

INCIDENTAL PAPER

**Seminar on Command, Control,
Communications, and Intelligence**

**The White House Information Process
Kenneth M. Duberstein**

Guest Presentations, Spring 1990

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December 1991

Program on Information Resources Policy



Center for Information Policy Research



Harvard University

The Program on Information Resources Policy is jointly sponsored by Harvard University and the Center for Information Policy Research.

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I-91-3

The White House Information Process

Kenneth M. Duberstein

Kenneth Duberstein is Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of The Duberstein Group, an independent, bipartisan planning and consulting company that provides strategic advice, counsel, and assistance on national and world political, economic, and social developments. Immediately prior to this current position, he served as Chief of Staff to President Ronald Reagan from 1988 until the end of the Reagan Administration, having been Deputy Chief of Staff to the President since 1987. He was Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs from 1982 to 1983, after serving as Deputy Assistant from the beginning of the first Reagan Administration. Between these two White House assignments, Mr. Duberstein was Vice President of Timmons and Company, a Washington government relations firm. Before joining the Reagan Administration, he served for four years as Vice President and Director of Business-Government Relations of the Committee for Economic Development. He was Deputy Under Secretary of Labor during the Ford Administration, heading all legislative activities for the Department, and previously was Director of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs for the U.S. General Services Administration from 1972 to 1976. Prior to entering government, he worked at Franklin and Marshall College and served on the staff of Senator Jacob K. Javits.

Oettinger: I'm delighted to welcome here today Ken Duberstein, whose biography I will not recount because you've all had a chance to look at it. When I asked him to meet with us, I pointed out to him, and reiterated when we had a moment before class, that he had a rather unusual career which enabled him to look at the kind of questions we deal with in this course from about as wide and high a set of perspectives as anybody we've ever had here, with experience from the private sector, from dealing with Congress, dealing with the Executive Branch and then also in a unique way, for a period of time being the consumer. We've had a lot of folks here talking as providers, or provider-like persons, but the consumer view is not one that we've had the privilege to have quite so often. So with those words, I simply turn it over to Ken. He has declared himself to be interruptible with questions as soon as we begin.

Duberstein: Having dealt with Sam Donaldson, I guess.

Oettinger: We're just pussycats.

Duberstein: Tony, it's great to be here. I know you all have my biography, but there are two things that I left out. The first is that, when I knew Tony in my previous incarnations, and certainly before I became Ronald Reagan's Chief of Staff, I was 6'4". Number two, I'm not writing a book.

Student: Why not?

Duberstein: Because I think the relationship that a Chief of Staff or a senior aide has with the President is based on absolute trust and confidence. He hired me for my best judgment and I didn't want to feel like some of my predecessors and others who felt that you can tell the President something and

you go back and write it down in a diary so that in fact when you publish a book you look better. One of the things is that I got a reputation for in the White House was being the reality therapist. I thought that if I was going to be the reality therapist I couldn't hedge my bets, and try to cover myself in a diary or writing a book.

It's interesting, I started getting asked that question after I left the White House. I had several publishers come to me and ask me to write a book and I said, "I'm not interested." They said, "Why don't you write a book on how to manage in the federal government?" and I said, "Yeah, it'll sell three or four copies unless I put in the kind of kiss and tell that you want." They said, "Oh no, no, just a few of them." I said, "No way," so I turned down those things, but it's all based on what I think is the relationship of trust and confidence that a White House aide should have with the President.

I want to cover several things today, as Tony suggested. One of them is what it's like to work at the White House and be the President's Chief of Staff, and how that fits into the information flow, both gathering and dissemination, how the information process works at the White House, and what leverage you have. But I really want to make this into a conversation, as I said, and do a lot of Qs and As. So I really mean it, feel free to interrupt and if I'm not making myself clear or I'm only saying things up to a point and you think maybe I'm short-circuiting something, then let's fire away at that.

Everybody talks about the White House as being the ultimate in fishbowls, and it is. But it's also, as far as I'm concerned, information central. You're deluged with information from every source, formally and informally. One of the things you have to watch out for being on the White House staff is that you're getting so much information from so many people that you have to realize a lot of people have their own agendas. While they may be giving you information and suggesting to you that it would be in the President's best interest to pursue this, there usually is a secondary objective. How to sort all that out and put it all together is something that I think takes an awful lot of experience and sophistication.

Oettinger: Can I break in right there and ask you a question? There's a dilemma there which crosses administrations, and I imagine exists within one administration, in putting it all together. One of the reasons for agencies, whether it's formal intelligence agencies or subscribing to CNN (Cable News

Network), or whatever, is that you can't do it all and so you pick it up from elsewhere and delegate some things. So there are still overloads and one way to do that is delegating some more of it. At some point you've got to put it together. Any sense of how that's juggled, or how you juggled it as opposed to somebody else?

Duberstein: Let me use as an example the traditional friction there is between the NSC (National Security Council) and the remainder of the White House staff. Colin Powell, who was NSC Advisor, and is now Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and I became very close. At that point when Howard Baker was Chief of Staff and Frank Carlucci was NSC Advisor, Colin and I were the two deputies. We devised a system that recognized that for every national security decision there is a domestic overlay. For many domestic priorities, there is a foreign policy overlay. Colin attended all of my staff meetings of senior White House aides. I treated Colin as the second most senior partner in my partnership management model of the White House.

If you look at all organization charts, the NSC Advisor reports directly to the President. It's very good for an organization chart, except in reality Colin never talked to the President unless either I was aware of it or I went with him. Any memos going from the NSC to the President went simultaneously to me as Chief of Staff. If there was something that Reagan needed to sign off on immediately, it went to me in advance rather than simultaneously. Colin obviously dealt with all the agencies, and certainly saw a lot of our raw intelligence gathering. He could pull things together and come up with some recommendations for the President as the honest broker, the NSC Advisor, but would want to test them out with me. Does it pass my smell test? Does it pass my political mind-set? Is it in the best interests of the President? How does this fit in with other things that the President is trying to do on the Hill? How does it fit in with a budget battle we may be having in Congress? Does this take money away from DOD and move it elsewhere because of what appears to be a narrow foreign policy decision? That's how you cross-fertilize the system.

It even went to the point where Colin and I had an informal rule when I came back to the White House the last two years. If you recall, during the first term Ed Meese, when he was Counselor to the President, made a serious mistake by not awakening Ronald Reagan when they shot down two Libyan jets. The

press jumped all over that: "How come Reagan didn't know?" Colin and I had a simple policy, and that was that anytime a U.S. citizen, military or civilian, was involved in anything, any place in the world, whether it's 4:00 in the morning or 2:00 in the morning, Colin and I would talk first. He'd get the first call from the Situation Room, I'd get the second, and then he and I would talk and determine whether or not to awaken the President. That happened, as you can imagine, many times during our two years together. We took it upon ourselves to crossmatch and also then to put all the levers in motion. Colin would task DOD or State, or his own NSC staff. I would task Congressional Relations, because congressional leaders needed to be notified, perhaps, or the press operation, under Marlin Fitzwater, who was Press Secretary for Reagan, and is now Press Secretary to Bush. So we had this thing down pat, unfortunately, because when the phone rings at 3:00 in the morning it's never good news.

