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SMOOTHING THE PEACEFUL TRANSFER OF DEMOCRATIC POWER

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INTERVIEW WITH ANDREW CARD

White House Chief of Staff for President George W. Bush
Deputy Chief of Staff for President George H.W. Bush

Conducted by Martha Joynt Kumar
Director, White House Transition Project

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WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

The White House Transition Project. Established in 1999 to provide information to incoming White House staff members so that they can hit the ground running, The White House Transition Project includes a group of presidency scholars from across the country who participate in writing essays about past transitions and the inner workings of key White House offices. Since its creation, it has participated in the 2001, 2009 and now the 2017 presidential transitions with the primary goal of streamlining the process and enhancing the understanding of White House operations. WHTP maintains an important, international dimension by consulting with foreign governments and organizations interested in improving governmental transitions. http://whitehousetransitionproject.org

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For the White House Transition Project
Martha Joynt Kumar, *Director* Terry Sullivan, *Exec. Director*
(202) 285-3537 (919) 593-2124
http://whitehousetransitionproject.org

For the Baker Institute
Mark P. Jones, *Senior Fellow*
(713) 348-2107
http://BakerInstitute.org

WELCOME REMARKS

October 18, 2016

Andrew Natsios, *Director, Scowcroft Center for International Affairs*
Warren Finch, *Director, George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum*
Martha Joynt Kumar, *Director, White House Transition Project*

MR. NATSIOS:

I am Andrew Natsios, the director of the Scowcroft Center for International Affairs, and I would like to welcome you here to this conference on presidential transitions.

I will let our other institutes that are participating in this introduce themselves, but let me just make a few introductory comments about this particular conference.

We are all focused heavily on the presidential race in the United States. One poll said that 50 percent of the American people were experiencing very high levels of stress over this election, psychological stress, which was very interesting to see. I have to say I am in that 50 percent myself, so it is not simply the average voter but people who have been involved in Washington who are nervous.

We are not, however, seeing the fact that the world is in turmoil. How do we know that? The president of the United States in his last address to the United Nations said the liberal international order, which by the way it's a small *L*—do not confuse liberal international order with liberalism or conservatism within the United States—is unraveling. It is unraveling. Some of us think it is collapsing, and there is nothing to take its place and that is very dangerous.

Two, the traditional treaties that have governed American behavior are under attack in Europe. The European experiment is facing its greatest challenge since the European Union was formed or the European Community was formed after World War II. One statistic from the United Nations, from the United Nations High Commission on Refugees—and the man who was the high commissioner for the last, I think, 10 years is going to be the new UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon's successor, who is the former prime minister of Portugal, Guterres. And he reports that we have the largest number of refugees and internally displaced people, we used to say since World War II. Its 65 million people. It's now bigger than World War II. This is the largest displacement of population in world history.

If you put aside all of the other value judgments, that statistic, more than any other, should explain that the world is in turmoil. There are only 22 million people in Syria. You can't blame Syria for the 65 million people. There are conflicts around the world.

As a result of this, but international order is destabilizing and as we know it and there is a risk, at very high risk in my view, that there could be incidents that could lead to

unpredictable results. So I think this presidential transition is actually far beyond any since probably Harry Truman took over as president.

I would say this is—the only comparable time period would be the post-World War II period, when Truman took over with only having been vice president for, I think, six months, never having been briefed, for example, that the nuclear weapon existed. He didn't—he had never gotten a briefing as vice president of that, and he was thrust into a world in chaos following the Second World War.

So this is not just an academic exercise. We are doing this in order to enlighten the process from people who have gone through this experience before and those of us at the Bush School, all of us are practitioners who have had senior-level positions and have been through these transitions. And, of course, we have my good friend Andy Card, who was chief of staff, and prior to that deputy chief of staff in the first Bush administration, who will be speaking, who has extraordinary experience in the transition from one administration to another.

So I look forward to this personally, but I think a videotape is being made of this and will be on our website so people who can't come from Washington to watch in person can watch this on our website, and we will certainly advertise this in Washington as well. So thank you all for coming this morning.

MR. FINCH:

Well, I'll say it. Howdy. I'm Warren Finch. I'm the director of the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum. On behalf of the library and museum, I would like to welcome both the audience here, the one that will be watching us and the participants, to the Bush Center.

Early in his offshore career, President Bush ordered several rigs from R. G. LeTourneau. These rigs were a new design of a jack-up rig with three legs, which LeTourneau believed would provide greater stability in the ocean.

Like those three-legged rigs, the Bush Library and Museum, the Bush School, and the Bush Foundation provide stability and make the Bush Center stable, and together we promote scholarship, research, and education programming, with President Bush and the former first lady, Barbara Bush, as our anchor to the windward.

This is why we are so excited that the White House Transition Project is here at the center, and we welcome back Andy Card, also Terry Nichols—Tim Nichols, sorry, and Terry Sullivan and Martha Kumar, with whom we have had a long partnership here at the Bush Library and a very long partnership at the National Archives, going back to when my hair was all black and I weighed about 175 pounds, many, many years. So we hope to continue that partnership and that road to discovery. So thank you and welcome.

MS. KUMAR:

Thank you very much, Andrew and Warren. This is our third conference and the final one in a series about presidential transitions. And it's the third one at presidential libraries in Texas.

Since 2000, we have worked with the National Archives and Records Administration and Office of Presidential Libraries to develop information on White House operations and presidential transitions. And thank you for all the support that you have given and that the headquarters in Washington has provided us with.

Our conferences have all have the same theme, which is presidential transitions in a bipartisan setting.

Presidential transitions is one area where you can see both sides working together and doing so really in a bipartisan way. I have been in a series of conferences in Washington that have, let's say maybe they have 40 people, but a large number of those people are people from both the Trump and Clinton transitions, and they have been able to work together in a very operational, functional way. Because everybody recognizes the need to have a smooth transition because it is a time of vulnerability.

In 2008, well, the 2008 transition, but on January 20, the day of the Inauguration, while the presidents—the incoming and outgoing, Bush and Obama—were having their traditional coffee in the Blue Room, you had both sides meeting, the Homeland Security, the secretaries of State and Defense, Secretary Gates, who was being held over, and Homeland Security, Chertoff and incoming Janet Napolitano, and they all worked together over in the Situation Room at the same time on a threat on the Inauguration. And they thought it was real, they had worked on it over the weekend, and then fortunately it vanished. But it was a stark reminder to everybody that there is a great vulnerability.

So we focused our first transition conference at the George W. Bush Library, looked at what was done in 2008, because that transition out of office of President George W. Bush was the best that everybody had experienced, because they pulled together information in a way that had not been done previously.

President Bush started in December of 2007 talking to Andy Card about the necessity of preparing for the transition, and then he asked Josh Bolten to lead it, and Steve Hadley, who was the national security advisor, was working on a series of 40 memoranda for the new team, looking at crises in countries around the world and putting together information for them about each one, so that the new people would have information. And he and his staff worked on them and moved them through the intelligence community, foreign policy, defense, and President Bush himself worked on them ultimately.

So much was done early, and they thought outside the normal realm or structure. They didn't wait until the election had come or was nearly there. They began in the spring, Josh Bolten began in the spring or the early summer, brought in representatives of McCain and Obama, to work on security clearances and that sort of thing and some of the other procedural points that would need to be completed.

So they started very early and that has now been memorialized in two laws, in 2010 and 2015 transition legislation.

So we're happy to be here and have you be presented with a crisis that is a scenario and hopefully that's something that won't take place, but definitely is in the realm that it could.

In our second conference at the LBJ Library was the national security one, and this one digs down further with crisis management and we would like to thank all of our partners here.

Andrew, thank you very much as director of the Scowcroft Center, you have been interested in our work from the beginning and were supportive of it, as has Don Bailey, who we have been working with for several months now. And General Welch, thank you, too, for the George Bush School of Government Service and its support.

We got generous funding from the Moody Foundation of Galveston and through coordination with Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy. We have gathered information for candidate transition teams that we have been providing to both the Trump and Clinton transitions, and we have been working with private institutions in Washington that also have been interested in transition practices and getting things started early.

