



President George W. Bush Oral History Project

BRIEFING MATERIALS

Doug Lute

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DOUG LUTE NEWS TIMELINE

Prepared by Rob Martin

Miller Center, University of Virginia, 03/19/2014

- 1975** Doug Lute graduates from the U.S. Military Academy.
- 1983** Lute receives an MPA degree from the Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University.
- 2004**
- June* Lute begins serving as director of operations (J-3) at U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). Lute had previously served as deputy director of operations at U.S. European Command, commander of the Multinational Brigade East in Kosovo, assistant division commander of the First Infantry Division in Schweinfurt, Germany, and executive assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in President George W. Bush's first term. As director of operations at CENTCOM, Lute oversees combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. John Abizaid is the current CENTCOM commander-in-chief. (<https://washingtonpost.com>)
- On the 30th, the Coalition Provisional Authority ceases to exist as the appointed Iraqi interim government, headed by Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, takes over.
- Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld chooses George Casey as commander of the Multi-National Force in Iraq. He succeeds Ricardo Sanchez and holds the position through February, 2007. (Bradley Graham, *By His Own Rules*, New York: PublicAffairs, 2009, p. 481)
- August* U.S. forces encircle Muqtada al-Sadr's forces around Najaf, home to one of Shiite Islam's holiest shrines, to step up efforts to eliminate insurgent forces in Iraq prior to next January's elections. Al-Sadr is an extremist Shia cleric with ties to Iran. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani helps negotiate a truce in which al-Sadr's forces agree to disarm and leave Najaf. The interim government agrees to withdraw U.S. and Iraqi forces from Najaf and not to prosecute al-Sadr's forces, leaving al-Sadr free to participate in elections. (George W. Liebmann, *The Last American Diplomat*, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012, pp. 248-249; *The New York Times*, 08/27/2004)
- October* Hamid Karzai is elected president of Afghanistan. (*The Washington Post*, 10/11/2004)
- November* Bush orders U.S. troops into Fallujah on the 8th in an attempt to re-take the city from insurgents. Casey argued that retaking the insurgent stronghold is essential to keeping security during the January elections. The last pockets of resistance in Fallujah are neutralized by December. (Scott McClellan, *What Happened*, New

York: Public Affairs, 2008, p. 241; Robert Woodward, *State of Denial*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006, p. 359)

2005

- January* Iraq holds elections on the 30th to select a National Assembly to draft a national constitution. Lute says that coalition forces will play a supporting role to help the Iraqis during the elections. Lute also warns that the elections alone will not be a panacea and solve all of Iraq's problems overnight. The Shiite party, United Iraqi Alliance, under al-Sistani, wins 48% of the vote. (Terry Anderson, *Bush's Wars*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 188; *Department of Defense Documents*, 01/28/2005)
- June* Zalmay Khalilzad succeeds John Negroponte as U.S. ambassador to Iraq on the 21st. Khalilzad had been serving as U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan since 2003. Ronald Neumann takes over as U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan on the 27th.
- October* On the 15th, the Iraqi constitution passes in a nation-wide election. It gives Iraq a weaker central government that controls foreign, fiscal, and defense policy, leaving many domestic matters in the hands of the provinces. Many Sunnis do not support the constitution. (Anderson, pp. 188-189)
- November* The Bush administration releases its 38-page policy review, "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq" on the 30th. (*The Washington Post*, 11/15/2006)
- December* On the 15th, a Council of Representatives of Iraq is elected. The United Iraqi Alliance wins the majority of seats. Ibrahim al-Jaafari remains prime minister, a position he has held since April. (Anderson, p. 194)
- On the 23rd, Rumsfeld announces a reduction of nearly 7,000 troops in Afghanistan as NATO takes over counterinsurgency missions in the south. (*The Washington Post*, 12/24/2005; *The New York Times*, 12/31/2005)

2006

- January* On the 31st, Bush says he will ask Congress for an additional \$1.1 billion for reconstruction in Afghanistan. It is part of a larger 60-country commitment to the Afghanistan Compact, a five-year blueprint. Bush also says he will cut U.S. forces by 2,500, as NATO deploys more forces. (*The New York Times*, 02/01/2006)
- In an interview with Charlie Rose on the 20th, Lute argues there are operational reasons why the military would like to see a "smaller, lighter, less prominent U.S. force structure in Iraq." (*The Charlie Rose Show*, 01/20/2006)

