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The Information Needs of Presidents
James W. Lucas

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The Information Needs of Presidents

James W. Lucas

Mr. Lucas is the Dean of the School of Professional Studies at the Defense Intelligence College. He has more than 25 years of military and civilian experience in intelligence and higher education. He began his career as a second lieutenant in the Air Force and from 1965 until 1976 his assignments included a combat tour in Southeast Asia, detached duty as executive assistant to the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence (Community), and as the Assistant Director of Intelligence Coordination for the National Security Council. From 1977 to 1981, Mr. Lucas served as Deputy Executive Secretary and Program Evaluation Officer/CIA with the Intelligence Community Staff. Between 1981 and 1985, he held positions as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, and Director of the National Security Council's Crisis Management Planning Staff. He joined the Defense Intelligence Agency in June 1985 as a Distinguished Professor of National Security Affairs, served as Associate Dean, School of Professional Studies, and was appointed to his present position as Dean in September 1987. Throughout his career, he has worked as an adjunct professor and guest lecturer at the four service academies, several civilian colleges and universities, and with the military war colleges, the Foreign Service Institute, and the Inter-American Defense College.

Oettinger: Our speaker is James Lucas, Dean of the School of Professional Studies at the Defense Intelligence College, whom I will not introduce in detail. You have his biography and if you have not already read it please do so quickly and spare us the need to spend the whole two hours reciting his long list of various accomplishments. I asked him to draw on both his White House experience some years ago and his current experience in talking to us today, and from a bit of conversation we had before we came over, I think that's pretty much what he is going to do. We have asked you to read by way of background the contributions of Messieurs Rodney B. McDaniel and Richard S. Beal to this seminar awhile back because Jim was associated with that group and will tell us a little bit about life in the business of trying to provide information to the President of the United States. But before that, and since then, he's had an interest in supplying intelligence to decision makers at whatever level, and after commenting on that specific period in his life, he'll tell us about his thinking before he went to the National Security Council Staff and what has developed since he assumed various responsibilities at the Defense Intelligence College. Then I guess he's going to speculate about which way the world is going and what that means in terms of what people should know about intelligence, what intelligence might be crucial and so on. I will turn this over to him. He has agreed to be interruptible right from the start to encourage comments, discussions, so on — please, in the manner that we began so nicely last time, let us continue this time. With that, it's yours.

Lucas: Thank you very much. I was delighted to accept Tony's offer to come up here and engage in a dialogue, I hope, with each of you about the role of intelligence and policy making, and how Presidents of the United States need information to decide, to move a government, or to lead a nation, or any of the other cliches that characterize presidential leadership.

Tony asked me to focus on an assignment that I happened to have from 1983 to 1985. My title at the time was Director of the Crisis Management Planning Staff at the White House. That had actually been my third tour of duty at the National Security Council (NSC). For a brief period in the Nixon Administration, and for a longer period in the Ford Administration, each time while on active duty with the Air Force, I was detailed or seconded to the National Security Council to provide staff assistance to Henry Kissinger. Then I had a chance to work for the current National Security Advisor, General Brent Scowcroft, when he was Henry's deputy. He too is a professor, at the Political Science Department at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. Later I came back during the Reagan Administration to work for Judge William Clark, and Bud McFarlane, and then John Poindexter, and that's when I left, in 1985.

My interest in the information needs of Presidents really goes back much further than that. As an intelligence officer in the early 1960s and early 1970s I had been on active duty and assigned to Southeast Asia to something called U.S. Mission Laos. There I was attached to the Central Intelligence Agency. I was a military officer, and for the very first time it came home to me the importance of information when that information really mattered: that is, when it was being used in ways that would either protect lives or take lives. From that moment on, that experience caused me to focus on the use of intelligence or information by high-level decision makers, particularly during critical situations (meaning, at the one extreme, life-and-death kinds of decisions). And so, rather than spend the remainder of my career as an intelligence officer worrying about how things were collected, or the various analytical techniques that one uses to present information from data, I focused on who uses it, who misuses it, who cares. Who cares at all?

I've been in government service for 25 years — the anniversary was last month, the 28th day of January. During that period I have spent all but five years in Washington and have had the good fortune of serving under four different administrations and on the staffs of four different Directors of Central Intelligence, on the National Security Council staffs of about four or five different National Security Advisors — cutting across nearly a decade and cutting across political spectrums — conservative or liberal, Republican or Democrat.

I've had the fortune of both being a career officer and taking up political appointments. That gives me insight. It doesn't give me much wisdom. You'll have to judge that. But I've learned some things, and that was the attraction. In 1983 I gave up what was a rather comfortable position in the Department of Defense — I had a political appointment as a Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force and had young officers and civilians working for me. It was a very comfortable living in terms of being able to make speeches and have a large staff to curry my favor and take me around. Occasionally I would get attacked by congressional staffers or have to testify on the Hill, but generally it was a pleasant existence.

Then I volunteered for duty again at the White House, knowing very well what I was about to get involved in, because it hadn't changed. People who are attracted to the White House are really people of two kinds. One, there are those who believe that this is the center of power. This is where real decisions are made that — not to coin a phrase but to paraphrase — move a nation. And they're intrigued by that power. They are either there because what they really want to do is "be the President," or they hope that by being associated with the President somehow they will become great ambassadors or general officers or Cabinet officers, or at least they will go away and write books about their experience. So the people who are attracted there are fascinated not only with the place but also with what they sense about it as being very powerful. I want to fall into the category of a person who wasn't attracted so much by the use of power but by the use of information. What causes Presidents — what is it that they use — to decide anything? What kind of information do they have?

Now let me put some things into context about what was occurring, in talking about crisis decision-making. In 1981, right after the election of Ronald Reagan, as is the custom, the President is taken on a tour of the residence and the public museum, the White House. Presidents live in one part of that museum, but it is in fact a public building available to all because it's the people's house. It's just where the President happens to live, and he's only a temporary resident. He isn't king; he's just king for a day or, in this case, about 48 months at a time. So

it is said that when on a tour of the White House (not that President-elect Reagan had not been in the White House before but he'd really not gotten a full-blown tour), he was taken around and he asked where the War Room was. He was taken to the West Wing of the White House, into the basement, into a room that is actually not one-third the size of this room — it is called the White House Situation Room. Around the room are six or seven computers, or analytical stations, a place for some photocopying of paper, a place where one can store documents, but the Situation Room is a very small place. In fact it can seat no more than 20 to 22 people comfortably. When shown this place the President said, "Now, go ahead, pull back the maps." He was thinking like Dr. Strangelove, I guess, about maps and so forth, and that didn't exist. This was a wood-paneled facility with a comfortable conference table with leather chairs around it, and behind the panels were maps of the world all right — simple National Geographic maps or maps that the CIA's Office of Cartographic Research had produced, but that was it. It is reported that Ed Meese and others who were accompanying the President on his tour said, "You know, CEOs of major corporations have better information systems than the President of the United States." So all those who surrounded Ed Meese — remember he was the counselor to the President at that particular point — scurried away saying, "Yes, we must look into improving the management information system of the government."