We have been fortunate to have the interest and counsel of Allan Matthews and Jamie Williams at the Moody Foundation and today with the Baker Institute, Melissa Griffin is here representing the institute, and she has provided us with gracious logistical support.

And we have our own staff we would like to thank. They keep us straight on course, including our research coordinators Heather Ba and Brandon Schneider, and our researcher Blake Ledger, our technical coordinator Michael Scribner, who brings information to the transition teams and those interested in our project through our White House Transition Project website.

The person who makes the project work by organizing the work force and developing important segments of our intellectual content is Terry Sullivan, our executive director. He organized our conference here, as he did much of the other two conferences at the Bush and LBJ, as well as directing two studies that our researchers are working on.

They are studies of the President's Daily Diary, which is a document kept by the National Archives. And it is a compendium of reports that tracks the president's daily work life and who he meets with and where he does, and Terry is heading two studies here of routines of a president that he adopts during—or she adopts during—their first hundred days and then how presidents manage crises, whether their daily work days substantially change during a crisis or are they pretty much the same. And the hint is that they really are pretty much the same. Presidents have things that they have to do, no matter whether there is a crisis going on or not.

Let us join in and welcome Andy Card, who is the perfect person to set our discussion on crisis management, because he knows the government from the position of an elected official in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, as director of intergovernmental relations for President Reagan. And deputy chief of staff and secretary for transportation for President George H.W. Bush, and serving six years as the chief of staff for President George W. Bush. He is the second-longest-serving chief of staff in modern history.

And, as we will see, he knows crises from all of these perspectives, and we are fortunate in having him at the position that he was in the Bush administration, because he had learned a lot. And he will talk about what he had learned in his various earlier positions, where he dealt with crises from a variety of perspectives, and so we welcome Andy.

And thank you for bringing his wife, the Reverend Kathleene Card. She knows the crises that he has experienced and served as his support during all of his White House years and for the 50 years of their marriage, which they are celebrating.

And you were lucky that she can provide you with spiritual guidance, something that those in the White House can use to deal with their hard days. So welcome Andy and let's have our discussion.

(Applause.)

A CONVERSATION ON CRISES AND TRANSITIONS

October 18, 2016

Andrew Card Jr., *Former Secretary of Transportation; Former White House Chief of Staff*
Martha Joynt Kumar, *Director, White House Transition Project*

AC: As Martha is getting wired, I will say howdy as well.

It's great to be back at Texas A&M, and it is a great privilege to be on this stage. I have great respect for President Bush and Barbara Bush, who made this possible, and I have great respect for the Bush School that hosts us and allows for the Scowcroft Institute to be well staged and contributing to the future, and also the work of the Archives because the great legacy of service as demonstrated in that building over there at the Archives.

And I encourage everyone to visit presidential libraries and visit this one in particular, because George H.W. Bush probably was the most productive one-term president in all of history.

Thank you, Martha.

MJK:: Let's talk about decision-making structure, because when you all are going to discuss the particular crisis, what is the structure that you are going to be working with? How did you set up a general decision-making structure during the transition? I assume it was during the transition in 2000 that you set it up.

AC: The White House bureaucracy is the only bureaucracy in Washington that is not dictated by Congress. The president has a relatively free hand in organizing a White House staff to serve the need of helping the president do his job.

Now, there are some congressionally authorized aspects that become obligations, like a National Security Council staff, domestic policy council staff, but the president has the flexibility to staff the White House kind of at his or her whim, whereas the rest

of government cannot be staffed without somebody else giving you permission, a confirmation process.

So it's really what are the needs of the president, and I quote a professor from Harvard, Roger B. Porter, who described the organization of the White House and the needs or functions: the care and feeding of the president, policy formulation, and marketing and selling were the three definitions or responsibilities that have to be done at the White House no matter who the president is, what their philosophy is, what party they represent.

And the care and feeding is by far the biggest challenge, and it's the one that nobody talks about, but you don't want presidents worrying about getting a meal, having their bed made, getting in the car with gas in it and getting on the plane and having their luggage not getting lost. That's the care and feeding, and it is a big part of the job.

Policy formulation is what you all argue about. It's terribly exciting to argue about it. And in the White House, they argue about policy as well. And that's a good thing, that's what the president wants. And he has the ability—or she would have the ability—to appoint the best and the brightest and, by definition, those very competent, intelligent people have high expectations that they are right and their colleague is wrong. So you're kind of guaranteed that by having good people at the White House who are smart, there is going to be a debate. And that's important because the president should never get monolithic counsel. He should get diverse counsel, because presidents make tough decisions and they don't want to make the easy decisions, and the chief of staff should not allow them to.

But then there is the reality of not just debating the policy but reacting to the needs of the world that demand a policy response, and sometimes a tactical or at a minimum a strategic response. And those end up looking like a crisis.

And so every president has to think about how will they work with a crisis because most of the challenges of a presidency are not the ones that are anticipated; they are the ones that show up.

And prior to becoming president, Ronald Reagan had a crisis that had unfolded. He had actually two very large crises that had unfolded. One was the Mariel boatlift in the 1980s, where literally thousands of Cubans came to the United States, and what do you do with them? And that was a foreign policy challenge that had domestic ramifications, and that was a challenge for President Carter, but it was a lingering challenge for President Reagan. Now, he had the benefit of knowing that one before he took office.

Then there was another crisis that he knew about because it was a dominant part of the news of the day, and that was the Iranian hostage crisis. And we were all watching *Nightline* and day 53, day 147, we knew the hostage crisis. And so President Reagan knew about that crisis. What he didn't know was the crisis would present an opportunity on day one, because as soon as he became president, the hostages were released.

And that wasn't a crisis of concern, but it was a crisis of confidence for other people. And the president had to deal with that. He had a team around him, and James A.

Baker III, his chief of staff, who helped organize the White House with Ed Meese and Mike Deaver, who made sure the president had an infrastructure in place literally on day one to deal with that crisis of opportunity, which was hostages coming home, without creating a climate that would have compromised national security.

But the crisis that—every president has to be prepared to deal with a crisis, and I guess the crisis that no one expected to have to deal with came soon after President Reagan took office, and that's when he was shot.

I can honestly say I am not sure that Jim Baker or Ed Meese and Mike Deaver actually had a game plan for what happened if the president got shot. But that was a crisis, and it was a real crisis, and it manifested itself in a way that scared America, scared the world. And so they had to learn how to deal with that, kind of without any preparation.

Now, there is a continuity of government requirement, understand that happens, and I am not even sure it was implemented according to the plan that day, but it was a crisis.

And then you had to deal with the other crises that came up that you would think about but you would say, that won't happen, and I remember it was, don't hold me to this, but I think that it was March of that year when Reagan was shot, and that was a challenge. And then the real crisis for President Reagan came when he hired me to come to the White House in August of 1983.

And then in October of 1983 there was a horrible bombing, a horrible, horrible bombing, I think it was October 17, so almost within the window of where we are today. And that's when the greatest number of Marines died, with the exception of Iwo Jima, on one day, and there were 240 Americans killed in Lebanon because of two truck bombs, suicide bomber truck bombs.

And that created an international crisis. Now that wasn't within the first hundred days of President Reagan's tenure, but it was during the first hundred days of my tenure at the White House. So I got to witness how that changed the nature of the Reagan presidency, because the White House had been a very open environment, relatively easy to park around the White House, relatively easy to get in and out of buildings and all of a sudden—

MJK: And drive on Pennsylvania Avenue. It was open.

AC: Pennsylvania Avenue turned into dump trucks blocking driveways and concrete barriers going up around the White House. And the world wondering, number one, how will America respond? Number two, is there more that will come and who did it?

So that was a crisis that I got to witness. But my job was intergovernmental affairs, so I was dealing with governors and statewide elected officials. And they didn't see the crisis the same way we were living it at the White House, where brand new security arrangements were being made.

MJK: How did they see it?

