
The Surge – Collective Memory Project

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strategy, to talk about the strategy. We put out a document --Meghan will remember the name of it.

O'SULLIVAN: The NSVI, National Security --

FEAVER: No, National Strategy for Victory --

O'SULLIVAN: -- for Victory in Iraq.

HADLEY: Right. Which was an effort both to improve our strategy, consolidate our strategy, explain our strategy, win support in the public and Congress for the strategy. In this period of time, it was not clearly working the [02:00] way we had hoped. And you two may remember, I carried around with me all the time and updated each month the chart that showed the incidents of violence in Iraq from 2003, when the initial invasion occurred. And that line was steadily going up in this period. And I remember saying to members of the staff, "I'll believe our strategy working when that line starts going down." And this period all the way through the Surge announcement in January of 2007, that line continued to go up. So there was a sense that it had not turned yet. It was not working yet. The question about a radical new look at the strategy I think does not really begin to emerge until early in 2006. You have in February of 2006, the bombing of the [03:00] Golden Mosque in Samarra. And people think maybe this is the point where it's all going to start coming apart. And initially, it didn't. That is to say, the government was slow, but there was a response. We didn't see initially in that couple of weeks afterwards, that kind of falling away that we thought. And I was

quoted on a Sunday talk show saying, "the Iraqis have looked into the abyss and have decided to step back."

That judgment was premature. I think in April and May, finally the new government, unity government is in place, but the violence continues to escalate in this period. And it's in that time frame, in spring of 2006, that really two things happened. One is that I remember the P



So I think it's in that spring time frame, April, May of 2006, when it becomes clear

secretary said, "If you and the P

were the views as you saw it in the rest of the interagency, MNF-I [Multi National Force – Iraq], etc., at that time? Did they share that sense?

HADLEY: I didn't see -- and others can comment --but I did not see a sort of parallel demand for a strategy [13:00] review. And of course, one of the things we wanted to do with that meeting at Camp David in June of 2006, we had structured it --as you both remember, since you were involved in it --as a way to begin to kick off the discussion between the President and his principals about what were the assumptions of our existing strategy? Were those assumptions still valid? What kinds of alternatives should we begin to look at? We were really trying to kick off a presidential-led strategy review at that point, and we had a series of briefings that tried to ask and pose some of those questions.

The problem was that that meeting at Camp David really got hijacked by another idea, which was to have the President of the United States convene his meeting for a strategy review on day one at Camp David, and then fly overnight [14:00] and to appear and join Prime Minister Maliki and his cabinet in Baghdad on the second day, and have the two cabinets then have a video link and begin to talk to one another. It was a way of showing support for Maliki, support for this new government. It probably was a higher priority, but it had the effect that the President in day one was not really focused on, the kind of strategic thinking we wanted him to do, because he was kind of looking forward to his meeting in Baghdad. And of course, on day two, it was completely hijacked by a very different

agenda. So that was our effort to begin a interagencywide discussion about a new strategy and it really was stillborn because it was kind of overcome by the need to connect with the new Maliki cabinet.

FEAVER: Can you talk a little bit more about the mechanisms [15:00] you had hoped that Camp David experience would take advantage of? You talked about some outside briefings. Can you just add flesh to that?

HADLEY: Well we did in and around that time begin a process of having the President get exposed to outside experts who would have a more strategic level conversation about how we were doing in Iraq and what we might do better. So that was a piece of it. And we had a series of those kinds of interchanges between the spring of '06 and the announcements of the strategy review. There were some briefings that attempted to be provocative and to get General Casey and Ambassador Khalilzad to respond to questions that would have hopefully provoked them to take a strategic re-look. Because it was my conviction that the best way to get this done would be for Casey and Khalilzad [16:00] to decide we needed to relook the strategy. And for, of course, the senior leadership at the Pentagon to believe that they should initiate the process of doing a strategy review, so it would not have the "not invented here" reaction that Meghan and I got when we brought some constructive ideas over about Afghanistan. But that process was unfortunately not provoked by the Camp David meeting.

The second round was the so-called 50 questions exercise, where we took the kinds of questions that we had wanted to be discussed at Camp David and put them in terms of a list of questions that I was authorized by the President to put to Casey and Khalilzad in the presence of Secretary Rumsfeld. And I don't know whether Condi was on that call or not. I think not.

O'SULLIVAN: I don't think so.