Student: Is this informal screening of the NSC Advisor's contact with the President a result of Irangate? Do you feel that that was a structured act or kind of a policy decision to do that?

Duberstein: Remember, I was not in the White House during the Iran-Contra affair.

Student: I understand that. Is this a result of that, because it seems that if Admiral Poindexter had had that contact, maybe some of the things wouldn't have happened. It seems like it takes away a little bit of the NSC Advisor's role as an impartial advisor to the President.

Duberstein: In fact, I would think it would make him more impartial and would give the President better advice. You also need a Chief of Staff who has some political sophistication. I don't mean political being Republican/Democrat. There's so much intertwining between foreign policy, national security policy, and domestic, and there are so many other factors that have to be brought in, that having that informal check, and having that kind of relationship, gives the President better advice. At 9:00 every morning I met alone with Reagan for a half hour. Colin would come in and do the NSC brief for Reagan from 9:30 to 10:00. If the Vice President was in town — it was then Bush — he attended the 9:00 and 9:30. But Colin and I spent a while together well before 9:00 in the morning, going over the things that he would be bringing up between 9:30 and 10:00, not only the things that were in the President's morning intelligence brief, but other

things that were going on throughout the world. On some of the items, some days, I would deliberately break in by setting the context for Colin. There were other times when we decided that Colin would take the whole measure on this one, but I would weigh in on his time. It's bringing people together so that you have a White House staff that really is integrated.

Oettinger: At the risk of belaboring the obvious, let me try to draw a couple of inferences from what you said, to see if they make sense. Number one, what I catch you saying is a lot depends on a good personal relationship. I underscore that because the account we're hearing from Ken is not necessarily the norm. I think you've all seen a number of White Houses where, in fact, the White House Chief of Staff and the National Security Advisor were at odds.

Duberstein: Including in the first term of Reagan, not just during Iran-Contra, when you had Bill Clark and Jim Baker, for example.

Oettinger: And there are a number of other instances. You slipped this in so smoothly. The domestic and foreign policy integration, usually, I might add, is a disaster in terms of not being brought together. So what Ken is describing is, I would say on the whole, although I haven't done a statistical analysis, not the norm. The problem that no foreign crisis doesn't have a domestic component and vice versa is a statement that is often an impiety, even if it's uttered at all and not brought into realization. So you're hearing something very unusual.

Student: I'm curious how you would differentiate between being a policy integrator and a policy maker, by the mere fact that you control all these inputs that come into the President's office. By saying that you already talked to Colin Powell, you said that, if you so thought, you could effectively argue with the President beforehand and say, "What he's going to come in in 45 minutes and say is a bunch of bull; don't believe it, this is the real story."

Duberstein: But you don't do that, because you've talked to Colin enough. You don't surprise somebody in the White House.

Student: I'm not saying you would surprise him. What I'm saying is that it seems you're in a position of being able actually to control everything and actually make the policy by saying that.

Duberstein: All my power when I was in the White House was derivative. It was whatever

Ronald Reagan wanted to give me. I had no power in my own right. Yes, the Chief of Staff usually is the person whom the President consults with last before he makes a decision, whether it's to appoint a new Cabinet officer, or to sign or veto a bill, or to bomb the so-called Iranian oil rigs. But that's what you're paid for. You're paid to integrate all the policy recommendations. You're paid to understand all the nuances. You're paid to look out for America's best interests, and remember that's America's best interests, and you've got to think about the President's best interests as well. You're the person who is the grand strategist who crosswalks all the different policies. So how does it come together as a whole, and how does this little bit fit in with this little bit? So, yes, you both integrate and help make policy. The way you help make policy is also making your recommendations to the President. He may not agree with me all the time.

Student: Doesn't that make you subject to Gephardt's criticism of managing your foreign policy activities through public polling?

Duberstein: We looked at polls to see how we were doing, and whether what we were saying was making sense in our policies. But we were not fine tuning to say, "No, we've got to reverse policies because the American public is against it." Aid to the Contras is a primary example. So I would think we used polling probably differently than the Bush people are using it. Bush people are using it more to guide them on some things.

Student: Could you describe what you see in the Bush Administration, how it differs from how the Reagan Administration was doing in the last few years?

Duberstein: On what, or just generally?

Student: Just in general, I think.

Oettinger: We've been focusing on information flows and so on.

Duberstein: Let me just tick off a few things, O.K.? In the Reagan White House the Chief of Staff was usually the hub for information, both incoming as well as dissemination. One of the realities that my successor John Sununu is having to deal with under the Bush White House is that George Bush likes to be the information central. Bush is much more informal, picking up the phone and calling world leaders, calling Congressmen, calling Senators, calling press people. "What do you know, what do you hear, tell me what's going on?" Reagan was

much more structured. If he wanted to pick up the phone and call Margaret Thatcher, we would arrange a time for him to call Margaret Thatcher, and work out what he wanted to say. He knew what he wanted to say, but we would run it through the process. Bush will ad hoc it. It's a big difference, but it also winds up getting you talking to imposters.

Oettinger: That gives a nice example of some of the tradeoffs, because you were pointing to one side of the equation, the possible filtering effect of the coordination.

Duberstein: When John Sununu and I first talked, and we've known each other for several years, after he was announced as Chief of Staff during transition, one of the things we talked about was my ability to help shape what was going to happen with Reagan. If there were phone calls that Reagan made, or Reagan took, I could know about them. Yet Bush does everything so much on the spur of the moment that it was going to be very difficult to put a system in place in the White House to be able to know everything that Bush was doing. So that if Bush was on the phone with Danny Rostenkowski and cut a deal on a tax bill, what you had to rely on was President Bush telling John Sununu, or you read about it in the next morning's *Washington Post* that Rostenkowski put it out, and Sununu is in a position of going to Bush and say, "Did this happen or not?" The only difference is that it doesn't wait till the next morning's *Washington Post*, you hear about it on the network news that night, and all of a sudden the press perceives and Congress perceives that you, the Chief of Staff, are not in the loop. Then the answer is the only person you deal with is the President of the United States, because he's the only one who makes a difference. Whereas with Reagan everything was much more structured. If he was going to talk to Rostenkowski, certainly I had talked to Rostenkowski before him, and I knew what Rosty wanted to talk to the President about or what the President wanted to talk to Rosty about.

Student: Take Sununu's influence on Bush as far as global warming goes.