As is the custom, any new administration (particularly when it believes that it has an overwhelming electoral victory from the American people and therefore a mandate to make a change) essentially sets aside the policies, procedures, attitudes, and personnel of the previous administration — because they were wrong. They must have been wrong because they were defeated. A new President takes office, therefore he and those who come rushing to support him at the White House (the staff) discard and discredit all that went before. It's a natural phenomenon. It will occur again perhaps four years or eight years from now, depending on the circumstances at the time and the attitude of the American people.

One of the very first things the President must do, and it has been the custom since 1947, is to issue a series of directives. In the national security field, he issues a Presidential Directive, the National Security Council Directive, that says to the national security bureaucracy how it is that the President is going to organize himself and his office to conduct foreign policy and make national security decisions. It says what kind of information and what forms in general will be transmitted to him and to whom, identifying what role the National Security Advisor will have, if any, and what the NSC apparat might look like. In principle, the President at that particular point is outlining command, control, communications, and intelligence architecture by the issuance of that directive. This occurs usually on the day that the President is sworn in. Ronald Reagan was no different than Jimmy Carter had been. All Presidents call the first directive they issue number one, and it's always a little different in form, whether it's a Presidential Directive or a National Security Decision Directive or a National Security Council Decision Directive or whatever it happens to be — but it's got to be different than the predecessor's. It's the President's stamp; it's his style and prerogative to do this.

So a directive was issued. What was agreed on in the beginning of the Reagan Administration was that they did not want a National Security Advisor like Zbigniew Brzezinski had been, or Henry Kissinger had been, that in fact the President, it was reported, wanted a Cabinet form of government: broad policy and guidance would be issued from the White House. You pick strong men and women to head up the Cabinet departments and you gather them together when necessary, but they basically run the government; and in the national security field you want a very invisible National Security Advisor. That's what was said, so Richard Allen was appointed as the first National Security Advisor.

In the spring of 1981, several incidents occurred. First, I described the tour of the White House just before inauguration when the impression of the senior White House staff had been that the management information system of the White House and the government was deficient, compared to that of a chief executive officer of some large corporation or perhaps a small, well-managed organization, and something needed to be done about it. Within the first 90 days of that administration, several other things happened. First, the new National Security Advisor and his deputy received a briefing from an intelligence officer regarding a new discovery (a briefing actually that had been going around town just about nine months before in the Carter Administration). At the time it was a closely guarded secret (now it is not) but then it was very disturbing, and the briefing frightened the National Security Advisor and his deputy. That briefing dealt

with the discovery, through national technical means and all other kinds of intelligence resources, that the Soviets had been digging, inside and outside of Moscow, deep underground bunkers, and that these bunkers had been dug and a program had been put into effect over 25 years ago. In fact it was surmised that beneath Moscow and its outskirts was a bunkered system that would take care of the command and control for the Soviet high command and its families. It was an underground city that could withstand, it was surmised, several direct attacks by the United States if there were a nuclear war.

The reaction of the Security Advisor to those who briefed him was, "Well, where's ours? Where's our deep underground command and control bunker?" The answer was, "Sir, we don't have anything like that." And we didn't. In the 1950s at Fort Ritchie, Maryland, an alternate command and control center was built. It could not take a direct hit from a three-megaton warhead. It would be out of commission. We have had since the 1950s at Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado, the North American Air Defense Command. It cannot take three to seven direct hits by a Soviet ICBM. There wasn't an underground capability in 1980. With sufficient warning, and I'm talking about several hours' warning, the President and his immediate staff and family could be evacuated from the White House, airlifted to Andrews Air Force Base and be put airborne. That would not accommodate a Tom Clancy kind of scenario where you have a Yankee class submarine 15 nautical miles off the coast of the United States and the captain opens a sealed envelope that says attack the United States, use Washington, D.C., as ground zero and the Washington Monument, and within 7 minutes 100,000 people in Washington and about half a million others would be irradiated by a submarine-launched nuclear missile — a surprise out of the blue. The President and his family would not survive in that instance. That was a very important briefing that was given in the first 90 days.

Oettinger: There's an account by General Rosenberg in the annals of the seminar of an exercise in the Carter Administration of this evacuation process in which the helicopter coming to get the President to go to Andrews Air Force Base was nearly shot down by White House security guards — so you understand that this is a matter of some consequence and comedy both.

Lucas: Absolutely. There was another series of incidents that were of crisis proportion. In March 1981, while the President was at the Washington Hilton Hotel, a young man, distraught for reasons unclear, attempted to assassinate the President. That episode created a tremendous crisis at the White House, a crisis in command. In other words, who was in charge? And how badly hurt was the President?

Oettinger: That's the "vicar" episode.

Lucas: That's right. There were other episodes in 1981, in the first year of the Reagan Administration. Intelligence reported that an incident in Poland had occurred that actually had been something that the United States government for some time might have wished to have happen: the Solidarity movement began and the incident at the Gdansk shipyard occurred. This caused a crisis atmosphere within the first six months of the Reagan Administration because you had the President recovering from gunshot wounds — and, by the way, there was a real secret about all of this, because he was very badly hit, but the public perception was here was this old man with the constitution of a horse who was recovering and very jovial. He had a work day of about two hours, and that was it for several months. But a crisis atmosphere ensued: What would the Soviets do? Would Polish government survive? What was going to happen? What should the U.S. reaction be? This was in August of 1981. Another incident occurred in that same period of time. U.S. Navy F-14 Tomcat fighter aircraft flying in the Gulf of Sidra — in international waters, of course — were attacked by Libyan fighters, and new rules of engagement were instituted. They could defend themselves and fire live ammunition, and they did, and they knocked down the Libyan fighters.

Also within the first six months, again learned through intelligence (this was after the attempted assassination), were reports coming out of Libya that Khaddafy, the enlightened leader of that particular country, had decided to finish the job that John Hinckley had attempted. The word came that assassination teams were en route or were in fact already in the hemisphere; they were coming in either from Canada or Mexico. An interesting phenomenon occurred in Washington among the senior Cabinet members and the President — for any of you who were in Washington during that time and clearly if any of you visit now, you know what the outcome of all that was — and that's barricades. Barricades were drawn up at the White House, the State Department, on Capitol Hill, in the Pentagon. All the Cabinet officers henceforth had

armed security guards taking them from place to place in Washington, which had not previously been the case, followed by a chase plane, an ambulance basically, and Secret Service personnel. This threat was taken very seriously.

Other incidents occurred within the first year (again learned through intelligence reports) — this time in the fall of 1981 near Christmas time, in Korea. Out of a North Korean exercise came an unknown number of forces that were not heretofore identified. They'd been identified coming out of mountains and tunnels and so forth, and the concern was: Was this exercise actually a prelude to a move south? We're talking about the first nine months of an administration. The crisis in Poland was still evolving. Within the first year of the administration the Israelis decided to secure their northern border and invade Lebanon. Now we had three crises occurring in Europe, in the Pacific, and in the Middle East — and an ailing President. It was a big secret in terms of what was really going on in Washington. Who was really in charge? Who was the national command authority in this case? And then, within the first 12 months, there was a domestic crisis that no one would have anticipated — but anyone who lives in Washington will know that if there's a quarter of an inch of snow, somehow all traffic stops. The incident was this: An Air Florida airliner leaving National Airport plummeted into the Potomac, killing all the passengers aboard.

