclear weapons for what they are: the antithesis of hope and aspiration, destroyers of civilizations, purveyors of global ruination.

But how then do we break free from the present dismal circumstances that we have invited by clinging so tenaciously to the fears and beliefs, the cautions and calculus, the policy and postures of a bygone era?

How is it we tolerate the spectacle of an arms control agreement held hostage to sovereign gridlock, its core numerical ceiling of 3,500 operational weapons grossly excessive to the security needs of either party and indeed already well beyond the reach of a Russian strategic nuclear force in growing distress?

How is it we accept the reality of thousands of nuclear warheads still poised on high states of alert, ready for launch on a moment’s notice? What can possibly justify this foolish, risky, costly and irrelevant posture? What could possibly send a more threatening, confusing and counterproductive message to a Russia sliding into chaos, fearful and suspicious of Western intentions, yet desperately needing our resources and our good will?

How is it that NATO, having made what is in my strategic view the highly regrettable decision to expand toward Russia’s collapsed western flank, insists upon retaining a nuclear weapons policy and posture that is wholly out of touch with its new security circumstances? Is it any wonder that Russia has abandoned its “no first use” policy, perversely earning the criticism of a NATO that refuses steadfastly to itself adopt such a policy despite its now overwhelming conventional advantage?

But most importantly, what explains the intellectual and political paralysis in the nuclear weapon states that not only chills new thinking on these issues but actively penalizes it? The looming judgment of this community of political elites is that it proved unworthy of its era, incapable of seizing the moment so desperately sought, of exploiting the extraordinary opportunity for which we risked so much for so long.

This is a stunning turn of events. It suggests a major dislocation between the attitudes, habits and modalities conditioned by Cold War security concerns and the challenges, needs and opportunities of the global village that is emerging in its wake. Clearly, that is the case with respect to the incremental, numbers-driven and exquisitely detailed approach to nuclear arms control enshrined in the SALT and START negotiations. What matters far more now are the policies, postures and practices that incentivize proliferation, perpetuate
enmity, prolong risk and divert precious resources. Separation of warheads from delivery systems, cessation of testing and fissile material production, inventory transparency and accounting, no-first-use declarations, nuclear-free zones and most importantly, a genuine commitment to elimination over the longer term are far more useful than arbitrary, incremental reductions over absurdly prolonged intervals.

New thinking on these and a host of other issues of planetary significance is of utmost urgency. If such thinking will not or worse cannot come from governments, then it must instead come from the rich resources of intellectual capital present in every society, and so abundantly in our own. Whether in the great universities, among which Harvard and MIT rank with such eminence, the laboratories endowed with such brilliance, the NGOs that continue to flourish and to attract remarkable talent, the foundations, councils, centers and institutes who sponsor and nourish individual genius, our nation has an infinite capacity to marshal its intellectual, economic and moral power.

Our present circumstances are not dire, but they are urgent. In the end it may matter little whether we poison our planet spontaneously, in a spasm of nuclear conflict, or incrementally, by rendering its climate incapable of supporting human life. In either case, the larger issue is that of free will, whether we shall choose to be crass and self-indulgent or noble and altruistic; savage and destructive, or civilized and decent; grasping and deceitful or generous and ethical. For myself, I choose to be optimistic despite my present dismay. I have only to contemplate the innate and profound goodness of my wife, the transporting innocence of our grandchildren and the radiant integrity of their parents to know the prospects and the promise of humanity. My challenge is simply to be worthy of their potential and deserving of their trust.

Thank you and may God help us all as we labor to create a more hopeful future and a more decent world.
Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you Michael for such a gracious introduction. However, I must confess it evokes mixed emotions; after all, it is rather awkward being introduced by a man your wife is in love with. I can deal with that, Michael, but for heaven’s sake, don’t go making a movie about it, O.K.? Truth be told, it is easy to fall in love with Michael Douglas. His qualities as a human being transcend his consummate skills as an actor and producer. The United Nations has chosen wisely and well in naming him an Ambassador of Peace, and we are graced by his presence.

You do me great honor this evening, and in so doing you honor my wife and children as well. They are my fount of support and inspiration. In August, Dorene and I will celebrate 37 years of marriage. Through four decades of service and sacrifice, she left an indelible mark on the men and women in uniform she loved so dearly. The two of us are blessed with a loving family, bound by common values and convictions, hopes and aspirations.

They join me in thanking you for this recognition and for the extraordinary efforts you have made in our mutual quest to rid the world of nuclear dangers. And, surely, none have served that cause more ardent than David Krieger and the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. The strength of his commitment is powerfully reflected in the moral force of his organization and in his eloquent testimony on behalf of humanity.

As I surveyed the history of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, I was once more reminded that I am a late-comer to the crusade to eliminate nuclear weapons. And, as I have come better to know the global army engaged in this crusade, I have begun to appreciate more fully the uniqueness of my role. I also feel increasingly the burden of my responsibility, both to you, and to those in whose company I spent most of my professional life.

My responsibility to this legion of former colleagues is to represent our common experience fairly, to honor their sacrifice and praise their sense of duty and patriotism. The men and women who serve so faithfully at the perilous ramparts...
of nuclear deterrence deserve our gratitude and our respect. It matters enor-
mously to all of us that they have done and will continue to do their job with
all of the skill it demands. Whatever your personal views with respect to their
duties, you must take care never to denigrate the devotion they bring to respon-
sibilities that are unprecedented in the history of the human race.

My responsibility to you has been first to feel the depth of your passion,
to understand your rage and frustration, to absorb the logic of arguments for
abolition, and to come to terms with the embedded moral issues. That task
has largely been met. For the past five years, I have studied, traveled, reflect-
ed, written and rehearsed publicly the evolution of my views on the role of
nuclear weapons as instruments of national security. I have met with, inter-
viewed with and communed with thousands of individuals and organizations,
who have showered me with praise, criticism and, periodically, confusion. My
indoctrination into your world is complete, and I have begun the process of
shaping my activities to fit my particular view of the work to be done.

Which brings me to my second responsibility to the abolition army: to explain,
patiently and humbly, who I am and who I am not; what I believe and what I do
not; what I consider to be a fair critique of U.S. policy regarding nuclear weapons
and what is not; and, to the point of my remarks this evening, how I see the future
of the task to reduce and to eliminate the dangers posed by nuclear weapons.

As for who I am and what I believe, first and foremost, I am a husband, a
father, a grandfather, a son and a brother who cherishes his family and the joys
they bring. I am a child of God, a world citizen, a patriot and a responsible mem-
ber of the city I call home. I am guided by my faith, devoted to mankind, inspired
by democracy and, with my wife Dorene, engaged in community service.

But you should also understand that I am a lifelong military professional
and a combat veteran who holds firmly to the conviction that the United States
plays an irreplaceable role in building global peace and security. We do not al-
ways play that role wisely, but by and large it has served the world supremely
well. The history of this century would have been written far differently had
our great nation faltered in its self-imposed task to defeat successive waves of
tyranny no matter the risk or cost.

My critique of the United States as a nuclear weapons power can be proper-
ly understood only in the context of that broader role. By clinging to the extreme
precepts of Cold War nuclear deterrence we erode the respect for life that an-
chors our sense of humanity and the moral sensibilities that increasingly inspire
us to contain the violence of war and the suffering of innocents. Worse, with
respect to the central issue of proliferation, we risk summoning the very night-
mare we have worked so fervently to forestall. First-use policies and high alert
postures are in direct contradiction to our self-interest, the objectives of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the patent rejection of the use of nuclear weapons by American presidents in conflicts from Korea to Indochina to the Persian Gulf.

The price of this foolish nuclear weapons policy is steep and continues to mount. We have lost a priceless opportunity to negotiate with Russia sharp, accelerated reductions in nuclear arsenals. As a consequence both we and our former adversary are squandering vital resources to sustain nuclear forces that have no conceivable relevance to our mutual or unilateral security interests. The absurd standoff over START II ratification, a treaty now overtaken by events, has stalled the arms control process, codified grossly excessive arsenals, weakened the political will essential to presidential leadership, and eroded the trust upon which further progress depends.

India and Pakistan have thrust themselves into the nuclear arena, casting aside pretense, brandishing their fledgling arsenals and declaring themselves cloaked in the security of the self-same deterrence proclaimed so insistently by the charter members of the nuclear club. It is by no means certain that U.S. intervention could ever have stemmed the all too familiar tides of nationalistic fervor and mutual anxiety sweeping the subcontinent. However, it is painfully evident that no amount of protest would suffice coming from an American president hoist on the petard of his own nuclear weapons policy.

Of gravest concern, however, is the fate of the non-proliferation regime, that grand contract which long stood as a tribute to statesmanship and now stands imperiled by brinksmanship. What seems regrettably clear is that none of the five declared nuclear weapons states have any intention of taking meaningful near-term steps toward meeting their obligations under Article VI of the treaty. Even what I consider to be half-measures, such as reduced alert postures and no-first-use declarations, have met stiff resistance. Clearly we are at an impasse with profound implications for the non-proliferation bargain and for its enshrined principle that nuclear weapons are intolerable.

These cumulative blows to the spirit and to the letter of nuclear arms control have done great violence to the mutual reliance upon which this fragile balancing of sovereign anxieties depends. Reviving the process, or simply preserving it through the current impasse, poses a defining challenge to the proponents of abolition: establishing a productive, mutually respectful dialogue with the nuclear weapon states and bringing responsible public pressure to bear on their policies. Both of these tasks are crucial, and in my judgment the abolition campaign has in both been largely unsuccessful.

The first task requires a more determined effort to understand the arguments, concerns and constraints of the policy makers in these states who must deal daily
with the realities of arsenals in being, negotiations in deadlock and bitterly partisan politics. Even having been in these positions, I still devote much of my time and energy to the business of constructive dialogue and find it invaluable. I am therefore dismayed by the number of abolitionists I encounter who are unaware of, indifferent to or unwilling to address seriously the views of key government officials. I am put off by those who impute to them ill intent or ulterior motive. Rather, these decision-makers are still disposed to see the world darkly, a Hobbesian brew of lurking enemies wherein Americans tire of engagement and nuclear weapons reign at once as ultimate threat and final salvation. Patient, courteous dialogue will not necessarily transform this view, but it is essential to clarify differences, air alternatives and begin the search for common ground.

With respect to mobilizing public interest and support, the task is equally daunting. It requires a sophisticated understanding of the role of the media, patient building of relationships with individual journalists, a very nuanced and regionally-focused perspective of public opinion, and a detailed analysis of the constituencies who can be most effectively marshaled to influence the political arena. That entails in turn a careful appraisal of the attitudes of key public officials and a strategy to engage them on the merits of their objections and concerns.

None of this, of course, is new or different. It is the ordinary business of informing public policy debate on any issue. Further, I recognize that much of this spadework has been done by any number of organizations in the abolition camp. What seems yet to be done is for the results of this disparate effort to be brought together in an organized fashion that will serve the purposes of the entire community, hopefully as a basis for a common plan of action.

Many of us spent a long day together in advance of this evening’s agenda to wrestle with these questions of challenge and response. While I have yet to absorb all of what I heard, let me share my personal impressions and conclusions about why we find ourselves at what I have described as an impasse, and how I am structuring my time and resources to address it.

First, I am persuaded that the traditional arms control process, which served us well through the tensions of the Cold War, is not just stalled, but dysfunctional. It is freighted with psychology, language, assumptions and protocols that perpetuate distrust, constrain imagination, limit expectations and prolong outcomes. It is mired in partisan politics, the nation’s most vital interest reduced to a spiteful standoff across a liberal – conservative divide. It focuses on things that matter relatively less, like numbers of warheads, at the expense of things that matter a great deal more, such as the policies that drive the numbers and the rapid response postures. With regard to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, ingrained patterns of interaction between the nuclear and
non-nuclear weapon states are promoting a train wreck, a collision of competing expectations that I believe are at this juncture irreconcilable.

Second, based on extensive recent discussions, I have concluded that the governments of the nuclear weapon states have simply stopped thinking seriously about their policies or the military utility of their arsenals. Civilian leaders talk in almost cavalier terms about the “political role” of nuclear weapons, operational readiness or the emotional cauldron of real-world crises. Nuclear deterrence has been transliterated from Cold War parlance as if it were immutable, an intellectual dodge that suspends the onerous requirement to fundamentally rethink outmoded doctrines and forces.