Duberstein: Let me cut off your question this way. The cardinal rule for being a Chief of Staff is that you have a constituency of one. In my case, one and a half. John Sununu is doing exactly what George Bush wants him to do, and if he wasn't he'd have his rear end out of there right away. Some of it's good cop, bad cop. But remember the changes that Sununu allegedly made in the speech were uttered by George Bush. He chose to read that

speech, he signed off on the speech. Is it John Sununu or is it George Bush?

Student: But should the information and advice on environmental policy be coming from the head of the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) or should it come from the Chief of Staff?

Duberstein: I think it should come from a lot of people. I think it should come from the Director of OMB (the Office of Management and Budget), I think it should come from EPA, I think it should come from the domestic policy staff at the White House, I think it should come from the Chief of Staff, and many others, because there are so many crosswalks. Certainly, no matter how much many of us may be dedicated to cleaning up the environment, there are potentially excessive costs to the economy. Somebody other than the Environmental Protection Agency head needs to comment on that stuff.

Student: All these individuals you mentioned all have their own point of view and maybe, you might say, an axe to grind or at least an agenda to represent.

Duberstein: So who pulls it together?

Student: The Chief of Staff is supposed to be above it all. Yet it seems that Sununu, having an engineering background himself, has opinions.

Duberstein: All right, but Bush doesn't have to agree with his Chief of Staff, but he decided on this issue to do it. John Sununu is doing exactly what George Bush wants him to do. He is cracking the whip, he is cracking heads, he is making recommendations. If Bush wanted to he could have sided with Bill Reilly, but he decided that he was going to go with his White House Chief of Staff's advice. End of discussion. Is constituency important?

Well, I covered that as Chief of Staff you're chief advisor, you're chief strategist, you're chief manager, you're chief coordinator with the Cabinet, which I think we'll touch on a little bit, you're the chief conduit to the President. Your days are filled, from the time I got to the White House at 7:00 every morning till I got home usually between 10:00, 11:00, or 12:00 every night. As Chief of Staff I was one of the few people in the White House who had a car and driver, and I was very fortunate because on my half hour ride to work every morning I consumed four newspapers and the White House News Summary. Other than the people at the White House, the thing I miss the most is the White House News Summary, which is put together at 6:00 every

morning by people on the White House staff. It's a condensation of the major news articles in the major newspapers throughout the United States, plus a sampling of editorial opinion around the United States, plus highlights both in sequence and in how much time is devoted to each on the network news programs the night before. So I skimmed the four newspapers, unfortunately not much of the sports page, and the White House News Summary on the way to work every morning. When I hit the White House at 7:00, my first bit of reading was the President's overnight intelligence brief, better known as the PDB (President's Defense Briefing), which is a compilation of major intelligence gathering throughout the world overnight. I met with Colin Powell for my first discussion on events overnight.

I then met at 8:00 every morning with the 20 top senior White House aides, everybody from the press people to the domestic policy people, communications, and the Vice President's staff, where we looked at the day coming up and started plotting where we thought the President should do something that is not on his calendar. In other words, if there was something likely to be going on on taxes, and Reagan wanted to say, "No new taxes," like Bush says, and we knew that if we threw that into a speech that he was giving that's what we wanted to lead the network news that night, we would decide to start drafting an insert. So we adjusted the day and looked for the events of the day coming up, not just on the President's calendar but on Congress' and the world's calendar, and at major events going on in the United States.

At 8:30 I met with half a dozen or eight of those 20. These were people who frankly were my principal aides and the President's principal aides, who I knew had their own information circles, and who I knew would give me the straightest possible advice. We went through not only that day, but things coming up in the next few days, and decided where we wanted to recommend things for Reagan, or for the Cabinet, or to modify a position with the Congress, or that we needed more information and one of this group of six or eight could get it all, or get a part of it and report back during the day. It was like my executive council.

At 9:00 I met with the President; at 9:30, as I told you, Colin came in and joined us, and during the day either I or my Deputy Chief of Staff attended all meetings with the President. The one who wasn't there was either dealing with Cabinet officers, the press, Congressmen, Senators, staff, running the

White House on the small things as well as the grand things, putting things into practice so that Reagan could, in fact, be prepared on decision memos, working with the staff secretary, who monitors and keeps following all the paper flow, and making sure that everything was done with zero error. Late in the day you would start looking for work for the next day, and the next couple of days, and the next week. But during the day you would also have half-hour or hour strategy meetings on particular pieces of legislation, or a national security decision for an NSC meeting, or an NSPG (National Security Policy Guidance) meeting, or a Cabinet officer who wanted to see the President or regularly scheduled time when George Shultz or Frank Carlucci or Cap Weinberger came in, and you would be sitting there and you'd also be absorbing a lot of information and figuring out how that computes into the President's calendar, and how that computes into what the President wants to do.

I guess one of the good examples of that is near the very end of the Reagan Administration. If you recall, the President ultimately announced that we would have some informal talks, not negotiations, but talks with the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization). That was a matter of great internal debate inside the White House, because it was being pushed by George Shultz. The national security community thought it was a great idea. We would try to get Arafat to say, A, B, and C and he would say A and B, and our intelligence people would tell us tomorrow he's going to say C, and he didn't say it. Then he would renege on A, and Shultz said, "We have to give him the benefit of the doubt," and I would say, "If you want this thing to fly domestically to cause the least amount of hiccups, then Arafat has to say A, B, and C all in the same speech." We went back and forth, and back and forth, and Shultz would say, "They're getting antsy," and giving me more information, and then other people would be giving us information. I was convinced that Reagan would be severely criticized in the press, and on the Hill, if Arafat didn't say at least A, B, and C. We wound up postponing and postponing until we got Arafat's attention and we got him to say A, B, and C, and then we announced we were going to have talks.

Pre-date this by several months and you recall the flak that we took because the United States government said that Arafat could not come to the UN to speak to the General Assembly. A lot of people criticized us roundly for it, and that was all part of the leverage game. We were trying to put leverage

on Arafat, to get him to agree to the conditions that would open up some talks. That's part of an information flow that you're getting informally from Shultz, informally from the NSC. You're balancing against domestic political concerns, "political" again not being Republican or Democrat. Reagan was, you know, a few months from leaving office.

Oettinger: You sampled in these last few minutes a number of sources from the newspapers as digested by the staff and Cabinet members, formally or informally, and so on. Any sense over that period of relative weight of where this stuff comes from, or is that so diffuse it's impossible to assess? I mean, relative in terms of formal channels, set pieces from the Cabinet or elsewhere, versus ad hoc, your guys pumping their sources, somebody bumping into someone else in the hall, or the Secretary of State calling up out of the blue.