At this very same time there was an accident in one of the tunnels of the brand new Metro subway system. This incident occurred within three blocks of the Pentagon, the National Command Center, seven blocks from the White House, and the District of Columbia government was incapable of coordinating any kind of rescue effort. The military were all standing by just waiting for somebody to tell them what to do in terms of the rescue.

By the spring of 1982, President Reagan made a decision that somebody besides himself must be the senior crisis manager of our government, and we must set up a system to better communicate, coordinate, and pull together people when there are either domestic or international crises. So a directive was issued and a decision was made that we'll have George do it. And so George Bush, in the spring of 1982, was designated the Senior Crisis Manager of the United States government. A system was set up within the National Security Council to support him: something called a Special Situation Group, and supporting that the Crisis Pre-Planning Group, and a Terrorist Incident Working Group to support this new apparatus, which basically included the statutory members of the National Security Council augmented, but a whole new network. Also, a study had been undertaken and it was decided to bring these activities together.

I mentioned the visit that the President had had to the Situation Room, and Ed Meese's comment that CEOs have better information management systems. A study had been initiated on how to automate, how to bring in information systems, and how to improve what Carter had left behind. Another study was done on how you could create a system at the White House that would bring information to a President and those who advise him without alerting the White House press corps. Remember, there are over 400 of them accredited to the White House, including foreign journalists, and about half of them have badges that give them access to various personages at the White House complex. So a study was commissioned and, typical of studies of this kind, it was to examine how the White House Situation Room could be upgraded.

The White House Situation Room, located in the West Wing in the basement of the White House, was created by the Kennedy Administration after the first Cuban crisis in 1960 (Bay of Pigs), but actually it had been ordered as a study in the Eisenhower Administration. It is reported that in 1958 when Dwight Eisenhower ordered Marines into Lebanon he turned to his Chief of Staff, General Andy Goodpaster, and said, "Andy, how are the boys doing in Lebanon?" And it's reported that General Goodpaster said to President Eisenhower, "Sir, if I call the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or if we go over there, maybe they'll tell us." President Eisenhower had been Commander-in-Chief of allied forces in Europe and a five-star general and it is reported that he said to Andy Goodpaster, "You know Andy, I think I might need a little watch office or something over here if something like this comes up again."

So a study was undertaken, typical of the way that we do things in the American government: a committee was formed and a commission was chartered and 18 months later a recommendation was made. The recommendation to President Eisenhower was, if you will give up either the bowling alley or the swimming pool (one of the two indoor swimming pools that had been created for President Roosevelt), you could probably put in a little watch office, operations center, or command and control center, if you want to call it that, at the White House. Sure enough, all of that was put into effect; that study had

been completed when the Bay of Pigs occurred in the Kennedy Administration within the first 90 days and, snap, Kennedy ordered it done. From that moment on, the information management system — live intelligence reports, raw reporting — became an everyday occurrence at the White House, from 1961 forward. It was the beginning of powerful National Security Council Advisors and the creation of the White House Situation Room and the ability of a President to gain access to more information than is accessible to any other single person in the government, as it probably should be. Every 10 years thereafter, because technology has permitted it or a crisis has occurred, as it did in 1973, there's been an upgrade in the communications facilities at the White House.

That's one crisis management facility. Actually there's another place in the East Wing, built during the Roosevelt period, called the Bomb Shelter. It was also given a nickname, the Crown Shelter. That's literally a place where the President could go, having no warning of an attack — a facility not much larger than this particular room. There he could initiate a nuclear attack and kiss his assets goodbye, because the White House is not a facility designed to take a radiation weapon. So there are really two crisis management facilities. The White House Situation Room is under the control of the National Security Advisor, manned by CIA and people on detail from the intelligence community, the CIA or NSA. The Bomb Shelter is under the control of the White House military office. Those are the two crisis management facilities in the White House.

In 1982 and 1983 another study was conducted and a recommendation was made to expand the Situation Room, which means either go deeper underground or build out the West Wing. It was concluded, for a variety of reasons, that it would attract too much attention, and besides that the White House architect and the Washington architect were concerned about disfiguring the White House, the public museum. So it was concluded that since the President had let George Bush become the crisis manager and since the Vice President's office was in the Old Executive Office Building (EOB) in the White House complex, that we would build the new facility in the EOB, down the hall from the Vice President, in room 208. (This had been Secretary Cordell Hull's office, where we received the wonderful news from the Japanese that they had only peaceful intentions in 1941, as they were attacking us at Pearl Harbor.) So a new facility was constructed and a new directive (now called NSDD 95) was issued by President Reagan in the spring of 1982, which was to improve the crisis information management system for the U.S. government. They would begin by cleaning up and streamlining and modernizing the facilities at the White House and then spread that to each one of the Cabinet departments that supports the President in times of crisis, and then it would go out even further as a network. So room 208 was reconverted.

Now the Old Executive Office Building is not secured from eavesdropping by hostile intelligence services. It is also a public building where people can legitimately come and go upon appointment. Audio devices and other things could be implanted in there without detection. It created a problem because there are only two places in the whole White House complex where the President can go and have a private and secure conversation. It isn't the Roosevelt Room and it isn't the Oval Office. You have the Situation Room — which is technically shielded in ways that protect the electrical emissions as well as the conversation — and this new facility we were constructing in the Old EOB. At about that point is when I first heard that something was occurring at the White House, and I was approached as to whether or not I would come over and assist in establishing and recruiting a staff that would implement the President's new directive on crisis information management.

Now it's one thing to fill a room with computers, but it's another thing to ask what you're going to fill those computers with. What kind of information is it that the President needs in critical situations? How is it that the President makes decisions? These were not academic questions. These were fundamental questions that determined the kind of facility or place where the President could come and be advised. We had a President at the time who was very comfortable with images, maps, charts, videos; he received and processed information by interacting, and he visualized things very well. He wasn't a reader of tomes of analysis. President Nixon, by the way, was. President Carter was. It is reported that Carter measured his productivity by the amount of paper he had on his desk. I don't know the truth of that, but that's what some have said. Nixon, trained as an attorney, happened to like reports that laid out options and alternatives, and he would choose the best. Every President is entitled to receive information that he or she has to decide upon, in his or her own way. So, one of the decisions was that we must have the ability to receive information in any form

that could be transmitted to the White House: video, digital, any kind of electronic information — store it, retrieve it, access databases in other government agencies if necessary in times of crisis — in a system that the President could control, that was both secure and private, and that only he could activate, where he could have the Secretary of Defense, State, Treasury or Director of Central Intelligence, remain in their own offices. He could, if he chose (this was the design in the system), stay right where he was, in the White House Oval Office, or in the Situation Room, or across the street in the EOB, and talk with them without any of them having to attend, and literally switch channels through technical assistance and talk privately to one without the others hearing.