Third, I believe the rhetoric about nuclear issues and dangers is becoming badly overheated. The shrill language and exaggerated portrayal of threats coming from parties on both sides of the nuclear debate is damaging to their credibility and detrimental to public understanding. It may well provoke precipitous responses, such as abrogation of the ABM Treaty and a rush to defenses, which will exacerbate tensions and foreclose options. Demonizing labels such as “rogue states,” disparaging personal attacks, and scaring of ballistic missile threats, Y2K failures, or a “new Cold War,” are a disservice to intelligent debate and unworthy of the stakes involved.

Fourth, turning specifically to the agenda, tactics and timetable of the abolition community, I see a widening gulf between its aspirations and their prospects, especially in the near term. That disparity is most immediately obvious in the disjunction between the name of the umbrella organization, “Abolition 2000,” and the self-evident reality that its implied goal is not yet in sight, much less in hand. That is a real Y2K problem that must be addressed to ensure the vitality of the work of the organization is not diminished by intimations of a failed strategic objective.

But, more to the substantive point, I worry that the message and the tactics are not attuned to the core conceptions and the priorities of its target audiences: publics and policy-makers. With regard to both audiences, for example, I think the challenge of gaining and holding attention, igniting concern and prompting action is far more daunting than many of you perceive. Belief in the utility of nuclear deterrence is a universal article of faith, and small wonder. Generations of authoritative figures, myself included, spent decades propounding its essence and extolling its virtues. And now, those who have no inclination or see any reason to test its hypotheses have the intellectual luxury of asserting that “it worked.” That simplistic but highly appealing supposition too easily translates to the equally simplistic corollary, “and deterrence will work against rogue states.”
As concerns tactics, I leave to your judgment whether the traditional marches, demonstrations, “ban the bomb symbols” and calculated confrontations contribute to or detract from the task of dialogue. In my own view, they are more hurtful than helpful, but I readily admit that view comes from having too often experienced them from the other side of the chain-link fences and the Pentagon walls. That being said I worry that such tactics and slogans may not be psychologically attuned to a far lower level of public trepidation about nuclear dangers than prevailed during the Cold War. As regards policy-makers, I can tell you with some certainty these approaches are far from endearing.

My real concern, however, is that they depreciate the greatest strength you bring to this arena and that is the force of your moral conviction. My sense is that in today’s environment, this powerful energy is best focused through the lens of carefully honed argument; otherwise it risks being diffused by the optics of erroneous or resentful perception.

I appreciate more than anyone else in this room that I trade on very thin credibility in calling for a reappraisal of the abolition movement. Many of you have suffered great indignities, hardship and even incarceration in the name of a cause that touches the core of your being. I understand that and I respect it. I can only ask you to accept that I am gravely concerned for the continuing effectiveness of the campaign.

Many of you will also recognize that I am echoing frustrations arising from within your own ranks. The impasse I have described is widely felt and, witness today’s colloquy convened by David Krieger, has already begun to prompt thoughtful assessments of cause and effect. Indeed, we have already witnessed an exemplary demonstration of the rigorous, sophisticated and fruitful enterprise I believe essential to sustaining the abolition cause. The Middle Powers Initiative led by Ambassador Doug Roche and his very competent staff has already scored a major success. I have been privileged to play a small role in this activity as pertains to its Canadian dimension, and have seen at close hand the product of Doug’s intelligent, focused leadership.

In no small way, I have taken a page from Doug’s book in reordering the nature of my participation in the nuclear weapons arena. My wife Dorene and I take this occasion to announce formally the establishment of our own foundation dedicated to reducing and eliminating nuclear dangers. We have decided on the name, “Second Chance,” to reflect our relief and gratitude that a merciful Creator chose to deliver His wayward children from their inconceivable folly of threatening to destroy His divine creation.

Our charter commits us to two major activities: promoting public education and awareness of the dangers posed by nuclear weapons and sponsoring
activities to reduce or to eliminate these dangers. We recognize that does not
make us uniquely different, but it does give us strategic focus. For example it
suggests that I must greatly curtail speaking to the converted, as uplifting as
I find such audiences. Rather, I am going to spend my time assessing and in-
teracting with those key constituencies who will or can play determining roles
in affecting outcomes, but who are unaware or unconvinced of what must
be done. Our mandate suggests equally that within the constraints of finite
resources we intend to sponsor research and assist efforts that bear most di-
rectly on resolving the most difficult and important issues and obstacles.

I might add we intend to begin with a small but expert staff. As witness to
that expertise, Dorene and I are pleased to announce we have engaged the
services of Doctor Tom Graham, formerly of the Rockefeller Foundation. No
one, in our judgment, knows this arena better or has been more effective in
shaping outcomes than Tom. He is operating out of an office in New York in
order to give us a presence on the East Coast. We have also brought on board
as our office manager and principal administrative assistant a wonderful lady
with whom some of you have already dealt. Peggy Kruse worked for me in
my previous life as a businessman, and Dorene and I quickly found her to be
indispensable. We will add other staff as our activities dictate, but for now we
are in being and on-line.

You have heard me say before that five years ago I knew virtually nothing of
nongovernmental organizations, but now I think I am one. Well, you can drop the
“I think,” and the “I am.” The correct articulation is, “we are.” Dorene, Tom, Peggy
and I took this step only after long and searching consideration. We have accepted
its consequences for us and for our families. We are mindful that the bar of expec-
tation for performance in this arena has been raised very high by organizations like
the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation who pioneered the crusade against nuclear
weapons. And, we are indebted to the individuals and organizations that have
provided valuable support in getting us airborne, especially Howard and Myra

But most important, we know what is at stake. It is too much to ask of
our Creator a third chance to purge our souls and to mend our ways. We dare
not continue to trifle with His work lest He finally leave us to our self-assigned
damnation of nuclear hell on earth.

I accept your award tonight in the name of those who have labored so long
in this cause. I accept it in tribute to my family who love and support me. I ac-
cept it as an obligation to serve the sanctity of life, the wonder of our planet
and the birthright of every child who enters this world to live free from the
threat of nuclear annihilation.
Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you, Wes, for your gracious introduction. My relationship with Wes Posvar is one of the threads that trace the evolution of my thinking back to the earliest years of my life as a military professional. His powerful intellect and rigorous standards of excellence imbued me with a profound determination to be worthy of my responsibilities as a servant of the nation’s security. That is a responsibility that continues to move me very deeply, and indeed, it accounts for my presence this evening.

I have brought with me another servant of the national interest whose contributions and sacrifices made an indelible imprint on my career and on the lives of thousands of colleagues with whom I served. My wife, Dorene, assumed the demanding obligations that derived from my duties with extraordinary grace and competence. She left a lasting mark on the quality of life of military families. In our new life, she serves as a principal officer in our foundation dedicated to reducing nuclear dangers and is my most trusted and valued advisor.

I want also to acknowledge the University of Pittsburgh for organizing this conference to address the future role and mission of nuclear weapons. In my judgment, this is the central issue of our age. I still find it near miraculous that we now live in a moment when the prospective elimination of these weapons can be seriously addressed. But, as I have made clear in my public remarks over the past three years, I am dismayed by how badly the handful of nuclear weapon states have faltered in their responsibilities to reduce the saliency of their arsenals.

It is not my intention tonight to reiterate the explicit concerns that underlie my dismay. Those concerns are spelled out in a series of five speeches that progressively develop my thinking as I have absorbed the arguments of my critics, devised alternative strategies for elimination with like-minded
Appendix M

colleagues and reflected on the steadily eroding progress of traditional arms control approaches.

With respect to critics, I noted with interest that the conveners of this conference chose a negative formulation of its subject: “Why Not Nuclear Abolition?” That is useful if only because it serves to remind proponents of abolition they must be deeply mindful of the risks and obstacles that must be accounted for both along the path and at the end state of a presumptive nuclear-weapons-free world. By way of introduction to my principal remarks, I will suggest that these difficulties and dangers are most often posited in terms of three key arguments: that nuclear weapons cannot be “disinvented,” that abolition cannot be verified, and that the absence of nuclear weapons will make so-called “major wars” once again possible.

I will touch on the first two of these arguments briefly and the third at length. But let me begin by noting that they all obscure an absolutely vital understanding. I came to appreciate early on in my long association with nuclear arms control that issues regarding risk reduction and prospectively abolition depend in the final analysis upon judgments about costs and benefits, both along the path and at the end-state. These judgments in turn depend upon a disciplined and continuing assessment of the security environment in which reductions might be taken, or a state of abolition is to be maintained.

Too often, however, the risks of abolition are simply asserted as if they could not be adequately mitigated. Such assertions typically project upon that end-state a risk calculus posed in terms of today’s sovereign relationships, technological tools and societal attitudes. This mindset ignores or discounts the stunning reality that the global security environment has already been profoundly transformed by the end of the Cold War. It also misses the point that this astonishing and wholly unanticipated eventuality was itself the product of both serendipity, such as the elevation to power of Mikhail Gorbachev, and the willingness of statesmen to work relentlessly toward reducing nuclear dangers even in the face of unrelenting tension.

As to the merits of these arguments, with respect to the first I would suggest that a world free of nuclear weapons but burdened with the knowledge of their possibility is far more tolerable than a world wherein an indeterminate number of actors maintain or seek to acquire these weapons under capricious and arbitrary circumstances. The former is effectively a condition of existential deterrence wherein all nations are marginally anxious but free of the fear of imminent nuclear threats. The latter is a continuing nightmare of proliferation, crises spun out of control and the dreaded headline announcing a city vaporized in a thermonuclear cloud.
As regards verification, I need only to pause and reflect on the extraordinary progress we have witnessed in this arena since the superpowers committed themselves to reduce their nuclear arms, and then imagine what can be achieved when they finally commit themselves to their elimination. I can equally imagine, having already been party to an instance of forcible denial, the regime of both sanctions and incentives that can be designed to severely penalize cheating and reward compliance. That regime will become increasingly imaginable and attainable as the distant goal of abolition draws nearer and nearer.

Finally, with respect to the argument that nuclear weapons have and will in perpetuity preclude so-called “major war,” I take great exception with its unstated premise that the Soviet Union was driven by an urge to armed aggression with the West, and that nuclear deterrence was the predominant factor in a presumed Soviet decision to refrain from armed attack. Greater access to former Soviet archives continues to shed critical new light on the intentions and motivations of Soviet leaders. For example, in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Vojtech Mastny, a senior research scholar at the Cold War International History Project of the Woodrow Wilson Center, has concluded that, and I quote, “the much-vaunted nuclear capability of NATO turns out, as a practical matter, to have been far less important to the eventual outcome than its conventional forces. But above all, it was NATO’s soft power that bested its adversary.”

The importance of this point cannot be overstated, because it goes to the heart of the debate over the future role of nuclear weapons as justified by the asserted primacy of nuclear deterrence in averting major conflict during the Cold War era. Certainly, there is no question that the presence of nuclear weapons played a significant factor in the policies and risk calculus of the Cold War antagonists. It may well be that once these weapons were introduced into their respective arsenals, nuclear deterrence was their best, and their worst, hope for avoiding mutual catastrophe.

It is equally clear, however, that the presence of these weapons inspired the United States and the Soviet Union to take risks that brought the world to the brink of a nuclear holocaust. It is increasingly evident that senior leaders on both sides consistently misread each other’s intentions, motivations and activities, and their successors still do so today. In my own view, as I observed in my speech to the National Press Club in February of last year, nuclear deterrence in the Cold War was a dialogue of the blind with the deaf. It was largely a bargain we in the West made with ourselves.

As a strategist, I am offended by the muddled thinking that has come
increasingly to confuse and misguide nuclear weapons policy and posture, the penalties of which are increasingly severe. Arms control negotiations are in gridlock as the United States and Russia cling to doctrines and forces that are completely irrelevant to their post-Cold War security interests. Both nations are squandering precious resources at the expense of conventional military capabilities in growing demand and in the process of being steadily eroded. They have rendered moot their obligations under Article VI of the Nonproliferation Treaty and thereby greatly diminished their moral capacity to champion its cause. The price of this folly is of historic import. By exaggerating the role of nuclear weapons, and misreading the history of nuclear deterrence, the United States and Russia have enshrined declarations and operational practices that are antithetical to our mutual security objectives and unique defense requirements. Worse, in this country, they have weakened our grasp of the power and the application of classic deterrence in an age when we stand preeminent in our capability to bring conventional military power to bear on our vital interests.