Duberstein: I think there's a place for formal, coordinated things, but you'd better know pretty well before you go into a formal proceeding how it's going to come out. I don't mean that everything is pre-cooked, because it's not, but you need to have your sidebar conversations, and your informal conversations and consultations beforehand so that you have a pretty good way of judging it. Reagan traditionally did not make Cabinet meetings and NSC meetings decision meetings, because he wanted to think about the advice he was getting, and if there were new options that popped up. Now that goes to your point of saying that that gives the Chief of Staff an awful lot of clout, because you can help shape the options. But you also need to be Chief of Staff as an honest broker, you also need to know where Reagan's or the President's head is at. Things in Washington, I guess, have gotten to the point that if you have a formal meeting you read about it in the next morning's *Washington Post*. While we're all for free speech, and we're all full disclosure people, sometimes and often times, the top officials would rather talk to you in private and explain things so you don't read their advice the next morning in the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times* or even the networks. So the informal channels, in fact, pay off much more in some ways.

I remember my first experience of briefing the President on a big matter with many White House aides around. It was on the defense budget and what some Republican Congressmen were saying as far as how much percentage they could swallow, and it wasn't as much as Cap Weinberger wanted. I gave him chapter and verse of my consultations with

several conservative Republicans, and I was mighty miffed the next morning where I read what I said to Ronald Reagan as a lead column in the *New York Times*, and there were only 12 or 15 people sitting around the room. What bothered me is I had quoted Congressmen by name, and the *New York Times* quoted me quoting x-Congressman and y-Congressman who had told me in confidence what they would recommend to the President. Well, you'd better believe that I called them up really quickly and explained that somebody opened up their mouth. Well, the next time I clearly gave it directly to the President rather than giving it in a big formal meeting.

Student: Just a small question on an aside you made about understanding Reagan's head. How did that work, coming into the administration as late as you did, especially as busy as you were? How did you get to know him, how did you feel confident?

Duberstein: I was there in the first term as his chief lobbyist and I left for a couple of years and then I came back. So I got to know him pretty well in the first term. In some ways Reagan is easier to understand than Bush, because he has a set philosophy, and he knew why he was elected, and knew what his goals were, and his parameters were pretty simple. Bush has a tendency to go here, and go there, and jump here and jump there. I'm not saying either one is better, but it was a little bit easier for me. I also had a good personal relationship with him and understood what he wanted to get done, whether it was with Gorbachev or Jim Wright. It was somewhat different.

Let me talk about some other kinds of information. It may surprise you, but David Stockman was one of the worst congressional lobbyists I've ever met. It's because of David's intellect that he had a problem. In the first term when David was riding high at OMB (and David remains a good friend of mine) I would make assignments, give David a call, x, y, or z, and ask him to find out about a vote on a particular piece of legislation. Invariably David would come back and say, "Yup, he's voting for us. Yup, he's voting for us. Yup, he's voting for us." After the first and second time that happened and the guy voted the other way, I started having my staff talk to some of these members whom David was talking to. Just because a Congressman says to you, "I agree with you. Boy, that makes sense. Gee, that information is important. I'm glad to know that because it sounds right to me," doesn't mean he's going to vote for you. David in his conversations

with members would hear them say, "I agree with you. Boy, that information is great, that's really helpful. Gee, that'll do the trick for me." David would call me up or see me and say, "This Congressman is voting for you," and the answer was based on the information that David had given them. They agreed with him, but it didn't mean that they were going to vote for him. I think that's something that you have to digest and learn in Washington.

Let me talk about informality a minute, and bring back a story from 1981, when the President gave his first speech to the Congress, I think it was in February 1981, where he laid out his economic recovery program at a joint session of the Hill. We had put an awful lot of time, with Stockman and many others and people on the Hill, into coming up with what the press termed "budget cuts" and we would term cutting down the level or the rate of spending increase. One of the keys for us to see whether or not we could win in the House, because remember Tip O'Neil still controlled the House, was what the Boll Weevils would do, the Southern conservative Democrats, and whether or not they would support the kind of budget cuts that Reagan was talking about. I happened to be on the House floor that night of Reagan's speech, and I found some of these leading Boll Weevils right after the speech, including Charlie Stenholm of Texas. I said, "Well, I promised you budget cuts; do you think Reagan did okay?" Stenholm looked at me and said, "I think Reagan was being cheap; he could have cut another \$10 billion," and it was at that moment that I realized Reagan could win his budget fights in 1981, because if the Southern conservative Democrats would tell me informally that Reagan wasn't cutting enough I knew we could strike a deal with them, that we could get at least the number that we were going for and we could keep the Republicans, and add the Boll Weevil Democrats to it, and therefore we would beat Tip O'Neil and get the kind of budget that we wanted. That's in fact what happened. How did I translate that information that Charlie gave me? Three days or so later, President Reagan invited all of the Southern Democrats down to the White House to have breakfast to talk about the budget. By that time, based on the one piece of information that Charlie had given me, we were able to seed several of the other conservative Democrats, and they gave Reagan another \$10 or \$12 billion worth of cuts that they wanted him to consider. So we exchanged some of the cuts that we had wanted for some they had wanted, and left some programs untouched, but basically came to the same number,

and poof. I'm making it sound easy and it wasn't. We wound up winning on the House floor, but that's informal information. We need to have that trust and confidence.

I remember when I was about to leave the White House in 1989, when Sununu and I were talking, he said, "Whom do you trust on the Hill? Who are the people whose judgment you can rely on?" and I said, "They're going to be different for you than they are for me. I've developed relationships in my 20-some years in Washington so that some Congressmen and Senators confide in me about anything and everything and I think they have great judgment as far as where their colleagues are in the House and Senate. But that doesn't mean that they're going to confide in you." So it's that informal relationship and trust that build up over an awfully long period of time.

Student: It struck me that there was an interesting contrast between your story about David Stockman and the one about the Southern Boll Weevils, both of which were informal. What was the difference? How did you know he was going to go along with you, yet Stockman was wrong?

Duberstein: Because I knew David's intellect was such that he thought his power of persuasion was such that he could convince everybody.

Student: Okay. So it was personal, there was no magic political difference there that he had failed to see.

Duberstein: David, even though he was a Congressman, I'm not sure understood the congressional mentality. Whereas Charlie Stenholm wasn't quite as blatant as John Breaux, now a Senator from Louisiana, who on a vote in 1981 was accused by the press of selling his vote to the White House. John Breaux's answer was, "I didn't sell it to them, I just let them rent it for a while," which got picked up in a lot of newspapers. That's not true, but that's beside the point.

Student: I have a question in reference to when you worked as the Director of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs at the GSA (General Services Administration). You worked on Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs for Labor as well?

Duberstein: In the Ford Administration, I was at Labor.