AC: Governors—governors were actually still concerned about the Mariel boatlift, because they were dealing with Cubans on their property. I remember Governor

Clinton having challenges with the Mariel boatlift, the people that were staying there. And the challenges of President Reagan having been shot was still a lingering concern. But it was then about the economy. And the economy was in the doldrums, it was a sleepy economy, and we were trying to readjust the economy. And Congress was of the opposite party of the president, and so there was a challenge of governing.

And President Reagan addressed that problem by being a very good leader, as a governing official. He invited people to be part of the solution. He had the courage to compromise, and that made a big difference.

But in terms of crisis management, my first experience to witness a White House in crisis where I could be there either as an observer or a contributor to a solution was a kind of an obscure event that happened where a fire—a bomb went off in a hotel in Puerto Rico and there was a fire. And I remember it being at a time when I got called back to the White House, and Puerto Rico is part of the United States, so it fell under my responsibilities in intergovernmental affairs, I had the Puerto Rico account. And I got called to go to the White House Situation Room, the very first time that I had been in the White House Situation Room, and I saw the professionals that were there, most of them military, some intelligence officers, and a White House infrastructure from the National Security Council staff.

And I remember that it was my first appreciation for what we call the fog of war, because there was a lot of misinformation. And I felt, observing it, that there were sometimes overly emotional responses to a question rather than an objective response to a question. And I learned from that experience how we were reacting and how the myth ended up being close to reality and how the reality was not as bad as the myth, but we had reacted to the myth.

And I think we actually compounded the fear around the fire in that hotel in Puerto Rico.

MJK: What were the facts of the fire? What were you worried about? A terrorist attack?

AC: Well, the worry was that it was a terrorist attack. There were Puerto Rican terrorists. The United States Congress had been attacked years before, and there were Puerto Rican terrorists who were fighting for independence in Puerto Rico. And there was some thought that this was a larger movement than in fact it was.

And so there was this kind of—I don't want to call this overreaction, but there was a hyperreaction to what could have been a terrorist act, when it probably wasn't quite as contrived as the myth. And it turned out to be a one-off.

But it nevertheless was a wonderful experience to witness how the White House functions during a crisis that wasn't anticipated. And I did lean on that experience many other times, helping presidents meet their responsibility to address crises.

And crises don't always have to be a terrorist attack or a bombing or a plane flying into a building. A crisis is something that you don't anticipate that shows up. And earthquakes—usually, there's not a big signal that an earthquake is coming. With a hurricane, there's a pretty good signal. An earthquake, bingo, they show up. And we had a crisis of earthquakes.

But that experience, dealing with that Puerto Rican fire, where there was a terrorist nexus, maybe, did teach me an awful lot about how to deal—how to work with others to present an objective opportunity for sound advice to be given to a president, rather than to have a president be pitched from one position to another position by emotions that weren't grounded in knowledge.

MJK: Can we look at the fog of war, and tell me what the elements are there? Where are you getting information? How do you test for the authenticity of information?

AC: One of the greatest challenges is to recognize what information at the time that you get it is factual. And the fog of war is real and it always shows up. I don't think there has ever been a crisis where there wasn't misinformation. The question is, how do you accept the information? When do you act on it, even though you may not know that it's factual, and when do you have the courage to step back and say, is this the fact, before I act? And that's a tricky balance.

With regard to the Puerto Rican question, it was really, is there any intelligence? Was there any information? It turns out a phone call had been made to warn about the attack or warn about the fire. And it was ignored by the fire departments in Puerto Rico. Of course, we didn't know that, sitting in the White House Situation Room.

So there was the whole question, is it just a regular fire? Was it really an attack? Was it just an angry employee? Was it orchestrated?

And we found that the information that was coming in was not very reliable. And we were getting more information—and this is before, really, cable TV came into—cable television wasn't really invented yet or it was nascent. And we were not getting real information, except from the broadcast networks. And the—candidly, Puerto Rico wasn't seen as a great place to collect information anyway. So we didn't have a serious intelligence network in Puerto Rico paying attention to terrorists. So we did get a lot of misinformation, and I think that was the challenge.

I would recommend that there always be someone who, in a crisis group, who has the courage just to question information. Question information. You don't need a cynic, you just need someone who can be objective. And I think it's good to task someone with the responsibility of objectivity, just to be kind of a conscience, to help keep emotions from driving a solution.

MJK: So how do you—today, you have—since '96, there have been cable, Fox and MSNBC, in addition to CNN, at the White House. And that's ever present in any kind of crisis, and they want to pick up information from anybody who was on the street or has a video, and it's treated in the same way almost as information from government sources. So how do you deal with the pressures that come from that, with people thinking that whatever is being shown on cable is real, and deciding yourself whether it is or not? How do you test that?

AC: I think it's very important that some people at the White House have peripheral vision. Most people who work at the White House are hired because they have outstanding tunnel vision. They're experts. And they exercise tunnel vision frequently with blinders on, and they see the world like this. And it's important to have a few people at the White House who see the world as it is and how it's reacting to this.

That balance is important, because the president cannot ignore what the emotions of the populace are, or the fears of an enemy or the fears of a friend are. And so the president needs to have the benefit of someone with peripheral vision.

But the people with tunnel vision are responsible for helping to provide a solution and, even before that, an understanding of what's going on. So you need both. And I do think that whenever you have a crisis team, it's important that you have someone with peripheral vision on that team, to put things in the context not necessarily of the crisis, but of the emotional connection to the crisis or the strategic connection to the crisis that may exist from another party.

For example, jumping way ahead to a crisis that we all remember, September 11, 2001, I was very impressed that President George W. Bush, without being told, as we're on *Air Force One* flying from Sarasota, Florida, to Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, he says, "I'm going to call President Putin and tell him, don't overreact. We're not looking for an excuse to attack you, don't you look for an excuse to attack us." And that was having good peripheral vision and understanding things in the context, and doing something that he should have been asked to do by his staff, but recognizing somebody else is looking at this and they may see something different than I'm seeing and I don't want them to see the wrong thing. So I think peripheral vision is very important.

MJK: So what positions in a White House do you think that you want to hire people for peripheral vision? One, of course, is going to be the chief of staff. What about the national security advisor?

AC: The national security advisor, the press secretary, I would say the domestic policy advisor should have good peripheral vision. The head of legislative affairs doesn't need to have as much peripheral vision as a chief of staff, but they've got to have a good sense of what's happening as it relates to how members of Congress react to what's happening. Because their peripheral vision is not vision, it's emotional. They hear from people about concerns very quickly. So those would be the big positions, I would say.

The national security—the head of the national security team should manage people with phenomenal tunnel vision. But the national security advisor to the president should have peripheral vision about the nature of the international challenge as it relates to what's happening in the world at any time. So they have to have a good peripheral vision, whether it's dealing with the Falun Gong immolation in Tiananmen Square, which happened early in the administration, and that becomes a mini-crisis. How are the Chinese going to react to a Falun Gong member immolating himself, or two people, as it turned out, in Tiananmen Square? It doesn't sound like a crisis, but an overreaction can turn it into a crisis. And a national security advisor should tell the president, you'll be getting a lot of e-mails or messages from this because of this very emotional, terrible thing that happened, but do not overreact to it. So that's something that I would say.

But you find those all the time. We had the problem of a plane going down in Hainan Island very early in George W. Bush's administration, where an EP-3 intelligence-collecting plane was forced down to an island off the coast of China. And it was not a good time. It was a very stressful time. And Chinese leadership

were not around to respond to the challenge. And so you're making phone calls and nobody is answering the phone.

The good news is, our national security advisor had excellent peripheral vision and put things in context and wouldn't let us just see it as an act of war that required a response of war. Instead, it was a deliberate response in trying to understand where is the fog, how do we get the fog to lift, what's really going on, and let's open lines of communication.

MJK: And had you set up—because that was early in the administration, and it's similar to the crisis that we're going to be working on—what kind of decision-making structure had you set up for crises? Do you set up a separate structure early on?

AC: When I organized the White House to come in with President George W. Bush, I had had the benefit of having worked at the White House under Jim Baker, Ed Meese, Mike Deaver. Jim Baker as chief of staff, alone. Then Don Regan as chief of staff, then Howard Baker as chief of staff, then Ken Duberstein, then John Sununu as chief of staff, then Sam Skinner as chief of staff, and then Jim Baker as chief of staff. So I had seen all of the organization in the White House.