We continue to do so in the face of compelling evidence that nuclear deterrence was and remains a slippery intellectual construct that translates very poorly into the real world of spontaneous crises, inexplicable motivations, incomplete intelligence and fragile human relationships. The fog of fear, confusion and misinformation that enveloped the principals caught up in the Cuban Missile Crisis could have at any moment led to nuclear annihilation. The chilling fact is that American decision makers did not know then, and not for many years thereafter, that even as they contemplated an invasion some one hundred Soviet tactical nuclear warheads were already in place on the island. No further indictment is required to put the elegant theories of nuclear deterrence in perpetual question.

But this lesson has been made time and again, in Korea, in Indochina and most recently in the Persian Gulf. Successive presidents of both parties have contemplated and then categorically rejected the employment of nuclear weapons even in the face of grave provocation. Secretary James Baker’s infamous letter to Saddam Hussein was a bluff as concerns the potential use of nuclear weapons. Not only did Iraq violate its prohibition against “the destruction of Kuwait’s oil fields,” but analysis had already shown that a nuclear campaign against Iraq was militarily useless and politically preposterous.

In sum, it is my profound conviction that nuclear weapons did not, and will not, of themselves prevent major war. To the contrary, I am persuaded that the presence of these hideous devices unnecessarily prolonged and intensified the Cold War. In today’s security environment, threats of their employment
have been fully exposed as neither credible nor of any military utility.

And so we now find ourselves in the worst of all outcomes. Policy is being reduced to simplistic declarations that nuclear arms are merely “political weapons,” as if they can be disconnected from the risks of misperceived intent, the demands of operational practice, and the emotional cauldron of an acute confrontation. Superpower postures are being largely maintained at Cold War levels, at enormous expense and increasing risk. New entrants are elaborating primitive forces and so-called deterrent policies without benefit of the intricate and costly warning and control measures essential to any hope of crisis stability. Finally, new forces are coming into play as political pressures build to deploy ballistic missile defenses, as governments rise and fall, and as regional animosities deepen.

This is truly a dismal state of affairs. But it was not foreordained. Rather, it is the product of a failure of the worst kind in the realm of national security, that is, a failure of strategic vision. I do not make that criticism lightly, because I have held responsibilities for anticipating and acting on the perceived consequences of strategic change at the highest levels of government. I want to dwell on that experience for a moment because it leads me to a precise explanation of how I view nuclear abolition as a goal and as a practical matter in light of contemporary circumstances.

Ten years ago I was engaged in one of the greatest intellectual challenges of my military career: rewriting United States national military strategy in anticipation of the end of the Cold War. At the time I was the Director of Strategic Plans and Policy for the nation’s armed forces, reporting directly to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell. I was working under his guidance to redefine the roles, missions, organization and equipage of our military forces in light of what we both foresaw as the precipitous decline of Soviet-style Communism. Having concerted our views on the broad-brush strokes of this new global canvas, it was then my task to fill in the details and present them for his consideration. I felt well prepared for this effort, having spent the previous two years engaged in intensive interaction with high-level Soviet officials. I had also invested an enormous intellectual effort to imagine how dormant forces might reemerge after the Cold War to shape the world security environment.

In my view, the revised strategic portrait I drew nearly a decade ago, amended by my conclusions during three subsequent years as commander of the nation’s strategic nuclear forces, is still largely relevant to the security tasks that presently confront us. First and foremost, it was founded on the premise that the United States must continue to play the leading role in sustaining and extending global peace and stability. Second, it posited that managing
relations with a Soviet Union engaged in a sweeping transformation was by far our primary security interest, especially in its nuclear dimension. Third, it identified stability in the Persian Gulf and on the Korean Peninsula as vital interests, which is to say that challenges to those interests must be met with immediate and overwhelming force. Fourth, it imagined that other smaller contingencies might arise requiring some form of American intervention with less robust forces and objectives.

This broad global framework was tied to a highly detailed and rationalized force structure and organization that differed dramatically from the Cold War era. It presaged a thirty percent reduction in the size of the armed forces, a much more compact alignment, a premium on joint war-fighting and a highly sophisticated equipage that would elevate warfare beyond the reach of any prospective opponent.

That vision of global leadership, security priorities and robust conventional forces was short lived. It began on a high and promising note. Events in the summer of 1990 quickly proved the thesis that we would not tolerate a challenge to our vital interests in the Persian Gulf. Iraq’s aggressive aims were stopped, reversed and harshly penalized by forceful American leadership and a brilliant combined-arms campaign that took Iraqi forces out of play with blinding speed and with minimal coalition casualties. Shortly thereafter, President Bush took a series of unilateral steps that dramatically advanced the purposes and the prospects of nuclear arms control. Then, with the sudden collapse of the Soviet Empire, the stage seemed set for an historic realignment of the forces and the rules governing security relations among sovereign states.

Today, I am dumbfounded as I survey the global security landscape. United States leadership is unfocused and uncertain, reeling from crisis to crisis, sharply divided over ends and means, bereft of a sense of larger purpose. Our nation is materially driven and spiritually depleted. Relationships with Russia and with China hang by diplomatic threads, the consequence of policies that have proven intemperate, shortsighted and too often premised on wishful thinking. Saddam Hussein has restored his power base and dismantled the inspection regime, and we have yet to decode the bait-and-switch tactics emanating from Pyongyang.

Finally, our precious conventional forces are under enormous stress, stretched thin across a host of roles and deployments, their capabilities diminished by falling readiness. Only recently have Congress and the Administration acknowledged these debilitating circumstances and begun to provide the resources required to reconcile our strategic ends and means. In the meantime, our armed forces have seen their ranks thinned by disaffection, grinding
deployments and economic distress. Worse, they are still required to fund a highly wasteful base structure and an unending array of pork-barrel projects and programs.

What then is missing from the current security debate? Why are we engaged in such an indeterminate and divisive quarrel over the most fundamental questions of national security? With respect to the conventional roles and missions of our armed forces, the answer is clear: as a nation we have yet to redefine much less to inculcate into our national psyche the broader scope of our vital interests in the post-Cold War era.

Nothing could make this point more sharply than the agonizing events in Kosovo. We are conducting a major air campaign in an undeclared war for extremely demanding objectives, yet unwilling to commit the ground forces essential to victory or to suffer the inevitable casualties. We want our strategic cake and to eat it as well. We have declared intolerable, that is, contrary to our vital interests, the humanitarian disaster in the Balkans yet want to reverse its circumstances on the cheap. As a consequence, we have contributed to the disaster and called into question our commitment to defend what we declare to hold dear.

With respect to nuclear forces and policy, the failure of vision is compounded by a failure of imagination, of sheer intellectual paralysis. The traditional arms control process, which served us well through the tensions of the Cold War, is not just stalled, but dysfunctional. It is freighted with psychology, language, assumptions and protocols that perpetuate distrust, constrain imagination, limit expectations and prolong outcomes. It is mired in partisan politics, the nation’s most vital interest reduced to a spiteful liberal—conservative standoff. It focuses on things that matter relatively less, like numbers of warheads, at the expense of things that matter a great deal more, such as the policies that drive the numbers and the rapid response postures. With regard to the non-proliferation treaty, ingrained patterns of interaction between the nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states are promoting a train wreck, a collision of competing expectations that are presently irreconcilable.

Clearly, it is time for reappraisal of what is possible and what is not, what is desirable and what is not, or simply what is in our best national interest. Were it mine alone to resolve, I would propose the following path. With respect to the goal of abolition, I believe it is the only defensible goal and that goal matters enormously. First and foremost, all of the formally declared nuclear weapon states are legally committed to abolishing their arsenals in the letter and the spirit of the nonproliferation treaty. Every president of the United States since Dwight Eisenhower has publicly endorsed elimination. A clear and
unequivocal commitment to elimination, sustained by concrete policy and measurable milestones, is essential to give credibility and substance to this long-standing declaratory position.

Such a commitment goes far beyond simply seizing the moral high ground. It focuses analysis on a precise end state; all force postures above zero simply become waypoints along a path leading toward elimination. It shifts the locus of policy attention from numbers to the security climate essential to permit successive reductions. It conditions government at all levels to create and respond to every opportunity for shrinking arsenals, cutting infrastructure and curtailing modernization. It sets the stage for rigorous enforcement of nonproliferation regimes and unrelenting pressures to reduce nuclear arsenals on a global basis.

That being said, however, in keeping with the unanimous conclusions of my colleagues on the National Academy of Sciences Committee on International Security and Arms Control in our 1997 report, I am persuaded that the more attainable intermediate step is the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Prohibition is the more familiar coin of the realm in global efforts to constrain weapons of mass destruction. The biological and chemical weapons conventions have put down the indisputable marker that as weapons of mass destruction these means are morally repugnant and an affront to humanity. The realization cannot be far behind that as the only weapons of truly “Mass” destruction, nuclear arms are not only a candidate for prohibition, they should have been the first objective.

Next, regarding the steps toward prohibition, clearly the most urgent concern should be those elements of nuclear capabilities that pose the most immediate danger. In my judgment, those elements begin with the practice of maintaining thousands of warheads on high states of alert, which is to say, launch readiness. Having successfully proposed to President Bush in 1991 to reduce bomber launch readiness from several minutes to several days, I am appalled that eight years later land- and sea-based missiles remain in what amount to immediate launch postures. The risk of accidental or erroneous launch would evaporate in an operational environment where warheads and missiles are de-mated and preferably widely separated in location.

Third, it is imperative to recognize that all numbers of nuclear weapons above zero are completely arbitrary; that against an urban target one weapon represents an unacceptable horror; that twenty weapons would suffice to destroy the twelve largest Russian cities with a total population of twenty-five million people – one-sixth of the entire Russian population; and therefore that arsenals in the hundreds, much less in the thousands, can serve no meaningful
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strategic objective. From this perspective, the START process is completely bankrupt. The currently proposed ceiling of 3,000 to 3,500 operational warheads to be achieved by the year 2007 is wholly out of touch with reality; the longer-term objective of 2,000 operational warheads is a meaningless reduction in terms of the devastating capability retained at such levels.

In light of the current, complexly interrelated and intransigent attitudes of the nuclear weapons states – declared or otherwise – the best compromise is an arbitrary figure in the hundreds as defined by the arsenals of China, France and Great Britain. Numbers above that level are simply irresponsible, owing more to bureaucratic politics and political demagoguery than any defensible strategic rationale.

At some future juncture, the thorny questions of warhead versus delivery system accountability and of tactical nuclear stockpiles must come into play. But what matters most in the current atmosphere is to reduce the saliency of nuclear weapons. That first requires the United States and the former Soviet Union to stop brandishing them by the thousands as if their Cold War hostility were undiminished. America and Russia are not enemies. Rather, we are common survivors of a perilous enmity who could find no better solution to their entangled security fears than the monstrous resort of mutual assured destruction.

Finally, with regard to the crucial question of deploying a national ballistic missile defense, let me recall here what I said to the Congress on this subject as a member of the Rumsfeld Commission. My position rests upon the following conditions, none yet evident. First, that we devise a system relevant to the threats described by the commission report. Second, that the technology essential to deploy such a system with high confidence be in hand. And, third, that in any case, we bend every effort to accommodate such a system within the bounds of an ABM Treaty amended as necessary in concert with Russia. To do otherwise invites a series of consequences that may leave us far worse off than the missile threats we strain to confront.

In closing, let me underscore that this imposing agenda is a necessary but far from sufficient step toward regaining our strategic footing as the world’s most powerful nation. We cannot shrink from devoting the resources necessary to sustain conventional forces of unchallengeable strength. The capabilities and professionalism of our intelligence community, badly eroded since the end of the Cold War, must be rebuilt. And we must recognize our unique responsibility to preserve and extend the capacity of international organizations to combat global poverty and human abuse.

Above all, we must remedy our loss of strategic vision and restore a sense
of larger purpose. We have become much too prone to demonize our ene-
mies, real or prospective, too ready to wield the meat axe of power politics
than to stay the course of patient diplomacy. Nothing I have read makes this
case more cogently than the sophisticated agenda set forth by Bill Perry and
Ash Carter in their recent book, *Preventive Defense*, which should be required
reading for both diplomats and warriors.