HADLEY: And that was an effort, again, through some fairly hard hitting questions to see if we could [17:00] provoke Khalilzad and Casey working with, of course, Secretary Rumsfeld, to initiate their own re-look at the strategy. And it probably helped in that process, but it was really a kind of second best alternative. We got some interesting answers; we wrote them up; we circulated them to the principals; we provided them to the President; and I think it provided some grist for those informal strategy reviews that were going on in the summer both at State, at the NSC, and at the Pentagon.

FEAVER: How did the DoD and MNF-I respond to those questions. Did they sense that this was trying to stimulate a larger review?

HADLEY: I think that they were surprised by them. I think they were more pointed [18:00] than they expected. I think they were surprised to hear them from me; I don't have, exactly, that kind of M.O. or manner. But I was pushing them and they read it that way and whatever they might have thought privately, they responded as the professionals they were and provided as good answers as they could. So I

think it was a very useful process. But it was unusual, and I think it was noticed.

We were pushing them, and we needed to.

O'SULLIVAN: So around that time, there was --

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Casey was very clear on this at that Camp David meeting. He said "Yes, there is an insurgency, but the accelerant of the violence is Al-Qaeda. And Al-Qaeda's strategy was to kill innocent Shia in order to provoke the Shia to retaliate against innocent Sunnis, thereby plunging the country into a civil war, which Al-Qaeda would then seek to benefit from and bring order in the form of the Caliphate." That was his calculated strategy. Our troops were in the way of that strategy, and of course, they therefore got shot. But if you had eliminated our troops, it was not at all clear to me the violence would stop, given the strategies of Al-Qaeda and the insurgence. So that was an argument. It might have had some resonance in some places. It never had much resonance with me. [21:00]

The second thing I think that changed -- and Meghan can correct me in terms of timing -- but I remember very clearly a conversation I had with Meghan, because we believed that in order to control the sectarian violence, there needed to be a neutral law-enforcer, a neutral provider of security. And my view was of course, that's what we were doing in training and equipping the Iraqi army. It was to be a nonsectarian army loyal to the national government, trusted by the people in bringing order to the country regardless of the sectarian identity of the population in which it was deployed. That was our goal, and that's what I was focused on. And so when people talked about we need a neutral provider of security, my view was it actually wasn't going to be the US Army, it was going to be this Iraqi security force.

But Meghan convinced [22:00] 32/Header /T.viL8 (2)1 (2)0.9 Do Q BTto(2)0.9 sh22o(2)0

conduct of a war is a kind of political crisis that will make it very difficult to move forward in any strategy. Because for something as controversial as Iraq, those divisions within the military would be [26:00] used by critics of any engagement of Iraq to undermine the strategy and to force us out and to give up and basically come home.

So this was a very difficult process to manage, and I think the deliberate way we did it was not a question of delaying. It was exactly the process that needed to be gone through in order to bring us to point where we could get a pretty good consensus behind a very difficult strategy and to be confident the strategy we came up with was actually going to succeed. So the nice thing about that process was that in parallel to it, we could see whether Together Forward was going to work in either of its two incarnations. But it was pretty clear to I think all of us at the NSC after the first incarnation that it was not working. Because the metrics of success were buildings cleared, weapons seized, nothing about terrorists killed or captured. [27:00] It was pretty clear that it was an empty operation that was really not setting back the terrorists. And it was also clear that it was not permanent. That is to say, what we were clearing, we were not holding. And therefore, it was achieving none of our objectives. That was pretty clear.

So it was not that we delayed to see what the results. We proceeded with our review, in parallel those things went forward, and basically they confirmed our conviction that we needed a new strategy because what we were doing wasn't

working. And I think probably in some sense, they helped bring General Casey and Pete Pace in the military to the point that, yeah, we got to be doing something different. And probably Don Rumsfeld as well. Because to Don's credit, in the end of the day, he did agree that we needed a new strategy. And he and Bob Gates made the joint recommendation to [28:00] President Bush that Dave Petraeus should be the person who should lead our forces in that new strategy.

FEAVER: One more question along these lines and then we'll get into the September-October timeframe when the process heats up. It's also been described as --

HADLEY: I want to say one other thing. In terms of your third point about other distractions, I remember a meeting with Bob Blackwill right after I became National Security Advisor, who said to me, "Your number one job is to get Iraq right. We owe it to the men and women in uniform. It is important to our country and it's important to this President because this President's legacy is going to be about how he managed Iraq." So with that ringing in my ears for four years, whatever the other distractions, Iraq was always going to be [29:00] at the top of my agenda.