And I did come to the office with an expectation that competent people who have emotional stability are needed in certain positions. And some of the positions are not well known.

Deputy Chief of Staff Joseph Whitehouse Hagin. Most people do not know his name. Joe Hagin was deputy chief of staff, and I brought—he was literally the first person that I asked to join President George W. Bush's team. And I put him in charge of all of the things that you don't know about at the White House. He was in charge of making sure the advance team served the president well when the president traveled, made sure that the Secret Service were coordinated, made sure that *Air Force One* activities were coordinated, made sure that the bunkers where the president has to go in case there's a real challenge, that we knew where they were, somebody else knew where they were and how to get the president there. He had to know how do you communicate with people during times of stress? What stability do we have to have so that people don't worry about infrastructure during a time of stress? Will the phones work? Will the Internet work? Whatever you have to do to communicate. So I call those the black programs of the White House, the ones that people don't see.

And I leaned on Joe Hagin, who had served Vice President Bush, then served at the White House under the Reagan-Bush administrations and George H.W. Bush's administration, I brought him in to pay attention to all of that, what I call the infrastructure of support that allowed for people to have the best communications at the time that they need it most and have competent people around, and make sure that the military, the Secret Service, and all of the agencies that help the president carry out responsibilities are there.

So that would be one thing. I would look for a Joe Hagin that could be competent, quiet, emotionally grounded, and really understand what the resources were and how to use them.

MJK: And he was in place then?

AC: I brought in Joe—literally, he was the first person that I talked to about joining the staff when I became White House chief of staff, and I was the first person named by George W. Bush after the election to put together a White House staff team.

MJK: And so did he work on putting together a crisis plan during the transition?

AC: He put together not necessarily a crisis plan, but a map of crisis support that you could lean on. He had the benefit of having—first of all, he was an EMT, so he was kind of a firefighter by training, and he understood the need to be cool, calm, and collected. Number two, he had been very involved in the relationship with the Secret Service and the White House Military Office and the aspects of the White House that provide the infrastructure for information and knowledge. And he also knew how to keep his mouth shut, and he didn't scare people when he talked with them. So he was a calming influence.

But did we put together a crisis management team on day one? I think that every team at the White House is a crisis management team because the nature of the job is there's a crisis every day. But Joe Hagin, I think, probably more than most paid attention to what it means to have a crisis team, and I had confidence that he knew how to do it.

MJK: In 2008 there were tabletop exercises. There was one in Chicago that the Obama people used as a way to develop their decision making on crises. And then there was one in Washington that was well reported. And now in law, it's required during the transition. Did you all do any of that when you were coming in in 2000?

AC: In 2000 we did not do any tabletop exercises. We were not invited to. President George W. Bush, as you mentioned, as a courtesy, opened up the transition process for President Obama and/or his opponent. They had the equal opportunity to understand what a transition would be. And I think that was a great gift to presidents that President George W. Bush gave, because now it is statutory and President Obama continued it. It's very important.

But we did not—when I went through the transition, we did not do tabletop exercises. I had done tabletop exercises when I was deputy White House chief of staff, I had done them when I was secretary of transportation. So I had been involved in that. I know Joe Hagin had been as well. So we had gone through it. But I can honestly say we did not have an organized crisis management exercise before we took office.

George W. Bush became president during a political crisis. So understand that he didn't win on election day; he won when the Supreme Court said he won. And so we only had a 39-day transition when most presidents have an 80-day transition.

It ended up being a phenomenal blessing because—the crisis of not having an election determine a president-elect but a court determining it—I got to spend time with George W. Bush at his ranch in Texas talking about what kind of government he wanted and how to organize it. And that was a phenomenal blessing, because without the clear—or the expectation that he was going to hold a press conference every 15 minutes, we could sit down and talk about how do you want to organize the White House, what do you want for people around you, who do you really want on

your team but you don't want to see, or who do you want to see but you're not going to listen to them that much? (Laughter.)

And those are all very important questions. So he helped avoid future crises by having that time to spend with me to say, this is how I want it to work, this is what I think has to be done. And he was also, contrary to most myths, he was a phenomenally good listener. So you could say, this is what I experienced working with your dad, this is what I experienced working with President Reagan, this is what I saw Jim Baker do or John Sununu or Sam Skinner or whatever. And he was very good at listening and paying attention and counseling as we helped to build a team for him that would serve him in the Cabinet and, most specifically, the White House staff.

MJK: Towards the end of his presidency in a press conference in the White House Briefing Room, a reporter asked him what advice he would give to an incoming president about White House staff. And he talked about how important it was to have different points of view. And while you can say that, that you want to have different points of view, there is a lot of pressure on the other hand with a staff who feel that what they should do is provide the president with information he would—or she would—like to hear. And so how do you deal with that, particularly in a crisis?

AC: Well, first of all, you should understand there is a caste system at the White House: president, vice president, assistant to the president, deputy assistant to the president, special assistant to the president. Those are all high-ranking officers, and those who have the title assistant to the president, deputy assistant to the president, special assistant to the president are commissioned officers. They outrank one-star, two-star, three-star, and four-star generals, depending on their rank. It's a caste system.

And when you get one of those positions, it is a very big deal. And you're presented a piece of paper that says "United States of America" on it; then your name is calligraphied just beautiful, and it says what state you're from, it says what title you have. And then it says you serve at the pleasure of the president for the time being. Those are insecure words. (Laughter.)

And the most insecure word is "pleasure." Because while you serve at the pleasure of the president, your job is not to please the president. So you do not give monolithic counsel or echo monolithic counsel. You give candid counsel to the president. And presidents should never, ever, ever make an easy decision. They should make presidential decisions that are, by definition, really tough.

So if the president is getting monolithic counsel, the chief of staff hasn't done his or her job and the decision was way too easy, and you wasted something that is invaluable and that's called time. So presidents should make very tough decisions and, by definition, they should not get monolithic counsel.

So my job was to make sure no one was trying to please the president in order to earn his pleasure; instead, that they were counseling the president with the risk of losing his pleasure. And I think that's how I would describe the responsibility.

So presidents—well, type A personalities of people who are extremely intelligent usually don't want to agree with anybody else anyway. So it's pretty easy to invite controversy. But what you want is the controversy to be constructive, not

destructive. Because you want the controversy to be such that it educates the president to the ramifications of a policy decision. Because there are almost always consequences to any decision, and it's best if they are not unintended.

MJK: And when people come into the Oval Office to talk to the president, there's an Oval Office effect, where they are reluctant to tell a president what he doesn't want to hear or she doesn't want to hear. How do you, as chief, how do you—does your nose tell you that they are telling something different than what they know?

AC: The Oval Office effect is very real and it affects everyone, including presidents of other countries. I mean, I remember when President Putin came to the Oval Office, and he walked in and he kind of—overly confident, Napoleonic, and then he's, wow, this is beautiful. Yes, it was beautiful. But that wasn't the image President Putin was expecting to convey when he walked into the Oval Office. So there is an Oval Office effect.

You can probably find it in Warren Finch's version of the Oval Office right next door. And you should go there; it's a wonderful feeling.

However, people who come to serve the president don't come to the Oval Office to do anything but help the president. So I had a test as chief of staff. And first of all, everyone who was appointed by the president, I would say, you know what, if the president is going to make you a special assistant to the president, I want you to see the president anytime you need to see the president, because he has hired you, you work for him, and your information, your knowledge, is what he wants you to give him. So anytime you need to see him, go see him. You don't need my permission. I would like to know about it before, during, or after. But if it's that important, you go see the president.

Anytime you want to see the president, you better not go. There was a test of needs versus wants.

Most people cheat. They walk in and they say, I need to see the president. And I would scratch at them and find that it was a very thin veneer of need covering a giant want. So the test of needs versus wants is critical.

And most people who really serve the president know that it's not about being overly impressed by the president or the Oval Office. It's being impressed by the need of the president getting this information, and I'm going to do it in such a way that the president will benefit by the information.