Our best guide in the process of national renewal is simply to act in ac-
cordance with the principles and values that set us apart from tyranny and
above the murderous instincts of racial, ethnic and religious hatred. That is
what must underwrite your deliberations in this conference. It is also the test
that will ultimately define our goodness as a people, our worth as a nation and
our legacy to humanity.
Appendix N

Excerpt from the Summary Report of the 7th Bilateral Meeting of the Committee on International Security and Arms Control (CISAC) of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Scientists Group on Arms Control (CSGAC)

Irvine, CA
March 3rd-5th, 2001

CISAC participants: John P. Holdren (chair); John Steinbruner (vice-chair); Lee Butler; Stephen Cohen; Steve Fetter; Alexander Flax; Richard Garwin; Spurgeon Keeny; Charles Larson; Albert Narath; W.K.H. “Pief” Panofsky; Jonathan Pollack

CSGAC delegation: Hu Side (chair); Qian Shaojun; Liang Sili; Song Jiashu; He Yingbo; Ye Ru’an; Zhu Xuhui; Chen Jifeng; Li Hechun; Bi Aili; Wu Gang

National Missle Defense and the ABM Treaty

Lee Butler gave the following presentation (Based on staff notes.)

Butler began by saying that he was delighted to be able to participate in this dialogue for the first time in his six years on CISAC. He first went to China in 1973, the next American official after Richard Nixon to visit the country. Nixon had come in a great airplane to inaugurate a new era of relations between the United States and China. Butler had come in a cargo plane to deliver the furniture for the new U.S. embassy. “When I got off the plane, I am not sure who was more astonished, me or my Chinese hosts.” He came again in October 1999, the day after the U.S. Senate had refused to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. “Again, I am not sure who was more astonished, me or my Chinese hosts.”

Butler said he feared that there is more astonishment to come. He believes we will see in the months ahead arms control decisions that many will
find astonishing – and some even more than astonishing, even outrageous. There is a great danger of mutual misperception. What is absolutely essential is for all U.S. partners around the world to understand the new U.S. national security team and its views.

Butler said that he had known and worked with all of these team members since 1987, as the Director of Strategic Plans and Policy for the U.S. Armed Forces, then as commander of the U.S. strategic nuclear forces, and then as a private citizen for the last seven years. Condoleezza Rice was an intern on his staff, Colin Powell was his boss, and he was a member of the Rumsfeld Commission. He has worked closely with Steve Hadley, the new Deputy National Security Advisor, as well as with Robert Joseph and Franklin Miller. He said he was climbing down the level of abstraction from nation to government to people because, at the end of the day, people, not offices, make decisions.

He wanted to explain his understanding of how these people think of the issues under discussion here:

- What is their world view?
- How do they see the role of nuclear weapons in the post-Cold War world?
- What is their attitude toward arms control?

In answer to the first question, without exception, these are people of uncommon experience, skill and integrity. They are open and honest, and to an uncommon degree, when they say something, they mean it. Their collective view is that the United States has a unique responsibility for maintaining global stability. You must understand this, or there is no way to understand what will come from their decision-making.

The new Bush national security team is driven principally by the lessons they take from recent history, that is, from the last 100 years, especially the scope of U.S. military and economic interests worldwide. Butler’s own military and business careers had taught him the lesson that U.S. actions affect outcomes in every corner of the globe. This view is shared by all of these people. But they are neither interventionist nor unilateralist. They do not see the need for the United States to embroil itself in every world conflict or problem. They understand the need for close consultation, both domestically and internationally. And they understand regional complexities and the limits of American power.

As for the role of nuclear weapons, these people are the staunchest possible believers in the efficacy of nuclear deterrence. They believe that this is
what prevented World War III in the years of the Cold War. They fully understand the dangers and destructiveness of nuclear weapons, but they accept this as a problem that requires continuing management. They appreciate the dangers of WMD proliferation, and combating this will be a high priority on their agenda.

With some exceptions, this team sees very little military utility in the actual use of nuclear weapons. Butler did the military analysis for possible use of nuclear weapons in the Gulf War. There was no question to him – or to anyone above him in the chain of command – of any potential use of these arms. It is true that the United States issued a veiled threat to use them, but it would only have been in response to Saddam’s first use. And Butler is not sure the United States would have responded in kind even in such a case.

These people believe that the current U.S. nuclear stockpile is excessive – and that some aspects of current U.S. nuclear weapons policy are outdated. They are prepared to take unilateral steps to change both the stockpile and the policy. After all, this is the same national security team in large measure as that of the first Bush Administration when important unilateral measures were taken.

As for arms control, this group believes that the SALT and START treaties and the ABM Treaty served a limited but useful purpose during the Cold War. The Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) are of marginal interest or utility. They believe that the threat calculation with respect to vital U.S. national interests, on which policy must rest, has changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War. All nuclear arms control agreements need new thinking.

So far, all of Butler’s assessment has been based on years of personal association. He had tried to structure his remarks as if the people he was describing were here in the room – and he did not believe that they would object to anything he had said so far. Now he was going to be more speculative.

What are the prospects for nuclear arms control and reductions? As for the size of nuclear arsenal, he argued that the Bush national security team believes the nuclear weapons states would set their own force structures, force levels, and policies. Nations might consult with regard to individual decisions, but there is no more need for the tightly linked, symmetrical policies and structures of the Cold War agreements. They believe strongly in the value of verification regimes, but these should not limit the pursuit of vital national interests. As for the CTBT, he believes that the Bush Administration will not accept the treaty in its current form. He recommended that anyone interested in the topic should read Donald Rumsfeld’s testimony during the
CTBT’s consideration by the Senate in October 1999, when he and all the other former Secretaries of Defense who had served in Republican administrations denounced the treaty.

As for the NPT, the Bush team believes that elimination of nuclear weapons, as called for in Article VI of the treaty, is a distant and even utopian goal. They support constraints on the size of arsenals and efforts to reduce the dangers posed by nuclear weapons. Some, in particular Colin Powell, have said in the past that a world without nuclear weapons would be desirable, but not everyone on this team would agree.

Butler said he is absolutely convinced that this group believes the ABM Treaty prevents the United States from responding to new, vital threats. Though they will be careful to consult, if they view this as necessary, they will walk away from the treaty to build the kind of missile defenses they believe are essential.

At this point, Butler turned to very speculative remarks about outcomes:

- Eventually, with Congressional approval, the United States will reach a level of 1,500 to 2,000 deployed strategic warheads, in a force that preserves the Triad of bombers and the land- and sea-based strategic ballistic missiles (ICBMs).
- Fewer land-based missiles will be a first step in reaching this lower level. The current moratorium on nuclear testing will be maintained. In addition, these missiles will have reduced launch readiness, a term Butler prefers as more accurate than “de-alerting.”
- The question of CTBT ratification will not be revisited, however, as they will not want to spend the political capital required to do so.
- As for the NPT, they will take periodic, marginal steps that will be presented as contributing to nonproliferation, but theirs will be a generally “hard-nosed” view of the limited benefits of such actions.
- Regarding the ABM Treaty, there will be serious consultations, but they will be fully prepared to invoke the “supreme national interest” clause and leave the treaty. They believe that, although Russia and China will be unhappy with such a decision, they will in time accept that this is necessary.
- Finally, they will not tolerate outcomes such as a nuclear-armed Iraq and will continue to champion the nonproliferation of WMD.

Butler closed with a personal observation about the current NMD [National Missile Defense] debate. What he finds most distressing about the situation is that it has become the classic “dialogue of the deaf.” The rhetoric – such as
statements that the deployment of NMD will lead to a “new arms race” – is overheated and the different sides on the issues are talking past each other. If the parties to the debate do choose to listen carefully to each other’s concerns, he believes accommodation is possible, but time is short. In the end, he said, “We will get the kind of security we deserve.” He fears that we will eventually have an NMD system that will not work, and therefore will not be worth the political or fiscal costs.
Retired Air Force General George Lee Butler, Expert in Nuclear Arms Reduction, Honored with Heinz Award for Public Policy

For His Courageous Efforts To Raise Awareness of Dangers of Nuclear Arms Proliferation

WASHINGTON, D.C. – General George Lee Butler (USAF ret.) has been awarded the eighth annual $250,000 Heinz Award for Public Policy. A valued advisor to several Presidents and Defense Secretaries, General Butler has raised national awareness of the dangers of nuclear arms proliferation. While his controversial ideas have possibly risked his career advancement, including a place on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, they have also made him one of the world’s most valued authorities on nuclear arms reduction.

General Butler began his military career as an officer in the United States Air Force, attaining the rank of General in 1991. In the latter capacity, he was the Commander in Chief of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) and subsequently Commander in Chief of the United States Strategic Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska. In this position, he had the responsibility for all U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy strategic nuclear forces supporting the national security objective of strategic deterrence.

General Butler first showed his ability to break the mold while at the Air Force Academy, where he objected to the cruel treatment of freshmen by older cadets. Twelve years later, his lengthy report about the school’s flaws, titled New Look, helped bring about reforms at the tradition-bound institution.

This was only the first of the General’s now widely known dissents. General Butler made it his mission to restructure SAC. As part of a reevaluation of global strategy in 1990, General Butler recommended that the
Military’s focus be shifted away from gearing up for a massive war to preparing for smaller regional conflicts in the Persian Gulf and in Korea. He also began to review the Single Integrated Operation Plan - the detailed, highly secret blueprint for war - and was appalled by the extensive sets of proposed targets and sites that had been marked for nuclear destruction, as well as the criteria chosen for their selection. He recommended the cancellation of the development of $40 billion in new nuclear weapons systems and told a shocked group of defense representatives that the command was no longer in need of their products.

In 1995, General Butler was asked by the Australian government to join a group of prominent politicians, military officers and academics to study the feasibility of abolishing nuclear weapons. As one of 17 members of the Canberra Commission, General Butler discussed his doubts regarding the utility and morality of nuclear armament.

“The world is slowly awakening to the inherent danger of nuclear weapons – that we mortals are untrustworthy stewards of such apocalyptic destructiveness. In effect, we have usurped the authority of our Creator to decide our fate. Now, and forevermore, the test of our humanity will lie in our capacity to contain the consequences of this folly,” General Butler said.

“Military personnel are taught how to play within the rules and excel within the system,” Teresa Heinz, chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation, said today. “But General Butler has re-written the rules. His courage in daring to speak out about whether so many nuclear weapons were needed, and whether their alert status could be lowered, made him one of the very few voices to address this critical issue at a time when doing so was very unpopular. Since retiring, General Butler has been one of our nation’s most vocal advocates of nuclear disarmament. He is a practical visionary and his work has opened a window on the possibility of a world without nuclear weaponry. He is a role model for those who believe that peace does not necessarily involve the deployment of weapons of mass destruction.”

By category, the other Heinz Award recipients are: Arts and Humanities (shared): Dudley Cocke, director of the Roadside Theater, Whitesburg, Kentucky, and Rick Lowe, founding director of Project Row Houses, Houston, Texas; Environment: Marine biologist Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Oregon State University; Human Condition: Cushing Dolbeare, founder of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, Washington, D.C.; and Technology, the Economy and Employment: Dr. Anita Borg, President of the Institute for Women and Technology, Palo Alto, California. Additionally, a Chairman’s Medal, which is bestowed occasionally and honors lifetime achievement, will go to Dr.
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Ruth Patrick, 94, of Philadelphia, one of the world’s pioneers in sustainable development.

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The Heinz Family Foundation, which is one of the Heinz Family Philanthropies, began as a charitable trust established by the late Senator John Heinz in 1984. The annual Heinz Awards program is the Foundation’s primary activity. The first Heinz Awards were given in 1994. In addition to the Heinz Awards, the Foundation also directs a grant-making program active in a wide range of issues, principally those concerning the environment and conservation, women, health, human services, education and the arts.

Heinz Awards nominations are submitted by an invited Council of Nominators, all experts in their fields, who serve anonymously. The nominations are next reviewed by five panels of 10 or more jurors, each appointed by the Foundation. Awardees are selected by the Board of Directors upon review of the jurors’ recommendations.

Past winners of the Heinz Awards include Ernesto Cortes, Jr., organizer of low-income neighborhoods; the late Emmy Award-winning documentary film maker Henry Hampton; Dean Kamen, inventor and founder of the student robotics competition U.S. FIRST; Love Canal activist Lois Gibbs; former United States Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan; child advocate Marian Wright Edelman; opera singer Beverly Sills; and poet Rita Dove.