Student: How does your job in that particular position overflow with the position that you had in

terms of Chief of Staff? You talked a lot about interconnectability and integration. My question really is relative to the lessons learned from that position. Also, are there other nationwide pockets of intergovernmental affairs offices, or is there just one central office at GSA or Labor?

Duberstein: It relates much more to my role as chief lobbyist to the President in the first term than it does to Chief of Staff. One of the things I insisted upon, which by and large has been carried over under Bush, is that the person who is the chief lobbyist and intergovernmental relations person at an agency or department, GSA or Labor, is appointed by two people, the Cabinet Secretary and the Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs, because that chief lobbyist for the department or the agency also has to be responsive to the White House. What I did on a regular basis, when I was chief lobbyist, was have each of the Assistant Secretaries for Legislative/Intergovernmental Affairs for each of the Cabinet agencies into the White House for a regular hour-long meeting twice a month where we talked about their priorities, as well as what the President was pushing. I'd try to piggyback on some of their contacts and relationships to support the President. I also used them to make sure that their Cabinet Secretary was being buttressed from below as far as what the President wanted, and so they were going to help the Cabinet Secretary by helping to lobby something that was on the White House scope, not just the departmental scope.

As far as whether places other than Washington have intergovernmental relations offices, I don't know the answer. I don't know how it's set up right now; they're different departments.

Student: The reason why I asked the question is because from what I understand, particularly in the command, control and intelligence environment, it's important that all systems operate together, or speak the same language. So from the top down I was wondering if that strategy, I mean talking about a core hub of people, was pervasive at broader levels.

Duberstein: It's certainly pervasive through the senior political levels in each of the departments and agencies.

Another informal information channel which will hit home to many of you was demonstrated at the height of all the problems we were having on convincing the Congress to support the MX during the lame duck session of 1982. It was clear we didn't have the votes in the House to save the MX

and we'd probably lose in the Senate. They started to debate MX when a little after midnight one night I met with Senator Rudman, Senator Cohen, and Senator Gorton right off the Senate floor. They gave me a piece of advice that I instantly recognized was sound. They said that if this was going to be a Republican missile it would never fly. The only way we were going to get the MX done was to have bipartisan support for a strategic modernization program. Why doesn't Reagan think about appointing a blue-ribbon panel that would examine the MX, the Midgetman, etc., etc. This thing became the Scowcroft Commission and ultimately helped us win the votes on the MX. It was based on a relationship with three Senators. I was able to go back to the White House and talk to Bud McFarlane and Bill Clark, the NSC Advisor. Bill talked to Reagan and presented it as the only way we were going to save his missile, and in fact that's how it happened, but it was through an informal channel.

I want to talk a minute about bureaucracy. The line that has been quoted most recently by Reagan was his line at the Berlin Wall in 1987, I believe, which was, "Tear it down, tear it down, Mr. Gorbachev." What you all would love to know is that for four weeks before that speech the State Department bureaucracy said, "Absolutely not. That line must come out of every draft of Ronald Reagan's speech because it's too inflammatory, and Gorbachev will get ticked off." If you want to talk about the role of a Chief of Staff as policy maker as well as integrator, that was the whole speech. You could talk about values, you could talk about a democratic system, but you also need to understand 15-second sound bites, and you also need to know what communicates to people. Several of us on the White House staff said, "The State Department be damned." It was easy to convince the actor, he saw it right away. The President saw that this is a thing that's going to communicate, but the bureaucracy went after the Secretary of State, and convinced the Secretary of State this would not be a sound way to frame U.S. policy. We had a donnybrook inside the White House, and obviously Reagan sided with those of us who really wanted the 30-second sound bite. It will go down in history as one of his most significant lines, and look what's happened since then. As an aside, I'm seeing Reagan next week in New York and I want to ask him, and I meant to while we were both still in the White House, whether or not when he uttered those little words overlooking the Berlin Wall, did he ever think in his lifetime that the Wall would come down. Interesting

question. I remember the tingles up and down my spine when he gave it.

Oettinger: There are a couple of morals one can draw from the story. One implication, though, is that, in terms of the earlier question, the President had access to the full range of views on this issue, and happened to come down on the side that you advocated.

Duberstein: Well, what I tried to demonstrate is that part of the job as Chief of Staff is to make sure that the President has all the options. Not to stone-wall it, as perhaps some of my successors did, saying, "Oh, you don't agree with me, you're not coming in to see the President." The State Department bureaucracy had a legitimate concern with what was going to be said. They needed to have that voiced, and the President needed to think about it before he made the decision whether to use that in the speech or not. My serving him the right way was to let him know about all the options and all the discussions, and all the arguments. You had a question?

Student: Well, that was basically it, because as I was sitting here it sounded like the system was working like it was supposed to. Having interfaced with that State Department bureaucracy somewhat myself, I have some slight sympathy with them, because basically a comment like that could have taken arms negotiations and kicked it in the teeth. It could have taken all sorts of things that they were responsible for bringing about, and in fact were some way down the path, and boy! That 15-second sound bite, great political impact though it may be, could take the rest of that stuff and throw in the trash can. Now the decision had to be made, it had to be made by the President, but I kind of see their point a little bit.

Duberstein: That's why I was mentioning the importance of dealing with the bureaucracy; that's how I started off this section.

Student: As Chief of Staff I guess you get to know the President pretty well, and you mentioned earlier finding out what's in Reagan's head. He seemed to be a President who delegated a lot of authority. That changes from President to President. My question in particular concerns national security matters. Most Presidents get a little nervous about that because it's so important. But it seems to me that Reagan, even when an issue was concerned with national security, delegated authority. The military operations that we did have during the

Reagan Administration seemed to be delegated to the commanders and all the way down the chain. I think particularly, although you weren't at the White House at the time, the Libyan raid ran that way, and the commander of the 6th Fleet actually decided the final go or no go on that mission. Now, do you feel that because as the President he delegated authority, that in fact the chain of command all the way down and other commanders were willing to let the chain of command work the way it's supposed to work?

Duberstein: Reagan was very much the broad scale, big picture leader. Jimmy Carter was much more the technician and the manager. A friend of mine who served in a very senior position in the White House in the Carter Administration tells the story of Carter receiving an 87-page document upstairs in the residence one night. It was returned the next morning with the initials JC on it, and "See page 83." On 83 was a grammatical change and that was the only thing on the document. Ronald Reagan would have read the executive summary, would have sensed the major points, and would have signed off on the damn thing.

Student: If I could bring the question up to a broader sense: since he delegated authority he was the broad scale, big picture President, and he made the decision, and it was implemented. Do you feel that because he did it, that influenced his chain of command? Did they also say, "Well, the President does this, I will in my field. I will continue to pass it on that way."

Duberstein: No, I think the Joint Chiefs, and well down the command, ran a very tight ship, no pun intended, once they got the decision by the President.