So it requires a chief of staff to be kind of a gatekeeper, to be someone who is not always welcomed, someone who I hope is always a conscience to how you do the job. And you kind of want to be a pebble in everybody's shoe that walks into the Oval Office. So they say, oh, darn that pebble in my shoe, do I really need to be here? If I don't need to be here, I shouldn't.

And so that's the job of a chief of staff, and it's a very tough job because most people just want to gravitate to that Oval Office and go in and stand in the beautiful room and feel the ambiance and be in the presence of the president. And have their name in the archives, because it's in the diary that you walked into the Oval Office.

MJK: But then you can see how long they stayed, too.

AC: The pleasure goes pretty quickly. (Laughter.)

MJK: Okay. In establishing your decision-making structure, which you did, say in 2000, what were the elements that you thought were going to be critical? And are the regular decision-making processes set up? Is that pretty much the same as the crisis decision making? Or does it change?

AC: The decision-making process is one that's also based on the need, the need rather than the want. Almost everybody wants to be involved in every decision that the president makes at the White House, and that's human nature. And so you have to describe responsibilities and make sure people understand the difference between when they're needed and when they're just peripheral. And those change based on the needs that the president has.

So on a national—on *Air Force One* on September 11, I can remember standing in the nose of *Air Force One* in the president's suite and, sure enough, most of the White House staff was kind of gravitating to the nose. And I'm thinking, they don't all have to be here. This is not a conversation that they necessarily have to be a part of.

And so we assigned to a fellow by the name of Blake Gottesman the responsibility of standing in the corridor. Don't let any staffer come up unless we tell them they need to come up.

MJK: He was the president's personal aide?

AC: He was the acting president's personal aide on that trip. He was my personal aide, and the president had the B team traveling with him that day, and Blake Gottesman got elevated to the A team that day and helped serve the president. He ended up becoming the president's personal aide, and then he ended up becoming an assistant to the president and helping to run the transition into the Obama administration.

MJK: Yeah. So were there certain offices that are associated with decision making? So, for example, like the staff secretary who controls the paper flow?

AC: The staff secretary is a very important position. However, President Obama has downgraded the staff secretary position to that which it had been. It was an assistant to the president during my—all of my experiences, Reagan, Bush, and Bush. And Dick Darman, for example, was the staff secretary under President Reagan, very close to Jim Baker, ended up becoming a very prominent member of the administration.

I would say it's still based on need. The national security advisor, if it's a national security concern, the national security advisor, the press secretary—now, the press secretary has a unique responsibility. They should know what they need to know, but they should be careful that they don't know everything because if they know everything, they will be expected to say they know everything, and then some reporter will say, you've got to tell me everything. So it's a great balance that a press secretary has. I want to know, which helps serve the president best, I probably should know what the president is deciding, not—I don't have to know everything that went into the decision that the president made. So that's a balance.

But I would say the press secretary, during a crisis, should be involved because he helps with peripheral vision and communication. Legislative affairs should be

involved because they become an echo for whatever decision they make. But neither of those should play a role in the policy response; they should play a role in how the policy will be viewed or seen.

I would say that you would need to have—for example, the White House Military Office would be involved in a national security crisis. The Joe Hagins of the world would be very involved in making sure the infrastructure was right.

But from a policy perspective, the national security advisor, the chief of staff. If there's a domestic aspect to it, you would have a deputy chief of staff for policy that would be involved in helping to know—like Josh Bolten was my deputy chief of staff for policy, Joe Hagin was the deputy chief of staff for operations. They would have been involved in different aspects of responsibility.

MJK: When does information go to the president? What is the route that it would take?

AC: If something needs to be known right away, the route should be direct. So if you hear something that is a crisis and you're in a responsible position, my goal would be—the national security advisor should not need permission to go see the president. Bingo, go see the president.

As chief of staff, I wanted to know before, during, or after. It's always better to know before. It's not bad to know during. But you better know after. And that was a conscience that the president helped impose on people in the White House.

But I really—what you don't want to do is have the president get information that is extraneous to those who are responsible for helping find a solution. The end runs almost never help. And knowledge is power. People who have knowledge generally know that, and they husband their knowledge until it maximizes their power. That's always dangerous.

So in the White House, my job was to bring knowledge out as quickly as possible to as many people as possible that had the need to know, so that the president could have the benefit of that joint counsel rather than just monolithic counsel. But there's always a predisposition to have somebody that wants to end-run the system and say, I know they're talking about this, I've got some other ideas, too. I'm going to sneak in and see the president and tell him about it. And I found that to be dangerous and something I tried to discourage.

But controlling the process, I don't want to sound like it should be overly controlled. It should be flexible enough for the president to be well served, but should be tight enough for the president not to be misguided.

And because words do matter. And utterances of a president do matter. So I would always tell the president, taste your words before you spit them out. And that applies to people who were working at the White House, whether you're talking to them, whether you're talking to members of Congress or the United Nations or the American public. And so I did try to have a conscience of the enormity of the responsibility.

Probably the best way for me to describe the conscience is what happens when you're the president-elect getting ready to take the oath of office the next day. And you usually go to the Blair House and spend the night before you become president

at the Blair House. And the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff comes in, and the CIA director comes in and there's the football, that briefcase with all the codes in it and, oh, that's kind of cool. And, you know, you're probably excited. Oh, this is going to be fun. And then they open up and they show you how to use the code and how to do the thing.

And then they sit down and they tell you, this is the world as it is. And you find out it's not the world that you thought it was, and it's not the world you want it to be. But it's the world as it is. And it's very sobering.

And then they say, you know, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs would say, well, Mr. President, don't worry, we're ready to respond to your leadership. You'll be the commander-in-chief and we've all taken an oath to follow the command of the commander-in-chief.

And then the president realizes, or the president-elect realizes, you know what? I'm going to be taking an oath and I want to keep that oath. And that oath comes right from the Constitution and it says, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution. That's the oath, that's the job.

And then the president realizes they cannot keep the oath without other people keeping their oath. And that's unbelievable. They want to keep the oath, but they know they can't unless other people keep their oath.

And then they realize that people who took the oath to follow the command of the commander-in-chief are very young. Some of them don't even vote. Some of them may not have voted for president. Some may not agree with the president. But they'll all keep their oath. And they will follow the command of the commander-in-chief. And the president can't keep his oath without them keeping their oath. And there's a reality that some people will make sacrifices that the president would never invite on anybody. And they give up life, they give up limb, they give up joy, all because the president said, I need help keeping my oath. And that becomes the greatest presidential burden that is carried. And you realize that the night before you take the oath.

MJK: And did you talk to President Bush about that?

AC: Yes, I did. I did talk to President George W. Bush. I actually reflected on an experience that I had with his dad, President Bush, Number 41. I'll never, ever forget it.

It was a kind of a mini-crisis. There was a dictator—not a dictator; he had been elected. But he was a dictator in Panama, Manuel Noriega, who had rounded up some Americans in the Panama Canal Zone and held them against their will. And he had a very, very close relationship with a lot of drug cartels.

And the National Security Council and the deputies committee of the National Security Council had been working on the challenge for some time. The American people weren't really involved in a great debate over it. And I remember recommendations were made on how to deal with Manuel Noriega. And then there was a meeting called in the Oval Office. The National Security Council had already considered lots of different options. And we go into the Oval Office. And I was in

charge of the easel and the charts, and other people were in charge of advising the president.

And Secretary of State James A. Baker III, one of my heroes, after the briefing had taken place, actually turned to the president, who was his best friend, and said, Mr. President, I'm leaving this decision to you because this is your decision. It's not our decision, it's not my decision, it's your decision. And he got up and walked out of the room. And everybody walked out with him, the national security advisor, the deputy national security advisor, the chief of staff, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, they walked out of the Oval Office. And the president went and sat behind his desk. He went from the chair in front of the fireplace to the desk. He put his hands on the desk and he folded them and he put his head down. I believe he was praying. I don't know that he was, but I believe he was. And I am collecting the charts and the easel.