In addition to the $250,000 for their unrestricted use, each recipient is given a medallion inscribed with the image of Senator Heinz. On the reverse side of the medallion there is an image of a globe passing between two hands symbolizing partnership, continuity and values carried on to the next generation. The hands also suggest passing on the stewardship of the earth on to the next generation. John Heinz IV, the Senator’s eldest of three children, designed the medallion. Heinz Award winners will receive their Awards at a private ceremony in Washington, D.C.

For more information visit the web at www.heinzawards.net

# # #
Thank you, Theresa, for this singular honor, one made all the more meaningful by my inclusion in this year’s wonderfully distinguished group of recipients. I also want to acknowledge my wife, Dorene, our son, Brett, our daughter, Lisa, and her husband, Mike. They have been a wellspring of support and helped bear the burden of my quest, now spanning a dozen years, to help walk mankind back from the brink of nuclear self-destruction.

While this quest is not unique to me, it was surely unique for me to undertake such a role. It is not one that came easily nor readily. My sense of urgency and obligation grew in proportion to my access to classified information, my exposure to the daily risks of military operations and my alarm at the unbridled appetite for sustaining or acquiring nuclear arsenals notwithstanding the end of the Cold War.

Nor, as you might surmise, is it a role easily played. Although not surprised, I was bemused by the reaction to my views, which ranged from condemnation to adulation. I discovered following my speech to the National Press Club in late 1996, which I commend to you, that it is indeed possible to become simultaneously an icon and an iconoclast. On one memorable day, I received both a scathing rebuke from a former colleague and a letter informing me I had been selected Sweetheart of the Year by the Grandmothers for Peace – the selfsame group that formerly protested outside the gates of the base where I once commanded a B-52 nuclear bomber mission. I was reminded of Harry Truman’s advice to “always tell the truth – half your audience will be astonished and the other half gratified.”

Breaking ranks in the nuclear weapons arena is risky business, not so much because of state secrets but because truth is so much in the eye of the beholder. It is a world of sweeping assertions and heroic assumptions, taken largely on faith, which if proved wrong would have apocalyptic consequences. But, for me, a compelling truth emerged, the product of too many crises born of human frailty and the failure of men and their machines. Today, as the delicate balance of Cold War terror is better understood and we witness the willing brinksmanship of new nuclear antagonists, this truth is starkly evident: we human beings are not to be trusted with the capacity for such boundless, wanton destructiveness. Our appetites, our egos, our fears and our enmities
stand too ready to brush aside the cautions of deterrence and eagerly brandish the nuclear saber.

There is some reason for hope. In a new era of nuclear terror, I see growing recognition that these weapons are an affront to civilized norms, that a single such device poses an intolerable threat, and that mankind has both a moral and a security imperative to loosen their grip on our safety and our humanity. That said, much remains to be done. Global arsenals still contain some 27,000 nuclear warheads, the vast majority in the hands of the United States and Russia, both of whom still declare these weapons essential to their security. A significant fraction of these warheads remain on missiles ready to launch on a moment’s notice, inviting both accident and miscalculation. Worse, hundreds of tons of fissile material remain inadequately secured, inviting theft by or sale to men bent not on deterrence but retribution.

In closing, let me underscore that these perilous conditions will not change by chance or good fortune. What is required is a change of policy in a handful of countries that persist in clinging to nuclear weapons as the ultimate arbiter of conflict. Our task, as a responsible electorate, is to empower leaders who will no longer accept this affront to humanity. Such is my quest, daunting, yes, but affirmed daily in the goodness of my wife, the shining integrity of our children and the wondrous innocence of our grandchildren.
This lecture series is sponsored by the Major General William Lyon Chair in Professional Ethics. It is given in memory of Alice Patricia McDermott, deceased wife of the first permanent Dean of the Faculty, retired Brigadier General Robert F. McDermott, who was greatly loved and admired by legions of cadets and faculty members. I was introduced by Colonel Mal Wakin, the first Head of the Department of Philosophy and Fine Arts, and a respected friend hearkening back to my days as a cadet. I have lightly edited these remarks to account for the fact that they were delivered from handheld notes in outline form and in a fashion designed to hold the audience rather than follow strict rules of punctuation.

Well, back at the Air Force Academy once again. Having returned many times over my career, each time fortunate enough to be wearing a higher rank, the principal difference I note this time is that four stars earn the privilege of staying at the superintendent’s home. On that score, it is still a bit unsettling to read the name on the door, to wit, Lieutenant General Bradley C. Hosmer. Brad was my squadron commander when I was a third classman, and I am very disappointed he cannot be here tonight; I was so looking forward to running his chin in. Not that I hold a grudge, mind you; it’s just about returning the favor.

I must confess that I really do harbor mixed emotions about returning to the Academy, going back to my first days here and my experiences across every aspect of the training. For the most part, I hated academics; I memorized everything, learned nothing. I was banned from the Electrical Engineering lab for destroying a round wound, squirrel cage induction rotor motor. I never understood one word in Thermodynamics. My lowest point came in Astronautics upon seeing the grade on my paper representing months of mind-bending work. The “A” was marked through with a red slash, and replaced by a “B,” followed by the professor’s acerbic comment, “Cadet Butler, it is generally
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considered fatal in an Astronautics course to misspell the word missile.” You guessed it – I left out the second “s” all fifty-seven times it appeared.

Athletics had its fun aspects, but 24 hours of boxing instruction was not one of them. At five feet, six inches and one hundred and fifteen pounds, I spent much of that time studying the ceiling from a prone position. I did manage to letter for four years in gymnastics as a trampolinist and rope climber. The several meets throughout the spring, together with my job as vice president of the Cadet Forum, had the salutary outcome of allowing me to spend many weeks away from the Academy. Much more importantly, one of my gymnastics trips in the spring of my last semester put me in the company of a gorgeous blonde student at Los Angeles State College. Today, nearly thirty-four years later, we are still in each other’s company – she being the gorgeous blonde sitting in the front row.

Military training was by far the most valuable aspect of the program for me. I had the unique privilege of commanding 13th Squadron for two semesters rather than the usual one. My Air Officer Commanding and I were in full accord on my rather contrarian concept of leadership: treat every member of the squadron with dignity and respect, let us set and maintain worthy standards, and give us the chance to lead by staying behind the scenes. Our goal was to win Honor Squadron, an objective we not only achieved but in the process set a precedent that held for four of the next five years.

Much more could be said, of course, about lessons learned in academics, athletics and military training, but that is not what I am here to talk about tonight. They pale in comparison with the value of the Cadet Honor Code, the deceptively simple prescription that enjoined me from lying, cheating, stealing, or tolerating anyone who did. That has been the foundation of my career, my sure guide every step of the way, every day of my life. And, yet, over the years, as my responsibilities mounted and with them the challenges of leadership, I discovered an essential truth about the Code and life beyond these walls: that it is an essential but far from sufficient standard for meeting the demands of the military profession.

I had begun to grasp the limits of the Code while still a cadet, having observed behavior by my fellows that, while in accord with a strict reading, fell far short of what I considered its larger intent. I was so troubled that, with the Commandant’s approval, I created a Cadet Professional Ethics Committee to operate in parallel with the Honor Committee in teaching the fundamentals of both honesty and ethics. Developing and teaching the requisite lesson plans made a lasting impression on me, my fellow instructors, and our audience.

Now, while you are hopefully musing about the distinction between honor
and ethics, let me suggest to you that these two qualities are simply two sides of the same coin, that while they are distinguishable in definition, they are in-separable in practice. Together, they comprise the singular trait that brings me to this stage and, as evident in the title of my remarks, goes to the heart of my message. The most important lesson you have to learn from your four years at this Academy is that the most priceless asset you will hopefully take with you is iron-clad integrity. Integrity. Here lies the truest measure of a person’s worth whatever their physical prowess, intelligence quotient, business acumen, artistic brilliance, or military genius. The most critical quality any employer, any coach, any leader or commander worth their salt looks for before putting their trust in anyone who comes through their door for the first time. I say that with the strongest conviction I can muster, because I have seen the price of lapses of integrity time and again in my career, and I have been terribly disheartened by the consequences. I have been in this uniform long enough to be responsible for missions of profound importance and to be entrusted with the lives and fortunes of tens of thousands of people. I know to the depths of my being what is at stake: the trust and confidence of the American people. Their willingness to allot hundreds of billions of dollars from their tax dollars to our missions. To send their sons and daughters to fight and to die on foreign soil under our leadership. To accord us pride and respect even though most only dimly perceive the details of what we do, and therefore to take us on faith, to trust us. Integrity is central to our credibility as leaders. It is the foundation of the moral authority that we must earn and sustain if subordinates are to entrust us with their lives and their sense of worth. It ensures the dignity of everyone who comes under our sway, not just subordinates, but their spouses and their children as well, the emotional health of their family life.

Hear me well, now. I am speaking to the first and most important measure of a professional. I say again, the singular quality that preserves public trust in who we are and what we do. It is the sine qua non, the motive force that allows and engenders open and honest communication and team work, whether on a staff, in the field and especially in combat. It is the wellspring of leadership. It is the basis of earned authority, of unswerving loyalty and disciplined obedience to lawful orders. Let me say it yet again – integrity is our most important asset as professionals. It is to be cherished and guarded against all assaults, temptations, snares and illusions. Why? Because when integrity fails, everything fails. There is no sense of outrage equal to that of a public shocked by scandal in high places. Or a unit whose mission and reputation are soiled by an incompetent or unscrupulous leader, or a subordinate abused by a trusted boss, or a spouse betrayed by an unfaithful wife or husband. Or, an Air Force Academy
Awash in honor violations. That is why we witness such a visceral rejection of the hypocrisy, and the greed, and the grasping for power and the distorted values of public officials who violate their oath and trample on the most common standards of human behavior. Because they have committed the cardinal sin for a professional – they have proved unworthy of their trust, of their influence, of their power, of their access to privileged information or to the public treasury.

That is why your understanding of the high expectations and demands of the military profession is so vital, and the crucial import of its first commandment, “Thou shalt not violate thine integrity lest public trust be lost.” But how to grapple with a subject so profound and so complex, so interwoven with our innate and our instilled values? Here is my roadmap for tonight’s exploration. First, I will lay out for you the elements of integrity that shape my thinking and my behavior. Collectively, they are the measuring rod that I use to gauge myself and the people who work for me, to assess their worth for retention or promotion. Second, I will speak to the reasons integrity fails, why people of high station stoop to low deeds, why they throw away reputations and careers and families for trivial ends, why they forsake the public trust for some personal convenience, ill-gotten gain, or a few moments of sexual gratification. Third, I will share some thoughts on how to preserve integrity here at this school, in the Air Force or wherever your future path might lead. How to protect and shield your sense of propriety, of right and wrong against the assaults of careerism, or monetary gain or the euphoria of power, or fear of failure or the darker shades of human nature which can overwhelm our commitment to decent, honest behavior. Finally, I am going to share with you the elementary code that I have hammered out over three decades of trials, temptations and disappointments. It is a code that comes from living in the company of great men and women whose standards, expectations and towering moral strength helped shape my sense of integrity.

The Elements of Integrity: Honor and Ethics

As I have already signaled in my earlier remarks but will expand on here, the first element comprises two sides of the same coin: honor and ethics, distinguished only by the degree of departure from the norms of right behavior. With regard to the precepts of the Cadet Honor Code, I have court-martialed but three officers in my career: one for lying – he falsified a leave slip; another for cheating – he tried to copy off a fellow crew member on an Inspector General examination during an Operational Readiness Inspection; and a third, if you can imagine, for shoplifting a pair of sunglasses in the Base Exchange.
Now, those are very obvious forms of dishonesty. But for the highly ethical person, what other standards come into consideration? How about misleading, or misrepresenting statements, or half-truths? How about using a false ID card, a dodge that has come into practice at this very school? Does that not fall within the bounds of lying in your code? If there is a shred of doubt on that score, you have failed the basics of integrity. Surely you cannot for a moment accept that a modified piece of plastic could ethically substitute for a direct answer to the question, “Are you old enough to drink?” That it is a lie just as if the words had come from your mouth?

