



# **President George W. Bush Oral History Project**

## **Briefing Materials**

**Peter Feaver**

**January 10-11, 2012**

**Prepared by Anand Rao, Research Assistant**

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**Presidential Oral History Program**

**MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED OR CIRCULATED**

## PETER FEAVER NEWS TIMELINE

Prepared by Anand Rao

Miller Center, University of Virginia, 12/13/2011

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- 1983** Peter Feaver earns a B.A. in international relations from Lehigh University. (<https://fds.duke.edu>)
- 1990** Feaver earns a Ph.D. in political science from Harvard University. His doctoral thesis is entitled “Guarding the Guardians: Civil-Military Relations and the Control of Nuclear Weapons.” In the same year, Feaver becomes a United States Navy reserve officer, serving until 1999 and achieving the rank of lieutenant commander. (<https://fds.duke.edu>)
- 1991-2005** Feaver is a political science faculty member at Duke University and is awarded tenure in 1998. (<https://fds.duke.edu>)
- 1993-1994** Feaver joins the Clinton Administration as director for defense policy and arms control on the National Security Council (NSC). (<https://fds.duke.edu>)
- 2005**
- January* Stephen Hadley begins to serve as national security adviser. He chooses J.D. Crouch, who served in the Defense Department, as his deputy. (Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, New York: Penguin, 2011, p. 631)
- June* Feaver joins the NSC as special advisor for strategic planning and institutional reform. (*The Straits Times*, 07/06/2005)
- September* Bush approves the document, “Strategy for Victory,” that rejects any timetable for a troop pull-out in Iraq. It is based on a document “Our National Strategy for Victory in Iraq” written by Feaver and Meghan O’Sullivan, deputy national security adviser for Iraq and Afghanistan. (Bob Woodward, *State of Denial*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006, p. 427)
- 2006**
- January* Feaver reportedly plays a lead role in drafting an updated version of the NSC strategy document, marking the first formal reassessment of U.S. foreign policy by the Bush Administration since 2002. (*Financial Times*, 01/06/2006)
- June* Feaver reportedly conceives of and arranges a meeting between Bush and four men—Eliot Cohen, Michael Vickers, Fred Kagan, and Robert Kaplan—who are seen as “sympathetic war critics” capable of telling “the president how it might be better run.” (Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble*, New York: The Penguin Press, 2009, pp. 42-44)

Feaver's academic research, which advances the hypothesis that the American people will tolerate high casualties in war as long as they are confident that U.S. armed forces will achieve victory, is reported to have strongly influenced the Bush Administration's new approach to Iraq from late 2005. (*Newsweek*, 06/19/2006)

*September* Hadley asks O'Sullivan to begin a strategy review for Iraq. (Peter Feaver, *International Security*, Spring 2011, p. 102)

On the 27<sup>th</sup>, the council of colonels conducts its first meeting. It is a group of senior army leaders examining the Iraq strategy. (Ricks, p. 90)

*October* In response to Bush's comment that the United States is "winning" the war in Iraq, Feaver reportedly cringes and is quoted as saying "That wasn't the way it felt from where I sat." Feaver also hears Karl Rove, the presidential adviser, telling others that "We need a new face on Iraq," implying that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has to leave. (Ricks, p. 58)

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, William Luti, senior director for defense on the NSC, presents his paper on a new operational concept to Crouch. It recommends a surge and increasing the size of the Iraqi army. It is reported that Hadley does not tell O'Sullivan about Luti's work. Hadley gives the paper to General Peter Pace. (Bob Woodward, *The War Within*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008, p. 170)

On the 21<sup>st</sup>, O'Sullivan convenes her first strategy review meeting. They identify basic questions like "What don't we know?" and they question basic assumptions. The group considers both a troop pull-back and the addition of more troops. (Woodward, *The War Within*, pp. 178-179)

On the 29<sup>th</sup>, Feaver goes to Iraq for an "on-the-ground survey." He is accompanied by Hadley and O'Sullivan. The trip is made amidst concern that the current strategy is not working. (Woodward, *The War Within*, p. 184)