And then he looks up. And I'm standing about 10 yards, 15 yards in front of him. And I am not there. He's just staring. And he says something that stuck with me forever. And he said, I'm making a decision that will cost young men their lives.

And he got up from the desk, didn't say another word, and walked out the door to the Rose Garden and then he walked around the South Lawn. And I left the Oval Office, and I was shaking. And I remember telling myself, I just witnessed a president making a presidential decision.

And I was so proud that he didn't make it based on philosophy, he didn't make it based on strategic advice. He made it conscious to what would happen as someone tried to help him keep his oath.

I'm going to fast-forward. Not long after that, the president was going to Cincinnati, Ohio, and I was in charge of getting ready for the trip as the deputy White House chief of staff. And the president, before he goes someplace, we would always, you know, check who mailed the president from the zip codes around where the president is going, so we'd test to see what are they saying.

And I remember getting the computer printout of the letters that had come in from the zip codes around where the president was going. And there was one letter that jumped out at me, the headline of a letter, someone who had requested a meeting with the president because they wanted to meet with him and tell him that he was a murderer and he murdered their son.

And I can always tell who was responsible for responding to the letter and paying attention to it. And it happened to be the national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft. I walked down to his office and said, you know, you've got this letter back and forth. And they said, oh, yeah, that was handled, the Defense Department handled that letter, da, da, da, da, the president had written to the family. It was all done.

And then this was before the age of smart phones. I had a very smart beeper. And my smart little beeper started to beep, and there was a code that showed up that meant the president was looking for me.

So I go down to the Oval Office, and I walked into the Oval Office. And President Bush is sitting behind his desk and I walk in. And he says, "Oh, Andy, I've got something for you." And then he looks at me and he says, "You look troubled,

what's going on?" And I said, "Oh, don't worry about it." And he said, "No, what's troubling you?"

I said, "I'm planning your trip to Cincinnati." He said, "When do I go to Cincinnati?" I said, "You're going in a couple weeks." And he said, "Well, what's troubling about the trip?" I said, "Don't worry about it." He said, no, no, what was troubling me. And I said, "Well, this mother wrote you a letter, wanting to meet with you. She's very upset. Her son died in Panama and she wants to meet with you." And he said, "Well, of course I should meet with her. Of course I should meet with her."

And I said, "Well, Brent and the national security team don't feel you really should." He said, "Well, of course I should. Set it up." So we set it up.

The day of the trip comes. We fly to Cincinnati. He goes to a school, he gives a speech on education at the school. I go to greet the family that shows up to talk with him. And it's a mother, a stepdad, a brother, and a sister. And I greet them, and they were very angry. The mother was particularly angry. And Marlin Fitzwater, the press secretary is with me. And after the mother has her very colorful comments, he says, "I'm out of here. I'm leaving this to you." (Laughter.)

So I'm talking with her. And then I hear the Secret Service moving outside, and I step out of the room and I see the president as he's coming down. I said, "The mother is very upset." And he said, "Of course she is." And he walks into the room.

And the mother comes up to him and said, "You are a murderer. You murdered my son." And he let her finish everything that she said. And he said, "Your son is a hero. Your son is a patriot. And I could not do my job if it weren't for people like your son. I want to know all about him, tell me everything about him." And she told him everything about that son.

And then he went to the sister, "Tell me about your brother." To the brother, "Tell me about your brother." To the stepdad, "He was a good boy, wasn't he?" Everybody was crying. There ended up being hugs for everybody.

And as the president is getting ready to leave, the mother reaches into her purse and she takes out a letter and hands it to the president. And he puts it into his suit coat jacket and we leave the room.

And we sit in the back of the limousine heading to *Marine One*. And in the limousine, the president reaches in and takes out the letter. I'm sitting right beside him. And he opens up the letter. And it's a letter written in pencil on white, blue-lined paper. And it's written by someone I think is like in the sixth or seventh grade. "When I grow up, I want to be a soldier. And I'm not afraid to die for my country." And it was signed by that son who died for the country.

That's the burden of the presidency. That's where crisis management comes into being, that it's not just about the theory, it's not just about what happens. It's that the crisis might invite other crises in other people's lives that are completely necessary for us to have a free nation. That's the burden of being president.

MJK: When you told that very—

AC: I told that story to George W. Bush on January 19, 2001.

MJK: What did he ask you about it and how did you tell him about it?

AC: I sat, after we had had the briefing about the football and about the CIA reports. And I said, I pray that you will never have to make this decision. I pray that you will never have to call on other people to help you keep your oath of office, that you can do it all by yourself. But the chances are, you won't be that lucky. And when you make a decision to get the help from the people that took the oath to follow you, think of what your dad did, and I told him what he did.

MJK: And what was his response?

AC: He was teary. And he said he understood. He didn't like I talked so long.

MJK: What did he say?

AC: I think—I don't remember what he said. It was a very serious conversation. This was—the whole experience, you have to understand, a president-elect at that moment has been told before they had the meeting, just remember you're giving the most important speech of your life tomorrow. So their head is all around the inaugural address.

And the conversation with the CIA director, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, getting the information about how to use the football and talking to an Andy Card weren't the upper— wow, this is an exciting day. I'm going to give the greatest speech of my life. No, it's sobering.

So I'm not sure it was the wisest thing to do for the president. And I didn't—I certainly didn't plan to have that conversation with him, but I did have that conversation with him. And I wouldn't have had the conversation if I hadn't had the experience. And if I hadn't had the experience of helping other presidents make brutally tough decisions and witnessing how brutally tough they are, I'm not sure that I would have even had it on my menu of options. I think I would have talked about, oh, this is all about pleasing the people that are there and working with members of Congress and the Supreme Court is going to be there, it's going to be a fabulous day.

Instead, I was kind of saying, you're taking a serious job on. And the day I whispered into his ear in that classroom in Florida, I'm convinced he focused on his oath of office when I whispered into his ear. He wasn't thinking about his inaugural address.

MJK: Had—did he have those kinds of discussions with former presidents? What did they talk about as the burdens and opportunities of the office?

AC: You know, I'm not sure that I was privy to the conversations that he had, even with his dad, that related to the job. The conversations that I witnessed him having with his dad—and, remember, his dad was the president of the United States. What a privilege it was to witness and have served for a president and a president who are father and son.

So I saw President George H.W. Bush be extremely conscious that the sitting president knows more about the job than the former president. So I never found that his dad was trying to, quote, counsel him or guide him. Instead, he was trying to lift him up. So I don't know that they had a conversation about, well, wait until you

read the codes, it's hard to memorize them. You know, I have no idea what they would have talked about.

But I did see President George H.W. Bush function as an empathetic dad. And, boy, does a president need an empathetic dad.

MJK: On September 11, did—were you there when they had—because he was, I think, President George H.W. Bush, was he in Minneapolis or—

AC: He was in Minneapolis.

MJK: Because I know the plane had been—

AC: Stayed at a motel or something like that. And he—they did talk on September 11. And September 11 was a day of phenomenal challenge and resolve. I was so impressed with how George W. Bush met his responsibilities that day.

But you should understand, there was controversy that day. And it relates to the president and his decision making. He and I had a huge—he argued with me; I never argued with him. But he really argued with me. He wanted to go right back to Washington, D.C. And I had talked with the Secret Service, to Mark Tillman, the pilot of *Air Force One*, and others. And there was little confidence that we should go back to Washington, D.C., without understanding the nature of security in Washington, D.C.

MJK: And who would determine that?

AC: A whole bunch of different people. The Secret Service, the military. You know, are there any Stinger missiles around Andrews Air Force Base? What do the streets of Washington, D.C., look like? Are there other planes coming?

In fact, there was so much obligation to understand what it would mean to be safe in Washington, D.C., that it was clear to me he could not go back to Washington, D.C., without at least having some of those questions answered.

And I know Mark Tillman was very uncomfortable going back to Andrews Air Force Base without knowing that the plane could land safely. And that was a dominant concern, because he raised it to me. The Secret Service, they're paid to be paranoid, and they were that day. So they said no.

The president said, "We're going back to Washington, D.C." And I said to him, "Mr. President, I don't think you want to make that decision right now."