What about quibbling, or fudging, or covering up for subordinates; or gossiping, or rumor-mongering, or maligning the reputations of peers or seniors, or not speaking up to correct misrepresented facts? Or not coordinating honestly on documents because you have not read them, or signing off maintenance forms without doing the appropriate checks? And cheating – a pretty straightforward violation, right? But, what about being disloyal to your boss? Or doing lazy, sloppy work on government time? Not giving your best effort on the job, or in school, or in service academies designed to enhance your skills? And on a more personal level, how do you regard being unfaithful to a spouse, or to a congregation, or a city, or to the constituents who put their neighbors in office? Using a friendship to get or give an edge on a public contract? Do any of those “indiscretions” as they are often rationalized strike you as acceptable?

Finally, as regards the Cadet Honor Code, stealing; pretty simple, right? We don’t take things that don’t belong to us. But in your mind, does that apply to say, taking home office supplies, even seemingly petty things like paper and pens? Or using government phones for lengthy personal calls, or the office computer for personal use? Padding travel vouchers, or deliberately disabling an airplane for an extra day in a choice location? Taking credit for someone else’s idea or achievement? More than property is at stake in stealing; reputations and opportunities, dignity, self-worth and even identities in this day and age are all candidates for exploitation by the unprincipled thieves who exploit our trust, ignorance or inattention.

The Elements of Integrity: Professional Competence

This element may surprise you, but hear me out. In my military training studies back in the day, we were taught Professor Sam Huntington’s definition of a profession, still the best I know. He singled out three distinguishing features: corporateness, expertise and responsibility, that is, a sense of common identity based on history, culture, uniform and shared values; a skill set that requires years of disciplined application to master; and most important, vital
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consequences that attend performance. The most important of those consequences are measured in personal health, safety, security, and protection of rights and property, as in the expertise of doctors, policemen, firemen and lawyers. For the military professional, however, a great deal more is at stake: the very survival of a nation, preserving freedom and security for an entire society. And at every level of responsibility, it is about the lives of co-workers and subordinates, about unit missions and reputations. It is knowing and doing a job with great competence, not as a matter of making money or setting records or for personal gratification, but because you have been entrusted with a great responsibility.

As a seasoned commander, my very worst moments, my worst nightmares were the product of failures of competence. Walking through a blackened field off the end of my runway, stepping over the shattered remains of a B-52 that had crashed on take-off due to an egregious error by experienced instructor pilots, dealing with the aftermath of ten lives lost in a fiery holocaust. Yes, competence is a crucial element of integrity and I want you to never forget that. When you graduate and go to your first assignment, whatever and wherever it might be, make a vow to be the very best you can be, remind yourself daily that what you do matters, that the competence you are beginning to build will someday be a cornerstone of integrity, the foundation of your leadership. You did not come to this institution to learn how to cut corners or slide by or meet minimum standards. You are here to gain the knowledge and character essential to leadership, and the motivation to aspire to the highest levels of responsibility.

The Elements of Integrity: Morality

Now, I want you to sit back, draw a deep breath and gather your attentive energies because I have come to what I call the soul of integrity, the behavioral norms toward our fellow human beings that spring from attitudes at the very core of our belief systems, both those that bend us toward justice and compassion and the survival impulses bred in our genes going back to the dawn of man. What now follows is my take on the qualities that condition and define the worthiness of leadership, that encompass all of the values of the leader, that separate the tyrants from the beloved, the abusive from the even-handed, the charlatans from the towering examples of integrity. Great men like so many I worked for throughout my career, who were my role models, who served as sterling examples, who got the job done while maintaining high standards of personal and professional conduct. Men who treated their people with unswerving dignity, respect,
decency and impartiality. Who reserved outrage for the lowlife who de-
means our profession with his racist, or sexist, or religious bias, or bullying
arrogance.

Permit me to dwell on this point for a moment because the failures of
morality that I have witnessed have made me weep for the victims and for our
profession. Unhappily, my account begins right here at this Academy where,
as a basic cadet I was appalled by the brand of so-called leadership that I en-
countered. I never expected it, I never accepted it, and I have fought against it
my entire career. In its worst form it is something I call “leadership by decibel.”
The shouting, posturing and abusive upper classmen who for lack of personal
stature and character, or worse, for sheer malicious fun, strip basic cadets and
fourth classmen of their dignity and their self-confidence.

This is contrary to every principle of human decency and totally foreign
to the high standards of conduct in today’s Air Force. Make no mistake; lead-
ing by fear, threat and intimidation is not toughness or an acceptable exped-
ient. It is a personality disorder. It represents the worst flaws of character in a
leadership position. Abusive authority rooted in excessive ego and ambition. It
creates a corrosive working environment, it breeds dysfunctional tension and
anxiety and uncertainty in people, and it takes a terrible human toll, both on
the job and spilling over the lives of loved ones.

There is really no substitute for the ages-old adage, “Do unto others as
you would have them do unto you.” That principle creates an environment
where talent, training and dedication are nurtured and enhanced. That does
not mean poor performers are tolerated – far from it. If you don’t or can’t
meet standards, then you will be identified, retrained or mustered out into
another walk of life, but in a humane and structured process. You may well
ask, “Does that type of leadership really work? Is it universally effective across
the enormous array of responsibilities and circumstances I can expect in my
profession?” My answer is, “Absolutely.” I know that because I have lived
it, from commanding the Honor Squadron in 1960-61 to commanding B-52
wings, heading large staff organizations with heavy responsibilities, and most
importantly, commanding the nation’s strategic nuclear forces, designing the
U.S. nuclear war plan, and serving as the principal advisor to the President of
the United States in the event of a nuclear attack on our nation. And in every
role, regardless of rank or mission, my leadership mantra never wavered: treat
people with dignity and respect. That was a cardinal rule; violation was never
tolerated. Justice was public and swift.

Why do I insist on this point of morality as the core of integrity? Because
integrity is the life blood of relationships among us humans. And because we
humans harbor such base instincts of intolerance that compel an array of counterproductive behavior, from teasing and bullying to the smoldering hatreds that lead to the most savage confrontations. Growing up for many years in the Deep South, I was not only witness to, but an unwitting participant in, some of the worst acts of prejudice we humans can devise. I lived in a small town where dark-skinned people went to different schools and churches, lived in tumble-down shacks, drank from separate water fountains, worked for slave wages and even died at the hands of brutal bigots. Thirty years later, my blood ran cold as these ugly memories came flooding back, triggered by the racial slurs I saw scrawled on restroom walls at Dyess Air Force Base where I had just assumed command. By the end of my one-year tour, more than the walls had been cleansed.

And finally, I insist on morality because of the lingering, debilitating and intolerable sexism that still permeates our society and worse, our profession. “Tailhook” is only the most recent and visible manifestation of churlish, adolescent male behavior that demeans the female members we are privileged to have in our ranks. Worse, it is as pervasive and deeply rooted as the racial prejudice that so tarnishes our democracy. The corrosive double-standard that men inflict on women was born in antiquity, in primal caves, tribal mores and warring cultures. To this day it is still omnipresent, staining every facet of life, from religious beliefs and practices, to the work place, and to the ubiquitous advertising that portrays women as sex objects. The preposterous notion of male superiority justifies, rationalizes every form of abuse, from leering stares and lewd jokes to physical harassment or rape – in some corners of our planet even murder is tolerated. The price – the toll of this kind of despicable behavior is unfathomable, incalculable. In my first six months as the commander of Strategic Air Command, I relieved and forced into retirement two general officers for sexual misconduct. As a wing commander I had my vice commander investigated and subsequently relieved of duty for making a pass at the wife of an NCO in my organization. The perpetrator was an Air Force Academy graduate, a three-time early promotee. He left a scar on my commander’s soul that will never heal.

How can such things happen? How can they happen in our noble profession where trustworthy leaders are essential? How is it that a female cadet can be raped at this institution? An Academy whose sole justification is to produce leaders with iron-clad integrity. Sole justification – if we did not train worthy leaders here, if we did not insist on the highest standards of conduct, if integrity were not the coin of this realm, then we should shutter the place.
**Why Does Integrity Fail?**

Why does integrity fail? Why do men and women of great reputation and talent lose their way, putting at risk a lifetime of work and achievement? Why do leaders abuse their authority and lose the loyalty of their people because of an exaggerated sense of importance and power? Why do officers destroy their careers and families by trashing their marriage vows? Why do crew members or maintenance technicians risk their own or others’ lives by disregarding directives? Let me suggest to you four reasons that I have distilled from years of bitter experiences.

First, integrity fails because of a fundamental character flaw: confusing who you are with what you are. When Lord Acton observed that “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely,” he knew whereof he spoke. He understood the cost of rampant ambition, ego and greed. I have seen it at close hand, and yes, fallen prey to the abuse of leaders so enamored of their power that they became mean-spirited, aloof, unmindful of the damage they did to the dignity of their people. They abandoned their moral anchors and wallowed in a sea of self-importance.

Second, integrity fails because of a basic human frailty – the fear of being found wanting, of not passing an examination, of losing a hard-fought competition or falling short of an eagerly sought prize. The fear of failure is so deeply rooted that in the morally deficient it can drive an overwhelming temptation to cheat. Or, to lie to avoid embarrassment or responsibility for mistakes. To cover up, to shift blame, to shirk duty. To condone bad behavior, to look the other way, to pass on bad apples. Or, in the words of your honor code, to tolerate behavior in others that you know to be wrong, potentially damaging to the mission. Abiding by the toleration clause is ratting on your friends; it is girding your loins for one of the most basic demands of leadership: setting and maintaining standards.

Third, integrity fails because of a sheer lack of competence, the capacity to perform as expected, creating a mismatch of ability and responsibility with all of the attendant consequences. Too often, inadequacy is deliberately masked by dishonesty, taking credit for others’ work, fraudulent reporting, and covering up shoddy work. And sadly, too often the inept are promoted beyond their level of competence because of a failure of supervisors who lack the moral courage to render honest, objective performance reports. As a former inspector general, I saw case after case where disaster sprang from the action – or inaction – of people who were in way over their heads, costing lives and untold destruction.
Fourth, integrity fails because of moral dilemmas, conflicts and blindness. Because of competing values and priorities. Because of a moral climate shot through with racism and sexism, where fraternization and debauchery become the norm. In the very worst instances, integrity fails those at fault who never understood they were facing an ethical or moral issue – they simply lacked a personal code.

**Preserving Integrity**

All right, now you can exhale, shake it out, take heart; we are in the home stretch. I am going to close this hour by musing a few moments about nourishing a code of integrity, the shield you burnish every day of your life.

First and foremost, for you first classmen who stand at the threshold of your Air Force career, it is imperative that you reaffirm your commitment not just to the minimum standards of the Honor Code you have lived these past four years, but to the broader definition of integrity I have set before you this evening. Notwithstanding the severe penalties that attach to violations of the cadet code, the consequences are largely individual. In a few short months, that will change profoundly. When you become an officer, a lapse of integrity can mean the difference between life and death, success or failure of a unit, the health or ruin of a family, the path to an honorable career or the lifelong stain of ethical misconduct.

Second, you must continue to build the mental toughness that will allow you to hold not only yourself, but your subordinates, colleagues and yes, superiors accountable for lapses of integrity. And those tests will come. Most are familiar, predictable, easily anticipated and recognized. Others will be more insidious, unique to a time and circumstance, catching you unaware, off guard. Your capacity to stand your moral ground will depend on not just your personal commitment to high standards, but also your ceaseless efforts to deepen your understanding of integrity, to study the ethical dilemmas faced by great military leaders, to reflect on the moral and ethical failures that appear daily in the media: Senators who sexually harass their aides, Wall Street schemers like Ivan Boeske, scoundrels in the pulpit like the Bakkers and the Swaggarts, contractors who overcharge, consultants who trade on friendships, mayors who do crack cocaine, or churchmen who prey on the most vulnerable members of their flock.

Third, and perhaps most challenging, I urge you to work constantly at keeping a sense of perspective, keeping your priorities straight, keeping uppermost in your mind that your character, your reputation are your most priceless assets, never losing sight of the fact that as military professionals it is imperative
that we preserve the trust of those we serve. With perspective comes the constant awareness that beyond the oath you take on being commissioned, the vow you make to your spouse and the responsibility that comes with fatherhood also require investment of time, energy, love and fidelity. Finally, whatever rewards your career may hold in store, or accomplishments you may seek, there is no better reminder of the penalty for not keeping your priorities straight than the timeless words of Mark’s Gospel: “And what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and shall lose his own soul?”