FEAVER: So another way this has been described is that this is a two-stage process. The first stage is deciding that the current strategy's not working. The second stage is figuring out what other thing we should do. And that it takes some time to make it through the first stage, but then you begin the second stage, which itself takes some time. Is that a fair description of it? And what are --

HADLEY: I would say --

FEAVER: Where were you in that --

HADLEY: I would say it was clear in April and May we needed a new strategy. And the President basically said, "Get me a new strategy." So we then started the process. And I would say the process of developing that strategy had two phases. There was this sort of informal phase that went from May through the Camp David meeting through the 50 questions and into the fall and that had these [30:00] parallel reviews in State, NSC, and D





on, which basically said, [35:00] "Surge is a good option. Here's how you would do it. You need five brigades to do it." It was focused on Baghdad. And it really validated where Meghan and her team was going. And, as I say, I then shared it with Pete Pace because I had been meeting privately with him about what options they were looking at. I wanted to make sure he had the benefit of the work Bill Luti had done. He'd already been informally seeing what Meghan was doing. So I gave a copy of that to him and ultimately had Bill share it with Meghan and his team. But for me, it validated the work and the conviction that Meghan and her team had developed in the notion of a surge. But I thought it was very important, that we needed to have a formal process where this would be brought together, that it was not going to work [36:00] if we were to end-around the process and try to jam the Surge down the throat of the military for the reasons I described.

FEAVER: So my memory of that process was that there were two questions. One was: what would we do if we wanted to do something different? And Meghan's team was moving towards the Surge as the option. But there was a totally separate question of, were there even troops available to do a surge? Because the official response we were getting was, we were fully committed. There were no more brigades available to do a surge even if you thought that was the right answer. And so that was the question that required military planning expertise, which we obviously didn't have in the Iraq shop. And so [37:00] what the Luti brief did was

establish that you could, if you were to tweak the rotation schedule, you could generate up to five brigades. Is that --

HADLEY: That's exactly correct, and that's what he did. It is interesting, if you search the record -- and I've seen it in some of the books that have been written -- the five brigade number surfaces actually before the Luti study in October. It is something Pete Pace, in my private conversations with him at one point says I said, you know, we don't have a lot of troops. So what would you have? What could you get? And Pete actually comes early on I think in the August-September timeframe, but you can check it, and says, "Well, five brigades is probably all we can do." And it's interesting that Bill Luti in a separate exercise, with'm sure reach-back to the Pentagon, comes back with [38:00] the five brigade number as well.

FEAVER: The reach back is not quite as far, so the other part of the story that maybe you're hearing for the first time is that coming out of Meghan's operation was this question: how many troops could we get? And we couldn't ask JCS for a formal answer. So I asked Lisa Disbrow, who worked for you, and did this job in JCS. She said, "Do you know how to get that number?" And she says, "Yes, I know how to do

it saleable to the military, he was going to have to couple it with an increase in end strengths of the force [41:00] so that we could ease the pressure. We had already gone to 15 months rotations from normal 12month rotations for the army. And he needed to show the military that he was willing to give them some relief from a intensive rotation schedule. I said that to him at the time, and he said, "That's right. Good idea. We will keep that in our back pocket."

So fast forward, at the December meeting with the Joint Chiefs in the Tank, when the Chief of Staff of the Army says, "Well, we're breaking the force." And the President says, "You're rightly concerned about the force, but the best way to break an army is to have it lose and we're on the threshold of losing in Iraq." And the Chief of Staff of the Army comes back and then says, "Well I need more troops." And he's shortly joined thereafter by the Head of the [42:00] Marine Corps. The Commandant of the Marine Corps says "Me too." And the President is spring-loaded to say, "Fine. We'll give you an increase in end strength and we'll announce it at the same time we announce the new policy."

FEAVER: That was also the other part of what Lisa did, is work the what it would take to relieve the pressure, how many more troops That was a separate piece of that study.

O'SULLIVAN: But let's go back, kind of reverse from December and talk about that period. You got us to the point where the President announces a formal review.

FEAVER: We haven't done the trip. We have to get him to the --

O'SULLIVAN: Oh, OK. We can take it back to the trip.