MJK: What time was it when—

AC: That was pretty quickly when we got on *Air Force One*.

MJK: Right after you got out of the school?

AC: It was right after we left the school, we're on *Air Force One*. It was as the Pentagon had been hit. So we had tried to call Secretary Rumsfeld in the limousine. The president was frustrated that he couldn't get through to Secretary Rumsfeld's office. It's because the Pentagon had been hit and we didn't know that.

So we found out about the Pentagon being hit when we got on *Air Force One* and we're lifting off from Sarasota, Florida. And the president said, "We're going back to

Washington, D.C." I checked with Mark Tillman, I checked with the military aides—there were two military aides on the trip, Paul Montana and Tom Gould. And we're—and that's unusual to have two military aides. But they were a great benefit to me because they were cool, calm, and collected, and they presented good information. "Give me options. Where can we go? What would be safe? Where is good communications?"

And I made the decision that we would go to Barksdale Air Force Base first, and then we would take some people off *Air Force One*, and then we would go to the Strategic Air Command in Omaha, Nebraska.

MJK: Why did you choose those?

AC: Number one, the runway at Barksdale Air Force Base was really long, and so we could land there easily. Number two, they were already on heightened alert because of an exercise that they were on, had nothing to do with September 11. And number three, I knew that they would have good communications. And we needed to go someplace because I didn't want to take the gaggle that was with us the whole time. Because everybody who had been a passenger on *Air Force One* driving to—flying to Sarasota—ended up getting on the plane when we left. And I wished that they hadn't, I wished that they had stayed at the school. But they got on, and I wanted to make sure they got off.

And so we had a skeleton crew that included the media, which was another debate, on *Air Force One* for the rest of the duration that day.

But when we got to Barksdale, we taped a message for the American people. We had a secure video conference back to Washington, D.C., and the national security team. And then we went to Strategic Air Command.

But President Bush the whole time was saying, "I want to go back to Washington, D.C." And he's literally getting quite angry with me. And I was just cool, calm, and collected. And I said, "Mr. President, I don't think you want to make that decision right now." "I am making the decision," and I said, "Yeah, but I don't think you really want to make that decision right now. I think it would be best if you weighed that decision a little later." "I am going, we are going back." I said, "Yes, but I think it would be best if you really made that decision a little later because we're going to find out what is going on." "Well, I'm making the—" He was very angry. It took him a month to apologize. (Laughter.) And I'm not sure I did the right thing. But I can tell you, Mark Tillman was comfortable and the Secret Service were more comfortable.

I remember in Strategic Air Command down in the bunker, deep under the ground, we had a National Security Council video conference meeting, secure video conference meeting. And as the meeting was coming to an end, the president turned to me and said, "Can we go back to Washington, D.C., now?" And I said, "I will check." And I went out, made a few phone calls, and came back and said, "We'll go back to Washington, D.C."

MJK: Did you at any point talk about the whole notion of the presidency and that it was the presidency that was involved there, it just wasn't his desire as a person?

MC: Yes. Does he appreciate that conversation? No. (Laughter.)

MJK: Did he listen?

AC: You actually have that conversation with the president very, very early in the administration. Because one of the first responsibilities that a president has is to make sure that the continuity of the presidency and the continuity of government are, number one, known—what the obligations are, the infrastructure obligations. And, number two, that the president has to make a decision on who do you need around you in case you have to scoot away really fast. And you can't take everyone. Because chances are, you're going to be in a helicopter.

So the president has to make a decision, these are going to fill the six seats on the helicopter. So that's the sobering conversation to have with the president.

And most presidents—I can't speak for all of them, but George W. Bush said, "If I'm dead, I'm dead. I don't worry about it. Go ahead, do your thing."

I mean, he cared about the infrastructure. But he wasn't going to worry about, okay, so you get decapitated, who do you think should be there? And was like, I'll be gone. Dick Cheney can worry about that, or whatever it is.

So he paid attention to the point that he knew I was paying attention, which meant Joe Hagin was paying attention. But we put the infrastructure in place.

But that conversation happens day one with a president. And I remember a television show, *The West Wing*, one of my favorite shows. And the deputy chief of staff, Josh, is—the scenario was that Josh is in his office and two colonels come in and shut the door and have him sit down and we're going to have a very serious conversation with you. And basically it's, you can't tell anyone about the conversation, but the president, in case of a nuclear attack, wants you to go with him.

And so here is a laminated card, here's instructions, this is what you have to do, da-da, da-da, da-da, da-da, da-da. And the whole rest of the show was about Josh realizing that only a few people go and he's worried about the people that don't go. So he's agonizing over, oh, they don't go, but I can't tell them they don't go and they don't know that I go. What's going to happen?

That happened to me when I was deputy chief of staff. Two colonels came in, shut the door, told me I can't talk to anybody, but here's a laminated card and 24 hours a day, seven days a week, if you get this code on your little beeper, take out the card, follow the instructions on the card, you'll be picked up here or you'll be driven there or whatever it is, but the president wants you with him.

And it's really heady. You say, whoo, I must be very important. And then I'm realizing, so I'm in bed in the middle of the night and my little pager goes off, and it says this and the code says go there, get on a helicopter and get whisked away, and I can't tell my wife where I'm going? Not going to happen. I'm going to say, "Honey, get out of town right now."

So, yeah, those are real things, and presidents have to do them. They have to be prepared for it. And an infrastructure in the White House has to meet it, because that's the ultimate crisis of the presidency, is that there's decapitation with our government—

MJK: Yeah.

AC: Or the president is incapacitated. And, by the way, President Bush gave up the presidency for a very short period of time when he was under anesthesia getting a tooth pulled or something. And I was there with him, and I had to be the witness. He's gone, ding, he's back. And Dick Cheney had to be notified and had to be ready to step right in. So it does happen.

MJK: And was that the first time that it had been handed over in that way?

AC: I don't think that it was the first time. For some reason, I thought that it happened once under George H.W. Bush. Don't hold me to that. But I remember when he was whisked off to Bethesda Naval Hospital or Walter Reed from Camp David, and I'm really not sure whether they ever did have the transfer, but I remember it was discussed.

MJK: Did you have other discussions about the presidency as an institution?

AC: Well, in the context of September 11, 2001, there was a very active plan that was being implemented to assure the continuity of government. And so there was lots of discussion about it. Some controversy. And certainly there were some people that were obligated to be engaged and they really didn't want to be.

So we had to assign members of the Cabinet: it's your turn to be away. And it's not just the same as a Cabinet member is always a designed survivor at the State of the Union address, or—this was bigger than that because there was—there was truly a shadow government set up around the country, appropriately, in case—until we understood the nature of the threat.

We tend to forget how serious the fog of war was around September 11, 2001, and the ancillary activities that compounded the challenge. The anthrax letters; in D.C. the sniper in the white van, those were all happening at the same time.

And so there was a legitimate question, you know, could there be a dirty bomb that's going to show up in downtown D.C.? What kind of infrastructure do we need to have in place right now in case there is a threat to the seat of government?

And so we focused on how to get Congress to pay more attention to the continuity of government responsibilities, the Supreme Court to pay more attention to it, and obviously the executive branch.

MJK: And that was on that day?

AC: It started that day. It actually started a little bit before that because Vice President Cheney had been put in charge, literally at the beginning of the administration, of paying attention to kind of homeland threats. And it wasn't based on any intelligence, it was kind of on instinct. And so that work ended up being quite helpful as we had to deal with the challenges of September 11, and then creating the Department of Homeland Security.

MJK: You said that you had the press, you decided, and then that there was some discussion about it. Ann Compton, as I remember, was the pooler who went on *Air Force One*. And what was the discussion about having the press and why that was important?

AC: Well, I remember we were in the commanding officer's office at Barksdale Air Force Base, trying to trim the number of people on *Air Force One* that would be going off to Strategic Air Command. And Ari Fleischer said, "I want to take the press pool." And there were some on the staff that didn't want to take the press pool. "No, we don't need the press pool, we don't need the press pool."