Student: Was there something organizationally in the command and control in the Reagan White House that created so many instances of disloyalty?

Duberstein: What do you mean by disloyalty? Leaks?

Student: Well, Stockman, leaks, Reagan?

Duberstein: They would argue they were being incredibly loyal. Stockman would argue with you that he saw the error of his ways and was trying to convince Reagan to change course. Reagan would argue with you that he was just trying to let Reagan be Reagan.

Student: So you think that disloyalty, if it is disloyalty, came out of some sort of frustration that they couldn't get through to Reagan?

Duberstein: No, I think you've got to understand that in the White House a lot of people lose perspective about themselves and their own importance. With all of the policy arguments that take place, sometimes you get people who are exasperated. They can't convince the President or their position isn't winning, so what they do is leak it to the press. That's the kind of action that I really think you're talking about. It's the same type of people who write books saying, "Reagan is dumb and I was right."

Student: Isn't it also just a way of communicating if you can't get to whom you want to get to because you're not authorized to? One way of getting the news or your point of view to the person is to put it on the front page of the *Times*.

Duberstein: Do you think it impresses the President of the United States to see an article butchering him on the front page of the *Washington Post*, quoting anonymous White House sources saying, "If Reagan would only listen to this argument, this argument, and this argument he'd be persuaded differently?"

Student: It should be done more diplomatically. But if you had a particular policy point of view that happened to be shaded somewhat differently?

Duberstein: From the decision that was made?

Student: From the decision which seems to be in favor.

Duberstein: That's one of the reasons, and I touched on it very quickly before by saying that I tried to run the White House as a partnership, why I tried to make sure everybody had a seat at the table, that all the senior White House aides could be in the discussion. That means that none of them were being shut out of the policy process. Many of them were involved in our strategy meetings. To buttress your point a bit, we had far fewer leaks in the last two years of the administration than we did in some of the middle years. I think a lot of that was getting everybody a seat at the table. Does that mean they always argued their things out to Reagan? No. Were their papers stopped going into Reagan? No. Many times I let them see Reagan with me. They could make their arguments directly. I happen to think that Reagan did very well being exposed to more people. I didn't think of myself just as a funnel, that everything had to go through me, but I wanted damn well to be sure that what you were saying when you were in front of Reagan made sense, that it was part of what you and I had talked about in advance, so that

Reagan was getting the information in the best possible way with the least amount of bias.

Student: Reagan is now being requested to testify in court in the case of Poindexter?

Duberstein: No. He gave a videotaped deposition.

Student: Can you enlighten us on how this case came about?

Duberstein: Beats the hell out of me. I wasn't there during Iran-Contra, and I don't work for him now. You're not going to get me to talk about that even off the record.

Student: This is another question about that issue with the State Department. What exactly, more than just gut instinct, drove that decision to override the bureaucracy? I looked at it the same way this gentleman did, and this isn't personalizing the State Department by saying the people in the State Department are crazy, they're striped-parts people, forget them, they're too focused on their careers and stuff like that. It's just they're the ones with access to the information making that recommendation.

Duberstein: Set aside this decision on the speech. But if you had let the State Department make some decisions on arms control, we would not have gotten agreements anywhere near as good as we got. What makes it work is that you have the information sharing and expertise that gets matched between State, Defense, the Agency, ACDA (the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency), and the NSC. I don't know whom else I left out of that litany. It's that cross-fertilization, it's those interagency meetings, held by not only the career people, but also the political, not Republican/Democrat again, that, in fact, make for good public policy, and better public policy than what would have just come out of this agency or that agency.

Student: So then what you're saying is that you were looking not just at the State Department's opinion but the whole spectrum.

Duberstein: You have to. You have to put it into things like what else is going on, and what impact it has on arms control, and how you crosswalk that into the defense budget issue, and what's going on, or likely to go on, on the Hill in the next month, or next two months.

Student: It seems that there's a perception in conservative circles that there are certain agencies that are aligned more with special interests on the

Hill than others. Is there a way of working with those agencies or is that a wrong perception?

Duberstein: One of the problems you have with some of the departments is that, in fact, some departments and some career people in departments are far more responsive to the congressional committee whose staff and leadership have been there far longer than the Cabinet Secretary of that particular agency. They know that's who they get funded by, that's where their relationships are, and they will be there long after this Cabinet Secretary is gone. That's something you deal with.

Student: It's just that simple? Peggy Noonan's book ridiculed the State Department. I've heard that perception before that book, about State always kind of negating Republican presidential influences.

Duberstein: I think George Shultz did a hell of a job as Secretary of State, and I think Jim Baker is also. So I don't think the criticism is anywhere near as warranted as you might suggest.

Student: I hear you mentioning a lot of names of men. Just for general information, besides Nancy Reagan, are there women at this level who are team players helping to make the decisions and push this information and get the job done?

Duberstein: Absolutely. I might be saying guys, but I mean that for men and women.

Student: For example?

Duberstein: Do you know Mari Maseng? She'd probably be in Peggy's book, she's a good friend of Peggy's. I brought Mari back to the White House as director of communications for the last year of the Reagan term. She oversaw not just the press operation, but speech writers, etc. Pam Turner was for the last seven years of the Reagan term the President's chief lobbyist in the Senate. So in all his relationships with the United States Senate, Pam Turner was front and center. I could go on with several more. You'll get a kick out of the fact that when I appointed Pam to be the chief Senate lobbyist to President Reagan, a bunch of old-time lobbyists and Senators said to me, "You can't do that, because the Senate is a gentlemen's club." I said, "Pam Turner is the best person to be the President's chief lobbyist in the Senate," and every last one of them came back to me within a year and said I made the right decision. Pam stayed in that job for seven years.

Oettinger: And close to our subject, for that same period, the Chairman of the President's Foreign

Intelligence Advisory Committee was Anne Armstrong.

Duberstein: Absolutely. I just threw out two on the White House staff. Nancy Risque was assistant to the President for cabinet affairs. The President's major link on the White House staff with each Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet office was Nancy Risque.

One of the questions that I obviously get asked an awful lot is about our hostages in Iran, and the frustration that Reagan has, and I think Bush has. On one side I'm convinced that there is not one key, but there are probably three keys, in getting our hostages back. One's the government of Iran, one's the Hezbollah, and one's the family that has our prisoners. On the other hand, a lot of people say we should be able to know where the hostages are, and track them down and do a successful mission; do Iran. I'm absolutely convinced, and remember I have not been working in the White House now since January 1989, that our intelligence just isn't good enough to know where they are, only that they are moved all the time. Some of that I attribute directly to some of the cutbacks in the Agency during the Carter Administration, some of it I attribute to some of the other difficulties we've had at the Agency. It's very disconcerting to think that we don't know where the hostages are, whether we can be outmaneuvered, because they are moved all the time. I think that calls for not only more sophisticated intelligence gathering, but also more human intelligence. In the same way we had an awful lot of problems in 1987 and 1988 penetrating the PDF (Panamanian Defense Force) to get good intelligence on what was going on with Noriega — where he was sleeping, where he was living, and what his movements were — because there had been such drastic cutbacks in human intelligence in Panama during the Carter years.