In 1982, this was an extraordinary advance as far as government was concerned: trying to orchestrate the multiple media, the multiple ways of receiving information simultaneously during periods of crisis. If all of that were to fail, and if the President were no longer there — if there had been a successful assassination, let's say, or the White House were under some kind of an attack (radiation, chemical, biological, terrorist attacks) — then the question that we were confronted with was: Who is going to be in charge? And what information does he need? And at what point do you transfer to the person who then assumes the constitutional role of the President? If you think that's an interesting academic question and you think you can easily identify the information, you're wrong. It's not as easy as you think.

So we built the facility. The architects and those concerned about history insisted that the facility be constructed in such a fashion that they could conceal all this high tech stuff, so we had to worry about 19th century and 18th century decor, and behind the panels were all the lights and cameras and computers, hidden by fine murals or mirrors. We took that into account. It added of course to the cost and to the complication of trying to put a facility like this together. Seven VAX computers (and we had on order a Cray II, but it never arrived) were installed in the EOB; 30 people were recruited in addition to the 30 who were already in the White House Situation Room. Over time, it has become a truism that the United States government, at least at the highest levels, cannot handle three real crises at the same time — I mean crises that involve American lives being at risk. If it were a major war and a minor one and a terrorist incident, we just cannot do that very well.

What we wanted was to allow the White House Situation Room, once an event occurred that was declared a Presidential crisis situation, to activate special communications, special databases, and ways of communicating with those who surrounded the President. Then the notion was, if the Situation Room would take care of the rest of the world, we'd concentrate on the crisis at hand and try to be as invisible about it as possible without creating a public perception that there was a critical situation; in fact, the overall philosophy was to create an impression that everything was calm at the center.

Student: I wonder what you would do if there is a glitch in the center — you receive information in the center that there is a Soviet first strike and you only have seven minutes to decide whether this first strike is real or not. Then you still have to make a decision and give your forces enough time to launch their missiles. Would you have that time? I was thinking of the danger of starting a nuclear war by some miscommunication.

Lucas: Of course, that's always hypothetically possible, if you mean an attack out of the blue. At the moment, of course, our relationship is changing and perhaps we would mutually agree that nuclear weapons of mass destruction will somehow be destroyed and then things will return to the good old days when we didn't kill each other so quickly. We did it more methodically and took a little longer. But to answer your question, surprise out-of-the-blue attacks and the kinds of decision-making that one has to do under those circumstances to retaliate is down to a fine art and a science. The question is what do you do the day after that? That has been thought about, but no one can quite figure that out. If we don't have warning, there is nothing we can do to protect our constitutional system of government, because what you're talking about is initiating mutual suicide.

Student: What I'm talking about is that your computer system indicates an attack and in fact there is not an attack. I think there was one instance when there was a signal from the moon and it was interpreted by the computers as an attack.

Lucas: There are multiple ways now of confirming whether or not those are false readings.

Oettinger: It's not this computer system. Those incidents to which you refer dealt with Strategic Air Command or North American Air Defense Command. He's talking about something that takes whatever the military and civilian agencies and intelligence agencies bring together for the President. It's not the primary system of a particular

branch of the military, so the nature of the failures and the impact would be somewhat different. The second comment I'll make on that score, which is important in this context, is that in a sense the systems that he is describing are competitors or alternative systems and the bureaucratic dynamics of that is something I hope you will say a little bit about before you move on to other subjects. I think that's a critical element, including that the President or any decision maker also gets information from outside the government. We have on record a wonderful analysis by Lyndon Johnson's Science Advisor about how Johnson heard about a crisis that was not cosmic — when the whole Eastern seaboard had its power go out and people didn't know whether that was just a power failure or a nuclear attack. The President heard it over the radio. Some of the details of that are in Don Hornig's account* that we have of how that was handled and how ultimately he got a phone call from the Secretary of Defense asking, "What's going on?" This is a piece of a much larger system. A final remark is to suggest that you also look at Dave McManis' account** of the whole question of the possibility of warning. McManis has a strong belief, which I guess we have some doubts about, on the ultimate possibility of warning. So in interpreting what you're hearing from Jim you need to put it together with a number of other pieces of the larger system in which this particular facility is embedded.

Lucas: The essence here is just to say that a facility was built. The technical problem of putting that all together is a story worth telling, but the point is that it was difficult to do technically, just to put together all of this equipment. The most difficult chore I found was to identify the kind of people who could work in that facility and not be threatened by what people thought they were doing versus what they were really doing. I'm talking about where they were from organizationally or within the National Security Council staff, because we were under instruction that what we did and why we were there was very highly classified and that other members of the NSC staff need not know what we were about, which created problems within the White House complex itself, as well as rumors in well-informed circles elsewhere in the bureaucracy. But we worked for the President; in that case, that's the way we understood he wanted it and that's the way he had it. We had the facility up and running in time for its first operational use, the Korean Air Lines (KAL) shootdown, and then for the Grenada operation and the Persian Gulf crisis.

Student: One question I have is basically in the National Security Agency, everybody's looking outward. We talked about that, terrorism, military operations, and things like that, but you mentioned two crises when you talked about Reagan's first year, about the airplane crash in Washington and the Metro problem. Do you have access to data for internal problems? Do those count as crises that would be managed from that center, or where does the President handle them?

Lucas: There was another event that was coming up that we all worried about and planned for: it happened to be the Olympics. The United States was hosting the Olympics, as you will recall, and there was great concern about some terrorist incident occurring in the United States, where the United States was the host and this was going to be done in the President's home state. There was a tremendous amount of international cooperation actually, from some of our adversaries at that time; even the "evil empire" was willing to cooperate with us in that case. The answer to your question is yes, the idea was that there would be databases and information, because remember, this information was not only for the Commander in Chief of the armed forces, but also for the President of the United States as head of the government — domestic, foreign, all that sort of thing. It raised some interesting questions: Was it a national security kind of issue? What constitutes a national security threat? So we had an element that worked with local law enforcement agencies and the FBI.

Oettinger: Let me just add one more thing. I think it's important in listening to what Jim is saying not to take his remarks too literally as applying only to the President of the United States. The problems that Jim is outlining are problems common to every decision maker at any level of any organization. It looks a little bit larger, a little bit more dramatic, but I think you want to listen to what he is saying as generic and as applicable at any level of any organization. The issues are across the board, perennial issues.

Student: Is it fair to say that the solution to implement this was in some sense a decentralization

*"Northeast Power Failure and Lyndon B. Johnson: An Interview with Donald F. Hornig, June 30, 1983. [5 pages; October 1983/Incidental Paper]

**David Y. McManis, "Warning as a Peace Keeping Mechanism," in *Seminar on Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence: Guest Presentations, Spring 1984.* Program on Information Resources Policy, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA: 1985.

of information by taking it away from the President and setting up this backup system under the Vice President?

Lucas: Don't get the impression that we were trying to create a solution. What we were trying to do was to set up and improve the facility, a place where the President and his advisors could come and could receive information of any kind in any form in any category they wanted and to be able to transmit that information to whomever at whatever level.

Student: Was there an organizational change?