FEAVER: Yes, yes. So you talked about the separate reviews. You brought in State to that, but not DoD. Can you talk about, you brought Satterfield into the NSC review, but not also bringing in DoD.

HADLEY: [43:00] Pete Pace was separately having his own conversation with Condi Rice. And he was separately having his own conversation with me. He would come over and we would sit down and talk about the reviews. And Pete was the guy that was going to have to bring the Pentagon along in this effort. And he was my principle partner and his view at that time was, "We're not done with our internal review. Let me keep going with what I'm doing. Don't force me too soon into an interagency process." And I took that advice.

FEAVER: But no OSD either.

HADLEY: It's interesting because Don -- it's my understanding, and you'll get it from Secretary Rumsfeld -- but Don gave the lead on that review to the Chiefs and to the Chairman. So I don't know what OSD's participation [44:00] was during that period, but the person I was dealing with, at Secretary Rumsfeld's direction, was Pete Pace. And Pete Pace had been authorized by the secretary to speak with me about this review. So we were following it in the way that Pete felt it needed to go in order to be successful.

know whether he was going to have a partner in Maliki for the Surge that was beginning to take shape in his mind, or whether Maliki was [49:00] going to be a barrier. And we went to try to get an answer to that question.

FEAVER: How did you assess the trip and what you learned --

HADLEY: Well, we ought to pull out the memo, which we wrote on the airplane going back and we were all a part of. But I think the view was, Maliki is not a sectarian. This is not being done with his active support, one way or another, he does not have the wherewithal to stop it, and is not stopping it. And therefore, the Baghdad and the Iraqis were not going to solve this problem themselves. And so it gave further grist, I think, for the kind of surge strategy, and we in that memo tried to set out what we thought the consequences were of what we found. And in some sense, they begin to lay the foundation [50:00] for the argument for the Surge is my recollection of that memo.

SAYLE I'd like to follow up with a question about the trip, itself, if I could. This gives us an opportunity I think to correct the journalistic accounts, many of which suggest this was an important trip for you personally in your view of Iraq. And there are a number of anonymous quotes suggesting that your views changed because of this trip. Now that doesn't fit with what you've said. You've identified and explained that you've been thinking about changes in Iraq far beyond this, but could you talk a little bit about where that trip fits in your own personal views of the need for a strategy review?

HADLEY: I think it confirmed a lot of things. It also confirmed a lot of things that I was hearing from Peter and Meghan and others. It also shows that there's a lot of cynicism, some people about overseas travel. I think I was quoted by somebody as saying, "I should have come earlier." And I think that's right, because [51:00] the kind of job you're in, there are a lot of constraints on your ability to travel. But it was an eyeopener and I think it helped, again, set up the process towards movement towards a new strategy.

FEAVER: During that trip --

HADLEY: I'm not sure Peter and Meghan learned a whole lot on it, but I learned a whole lot on it.

FEAVER: At that point in the process, did you have an idea of what, in broad outlines, the best way forward would be in terms of the Surge option? Or was it still, we know we have to make a change, but I'm not sure which of a range of changes is the right way. Where were you in that evolutionary process?

HADLEY: Again, I was wanting to make sure we had the kind of process that would be inclusive, that would be focused on the President, that would give him the right set of options and would put him in the position to make the right decision. I think [52:00] he and I were both moving towards the Surge as the way to go, but wanting to reach that decision through this process that we had described.

At one point in this process, when the formal strategy review is launched, it goes forward on two levels. It is focused on the President; it is going to have an

important component of the President talking to his National Security principals. And then it's going to be supported by the deputies process that J.D. Crouch is running, which is going to run the numbers, do the analysis, and respond to the questions and insights of the principals and inform the principals.

So that's really how we ran that process. It was kind of a three-tier process.

[53:00] And I do remember at one point meeting with J.D. and the team, the deputies level team, that was doing that important analytical work and saying that, "You come up with a set of options for the President. It needs to reflect the full range of views, but it will contain a surge option. Because if it doesn't contain a surge option, we are not presenting the President (di 42d)-13 (e)-1T01 4 ()JT0 (n)ptis (e)And tha

guessing of the White House's. Is that a fair description? Talk a little bit about that.