A Simple Code of Integrity

I promised at the outset to share with you three bare-bones precepts that I have distilled from decades of thinking and writing about integrity, what the bitter taste of shattered trust has taught. The roots of these simple guidelines are sunk in the Cadet Honor Code; their impulse springs from my cardinal rule of treating people with dignity and respect, and their vitality is sustained by the nourishment that comes from living daily among great military professionals.

The first should sound familiar: “Always do and say the right thing.” Never lie, cheat, steal or tolerate such behavior where you have a clear obligation to intervene. And from the positive side of the ethical coin, remember that no one has ever improved on the Golden Rule as a standard for civilized behavior.

The second is, “Work hard, but for the right reasons.” Your effectiveness report will take care of itself if your boss sees that your focus is on the mission, not your career. Your peers will admire your motives, and your subordinates will know that their best interests are your constant preoccupation.

The third is, “Live your life as if someday you will have to account for every moment, every thought, and every deed, public or private.” That’s not only smart; someday you might actually have to. And, if you knew that accounting was coming tomorrow, how well would you sleep tonight?

The most cogent anecdote I can give you apropos of these three guidelines is taken from a book by Major General Perry Smith, one of my role models when I was a young captain. The title is Taking Charge, and the relevant example is an act of sterling honesty by the late, great Babe Didrikson-Zaharias, one of the greatest athletes of all time. She is a legend from the 1932 Olympics and one of the best female golfers of her era, hence this story. She came into the scorer’s tent having apparently just won a tournament, checked her card, and signed it but not before having assessed herself a two-stroke penalty. She realized as she cleaned her ball before putting out on the last hole that she had played the wrong ball from the rough on her approach shot. She sank the putt, which would have resulted in a one-stroke victory absent the prescribed
penalty. The astonished scorer said, “But Babe, no one would have ever known!” “Oh, yes,” she replied, “I would have.”

The point is obvious: in the final accounting, integrity comes down to you. What you do when no one is looking or listening. The kind of penalty you assess yourself when you fail to meet the demands of integrity. To you when the chips are down, when values conflict, when things go off the rails on your watch. To you when temptation beckons, when an untruth can lead to easy money or deflect criticism, when a pretty face weakens your moral knees. Your integrity is the most priceless asset you bring to the unit you will command, the office you will supervise, the table where you will negotiate, your relationship with the boss who will depend on your word, and the oath you will take to preserve and protect the Constitution of the United States of America. And with that, I wish you every success – and a contented sleep.
The ABCs of Leadership

This is a slightly modified lecture that I gave to newly selected SAC squadron commanders at the opening of a two-day orientation course at my headquarters. The purpose was to introduce them to staff members and for me to instruct them face-to-face. That lesson was titled “The ABCs of Command” and focused on the demands that came with their new role, most importantly, the authority to render punishment. For cadets, I changed the focus to leadership writ large since many of them might never command, or, as was my experience, would serve for many years before earning that privilege.

As I survey this large and somewhat less than enthusiastic audience, I would guess two things: first, that given the ungodly hour your attendance this morning is not voluntary (audible groans, signifying agreement). Second, most of you are seniors with only a few weeks to graduation and freedom from four years of indentured servitude (cheers, signifying strong agreement). That being the case, which I surmised it would be after talking with my cadet hosts long into the evening, my remarks will be devoted to the single most important question you have to confront in the closing days of your studies: How well are you prepared for leadership in the real Air Force, that is, how well have you absorbed the core lessons of this institution? In my view, the Academy has no reason to exist other than to provide each of you the instruction and experience essential to leadership and the motivation to serve your nation at the highest levels of responsibility.

For those of you fortunate enough to have been given meaningful leadership positions during this past year, I suspect you have had enough experience to begin to gauge your capacities in this regard. Others of you have the more difficult task of imagining how you will respond as leaders based on observation and study. In my case, I was doubly fortunate as a senior cadet back in the 1960-61 era. Not only was I a squadron commander for two consecutive semesters, but I also had the benefit of an Air Officer Commanding who understood his role perfectly – give us cadets every opportunity to lead at every
level of rank within 13th Squadron, intervening only if we failed to meet his high expectations.

My first meeting with Major William Alexander Patch was on the morning on the first day of academics in the fall of 1960. I had arrived back at the Academy late the night before and found his note waiting on my desk: “Lee, you are my squadron commander. See me in my office at 0700 with your plan for staffing the unit’s key positions, your goal for the year, and how you intend to lead.” As you can imagine, that occupied me the rest of a very short night, but I had my brief ready at the appointed hour. I put on his desk a list of who I wanted in every spot in the chain of command and on my staff. When he signaled he had approved it, I said, “Sir, my goal is to win Honor Squadron (now called the Outstanding Squadron) by an uncontested margin. I intend to do that first, by insisting that each member of 13th Squadron treats every other member with dignity and respect, especially with regard to our Fourth Classmen who are our most motivated group; second, by setting and maintaining high standards across the board – academics, military training, and athletics; and third, I am going to lead from the front. I will do my level best to be the best scholar, leader and athlete in the squadron.”

Major Patch wholeheartedly concurred with my strategy and then asked me for specifics. I then walked him through the tactics, that is, my plan to ensure that each and every cadet was involved in some extracurricular activity, that tutors were available in every subject to assist those in need of an academic leg up, that our athletic talent was optimally deployed across the entire slate of intercollegiate and intramural competition in order to maximize our score in this element of the Honor Squadron scoring and so forth. By the time I finished, he was fully on board. Patch rarely came to the squadron area; he and I communicated through a notebook delivered to me at night and sent back to him at first light. The bottom line? We won Honor Squadron by a wide margin come late May of 1961, and took the trophy four times in the next five years, a record yet to be equaled.

Clearly, we were on to a winning formula, and that is exactly what I want to share with you for the next forty minutes. If you doubt its relevance to the real Air Force, then hear this: after graduating in June of 1961, my next opportunity to command was in 1982, over twenty years later, as the commander of two B-52 bomb wings in the Strategic Air Command, spending a year in each of the successive tours. In those extremely responsible and demanding positions, I employed exactly the same leadership principles that guided my actions as 13th Squadron Commander, and they served me equally well in two entirely different circumstances.
And so now I am going to spell those principles out for you in exactly the manner as I taught them to my subordinate commanders when I was running not only a bomb wing, but as commander-in-chief of the nation’s strategic nuclear forces. I touched on some of them in recounting my response to Major Patch’s question, “How do you intend to lead?” Now I am going to put those elements in a broader context that I call, *The ABCs of Leadership*. And, in order to give you bit of extra incentive to stay with me at 0815, I am providing you right upfront a guarantee: if you absorb the nine elements arrayed in the three basic categories outlined on this slide, spend time to fully get their import, measure yourself against the skills and values they imply, and begin to employ them at every opportunity no matter how small the task, you will succeed in whatever leadership role you are given at any level of rank and responsibility:

**Abilities**
- Competence: Earn Your Authority
- Communication: Connect With Your People
- Control: Keep Your Emotions in Check

**Behavior**
- Charge into Problems: Run Toward the Fire
- Call It Like It Is: Set and Maintain Standards
- Create the Vision: Lead from the Front

**Characteristics**
- Courage: Never Give Up – or In
- Compassion: Treat People with Dignity and Respect
- Character: Never Compromise Your Integrity

There are fifty-nine words on this slide, including the A-B-C denomination of the three elements of leadership. Note that the operative words are all active verbs and that they all begin with the letter “C.” I have kept the format simple and direct, because when I give this lecture to my commanders, I expect them to memorize this outline word for word. That is because I want them to make these prescriptions second nature, as they are with me. I do not need notes to give this talk, nor do I rely on the slide – I live it. I spent years perfecting the content and disciplining myself to meet its prescriptions. That is precisely what I expect of my commanders because they are my surrogates in the field. As the first link in the chain of command, they set the tone for my entire organization, arrayed on dozens of bases around the world. And, as you may imagine, I select them with the greatest care, along with my wing and
numbered air force commanders. They have the best and most important duty our profession has to offer.

Now, before we talk about each of these nine elements, I want to look at them collectively. Note, for example, that each one, to some degree, is challenging for the average person. Some, such as public speaking, rank near the top of the list of things that respondents say strike fear into their hearts, and from what I see almost daily, effective writing appears to be a lost art. Much the same could be said about the discipline required to master a complex skill, or staying composed in stressful situations, dealing with problems head-on, grading objectively or thinking strategically, getting through difficult times or circumstances no matter the pain or exhaustion, being unfailingly courteous and kind, or staying true to yourself whatever the temptation or penalty incurred. All of that said, my message this morning is that for the leaders in my employ, I expect them to meet all of these standards, and to a degree well beyond what I expect of someone who is not in a command or supervisory position.

Second, note that until you arrive at the eighth of the nine bullets, there is nothing to distinguish the humane qualities of leadership; the first seven skills or attributes could be – and have been – exhibited by the most savage leaders in recorded history, as well as the most benevolent. That is why I have put Compassion and Character last on the menu; they deserve the most attention and thought.

Abilities

Happily, most of the other capability and behavioral norms are fairly self-explanatory. Competence, for example means exactly what it says, which is that the leader must be expert, and preferably, the most expert person in his or her unit with respect to the tasks or mission at hand. That is the down payment on earning the authority that is assigned the leadership position by law or regulation. That is why so many of our skill sets require such long apprenticeship, especially in the flying business where becoming say, a flight leader qualified to take a wing-man into combat, is a matter of years, much less a wing commander with the experience to direct the operation of several squadrons of priceless aircraft and crew members in a remote, hostile environment. I can assure you that in the nuclear weapons arena, I place a very high premium on experience and a long record of flawless performance.

Communication is an equally important skill for any leader; that is how you connect with your people, not only through the spoken or written word, but also through the non-verbal cues that subordinates pay careful attention to. For example, how well do you listen? Do you pay strict attention when people are trying
to convey something difficult? How skilled are you at understanding *subtext*, that is, the real meaning often masked by timidity and uncertainty in the presence of the boss? I will have more to say about establishing lines of communication when we get to Compassion and Character, but at this juncture, my take-away for you is that if you are not yet a reasonably polished speaker and adept at putting your thoughts and desires in writing, there are tools and venues to achieve those skills while you are still a junior officer. Don’t expect to be promoted without them, because that is one of the criteria on your effectiveness report.

**Control**, as in Self-Control, is inseparable from Competence and Communication as a foundation of effective leadership. In my observation, it is also the most difficult to master of the three *Abilities*. Sad to say, I have known twenty-year old airmen with more emotional maturity than any number of very senior officers I have worked for and with. Erratic, unpredictable leaders generate stress and anxiety; their hair-trigger tempers and defensive reactions make them unapproachable, obviating open, honest communication and poisoning the work environment. Conversely, maintaining an even temperament, a calm steady demeanor, breeds confidence and respect; it allows people to do their best work, to make problems known, and to take initiative without fear of undue criticism. Adults are no different than children in this regard. As we will talk about shortly, every one of us prizes our dignity and wants to be treated with respect.

**Behavior**

**Take Charge of Problems.** Herein lies the truest test of *ownership*, of *accepting responsibility* for a mission and *relishing the accountability* that comes with it. I always pay the closest of attention to how my commanders respond when the fur flies, when things go off the rails, when the unexpected strikes. I dealt with two Class A mishaps as a wing commander, that is, an accident that causes major damage in dollar terms and/or loss of life. In both cases, the event came completely out of the blue, on an otherwise calm and cloudless morning. The first cost the lives of the ten souls on board when their B-52 crashed in a merciless fireball just off the end of my runway. The other resulted in a wing being torn off a B-52 on my parking ramp and tens of thousands of gallons of volatile jet fuel spewing into a teeming sea of activity. Both required, of course, immediate notifications up the chain of command, managing the flow of information to my base personnel and the local media, putting response teams on site – and, most important, consoling the families and loved ones. This was truly a case of running toward the fire, making the disasters mine. President Truman’s desk plate said it all: “The Buck Stops Here.”

**Call It Like It Is.** Truth-telling and standard setting start at the top. Your people
need to know what is expected of them and how they are measuring up – like you, they need to be held accountable. If they screw up, they must be called out. Conversely, outstanding performance must be recognized and rewarded. When I was the Inspector General of Strategic Air Command, I adopted the motto, “High Standards, Fairly Applied.” We graded every facet of performance, from the mission per se to physical fitness to the condition of facilities. I told my three hundred team members that for every error recorded I wanted something or someone praiseworthy to be recognized, in writing, in the Inspection Report. One of the ironclad truths I distilled from my two years as the eyes and ears of the four-star general in charge of SAC is that every unit is a reflection of its commander. The parallels are almost uncanny and track across every dimension we graded, whether appearance, fitness and discipline or competence.