Lucas: Yes, there was, because the question was, what kind of information does a President need to preside, to govern, particularly in very critical situations. How could you get that information when you felt that you needed it? We were to be silent staff officers to him, so that we would be as invisible to the decision-making process as possible. There was debate about that. There were those who said we should be very visible: See, there is a crisis management facility at the White House. There were others, and I happened to be in that category, who said no, we don't want anything on the door; we don't want anything in our name; we're supposed to be silent staff officers to the President. To all outside he's making the decisions, and he has the information necessary for him to decide. Don't get me wrong, most of the folks that we tried to recruit had the attitude that this was a system for the Presidency, for *the President*, not Ronald Reagan, or George Bush, or whomever, but for the Presidency. That was our (at least that was my) going-in position. Unfortunately, after I left, the facility was used for other operational purposes. It was apparently the choice of the National Security Advisor at the time, John Poindexter. In fact it was a highly capable command center where you could do things in the name of the President that you wanted to do, but that was after my time. All we were trying to do was to improve the crisis facilities at the White House.

Oettinger: You can follow in the newspapers the account of what one of the alumni of this school did in later years in tracking Oliver North's use of these facilities. One of these days some more details may come off the court record, depending on what testimony one gets from Poindexter or Reagan in the ongoing court proceedings.

Lucas: I shall not go beyond what I think is prudent on that issue. The point is, what we tried to do, and what I thought was fascinating, was to provide a place and the information in an organized way for the President. For an intelligence officer it was absolutely fascinating, because our business in intelligence is organized knowledge. We're one of the very few activities of the U.S. government that looks worldwide and tries to organize what we look at in some fashion and make sense out of it in a collective. I'm exaggerating, but I have a bias.

In terms of volume, you should realize that, with or without us, about 250,000 electrical messages come and go to the White House each day that either someone out there thinks the President should know about or someone at the White House wants to transmit. If it were translated into paper, that's 250,000 sheets of paper a day that someone has to process and handle, that presumably are for the President. That does not count what the bureaucracy routinely sends to the White House or what the general public wants to send to the White House in the form of letters to the President — solicited or unsolicited. I'm talking about a tremendous amount of information available at the White House, and it's a task to process it all, let alone carve out of that what is absolutely necessary in times of crisis. What constitutes a crisis was also a great debate. You might say it is self-evident. Well, is it?

Student: Who pares that 250,000 down to what the President sees? Obviously, what he sees is determined by somebody else.

Lucas: Absolutely. There are filters all over the White House. By that I mean the staffs — whether it's OMB, Office of Management and Budget, or National Security Council staff, or the Chief of Staff's staff — they're the ones who filter that information.

Oettinger: Let me dig into this one as an occasion to make a statement about one of my favorite balances. As a consequence of what you've just described, every President, any executive in any level, has a strong compulsion to escape all that apparatus and develop his or her own sources. Roosevelt was a master. There is a good deal of literature on Roosevelt's practices in bypassing. Clearly the price the decision maker pays in bypassing is that the avalanche grows — then he says, well I've got to have staff. So then he builds staff; then the staff collects more and more information and it becomes a filter. The President has escaped. As you've heard from Jim, of course all of this is very much dependent on the personality of the particular decision maker. So you have a highly dynamic situation where the technology is one of many

factors, including the personality of the incumbent, including the relative balance between staff filtering and a desire to have direct access to whatever, and the need for selection. The notion that there might be some solution for all time to these problems is fatuous.

I'm trying to understand the balances and the factors involved because if you can understand the factors and their interplay you may have a chance, when in a particular situation — as President or an executive in a lower level, or as staff to someone — of having a checklist in your mind about what it is you have to juggle. The notion that there is a school solution to the outcome of that juggling I think is also completely fatuous. There is a bare hope that, by understanding what the balls are that you have to juggle, maybe you can do a better job, drop fewer of them, when you're called on to do so, either as decision maker or as staff to a decision maker. Is that a reasonable summary?

Lucas: And recall that, at the White House at the turn of every administration, the President's staffs, who have now become knowledgeable about what kind of information is really useful and what information is not so useful, leave. All of the knowledge that they've accumulated generally goes with them to a Presidential library that's going to be set up. So there's a big vacuum at the change of nearly every administration. We have had a really historic first in some respects. We have a President from the same party that has governed the nation for an eight-year period before, and who was part of that governance, and so there hasn't been quite the shift that there normally is when there's a change in party or a change in personality in terms of how to staff the White House.

Student: I'd like to go back to your observation on filtering as it happens in the White House. The information that comes there has been prefiltered before it ever gets there, because everything comes in with a priority attached and that will determine in what form the staff of the White House gets to look at it, and determine what gets looked at in what order. Are you entirely comfortable with the fact that that's being prefiltered, set against criteria that may not match those of the people who are in the White House?

Lucas: Don't assume that the only information source available to the President is provided to him by the government or the Executive Branch. The President listens to the radio and watches television, and news accounts, whether they be from the electronic media or the print media, are summarized for him by clipping services. A President's family or personal friends are reading things, and they have friends and contacts and telephone calls outside of government. The President then filters that; he's the one who switches the channel; he's the one who reads the *New York Times* or the *Boston Globe;* and it's his nickel. So there are multiple sources of information available to the President not always under the control of the staff or of filters in the government.

Oettinger: To your knowledge, has any President ever used that facility personally?

Lucas: Yes. I can speak only for the 1983 to 1985 facility. You will read in the Iran-Contra hearings, if you've had access to that, and the President's special review of that particular incident, of a group called the National Security Planning Group (NSPG). That was the group convened basically to address covert action. They met in the EOB in 208.

Oettinger: But those were the second level.

Lucas: No, I'm talking about the President of the United States. Now, quite candidly, the President would prefer to either meet in his quarters, his residence, among very close friends, or maybe come down to the Oval Office, or, if it had to be a big meeting, meet in the Roosevelt Room, or he could walk down a flight of stairs to the Situation Room where he could meet with as few as 5 and as many as 22 — rather than cross the street to the Old Executive Office Building. So what we did was basically configure the Situation Room and the crisis management facility in 208 so that there was a secure video link and digital link, and we could monitor who was in the Situation Room, and if they wanted to see who was in the room 208 we had it fixed that way. Down in the bomb shelter we fixed it up that way, and the idea was to have a portable facility in the Oval Office (literally a wheel-in thing) or in the Roosevelt Room, if that's what the President wanted. We were told, although I cannot say that he ever told me, that's what he wanted and so that's what we tried to build.

Student: When is it possible — with a few recommendations, possibilities, techniques — to change a decision maker's mind on a policy he's already decided on? What if you had some information that you are absolutely certain of, that if you could present it to the President and convince him of

it, he would change his mind — for example, that the U.S. Embassy was to be taken over by radical students in Tehran, that the Japanese will attack on December 7th. How do you get access, since you have this clearing out process that sorts out the information? What can you do to say something that's absolutely critical when you, as an intelligence officer, or any civilian or military, are absolutely certain that you could do it? How do you get up there; how do you get the word out?