HADLEY: It's fair. It's a real dilemma for a President, because we're in the middle of active hostilities, and if you suddenly, it comes out that you're rethinking the strategy, it's an incentive to your enemies who think that they're winning. And if the issue is [55:00] a review of strategy and one of the options was going to be withdrawal -- and if you looked at American public options, it was clear that one of those options would be withdrawal -- then you incentivize your enemy to step up, to start killing more and more of your men and women in uniform in order to strengthen the hands of those who say the war is lost; we ought to pull out. It also undermines the confidence of your friends and allies. It undermines the confidence of the wives and husbands and children of the men and women in uniform who serve.

On the other hand, it requires you to continue to reflect publically confidence in a strategy in which you have increasing discomfort and lack of confidence. And it is not a perfect solution. And so it leaves people to say, "Well did the President mislead the American people by indicating he was committed [56:00] to our continuing the project in Iraq?" We talked about he should talk about that, to not give a hint of the strategy review, but also to not say something that would raise credibility problems after the fact. It's one of the dilemmas you have in these situations. I think we did the right thing in terms of how we handled





already discussed, in this case, he wanted his decision to be something that all his cabinet [01:02:00]secretaries would support. And it needed -- for the reasons I said -- to be something that as much as possible all the military would support because it would not stick, it would not succeed if that were not the case for a whole series of reasons. So part of that reason was to figure out where Condi was and to start a process to try to bring her along.

FEAVER:OK, so we have a series of questions now from the J.D. meetings through to Sdarium.

HADLEY: And I hope you think -- if I'm saying something that's wrong or incomplete, you will be free to volunteer and refresh recollections here.

O'SULLIVAN: Peter, you and I can go back and forth on this[01:04:00]So the J.D.-led portion of the review, as I remember it, brought a lot of agencies to the table and it was an opportunity for them to really present the option that they had developed in their separate reviews. And so that was very constructive in that regard --

HADLEY: Correct.

O'SULLIVAN: -- it was airing of the views, but I also remember it really exposed how far apart we were And there was a little bit of tension there in the sense of, I remember that there was a desire for a consensus to emerge out of that process. And at one point, I remember you asked me to write a memo called the Emerging Consensus, which is the hardest memo that I've ever written because I couldn't figure out how we could craft a consensus out of it. And it was that brief which J.D. briefed to the Sdarium. And I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about your impression of that meeting and really where everyone's thinking [01:05:00] was, where your thinking was and the President's. Because I recall very much --

FEAVER:At that point in time .

O'SULLIVAN: Yeah, at that point in time. So I recall very much people's positions as you described them. The State Department position of kind of, let it burn out, protect

key institutions, and John Hannah or the Vice President's office being, let's focus on the Shia. And the view that I -- of course I didn't know exactly what was in

underneath that, is he is asking a series of questions that are going to put facts on the table because he's also trying to bring his other national security principals to where he thinks he's going to come out.

That's what's really going on. And it's been building over the two month period. And I'll give you some vignettes that indicate both the President's changing views, but also how he is pushing back and beginning to try to shape the views of his principals. So Don Rumsfeld for a long time has been saying, "You know, we're teaching the Iraqis to ride a bicycle and at some point, you have to take your hand off the bicycle seat." And he's been saying that [01:08:00] for months. And finally in this time frame, he says it again and the President says, "Yeah, but Don, we can't afford to have the bicycle turn over. We can't start again. So if the bicycle starts to tip, we've got to be able to grab it." That's a very big break with this notion of handover.

Another thing the President's talking about, something he and I talked about, Don -- and he said this -- Don is basically right. Casey's basically right. Ultimately, Iraq is for the Iraqis and we are going to have to hand it over. But we - - we're not in a -- but we couldn't get there from where we were. There had been another assumption that there has to be a political solution, and once there is a political solution and a real unity government in which all three communities [01:09:00] participate, then the sectarian violence will die out. But of course, the problem was that the violence was so great that you weren't going to get that kind

“They’re not going to just do what they’re already doing. They’re going to have to be doing something else.”

So in those meetings, he’s bringing people along so that in the end of the day, when he makes the decision, I think he’s increasingly confident. He doesn’t have a split within his cabinet and he’s got cabinet officers who are going to be committed to implementing it. He’s also -- or we are also bringing in this strategy review process, we’re bringing the Pentagon along. Because in my conversation with Pete Pace, he’s coming in and I’m saying to him, “If the President is going to order a surge, what’s the reaction going to be? What do we need?” And there are a couple things that Pete in this run up, in this sort of November, December timeframe -- October, November, December. He says, “Well first of all, it can’t just be a surge in the military. Where is the civilians?” [01:12:00]

And that of course gets into the work that J.D. is doing and percolates up to the principals that there needs to be a civilian surge. There needs to be a whole of government effort to bring civilian expertise to contribute to the post- conflict stabilization reconstruction. So we structure and Condi and her team put together a civilian surge. Box checked for Pace.