They came to me, everybody came to me, and I said, "We're going to take a press pool, and it will be a representative of each—you know, it won't be the whole pool, it will be a representative of each outlet, I mean each—"

MJK: Type of media.

AC: "—media, media. And we'll just do it. And we're going to keep them away from the president. You know, they're not going to be up near the decision-making part of the plane."

But, yes. It was not a heated discussion; it wasn't even a long discussion. But there was a discussion. And Ari Fleischer was a tremendous advocate for having representatives of the press there.

I don't think there was anything in any rule or any outline of, this is what you have to do, that it said the press should be included. So this was probably outside of what the playbook might have called for.

MJK: And looking at the decisions you made and the way that you approached it, you had gone through a lot of crises in earlier administrations. And can you tell us how those various ones made a difference to what you learned, both about the structure and the kinds of people that you need around the president?

AC: Going all the way back to that first experience in the Situation Room with the Puerto Rican fire, I came into this challenge appreciating that there was a fog of war. So I wasn't going to presume that all of the information that we were getting was accurate. I was going to have—I was going to say, all of the information is valuable but it may not be accurate.

Number two, I did not want to have people around the president who were emotionally invested in what was happening. I wanted them to be objectively counseling the president. So I was—and you can judge when someone is too emotionally charged. They're running into the room and their hair is on fire. And I would try not to have those people allowed to come into the room. So, yeah.

I had to make relatively quick judgment: this person will help, this person won't. Or this person spins the president up all the time. I can't imagine what it would be today. So, yeah, I made those decisions. And those are controversial, and they're hard and they're painful because they come back to be an irritant later on in life.

I also reflected on kind of, I wanted to be cool, calm, and collected and completely engaged in the president's ability to do his job. And selfishly—I don't mean it selfishly for Andy Card, but I did something that was—I regretted. I never talked to my wife that day until I got home that night.

So, unlike everybody else on *Air Force One* who, when they got back to the White House, called home, told their spouse or their kids or whatever it was, we're fine,

we're doing great, I was all business until I got home that night, and I didn't get home that night until 11:45 at night. And I still feel guilty about that.

Here my wife is, my best friend, my partner. We do everything together. And I was focused on the president. I was focused on helping him do his job, and I was trying to be cool, calm, and collected.

I reflected on another day. Just before I walked into that classroom in Sarasota, it was bizarre how it popped into my head. I was the acting chief of staff on the day that most of the students don't remember, but other people remember. I was the acting chief of staff when President George H.W. Bush was in Tokyo, Japan, 1992, early, early on. And he throws up on the Japanese prime minister at a state dinner.

And he had been sick before we got to the reception. He's in the receiving line, he's shaking hands, and he goes into the men's room. I follow him into the men's room. There's a Secret Service agent. He gets sick in the men's room, actually threw up on his tie. And turned around, took the tie off the Secret Service agent, put it on himself. Rinses his mouth out, washes his hands, goes back out, stands in the receiving line. So I knew he was sick.

And at the state dinner, I'm sitting so that the president is in my eyesight, I can watch him. And the president's physician is sitting right opposite me. And I'm watching the president kind of go—the wobbly thing. And I remember saying to the White House physician, "He doesn't look good."

And, you know, the doctor turns around and sees the president dive in the prime minister's lap. And, you know, Barbara Bush stands up, everybody else kinds of gasps and goes this way. I'm the only person in the room going in the other direction. I'm going out to get the Secret Service to get the ambulance to take care of the president.

And so he comes out, and he's very upset that the ambulance is there. And he says to me, "I'm not getting in the ambulance. They're not going to see a president getting into an ambulance." Okay. So we get in the back of the limousine. I'm sitting beside him in the limousine. He's throwing up all over me. And we're driving to Akasaka Palace. Get him into Akasaka Palace, he goes—feels miserable, he goes into the bedroom, he's lying down in bed, gets up, goes in the bathroom, back in bed. We're in there.

And then all of a sudden, I'm saying, you know, the world is going to think President Bush died. I'm going to do what I'm supposed to do to make sure that they know he's okay.

So I took my little laminated card out of my wallet and I went into another room and I called the vice president, the Speaker of the House, the majority leader in the Senate. I called the people just to say, he's okay. I did not know at the time—by the way, I'm also trying to track down Marlin Fitzwater, who skipped the state dinner and was out on the town. (Laughter.)

MJK: Probably with all the reporters.

AC: Probably with the reporters.

MJK: The reporters who were covering.

AC: I did not know at the time that a Japanese film crew, in violation of the rules, had left a camera on in a balcony overlooking the dinner. So everything was taped, and it was being broadcast on CNN and to the whole world. I did not know that as I'm making my phone calls back to the United States.

But I reflected on that moment standing in that classroom on September 11, 2001. Because I made a conscious decision that day to do what the protocol said to do, go down the list, as if the president had died or come close to death or whatever it was going to be. So I went through that and I thought, this is not unlike that day when the president threw up on the prime minister. You better follow the rules and stick with the book.

MJK: Okay. I have one last question and that is, on the plane, you had a limited number of advisors on the plane. So how are you able to get him the advice that he needed to make the decisions?

AC: On the plane, we had people who are responsible for getting information that he needed to have. We had, obviously, we had a briefer from the CIA who did a phenomenal job that day, and so he had good communications back to the CIA. So we were getting pretty good information. Deb Loewer, who was the director of the White House Situation Room, was the acting national security advisor on the trip. At the time, she was a navy captain; she went on to become a navy admiral. And she was very helpful. However, she was one of the people that the president said, "Let's keep her a little bit distant"—because she wasn't quite—she wasn't always contributing to the solution. She was describing the problem.

And then we had two phenomenal military aides, one a Marine officer, one an Air Force officer, that were very helpful.

But we had pretty good communications. I know that people have complained about the communications on *Air Force One*. It was really amazingly good. Did we make it better after September 11? Yes, but it was still quite good. And we did limit everybody else's communications on the plane so that communication was to help the president, it wasn't to help the reporters or the staffers call back to friends. It was, no, this is a business flight now. Everything that's going to happen on the plane is a business flight.

And we worked extremely well with Colonel Tillman and his team. They were phenomenal. Most of those people aren't seen by the White House staff; they're up in the top of the 747. And they do a great job, the communications officers.

And so I felt as if the president had good access to information. We had good lines of communication to the bunker under the White House and the White House Situation Room. We had good lines of communication. Not to the Pentagon, because it had been hit, but to the Defense Department and specifically the Strategic Air Command.

So we were getting, I think, the right information to the president at the right time, and he was able to make decisions.

Probably the most memorable conversation that I eavesdropped on was the president's conversation with Vice President Cheney when Vice President Cheney made a call. And I'm only hearing the president's side of it. But it was basically,

would you authorize our pilots to shoot down commercial jetliners if they're not responding to the communications to a fighter jet or anyone else who says, please go land? And President Bush authorizes that. I know there's some controversy—was it authorized before the president did and all that. That's kind of irrelevant. The president authorized it.

And what he said when he hung up the phone was very telling to me. Because he hung up the phone, and he leaned forward in his chair. And I was sitting on the opposite side of his desk. He says, "I was an Air National Guard fighter pilot. I can't imagine getting the order to shoot down a commercial jetliner."

So here he was, having empathy, legitimate empathy, for the challenge that these young fighter pilots would have if they got that order to shoot down that jetliner. So that was a sobering experience for me.

But *Air Force One*, the communications were good. He did have access to the people that were advising him. He did call back to the Situation Room many, many, many, many times. And we received calls from the Situation Room.

He did reach out and do things on the diplomatic front that he wasn't asked to do. I mentioned Putin; that was very important. He was also very good about communicating with the FBI director and Governor Pataki and Rudy Giuliani. So he had communication with them even back at the school before we left to go on *Air Force One*.

MJK: Okay. Thank you very much, Andy. And we'll take a short break and set up for your scenario with Fiery Cross.

AC: That's great. Sorry to ramble on so much. I appreciate your attention.

(Applause.)

Note: A video of this interview is available on the White House Transition Project website: http://www.whitehousetransitionproject.org/experts-news/events/455-2/.