Lucas: There are all sorts of rules about the passage of critical information, particularly in the U.S. intelligence community or in government. When any individual is as certain as you hypothesized he might be about some event, there's a way of issuing "critics," or critical information that will at least get to the White House, and hopefully into the Situation Room, to that analyst who receives it, who if trained properly will take three steps, or pick up the secure line and call the Security Advisor, or punch a button and be able at least to access a telephone to the President, and say, "Sir, we have received a critic and I believe it and I think it is something that you, sir, should act upon." Or you can pick up the telephone and call the White House operator. Any one of you can say, "Put me through to the President." You might get through. You could stand down on Pennsylvania Avenue and wave a flag. If it's a private citizen, it depends on who that private citizen is; if it's a friend of the President, clearly he will believe that friend perhaps over someone he doesn't know in government. One can only hope that he has appointed reasonable men and women who will act responsibly when they receive critical information and pass it to him and attempt to persuade him that the President would act differently than he might if he didn't have it. It's all you and I as citizens can hope for.

Oettinger: To get away from the hypothetical, look at the account by Don Hornig of the East Coast power failure. His daughter Joanna was here at Radcliffe when the lights went out. She called her mother in Washington and said, "Do you have any idea what's going on?" Her mother called Don, the White House Science Advisor, and said, "Joanna reports the lights are out." So Hornig started making some phone calls. Meanwhile Lyndon Johnson was in his Jeep at the ranch and heard the news on the radio. It was broadcast to the public. He called up Hornig to say, "What the hell is going on?" Hornig was able to tell him because he was beginning to know. You have a wonderful account of a particular instance. Everybody's alive, it wasn't a nuclear incident, it was only a power failure. The randomness of some of this I think is a critical element.

Lucas: At the White House, and that's what Dr. Oettinger wanted me to speak to, the six or eight individual analysts who are manning the White House Situation Room, and the NSC staff people are tuned constantly to Cable News Network. There are the AP and Reuters wire services; besides government reporting, there is access to all of the news media out there whose business it is to report events.

Student: In another class we're taking the big issue is when leaders have had the intelligence, the intelligence analysts have done their job and given it to them, and they just ignore it. As an intelligence officer where is the ethical line that says you believe with almost certainty, that what you just told him was true and he says, "Well, I understand, but I'm not going to do anything about it." The question that came up in class is what do you ethically do about it then? Where do you go, do you just say the boss made a decision and I'm going to sit and watch Washington get blown up? That's a question when leaders have been presented with facts and now in retrospect you look back and see they failed to act on it.

Student: I think it would happen again. Given Pearl Harbor — you couldn't have convinced Roosevelt to change his mind. There's got to be some evidence.

Student: Just yesterday we had a good discussion about a leader having a paradigm in his mind on what he thinks is going to happen, and how you change his mind once you've given him the facts. We're just curious if, as an intelligence official, you have bumped into a case where you had something and the people have said, "Well, we've seen that fact, but we don't really agree with it."

Lucas: That occurs frequently. But let's not be so arrogant as to think that even as an intelligence officer you have all the information that may be necessary for the President to decide, because intelligence is but one source of the kind of information he may need to decide something. Historically, even in the American system, the U.S. intelligence community is not always cut in on U.S. operations. I don't mean necessarily military operations; I'm talking about diplomatic operations or negotiations, or the President communicating with another head of state — that's not privy to the U.S. intelligence community.

Oettinger: There's a lot of that.

Lucas: Sure, and so did past Presidents pick up the phone and call Maggie Thatcher and say, "This is what I'm going to do. This is what I'm going to say in my State of the Union; do you have a problem with this?" Or they talk to Gorbachev or send a Presidential envoy, someone from the President's staff with instructions, "I want you to seek out so and so and ask them about this or that, or make an observation about what you see when you're there and report back to me only. Do not share this with the Secretary of State or Defense, but me only." That's the prerogative of the President, and that is not information that is shared with the intelligence community unless the President authorizes it. The President decides, for example, when there's a Presidential daily briefing given and whom he wants to share that within his Cabinet. It's a briefing designed for his purposes. The past few Presidents have decided that they will share that intelligence with the Vice President, on occasion with the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, on rare occasions maybe with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or the National Security Advisor. That's a President's call. He can tell his Director of Central Intelligence, "I want only certain categories of information shared with my Cabinet officers." That's his call. It's his organization. He's the Chief Executive. The people elected the President, but they didn't elect the others. They're going to hold him accountable for the conduct of his office. So you have to be careful of the way you frame things because it's not always clean and clear. We'd like to think in intelligence we know everything that is going on and we have the market on truth. That's not true at all.

Student: You said that President Reagan only worked two or three hours during his recovery, so I guess he never fully recovered.

Lucas: What I really meant was that during the period he was hospitalized he was not in the residence and up and about.

Student: It was a joke. Do you think that the technological capability to get raw information from the field on real time events into this room and to the President and have him talk to the grunt in the foxholes directly, instead of having people going off and doing the job and analyzing information has affected policy making, decision making, and can you give a concrete example of that?

Lucas: That's a very insightful question that there is actually great debate about. You are in a school named after a President who said that he would not allow some sergeant in the field to trigger the Third World War; that was a decision he would make. That President decided in the White House to make decisions for the Chief of Naval Operations (if you've read *Essence of Decision*) on a Navy blockade around Cuba. You had in President Johnson reliable reports, from all accounts, that the kind of tactical decisions in the military context were being made at the White House — that decisions you pay generals and admirals or fleet commanders for, during the Vietnam War, were being made at the White House. Even during the Nixon Administration there were episodes, using the military analogy, that decisions about even what targets to strike in a neutral area that we weren't supposed to be striking (which was Cambodia and Laos) were made at the White House. People argued that that's what the President should do. Those are life-and-death kinds of decisions and war-and-peace decisions. No one below him should make those decisions. So he has to have the communications ability and the detail to do that. You'll find a number of scholars and practitioners on the other side who say when a President does that it preempts all of that government and all those advisors and all of that help in between. I would argue in time of crisis — if it really is a critical situation for the fate of the nation — there's a less than 50/50 chance of the President making the right decision and saving the lives of many Americans. I think he should have the capacity to make that decision, but that leaves a wide area in which I think he should not.

But let me tell you something. What is also forcing Presidents to act on a lot of detail, and in my personal judgment I wish they would not, is the media. There isn't an episode, an event, any kind of utterance coming from any foreign government, or a natural disaster when you don't have a reporter at the White House asking the Presidential spokesman or the President himself, "What do you think about...?" The expectation is that the President has a position on every single episode and incident and utterance from somebody in the world. You can't say too often, "Well, I don't know what you're talking about," or "Why don't you talk to the Secretary of Transportation or the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs?" because then the Washington media says, "The President's not informed, not in control — who's running the place? We know about it, shouldn't he know about it? We have an opinion,

doesn't he?" You go on and on with that sort of thing. Since the end of World War II especially, mass media, mass communications, instant communications (I don't have any evidence for all this, it is my theory) force the White House and its staff to require more information than it ever had before and, by the way, technology permits it.

Student: Can you give an example that you are familiar with when the President or Vice President got involved in the nitty gritty of commanding forces in the field?