Another piece, Pace says, “It can’t be just American forces. The Iraqis have to do it and the Iraqis have to be willing to cooperate with the Surge if it’s going to succeed.” So as you well know, the next box is we’ve got to get Maliki and the Iraqis on board. And that process starts in --is it in --

FEAVER: Amman.

HADLEY: Is it Amman or is it Aqaba?

O'SULLIVAN: Amman.

HADLEY: Amman. It starts in the Amman meeting, where the President talks to Maliki.

[01:13:00]And I'm jumping over, but it's a very important meeting, because if you remember that meeting, Maliki says, "I have a strategy and I want to brief it." And it's a surge strategy of sorts, not perfect. Ad Maliki says, "This is the strategy and I'm going to do it. This is how we're going to bring down the violence." And at one point, the President turns to Casey and says, "George, will this work?" And George says --

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it emphasized the importance of keeping the President at the center of the kind of decision process on an issue of this import is the only way it's going to get done.

FEAVER: Two more questions about that --

HADLEY: It is a non-delegable responsibility by the President.

O'SULLIVAN: So you made an important but a kind of slightly nuanced decision about the President's leaning in this direction, hadn't decided in a way that he was ready to go ahead with it, but he was leaning in that direction. Do you remember what were the points that he wanted more validation on before taking his inclination and translating into a decision? Were there specific issues that were --

HADLEY: It's a good process because [01:17:00] the issues surface -- sometimes they surface in the way that Pete Pace says, Well I can't sell this to the Chiefs if it doesn't have the civilian -- The Chiefs feel that we're the only one engaged in Iraq. Where's the rest of the government? And we can't make this succeed if Maliki is going to continue to be a Sectarian. What are the assurances we need? So it's a good process because people raising their concerns about this particular option or other options surface the problems that indeed need to be addressed in order to fill out and get a kind of full blown, effective strategy. Some people would say it was all bureaucratic politics, paying what you need to bring players along to where the President finally ended up. I would also say it was a very good process of surfacing issues that needed to be [01:18:00] addressed if the strategy was going to succeed.

O'SULLIVAN: Could I ask a slightly more historical question, in a sense? Were there any decision-making processes before this one that helped inform your thinking about, this very kind of delicate way of handling this issue, or the President. For instance,



left; some leaned right. Casey thought we could do it with two brigades, maybe a third on call. The President [01:22:00] at the end of the day thought we were going to commit the full five brigades; that's what Petraeus clearly wanted. So there were some disagreements, but everybody was largely in the same boat, and that protected the Surge from being submerged or basically torpedoed by public disagreements among the military.

FEAVER: We want to follow up on just those points that you made with three probes.

The first one is, you had given clear instructions to the NSC overall that we were to

the administration supports. I want to say two things before I forget them. One, I want to talk about the five brigades, and I want to talk about BakerHamilton .

FEAVER: We're going to get to both of those, so don't--

HADLEY: OK, don't forget. Because --

FEAVER: We won't. No, no, no those are --

HADLEY: -- there are a couple things that are important there.

FEAVER:--

The President -- one of the reasons the President has to be in the center of this process is he's got to be so committed to it and so visibly committed to it -- and I have seen with my own eyes, in situations where it's very rough going, the President basically by his conviction and confidence holds the whole team together. So that process has to be one that produces in the President a real conviction. But also, this President in particular, he wants the whole team to be with him. He understands [01:26:00] that he gets to decide because he's the President, but this is going to have to be implemented both politically -- sold to the American people, sold to the Congress -- and then implemented effectively on the ground. Otherwise it's not going to work. And there's no point having a good option where you check the right box, but because it isn't implemented, it doesn't produce the effects you need on the ground. And it does not work. That's the problem.