I think Bush was frustrated about it for a long time, not only when Reagan was President, but certainly during most of the first year until the invasion of Panama in December. He couldn't get good information, and in fact they didn't have precise intelligence on where Noriega was, because that was the first thing to do: capture Noriega. So as sophisticated as we are on electronic intelligence, it's very difficult on the human intelligence side.

Student: The comments you just made strike me as somewhat strange, because I wouldn't suspect that anyone would ever point out a historical time when people had enough human intelligence to

know where one individual was at any particular time. It seems like you're extrapolating advances in electronic intelligence and then expecting that human intelligence would keep pace. It would be pretty near impossible to find one person being held by a kidnapper in the United States.

Duberstein: I thought you were referring to the one person in Panama being the head of the PDF. That should be quite easy. It wasn't a hostage situation, it was Noriega, who was pretty prominent and pretty public.

Oettinger: The question is still fair in that you sort of lumped the Noriega situation and the hostage situation.

Duberstein: I wasn't trying to make the same argument.

Student: The implication is that during the Libyan raid they knew exactly where Khaddafi was. In my mind it would be stupid to believe that intelligence should be able to pinpoint even a leader and say that President Bush is in the West Wing right now, and in five minutes he's going to move to the East Wing in the White House. It seems too high an expectation.

Oettinger: Could we pursue it just a little bit, because it seems to me behind this is a question of budgetary priorities and so on that's going to get worse rather than better as the number of places in the world where the need exists will increase, whether it's on a leadership basis or a potential hostage or economic situation, or nuclear incidents and so on. The demand is going to keep growing because the world is getting more complicated, and the complexity of things is growing. Whether it's electronic, or human, or whatever, we're going to have to make decisions about where the boundaries are on what we can spend, and I'd like to turn his question into asking you to comment on the past or speculate on the future a bit about different criteria for where to draw the line. The demands keep growing, the resources aren't going to grow as fast, something is going to have to be let go and emphasis put somewhere. Any thoughts on that?

Duberstein: The name of the game as far as where the money is going over the next few years is going to be in verification. It's going to be the number one priority.

Oettinger: That will mean there will be more incidents of the kind that we mentioned.

Duberstein: Exactly. But I would try to find a way to get more human intelligence, as much stress as there is on electronics, in NSA.

Ernst: Human intelligence needs a long, slow buildup, though.

Duberstein: I know; that's why I said you need to start doing it now for several years down the road.

Student: But that brings in the other costs. Tony is right about the budget, but there's also the political cost. The oversight committees who all want to be in on it. You don't build up major HUMINT (human intelligence) networks and tell everybody on Capitol Hill about it; you just can't do that.

Duberstein: No, but you can tell six people, or twelve people, on Capitol Hill.

Student: You don't because they've got staffs and they've got all these sorts of folks. It just isn't that small.

Duberstein: I beg to differ with you. As much as I am sensitive to even the smallest leak, we live in a system of government where we need to have some congressional oversight. We need to be able to take the Gang of Twelve into account and brief them.

Student: We can take them into account and we can brief them, and when they say no, it's no. It's a whole other group of people outside of the people we're trying to build into this HUMINT infrastructure who won't see it the same way. I'm not saying that it shouldn't be that way, what I'm saying is that there's a significant cost to building this network.

Duberstein: It's a significant cost. It's part of our democratic form of government and I think that Congress, or at least the leadership, or at least the few that are aware of things like this, when they say no are not doing it on political grounds, Republican/Democrat, they're doing it for what they think are the best interests of the country. It's an argument that I've had with any number of intelligence and national security types for years, and some of them are saying, "That's why you're Chief of Staff and I'm not."

Student: On verification using national technical means, is it channeled that narrowly or are we talking one big aggregate basket?

Duberstein: I was talking much more of the arms control agreements.

Oettinger: Verification is really on-site inspection. Over the last few years there's been a tremendous increase.

Duberstein: I hear, from business community, private sector experts, that the boom business these days is on-site verification.

Oettinger: That has grown now over the last three or four years.

Student: Back to the HUMINT question: I understand that during the Carter Administration that Stansfield Turner was bigger on technical gathering than HUMINT. That might have been what you were referring to, but I was wondering if there are certain areas that are impenetrable — North Korea, Lebanon, Albania for that matter — certain places where, if you try to build up the HUMINT base over a 15-year period, it's irrelevant since you can't even penetrate in the first place. That may have even been so in the Soviet Union years ago, maybe less and less now. Can we actually do it? Can it be done?

Duberstein: I don't think I can comment on that.

Student: I'm not sure that even if we decided to do that we'd be able to penetrate Lebanon with all the competing forces there.

Oettinger: You are contrary to fact on the record, like Penkowsky and Soviet penetration. So the notion that impenetrability is a black and white phenomenon, on or off, is nonsense. One can infer from that, that in any particular place it may be harder, it may be easier, it may cost more, it may cost less. I think you're more likely to get a useful answer from Ken by asking questions at the borderline, like do you want to spend more or less.

Student: That's my question. For example, say the Soviets had the hostages, they were waging some kind of fantastic Cold War and they took American hostages. Would we have made the decision to put the HUMINT in to find out where they were? I'm not sure that we can say yes, we can do it, unless we decide we ought to do it.

Duberstein: I'm not sure I want to deal in hypotheticals. It takes an awfully long time to develop the capability on the HUMINT side, and once having decimated this it's tough to rebuild it. I think we could have been doing it with more dispatch and with more funds than we were able to.

Oettinger: If you want to pursue that particular question more on the record, some of Roy Godson's writings and edited things in the bibliography will get you about as far as you can from the available open literature. It's a good set of questions, but it's a difficult one to deal with. I think it's an important

one because it's going to get worse over the next few years as the monolithic United States versus Soviet Union kind of thing degrades even more. The instances that Ken referred to were ones when the Cold War was still the center of attention. There were relatively few other places and all of that is getting worse.

Ernst: The preconditions for releasing the hostages get down to penetrating a single family in Lebanon, so to speak.

Duberstein: That's correct.

Oettinger: Could you comment a little bit on the political side? Some of that is then the consequence of political pressure, right or wrong, about individuals and the obligation of the country with regard to individuals riding on airplanes that happen to be abroad or, for that matter, riding on a plane in the United States. Do we have to adjust our views? I ask as one who flies a lot around the world, who worries about it each time, but then wonders as a matter of national policy about treating each hostage in the same way as if the whole national interest rested on him, when we don't do that, let's say, in kidney dialysis or other areas where there is a budget and a life balance.