Lucas: The President and Vice President in the two years in the Reagan administration, in my first-hand experience, never got into that level of detail. That does not say that members of their staff who used the President's name to other members of the government, saying that the President wants to know the following, didn't get into that level of detail. But to my knowledge, for the two years that I was there, and in the Nixon and Ford Administrations, it was never that level of detail. Reported reliably by Jimmy Carter himself in *Keeping the Faith*, and by Zbigniew Brzezinski in *The Memoirs of a National Security Advisor*, are episodes dealing with American hostages where the President wanted to know exactly what was happening with that rescue operation in Iran. He was in direct contact with Colonel Beckwith who was running the operation on the ground. In the Ford Administration it is reliably reported that the President was receiving live in the Roosevelt Room a broadcast from the pilot who was reporting all the way back to the White House what he was seeing in a boat, "I see Caucasians," he said. "I don't know who they are." This was the *Mayaguez* incident, and everyone expected the President to take some action on the information he was receiving. Was he going to tell this helicopter pilot what to do? To my knowledge, in the area that I had responsibility for, that level of detail was never asked for by the President or Vice President.

Oettinger: I didn't mean to imprison you in that bit of past experience when you had intended also to discuss some of your other interests. With the time that is remaining, why don't you switch to that.

Lucas: Now remember, I am not speaking for the United States government, the U.S. intelligence community, or the Department of Defense, so the picture I paint, I am responsible for, and it is my own (although I think I'm a reliable source).

Let's look at some lessons learned in the relationship between intelligence and policy. It's my impression that senior decision makers prefer current reporting over longer-term estimates. They like the current day-to-day stuff rather than the longer-term, "what does this all mean" material. Our policy makers have little time to read. They are pressed with current problems. They don't like to read tomes. They don't like to read theses. They like to read executive summaries, one page or two.

Remember that intelligence does not advocate policy. Intelligence is information. I've learned on policy staffs that uncongenial messages are not well-received. Because of the paradigms that are carried around by the decision makers, it is very difficult to bring them evidence that the view they have of the world is not quite right, and in fact it might be wrong. They don't want to hear that. New administrations try to fix the mess left by the last, and pride in political commitment sometimes distorts their reality. After time you see that the foreign policies of one, whether Republican or Democrat, conservative or liberal, look an awful lot like the policies of the last.

Actually intelligence sometimes increases uncertainties. There is a perception on the part of policy makers, particularly those who are new to government, who have not served at the national level, who have not gained access before to intelligence information, that intelligence is somehow perfect information, that somehow we have access to the secrets of other societies, and they become disappointed when there is so much unevenness about it.

Student: Does the mere fact that you have a crisis management center increase that problem? We talked earlier about President Johnson hearing on the radio that the power went out, and you also mentioned that the people at the center are also monitoring the newspapers, TV, and so forth. Is it possible they could reinforce the press speculation, that one of his friends would hear it on the radio and call him, and then the security team would call up and say we also report the same thing but evolving from a different source?

Lucas: There is that chance, but well-informed and trained analysts would ask questions like, "We're receiving reports on Cable News Network that an incident has occurred." I remember very distinctly that the first reporting we got at the White House about the *Achille Lauro* was not from any U.S. or foreign government source; it was in fact an information service translation of a foreign broadcast about the *Achille Lauro* that was being picked up on Cable News Network. The question is always asked, "Do we have anything that confirms or

denies that through government sources — our own controlled U.S. State Department or military, intelligence or friendly reliable government sources, the British, the French, the Italians, whatever?" For example, the President was attending the economic summit in the Far East, and the first information we received on the Chernobyl incident was not from the U.S. government but from reporting by Swedes about an increased radiation count.

The other thing is that intelligence is only one facet of policy making. Senior consumers also have to consider budgets, any departmental differences, earlier commitments to some foreign government, foreign reactions, public image, and their own political longevity. There are other factors besides some ground truth perceived by intelligence. In fact, I was disappointed with the President's time spent on national security issues. On the average, the President spends, depending on the day and the time, no more than about 30 to 45 minutes a day on things that one would consider foreign policy and national security; that depends on the incident. If you count greeting and meeting foreign visitors as they come through, or greeting, as is custom, ambassadors, welcoming them to the United States or bilateral exchange between heads of state — if you count that as foreign affairs, then that figure might increase to about an hour and a half a day, and that's it. His time is taken up with other matters that are also important to the governance of our nation, whether it's pinning medals on a Boy Scout troop or the many other activities of a President. Having come from the national security arena I was disappointed that Presidents don't spend more time on the issues that dominated my time.

Student: When you were working with the crisis information center, did you have any feelings about the problem with computer viruses or would that even have been thought of as having any impact on this sort of thing?

Lucas: Viruses, no. Reliability, yes, I mean just getting them up and running and counting on them, and how much redundancy you have to develop, and how reliable they all are. We do worry about security, of those files and that data from a conscious attempt by someone to try to access them. I don't recall us worrying about computer viruses at that particular time; they may now.

Student: In the event of a nuclear explosion, can the electromagnetic pulse shut down the computer databases? Would a 20-megaton bomb explosion wipe out all the data banks in the U.S?

Lucas: That's the theory. We have no empirical evidence to support that theory, but there is a theory that there would be electromagnetic pulses that would disrupt major communication in our computer databases in a thermonuclear war.

Oettinger: I'm not worried about that because the Office of Emergency Management has seen to it that the Post Office has forwarding addresses.

Lucas: It is theory and we might have to end up going back to doing it the old way, which is to send paper or walk over and talk to somebody.

Student: Would that be the end of your information center?

Lucas: No, no. Remember when I talk about an information center, don't think just computers. I'm talking about a place just like this where some future President, whether it would be Ronald Reagan, George Bush, or Michael Dukakis, or whoever, wants to meet with his advisors, or her advisors. What kind of information do they need? Do they like working with paper? Do they want a picture on the wall? Do they want video, or digital, or tapes? What is it that they need? And let's have it for them. Let's make sure that we can access it, store information that they need to make a decision; that's all we're talking about. It just so happened at that time this President was very comfortable with a lot of computer databases, and technology permitted them. That's the wave of the future in terms of massing a lot of information and data and storing it, retrieving it, and displaying it. That's why you all now, I gather, are computer literate. When I was 22, I wasn't. We had to go to a big main computer and keypunch cards, and we had to know COBOL, and we had to have programming language, we had to wait 24 hours to get anything done, and we used the Underwood typewriter, that was our word processor.

President Bush, for example, likes to read, and he likes to interact face-to-face with individuals, and he likes to use the telephone. Here's an individual who makes contact at various levels in an organization, including intelligence analysts who put their names (which has been required for a few years) on a document. He will often not only write a note to them, but also pick up the phone and call them, which causes concern, of course, in the intermediate bureaucracy. He's that kind of President. Ronald Reagan was never that kind of President; that doesn't make him better or worse, it just wasn't his style.

Student: My point is that the electromagnetic pulse of a nuclear explosion can not only destroy the computer databases but also knock out all the power lines.

Lucas: That's correct.

Student: The entire communications system.

Lucas: And kill all of the people.

Oettinger: I suggest that we not dwell on a nuclear scenario, because in truth nobody knows, and it's doubtful that many of us will care, if we're around. I think dealing with crises short of nuclear holocaust is much more sensible because it's likely to be in our experience and also what we're most likely to give a damn about. In the other event, we can't solve it.