So you could have gotten a faster decision -- and I've seen meetings like that. And what happens when the NSC comes in and briefs the three options, which are supposedly the options of the agencies and the agencies or principals are there -- and they have to be there to witness it -- they spend all their time saying, No, no. The NSC didn't quite characterize my option the way I would have framed it. And they end up re-framing and re-framing the options, and you get mush. In the end of the day, I think the best process is to take these cabinet secretaries who the President has proposed and who the Senate has [01:27:00] confirmed and who the Congress has appropriated the money and the funds and allow them to speak



force. What do you need?" And they say, "We need, roughly, ~~aim~~ increased end strength to give people hope that they're not going to be doing these kinds of long service, short rest deployment cycles forever."

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HADLEY: You know, it's a mystery. And I think Bob Woodward's book sort of publicizes Jack Keane's view of things. And I was not aware of all he was doing. I don't know how much he was spending time with you folks. For me, when I finally meet with Jack Keane, the decision has largely been made. We have a speech—a draft of the speech The President would have given it on the 10th or the 11th or whenever it was, except he wanted to hold off until January so that Gates can have an opportunity to see things on the ground. And Keane comes in and gives us a speech gives us his briefing. And for me it does two things: [01:35:00] one, it validates what we have come up with. It's not that it's the author of the Surge we've already developed the Surge option at that point. But it's very much along the same line. So that's good. It's a validator. And we don't have a lot of people who were going to be external validators, and he's going to be one.

But there's a problem. His is a seven or an eight brigade surge. Ours is a five brigade Surge. We haven't talked about it; it's actually five brigades plus Marine Corps battalions to, because— one digression. The President does a very smart thing. Because one of the last issues in the Surge discussion is, do you do Baghdad now and Anbar later? Do you do Anbar now and Baghdad later? Or do you do both together, which requires more troops: five brigades for Baghdad and some battalions of Marines for Anbar. And the President wisely [01:37:00] decides, again very strategic, he's going to address his biggest problem, which is Baghdad and the sectarian violence there, and take advantage of his biggest opportunity,

country. From where I sat, that's [01:38:00] the role he played and it was a very useful role.

FEAVER: In General Keane's meeting with the President was also Eliot Cohen and Steve Biddle and I believe one other general, perhaps two --

HADLEY: Wayne Downing.

SAYLE: And Barry McCaffrey.

FEAVER: And Barry McCaffrey. Much of that discussion was about how commanders in chief in wartime make decisions that maybe run against what generals are wanting

FEAVER: The other big event of that week is the release of the Baker-Hamilton report. So talk to us about its role in shaping or influencing the Iraq Surge decision.

HADLEY: Baker-Hamilton's -- the reason we got that was it was pretty clear when we set it up that we might need to have a new strategy and that it would be controversial. And that it would be helpful if we could harness some [01:40:00] respected national leaders and national security Republicans and Democrats to sort of construct a landing pad out there in the public debate that we could go to when and if we decided to change the strategy. So that was the purpose of it. It was in some sense to clear the way and to begin clearing the space for the strategy where we would end up.

If you remember, we provided a lot of input to the Baker-Hamilton committee, which was a lot of the thinking that resulted in our changing strategy and going with the Surge. And a lot of it is reflected in their report. If you look at their recommendations, and one or the other of you did the rack-up 11 (s)](rt 9 re)-4 U ()T8p-(r)

the phone about the Ex-Ord that the Secretary of Defense is going to sign, committing the troops. And it's an issue of what we say about it in the speech. Pentagon preference is five brigades available, only two committed, three more on call. Something like that. Or do you commit the five brigades now? [01:46:00]

I have a recollection of talking to Meghan, who I knew was having discreet conversations with General Petraeus and others, and that I was delighted that she was, but for a lot of reasons, I didn't want to know anything about them. And I said to Meghan, "How do you think General Petraeus -what would be his druthers?" And she said (,)-41 (o)1 (t)-7 ((t)9)1 (o)11 (i)3 (5a-0.003 Tc 0.002 Tw -31t)3 (o)1 ()fo

HADLEY: I don't think he entered it in any formal way. I never talked to him. I didn't talk to him even after he became the commander out there, because I thought it did not help him if it became known that he was getting phone calls from the National Security Advisor in the White House. The Doug Lute arrangement was different. I think he was behind the scenes cheering on the advocates for the Surge. And he had relations with a lot of people and I think there was a lot of phone calls going on, as well they should. But he did not formally enter the scene [01:48:00] until he was designated as the commander.