*November* On the 15<sup>th</sup>, the larger NSC Iraq review team has its first meeting. The group includes NSC members Crouch, O'Sullivan and her staff, Luti, Brett McGurk, and Feaver. From Defense, it includes General Doug Lute, Steve Cambone, Peter Rodman, General Kevin Bergner, and John Sattler. The director of national intelligence brings in David Gordon. From the State Department side, Rice agrees to lend David Satterfield and Philip Zelikow. Cheney's office is represented by John Hannah. (Woodward, *The War Within*, p. 230)

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, the Crouch group meets with Hadley to go over the State Department's memo that argues for a pull-back of U.S. troops. Hadley reportedly states, "You have got to give the president the option of a surge in forces. He will want to see it, and he'll want to know what it means." O'Sullivan sees the memo as a "graceful defeat." (Woodward, *The War Within*, pp. 232-235)

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, Hadley attends an Iraqi strategy meeting with Bush, Rice, Crouch, Rumsfeld, Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, and others. Crouch suggests accelerating the transfer of security responsibility to the Iraqis and a troop “surge” to increase security. Rice is still skeptical about a surge working, unless there is a sound military plan. (Woodward, *The War Within*, pp. 244-245; Feaver, p. 105; *The Washington Post*, 11/15/2006)

*December* O’Sullivan talks with General David Petraeus about General George Casey’s plan for one or two additional brigades. Petraeus says it is not enough. She tells Crouch and Hadley. (Woodward, *The War Within*, p. 300)

O’Sullivan writes a series of memos as the strategy review group is reaching a consensus: The U.S. should send more troops to help stem the violence and help the Iraqis train their security forces to take over. The option of intervening only in extreme cases of violence is still discussed as Rice still favors it, while Pace favors option one. (Woodward, *The War Within*, p. 267)

On the 6<sup>th</sup>, the Iraq Study Group, which interviewed key figures such as Hadley, Bush, Rice, and Cheney, releases its findings. Its primary recommendations include a pull-back of U.S. forces over the next fifteen months, an amnesty program for insurgent fighters, a “diplomatic offensive” toward Israel-Palestine negotiations, and high-level talks on Iraq with Iran and Syria. The Administration rejects the plan to talk with Iran and Syria and rejects setting any deadlines for reducing U.S. troops. (Woodward, *The War Within*, pp. 314-315; *The Washington Post*, 12/07/2006, 12/15/2006)

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, Hadley and some of his NSC staffers, Rove, General Jack Keane, Kagan, Cohen, and Stephen Biddle from the Council of Foreign Affairs meet with Bush and Cheney. Keane, Kagan, Cohen, and Biddle argue for a surge to protect the population and for Bush to make his generals more accountable. (Ricks, *The Gamble*, pp. 98-101; Stephen Dyson, *Political Science Quarterly*, 2010, p. 574)

On the 13<sup>th</sup>, Bush, Cheney, and Hadley visit with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Reportedly the chiefs do not fully support a troop increase and are worried where they will get the five brigades for the surge, plus ten more for military personnel rotation. However, Bush argues that Iraq has to take priority. (Woodward, *The War Within*, pp. 286-289; Dyson, *Political Science Quarterly*, 2010, p. 575)

## **2007**

*January* Bush announces his surge strategy for Iraq in a televised address. (<http://www.cnn.com>)

*July* Feaver leaves the Bush Administration and returns to teach at Duke University. (*The Herald-Sun*, 07/26/2007)

*September*      Feaver publishes an opinion piece that is critical of an ad campaign by the group MoveOn.org that questions the honesty and integrity of Petraeus, the head of U.S. armed forces in Iraq. (*The Boston Globe*, 09/11/2007)

## **2008**

*April*              Feaver publishes an article in *Commentary* magazine that explains how and why the surge strategy materialized in 2006.

## **TIMELINES**

- Peter Feaver News Timeline, prepared by Anand Rao, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 12/06/2011.
- Timeline of the Bush Presidency, prepared by Justin Peck and Bryan Craig, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 04/30/2010.

#### **SELECTED WRITINGS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY PETER FEAVER**

- Peter Feaver, “Anatomy of the Surge,” *Commentary*, 04/2008.
- Peter Feaver, “The Right to Be Right,” *International Security*, Vol. 35 (Spring 2011): 87-125.

## KEY ISSUES AND EVENTS AT THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

### *National Security Strategy Review and Update*

- “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” March 2006, <<http://www.comw.org/qdr/fulltext/nss2006.pdf>> (12/07/2011).
- Caroline Daniel, “Softer US Foreign Policy Seen After Review,” *Financial Times*, 01/06/2006.