Lucas: In fact, I have to tell you that at the facility I was involved with, that was one scenario or episode we were less interested in: warning of a thermonuclear war. If we hadn't done our crisis preplanning to avoid two nations coming together and deciding to commit mass suicide by committing radiation weapons, the whole government would have failed in its crisis planning activities.

Student: Sir, we've also got the E-4 platform, the doomsday aircraft. If you want to say there's nothing left, we do have provisions to marshall forces and for the President to command and control those assets through different means, but certainly not through the means that Mr. Lucas was working on. I don't know if that's what you're driving at.

Lucas: No, there are alternative ways, as I said, of continuing to prosecute a war.

Oettinger: Or to terminate it.

Lucas: Yes, to terminate one another, to reduce the other side, kill them, if that's what you want to do. Our business was to prevent those kind of events from occurring, and hopefully to negotiate and slow down the hostilities before we got to radiation weapons.

Oettinger: You have only a few minutes left for whatever central points you wanted to make sure we used.

Lucas: On the plane I thought I had done a good job of listing all this down. I think that by your backgrounds, as I gather from Tony, some of you are in government service. I clearly would encourage those who are not to enter government service, to get involved in a profession that I've been involved in for 25 years, which is intelligence. I find it fascinating. Anybody interested in international affairs should have a natural propensity in this area. For me it's been an exciting career, but not without stress and strain — if that's not what you're looking for, stay out of this business. I'll open up to any other questions in the last few minutes.

Student: What is the mechanism that you have in the intelligence community to sort out inaccurate information, and have decisions ever been made on distorted information that you found out was wrong?

Lucas: You mean, have we been deceived or did we have incomplete information? There's a difference.

Student: Information that told you something that you made a decision on, and then you found out that you had interpreted the information incorrectly?

Lucas: Yes, historically there are cases — such as the Pearl Harbor incident, where information or intelligence was available in Washington but was not collated, and you know that familiar story. So the President wasn't able to act on incomplete information. In the Vietnam War, before we went big in 1965, before President Johnson decided to introduce major ground forces, the intelligence community was pretty accurate in its assessment of the futility of doing that, and that intelligence was ignored; that's well-documented.

Oettinger: There's another notable incident. The Son Tay raid was a masterpiece of flawless execution, but when the raiders arrived in Son Tay in Vietnam to liberate American prisoners, they weren't there. I'm not sure from what's in the open literature whether it was faulty intelligence or whether it was a breach of security that led to the evacuation. I'm not familiar enough with that story.

Student: Because of that, have mechanisms been installed?

Lucas: All decision makers wish for perfect information. They all presume that because you're talking about information that you classify as secret, therefore somehow special, it is somehow complete, and the fact of the matter is that in some cases it is, but in most cases there's a great deal of uncertainty about that information, that analysis. But I always say to those who are critical of it, "Tell me who's going to be." These are the questions that are put to the intelligence community about some foreign political event, you know: "Is Gorbachev going to

survive?" "Are *glasnost* and *perestroika* going to work?" Well, you tell me who's going to win the off-year elections in this country. Tell me who's going to be President of the United States in 1992? Will George Bush be successful? Are we going to have a recession or inflation? Those are reasonable political/economic questions; now who can answer? We live with tremendous resources of rich data, but we can't predict. Those are very difficult things to predict, or to forecast.

Oettinger: I'm glad you're saying some of these things, because they go to the heart of the matter: are you getting your money's worth in this course? We were talking about subjects here in an open environment that might be worthless because of all the better information that is available behind some wall. I think part of the reason why a course like this makes sense in this university is that the fundamental problems that we're wrestling with are universal problems, where there's no special behind-the-wall kind of magic that somehow, if one had access to it, would suddenly clear off the fog of war.

Lucas: Absolutely, particularly about the Gorbachev question. If you read the press faithfully, and whatever media, you know about as much as we do about whether Gorbachev is going to be successful or not. There aren't any secrets to steal right now. I'm sorry.

Oettinger: A couple more questions and then we have to let our speaker go.

Student: Yes, I just had a fast comment on methodology, and that is any good newspaper reporter would follow the same procedures that an intelligence analyst does. That is, confirmation, multiple sources, and basically one of the biggest things on things like NIEs (National Intelligence Estimates), the major intelligence things, is an editorial process where a whole bunch of people who are supposed to be knowledgeable about it get together and fight it out, and come to some consensus about the conclusions that are drawn.

Student: I'd like to ask about when the President is out of the White House, is he carrying the equipment or systems; is he prepared to make up some kind of situation room?

Lucas: The answer is yes. Both the new Air Force One and the old Air Force One, the Boeing 747 or old 707, are fully equipped in terms of communications and processing information, and staffed to help him while he is airborne. Every time, whether in this President's case when he goes up to Maine, or in Reagan's case when he went out to California, there are mobile communication facilities or a crisis facility, fully manned to satisfy his needs. There's always this entourage. He has full support; that's one thing about technology. In that sense he's well prepared; he's always in command.

Student: Usually, how many people are flying?

Lucas: You mean in the entourage that goes? Good question. Everybody generally knows the advance schedule, if you're talking about getting a President from Washington to Kennebunkport, Maine. There's an advance team that sets up on the ground in Kennebunkport, or out in California, or wherever it happens to be. So all you're worrying about is getting the President through about a 2-, 3-, or maybe as much as a 5-hour flight, depending on where he's going, and that's the flying White House. When it sets down, then the people on the ground take over. So, you ask about total numbers. The White House Communications Agency team is aboard; maybe a half-dozen.

Oettinger: It's an unanswerable question for a variety of reasons, the last of which might have to do with security. There's a wonderful book by a man named Gulley, called *Breaking Cover*. Gulley worked for the White House way back in the communication days with the military office. The lengths that Presidents or any executives go to in order to have the staff that they need without paying for it is enormous, and so the number will never be known, because the number is never paid for, and is always buried in the budgets of a variety of agencies. So for reasons that have relatively little to do with any security questions, any executive, at any level, in any organization will never have the staff support that is readily identifiable, mostly for budgetary and political reasons.

Student: You mentioned that Vice President Bush at the time was head of the crisis management center. Who's head of it now?

Lucas: President Bush has chosen not to have the Vice President as the senior crisis manager. He controls that himself through the National Security Advisor, General Scowcroft. That's his call.

Oettinger: As of about a month ago John Grimes, who has spoken here previously, has become the director of the facility and I suppose next year we'll have him back to continue the story. One of the charms of the ongoing part of the seminar is that we

try to get a picture of continuity, and I hope you will relate what you've heard today from Mr. Lucas to the comments of Beal* and McDaniel,** so that you can round out the picture. But meanwhile, we've got to get you back to the airport. Thank you very, very much for being with us and sharing your insights with us.

*Richard S. Beal, "Decision Making, Crisis Management, Information and Technology," in *Seminar on Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence: Guest Presentations, Spring 1984*. Program on Information Resources Policy, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA: 1985.

**Rodney B. McDaniel, "C³I: A National Security Council Perspective," in *Seminar on Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence: Guest Presentations, Spring 1987*. Program on Information Resources Policy, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA: 1988.