Now, he had of course played a role because he had come to see the President about the work he had done at TRADOC-- Training and Doctrine Command, I think that's where he was to write the manual on counterinsurgency. So everybody knew where he stood and everybody knew that he was a leading candidate to implement the new strategy on the ground. But he did not --my recollection -- he did not play in any formal way and he was smart. And it allowed him to be loyal. And so that he had the honor of in fact being both Don Rumsfeld and Bob Gates's candidate to lead our forces in the new strategy. And it was also very important to the President that the new strategy was not a rejection of the leaders who had pursued the old strategy. So he wanted this to be something that George Casey could support and not be [01:49:00] a critique of George Casey. And this was also Pete Pace's objective was well. And he said to me a number of times, "I want this end up being George Casey's surge." Well, in some sense it never was

going to be George Casey's surge, but the point was, he wanted Casey to embrace it, and that the change, not to be a repudiation of Casey. And the President was clear on that too, that whatever problems we had in Iraq, the President took responsibility for. And if you remember that speech he makes in January of '07, he

FEAVER: Not a specific one --

HADLEY: Go ahead --

FEAVER:-- I have a specific question that I'll ask.

HADLEY: Well hold, let's do Meghan first. Go ahead Meghan.

FEAVER: Are we on or off?

O'SULLIVAN: No, I think it's for [01:54:00] --

HADLEY: The private session?

O'SULLIVAN: Yeah. But generally factually --

SAYLE I guess I would like to ask one question --

HADLEY: Please--

SAYLE I'd like to know how regional politics played in this November, December period,

how much attention you or the President or the strategy review group were giving

regional politics. Both American allies in the region, what they thought of the

possibilities of the Surge and how the United States viewed the Surge in relation

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terms of the Surge I think that was partly because he was a bit conflicted. Don Rumsfeld, his oldest and closest friend, was clearly not in the early days of this process on board with the Surge. He allowed his staff to participate in this process and to express their own views. My own take is that he thought the Surge was the right thing, [01:56:00] that he did not want to be the advocate of it because of his relationship with Don, that he kind of pushed things in that direction, pushing Jack Keane forward at various times in the process. And I also like to think that he liked the process that I was running and was probably providing his views privately to the President, one on one, which I think was wholly appropriate. So I think he was initially a closet supporter, but a supporter nonetheless. But the notion that somehow the Surge was brought to you by the Vice President, as some people say, is not right.

There's one other thing I want to say about the President, and it was a question about my own views. I'm interacting with the President all the time in this period as I'm shaping my views, shaping his. He's shaping [01:57:00] his views, helping to shape mine. It's a very constructive process. But there's one thing that needs to be recorded for history and that is right about the time he's clearly going to head and make the Surge decision. And one of you may well be there, and if so, you can add to the comments. He looks up and he says, "Hadley, is this going to work?" Were you there [pointing to Meghan O'Sullivan] ?

O'SULLIVAN:

HADLEY: In my recollections, I said, "Mr. President, I think it will work, but it's the last chance we have to get this right." And he says, "Well that's good." And he said,

FEAVER: So two last questions. One is the question about --

HADLEY: We didn't spend a lot of time thinking about -- and I think it's largely -- and you folks may know better -- I think it's largely because we largely lost the region on the Iraq project. It was not going well. And there were a lot of reservations about the decision in the first place. Iran was viewed as a problem because they were doing things that killed our people. And one of the things that we did in the execution of the Surge was to push back on that and both expose it and also push back on it. And I think stop, [02:00:00] because we made it clear that we were prepared to hold Iran accountable, and we did that in a couple very symbolic ways to show that we could get to their people and we would if this didn't stop. And I think it helped.

FEAVER: The other question is, Britain and Tony Blair, haven't talked about that, our closest ally in the fight.

HADLEY: Well Blair was, I think of any world leader the closest confidant of the President. And Blair made his own decisions on Iraq based on his understanding and judgments about what was in the best interest of his country. His view happened to coincide heavily with the President's, and that was a source of enormous comfort and strength for the President. [02:01:00] And I remember in a Camp David meeting before the President made the decision to go into Iraq in 2003, he had had a one-on-one conversation with Tony Blair and he came back to the conference room at the Laurel Lodge at Camp David and he said, "Blair told me

that if the diplomacy fails and the end of the day we have to go to war to remove Saddam, he's with us. He's with us." And you could see the sense of relief that the President felt when he knew he would have Tony Blair at his side if we had to do this. And I think that kind of relationship continued throughout this period.

FEAVER:But not a factor in the