Create the Vision. One of my proudest possessions is a memento given to me by my headquarters senior staff in the aftermath of an historic change in the mission of Strategic Air Command that brought the Navy’s strategic missile-carrying submarines in harness with the Air Force strategic bomber and land-based missile forces. It was just a dark blue baseball cap, with the new command emblem on the front and emblazoned on the back the words, “Vision Master.” This simple but thoughtful gift conveyed with marvelous brevity my role in creating the vision of this sweeping change in mission and organization and bringing it to fruition. While you may never have the opportunity to implement change on this scale, no matter. Every unit needs a Vision Master, someone who can be both passionate about the mission and relentless in pursuing better ways to get the job done.

Characteristics

Courage. Physical courage? Yes, to be sure. I have no doubts about any of you on that score. The determination to persevere, to carry on in the face of exhaustion and pain, you’ve all been there in the past four years, on the fields of friendly strife, on the obstacle course, POW training – the military profession places a premium on strength and stamina. But here, I want to speak more to ethical courage, being true to yourself, your values and standards, holding not just yourself accountable, but your fellow cadets as well. More than that, however, I am talking about the courage of your convictions, setting things right that you know to be wrong, making the unpopular choices and decisions, standing up under fear, threats and intimidation. Here again, your people will be taking careful note, measuring you against your words and their principles, watching to see if you walk the talk, if you will march into the fire with them and for them.
Compassion. Of the nine elements of leadership on the agenda, I grew into this one last. My most comfortable persona is insular, reserved, and yes, if you haven’t guessed, judgmental. On the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator, I am a strong INTJ, that is, introverted, intuitive, thinking, judging – I like to have matters settled and move on. Empathy was clearly not my long suit, which means I was even farther away from compassion, which to me means acting on empathetic feelings, getting personally involved in resolving people problems and their consequences. While compassion is not essential to leadership, it brings your effectiveness to an entirely new level, one that not only builds bonds but makes people want to follow you into the jaws of hell. Because compassion is so closely linked to persona, and therefore to both genetic disposition and upbringing, I hold my commanders to a less demanding but nonetheless imperative standard: treating people with decency and respect.

Character. No surprise that I have saved this discussion to the end of my lesson, because it is the decisive factor, the measure that gets prospective commanders through the door for further consideration. When we say that someone is “a person of character,” we are getting at the core values I have in mind when I judge leadership potential or worth. Those values are 1) professional competence, because that speaks to discipline, experience and ability; 2) honor and ethics, two sides of the same coin that speaks to trust and dependability; and 3) morality, the soul of integrity, the trait that ensures decency, that shields against temptation, that prizes tolerance. Character is what allows me to sleep better, knowing that my commanders have the welfare of their people – my people – foremost in their concern. That is why the Cadet Honor Code is at the heart of the Academy training, why we teach ethics, why we insist on your best behavior and performance.

Because here we train leaders. And in that quest, I bid you Godspeed.
Class of 1961 Gift Dedication  
United States Air Force Academy Cemetery  
November 3rd, 2011

General and Mrs. Gould, members of your terrific leadership team and talented staff, ’T’ Thompson, my dear friend General Steve Lorenz, and other very special guests. Let me add my own welcome to you and to my classmates and their families who bring to mind so many treasured memories for me, Dorene, Brett and Lisa – but none more meaningful than today’s gift presentation. Looking across these hallowed grounds, I am keenly mindful that while this is a landmark occasion for the Class of 1961, it is also poignant for us on many levels, both personal and professional. From the latter perspective, we have come full circle from that bright September afternoon in 1958 when we assembled here to honor a man we so greatly respected. Today, we return to honor all those who lie here, but on a very personal level, to mourn those we so deeply loved.

General Gould, you and your staff have been instrumental in making this moment possible. Special appreciation goes to Duane Boyle, the Academy architect; Nancy Burns and Steve Simon of the Alumni Affairs Office; and Janet Edwards, Academy Mortuary Officer. They all took ownership of our project some 27 months ago to shepherd it through the long approval process. Our hearts are touched as well by the presence of the Cadet Honor Guard and Chorale, who bring an added measure of dignity and grace to this ceremony.

Equal acknowledgement is due Terry Storm and Al Burrell who, on behalf of the Association of Graduates, provided meticulous financial oversight and project management; we could not have been in better hands. That same accolade holds true for Jeff Gosch from JBI Construction, whose talented team led by Kevin McLaughlin and Jerry Brady lived up to their reputation for first-rate work. That excellence was mirrored by our Wings fabricator, Zahner, arguably the world’s best, represented today by Angela Bolger, who directed our project.

I must also make special note of a visionary whose faith in our class and
Uncommon Cause

iron-willed determination fueled a fundraising campaign that produced a jaw-dropping result: one hundred percent participation. Brice Jones set the bar at record height, only took “yes” for an answer, and eloquently described the outcome: a tribute to our indivisible brotherhood.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the irreplaceable role of our class president, Tom Eller, who followed every detail of this project; Mark Anderson, whose advice was invaluable in crafting the extraordinary detail you will see in The Airman statue; and Charlie Neel, whose unwavering friendship was my constant companion.

As I survey this gathering of classmates, families – especially the spouses and children of our fallen comrades – and dear friends who are so much a part of our brotherhood, I feel very privileged to speak for you today. As many of you know, I have been engaged with the gift undertaking from its inception and so can comment on its rather circuitous path. We began with Sam Hardage’s bold vision of a hotel on the Academy grounds, but the hurdles were too many and too high. We grudgingly fell back on an option from the Academy’s wish list, then at my behest switched gears and undertook an enduring tribute to our profession, to our colleagues and to our loved ones.

I must confess to a very personal stake in this outcome, one born of my E-ticket ride as an aviator spanning thirty years, three thousand hours in a dozen types of aircraft, and two ejections within six years after earning my wings. As I fell into an Alabama cornfield just off the end of the runway at Craig AFB in 1963, and five years later into the roiling seas off the coast of Vietnam, I not only had visions of my Maker, but was certain I was about to enter His kingdom. Happily, my prayers for salvation were answered, embodied in the first instance as an aging Alabama farmer who climbed down from his tractor to greet me with a sweet smile and a kind word, and in the second as a youthful para-rescue man who plucked me half-drowned from my swamped life raft.

That dual confrontation with impending death became permanently imprinted on my psyche; it changed forever how I regarded my profession, my role as husband and father, and most recently, how I came to contemplate our gift. As you might imagine, The Airman standing on the Meadow at the approach to the Memorial Pavilion has more than symbolic meaning for me – his gesture mirrors my own reach for heaven-sent rescue.

That said, the challenge was to transform my rather sketchy vision of deliverance, inspired by the closing lines of the poem High Flight, into a work of art. For that, I turned to an immensely talented sculptor in Omaha, Nebraska, with whom Dorene and I had worked some years ago. Let me now introduce John Lajba, for whom our class gift became not simply a commission, but a
true labor of love. John immersed himself in the history of the Academy and its architecture, the extraordinary ties that bind this class, the detail of our flight gear, and the abiding faith that sustained us in peace and in war. His vision and artistry quickly won the confidence of General Gould and his staff, prompting their request for a concept of a second sculpture that would join spiritually with *The Airman* to create a defining artistic theme for the cemetery.

He responded with a work that is so exquisite, and so intimately linked to *The Airman*, that the class elected to incorporate it into our gift, rather than leave its realization to the vagaries of future funding. His gleaming steel *Wings* stand on what was a vacant East Plaza of the Memorial Pavilion that now serves as a comforting sanctuary bearing the name, *Winged Refuge*.

This, General Gould, is the mark we have come here today to make on this magnificent Academy. This is the first opportunity for most in this audience to see what had only been described, what they took largely on faith, but nonetheless supported unanimously with their contributions.

I should say, in all candor, there was some debate amongst our class as to the concept and placement of our gift, and understandably so with such original works of art. But now that they are fully realized my fondest hope is that we have put any lingering doubt to rest.

What other setting on this vast campus could be more meaningful? Where else in this majestic place can one more fully grasp the sacrifice of our brothers and sisters who fall in battle or more deeply mourn all of those taken too early from our ranks and from our side: classmates, friends, husbands and wives, sons and daughters?

However familiar the glass and steel of our alma mater’s storied buildings, its sweeping terrazzo, its fields of friendly strife, it is here on this field of honor where we honor all airmen, without regard to rank or specialty. Here is where we bear the full weight of our calling, where is taken the last full measure of our devotion. Here is where we confront our mortality; here is where we embrace our destiny.

For what all of us gathered here know is that only by the grace of our Creator do we count ourselves among the living rather than with the departed. We know that there is no accounting for this blessing; we wore the same uniform as did they, marched to the same drum, swore the same oath, loved the same flag, and served the same glorious call of freedom. Yet here we gather, humble in the presence of those who are absent from our ranks, heavy of heart but proud in spirit, indivisible in brotherhood, celebrating a half-century since that June morning of 1961, come now to enshrine a tribute for the ages.

Generation upon generation will look upon this *Airman* and find comfort
in the faith that he is heaven-bound, secure in the promise from Psalm 91 inscribed in the marker for *Winged Refuge*, “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt Thou trust.”

General Gould, on behalf of the Class of 1961 I commend this gift to you and now entrust it to your keeping.
Appendix S

I began this Retrospective with a “Special Acknowledgment” to Dorene, alerting the reader to her irreplaceable role in my life and why this is very much her story as well as mine. My appreciation of her unstinting devotion was echoed by countless other admirers over the years. Perhaps none was more lovingly penned than the letter she received from her friend Sharol Metzler, which they have permitted me to reproduce here.

3/29/11

Dearest Friend, Dorene,

I thought I would get this off for your birthday, but at least it is in the right month! Like I told you via email, when Wes and I were going through the program “Seven Levels of Healing,” we were to think of someone we wanted to “Give Honor to the Enterprise.” When the facilitator said to tell someone, “Here’s what you did, here’s how it felt, here’s how it feels to remember,” you popped right in my mind! So here goes!

I first heard from you when you called to thank me for the Rome, NY, “Directory.” You said I should publish it! (Wow, a colonel’s wife thinks such an ordinary act was special!)

When we moved to D.C., you said I should be an Arlington Lady; you explained it would change my life like no other volunteer work. (Hey, you see a side of me that just seems ordinary! And guess what, I not only loved it, I was chairman for several years and therefore a member of the OWC [Officers Wives Club] Board!)

When you moved back to D.C., you asked me to dance in your fabulous show! When I asked why, you said, “I know you’ll be good just by the way you move!” (I move well? Gosh, I never thought that about myself!)

When you gave me Mary Francis for a friend? What a lifelong gift! You said you knew we’d like each other. (You think I am worthy of the gift of a special friend. Thank you, thank you!)

When you asked me to join Barbara Allen’s Spouse Issues Group! (What an accolade to think you, my most admired AF wife and friend, think I can
contribute to such a prestigious group!)

When you encouraged me to apply for the job at the Reserve Officers Association! I remember the interviewer told me, “You would improve this office by just walking in the door.” Then, knowing Devere was a student at National Defense University, he encouraged me to go for all the school offered the spouses. So, Mary Francis and I organized the first-ever Wives Seminar! (So that was a “double-decker with a cherry on top” encouragement from you!)

When you encouraged me to apply for the job post-Okinawa when the new retirement facility was being planned. (You still believed in me, and with my first marriage on the rocks this meant more than you could possibly realize at the time – someone still valued me!)

When you called, wrote, hugged, laughed, cried through my divorce from Devere, and then invited us to Omaha for Lee’s Change of Command. (On meeting my new husband Wes, you called him the smartest man alive; my heart leapt when he said, “You are right, I got Sharol.”)

There are lots more wonderful ways you have been my friend, but right now I want you to know when I remember – I feel blessed, happy, joyful, acknowledged, fortunate, mentored, valued, emotionally filled to the top with Love!!

Thank you forever, precious friend.

-s-

Sharol
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LB stands for Lee Butler (George Lee Butler). Italicized page numbers indicate photographs.

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