Duberstein: Tony, I am one of those who think that we should not negotiate with terrorists for hostages. Remember when I *wasn't* in the White House. I think that the more you talk about hostages, the more you up the premium and make them more valuable. This does not mean dispensing with human life or lowering the price tag, but the less said the better, and don't get into a situation where you're trying to negotiate for their release.

Student: In reference to some of the needs that you spoke of in terms of more human intelligence and verification, do you see any risks involved with trying to support the coordination of the economic policy that's going to have to rise to the occasion in East and West Germany? Are we to increase our human intelligence forces for any possible changes that could occur, say, 10 years from now as a repercussion of the reunification in Germany?

Duberstein: That's not something I've given a lot of thought to. I have to think about that.

I also want to talk for a minute about the important role that the press plays as somebody who is a consumer of information. I enjoyed the banter back and forth with the press, because if I couldn't answer their questions then I needed to go back and

do my homework a little bit more and maybe ask some questions of some of the other policy makers. Everybody talks about the press being so cynical; well, whether we like it or not, the world can also be very cynical. You'd better answer those questions, even as cynical as they are. So I would deliberately spend time with the press to listen to the questions and to test myself, not necessarily knowing what I wanted to say, and to make sure that I had the right answers.

The same way, one of the best information sources, for those of us who have been in government, has often been the opposition. I have some very close friends in the Congress who are among the most liberal members of the House. We went back and forth on the MX, where they were going to knock the hell out of Reagan; everything from talking about the facts and the strategies to how many votes they had or didn't have. We dealt in good faith, and I learned a lot. They would give me all of their arguments why Reagan was wrong, and I would play them back to the Pentagon, play them back in the sense of repeating them, and I would test them out with the NSC staff, because we'd better sure as hell have answers to those questions. You talk about informal networks and that clearly is one, Tony. But when you base a relationship on that kind of trust and confidence, even if you're philosophically opposed, there are always times, especially in Washington, when you become allies. Some of those people who were the most strident against Reagan, and strongest about voting against everything he wanted on the national security side, helped lead the effort, for example, in the Caribbean Basin initiative, or some of the trade things that we wanted. So you're cultivating those kinds of relationships, and that kind of informal information gathering. So there are times you know you can go with them.

Oettinger: I want to interject a comment, because what Ken is saying is at the congressional, White House, etc., level. I'm still probably going to get you copies (they should be on their way now) of General Gray's Marine Corps doctrine. You will find echoes of what Ken has said, over and over again, in that doctrinal manual intended essentially for the platoon level, and for much the same reason: that the ability to communicate with trust with folks can only be gained over a period of years and through some mutual experiences, so that when all hell breaks loose — whether it's legislative, legal, or in some skirmish or amphibious landing — you know whom you can talk to, and you can trust what

they're telling you, even if it's not what you want to hear. It is completely independent of technology. Now the ability for Ken to pull off a number of the things that he's talked about throughout this session has depended on the telephone. A lot of what he has described, both face to face and otherwise, is deeply technology dependent, because it wouldn't be practical otherwise.

Duberstein: Somebody said a year ago that two people in the Reagan Administration would die if the telephone didn't exist: Nancy Reagan and me. Not because we talked to each other all the time, but I was always on the phone.

Oettinger: So you're getting a very interesting perspective on the relationship between technology and the human components.

Student: The news summary you said you missed so much, I take it is put together by the White House News Office, and they have access to the same kind of on-line information. For instance, during the campaign there was a service put together that put out ...

Duberstein: A lot of people have imitated the White House News Summary.

Student: So it's not impossible. There's nothing unique to the White House that makes that summary possible.

Duberstein: They've been doing it for years and years, that's all.

Ernst: Some big corporate systems do very much the same. The big oil companies have excellent media in some ways.

Duberstein: Somebody was doing it during the 1988 campaign, I think an outfit in Washington tried to sell it to corporate offices. But doing things like not only the major newspapers and the major editorials, but also the highlights of the network news and what order each story ran in, how much time each network devoted to it, plus the PDB, the intelligence brief in the morning, starts you off with a good shot of caffeine as far as information and intelligence are concerned.

Student: I was wondering if you could talk about some of the things you did in restoring the congressional-White House relationship after Iran-Contra.

Duberstein: When I came back to the White House it was clear that Reagan wasn't just a lame

duck, he was a dead duck. All the polls and the political scientists and the columnists were saying the country was going to drift for the last two years, that the economy was going to go to hell in a handbasket, that not much was going to go on in East/West relations, that Bush probably wouldn't get the nomination, let alone be elected, and it was all Ronald Reagan's fault because of Iran-Contra. We decided early in 1987 on about four parts of a strategy, in no priority order. Number one was to make sure that every evening's news wasn't dominated by coverage of Iran-Contra. While you could have accusations coming from the Hill or the Hill committee, if you didn't have Reagan on television responding to that criticism or those allegations then they had only half a story so they couldn't lead the network news. So therefore you weren't going to respond minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, to all the charges. That all of a sudden took everything from bold print to the small print.

That also enabled us, number two, to start focusing on some other objectives. Clearly what we were looking for was to make sure the economy remained strong. What that meant was to continue all the months of economic growth so that Reagan could leave office with close to 80 months of continued economic growth.

Number three, on the foreign side the thing that looked most promising was to continue to rebuild East/West relations. Even with the difficulties at Reykjavik, at least on the INF (Intermediate Nuclear Forces) side it looked like a possibility of a treaty, and we could make significant progress on all parts of the Soviet/United States agenda. So we put down as part of our strategy the INF treaty, and at least a couple of summits between Gorbachev and Reagan.

Next, we needed to rebuild Reagan's image so that he would be perceived, as he was in the first term, as King of the Hill. The only way to do that was to figure out a few places where Reagan could win some votes on the Hill quickly, so that the press would write that Reagan was victorious on the Hill, which then would be translated into, "Reagan is getting some of his magic back." Therefore, eventually he would become King of the Hill again. So we picked some fights with the Hill where we could win, and it was written up that way.

Finally, if we did all of those things, Reagan could be a major positive force in making sure that the White House stayed Republican in 1988. Those were the parts of our strategy. Does that answer your question?

Student: Indirectly. I was specifically wondering about the breakdown in trust on the House and Senate Intelligence Committees.

Duberstein: A lot of it was helped by the fact that when I came back as deputy, Howard Baker came in as Chief of Staff, Frank Carlucci came in as NSC Advisor, and Colin Powell came in as Deputy NSC Advisor.

Student: So it was the credibility of the appointments.

Duberstein: It was the knowledge and relationships with three of us especially, but also those that Colin had on the Hill.

Ernst: We've run out of time. Thank you very much.