### *Iraq Strategy Review and Surge*

- George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010) pp. 355-394.
- Dick Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Threshold, 2011) pp. 444-453.
- Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown, 2011) pp. 538-546.
- National Security Council, “National Strategy for Victory in Iraq,” 11/2005, [http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/whitehouse/nat\\_strat\\_iraq.pdf](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/whitehouse/nat_strat_iraq.pdf) (12/07/11).
- National Security Council, “Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review,” 01/2007, <<http://merln.ndu.edu/archivepdf/iraq/WH/iraq-strategy011007.pdf>> (09/06/2011).



## NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

- Scott Shane, “Bush’s Speech on Iraq Echoes Analyst’s Voice,” *The New York Times*, 12/04/2005.

## **PETER FEAVER SUGGESTED TOPICS**

*PREPARED BY ANAND RAO (WITH FACULTY EDITS)*

*MILLER CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, 12/07/2011*

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### ***Joining the Administration***

- How did you first meet George W. Bush? What were your early impressions of him? Did you have any informal relationship with the administration as an external advisor before you formally joined the NSC staff?
- What kinds of assessments had you made as a scholar about the Bush administration before taking a position in it, both in terms of process and policy? Did you find those assessments in any way confirmed, or flawed, once you moved to the inside?
- How did you come to join the National Security Council during the Bush administration?
- Did you have detailed conversations with the Stephen Hadley about your new role in advance of taking the job? With the president himself?

### ***National Security Council***

- What were the differences between the NSC apparatus under President Clinton compared to President Bush?
- What specifically was your portfolio on the NSC staff? Were there any significant turf disputes at the outset within the national security making apparatus?
- How did you communicate foreign policy options and advice to the president? Did the president prefer particular briefing formats before making decisions? Did he rely on you to be a policy advocate? To be actively engaged in policy implementation? Discuss the president's decision-making style. How often did you see President Bush in person? How involved was he in the operations of the NSC?
- Discuss the NSC's interaction with other major White House offices (OVP, Legislative Affairs, Communications/Speechwriters, OMB, etc.) and with other executive departments (State, Defense, Justice, etc.). Where were those relationships especially productive? Were there places where the relationships were especially difficult?
- Describe your working relationships with fellow NSC staffer Megan O'Sullivan, J.D. Crouch, and National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley.
- How well suited is the normal NSC apparatus for serving a wartime president? What does the experience of the Bush presidency suggest about the proper institutional relationship in wartime between the White House, Defense Department, State, the intelligence community, et al? From your perspective, were there unhealthy imbalances in these relationships?
- What role did the personalities of the principals play in the politics of this administration?
- How was the NSC affected when Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was replaced by Robert Gates in November 2006?
- Describe the circumstances under which you left the NSC and returned to Duke University in July 2007. Was extending your sabbatical from Duke an option, or were you content to leave the Bush Administration after two years?

### ***Iraq***

- What role did you play in drafting the “National Strategy for Victory in Iraq” in 2005 and the updated version of the National Security Strategy in 2006?
- How did the mounting domestic criticism of Bush’s Iraq policy, and calls for rapid American withdrawal, affect the president’s approach to decision-making? Discuss how we should understand the work of the Iraq Study Group in relation to the president’s decision-making.
- Describe the process that produced the troop surge. How did the surge of 30,000 additional U.S. troops affect the sectarian violence and political reconciliation in Iraq? How do you think history will judge the results of the surge strategy?
- During the surge, how effectively did the different components of the executive branch—the State Department, the White House, and Defense—work together and did this represent an improvement over earlier situations?

### ***The Bush Presidency in Retrospect***

- What do you consider your greatest accomplishments as a special advisor in the NSC from 2005 to 2007?
- What were the chief strengths and weaknesses of the Bush administration in the realm of foreign affairs? How would you rate the president as a strategic thinker?
- Discuss what you saw of George W. Bush as a presidential decision-maker, and what about him the conventional press and secondary accounts have gotten right, and wrong.
- What features of the Bush administration were misunderstood by the press? How should the Bush administration be viewed by future historians? What is the legacy of President Bush’s foreign policy?