- February* On the 22nd, al-Qaeda and Sunni extremists bomb the Shiite al-Askari Golden Mosque in Samarra, unleashing waves of sectarian violence. (Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*, New York: Sentinel, 2011, p. 659)
- March* On the 1st, Bush meets with Karzai in Afghanistan. (*USA Today*, 03/02/2006)
- Lute helps prepare a profile of suicide bombers in Iraq, which identifies them typically as non-Iraqis in their 20s who have some education, but not from destitute backgrounds. (*NPR*, 03/10/2006)
- May* Jawad al-Maliki becomes prime minister of Iraq's first official, non-interim government since the fall of Saddam. The Bush administration had reportedly communicated to the main Shiite political bloc that it did not support al-Jaafari's re-election as prime minister due to his support of Shiite militias. (*The New York Times*, 03/29/2006, 05/22/2006)
- June* Rumsfeld and Pace first begin discussing possible replacements for Casey and Abizaid. Casey has served two six-month extensions in Iraq beyond his initial twelve-month tour and Abizaid had told Rumsfeld that the U.S. needed "fresh eyes" on the situation. (Rumsfeld, pp. 701-702)
- Coalition forces begin a plan to stop sectarian violence in troubled Baghdad neighborhoods by increasing U.S. forces to over 15,000, with the Iraqi army taking the lead in searching homes and securing neighborhoods. The plan is ended in October amidst rising sectarian violence. (*Knight Ridder Washington Bureau*, 06/08/2007)
- On the 13th, Bush travels to Iraq. (*The Globe and Mail*, 06/14/2006)
- Summer* The NSC conducts a strategy review on Afghanistan. Taliban forces are spreading in the east and south of Afghanistan, with many insurgents using sanctuaries in Pakistan. Insurgent violence and the heroin trade are reportedly on the rise. Rumsfeld informs Vice President Dick Cheney and Hadley that the Taliban is mounting a major offensive. Bush raises the troop levels from 8,000 to 18,000 and increase economic assistance for 2006. (Peter Tomsen, *The Wars in Afghanistan*, New York: PublicAffairs, 2011, p. 636; Rumsfeld, pp. 688-691; *The Nation*, 10/30/2006; <http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu>)
- July* On the 22nd, Rumsfeld meets with Pace, Casey, Abizaid, Hadley, Khalilzad, and Meghan O'Sullivan, deputy national security adviser for Iraq and Afghanistan, to discuss sectarian violence in Iraq. They reportedly discuss whether al-Maliki needs additional resources and what can the U.S. do to further help stem the violence. (Bob Woodward, *The War Within*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008, pp. 73-79)

August Appearing before a Senate committee, Pace and Abizaid testify that they did not expect the level of violence in Baghdad to be as high as it is and acknowledge that a civil war is possible. Casey tells Pace and Rumsfeld later in the month that he believes more troops in Baghdad are needed to help stem the violence. (Rumsfeld, pp. 698-699; *The Washington Times*, 08/04/2006)

September Lute begins serving as director of operations for the Joint Staff.

On the 6th, Bush acknowledges for the first time the CIA's program of secret detention of terrorist suspects in foreign prisons and the use of harsh interrogation methods to collect intelligence. The president expresses a willingness to work with Congress to authorize new military commissions and transfers fourteen high-value CIA detainees to Guantánamo. The Military Commissions Act is passed and signed into law in October. (*The New York Times*, 10/18/2006)

On the 25th, Pace initiates a broad review of Iraq and the war on terror. "We have to give ourselves a good honest scrub about what is working and what is not working, what are the impediments to progress and what should we change." (*The New York Times*, 11/11/2006) Pace brings two or three colonels and captains from each of the services back from Iraq for a 90-day assignment to participate in the review and make recommendations on how to best move forward in Iraq. The group becomes known as the Council of Colonels. Pace later meets with the Iraq Study Group, the commission created by Congress to study Iraqi policy, and works with other similar reviews being conducted within the Bush administration. One of the options Pace's review considers is a surge, which reportedly meets with opposition from Casey, Abizaid, the Joint Chiefs, and initially Rumsfeld. Rice, who is conducting a review at State, also opposes a surge. (George W. Bush, *Decision Points*, New York: Crown, 2010, pp. 363-364, 371, 376; Dick Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir*, New York: Threshold, 2001, pp. 440-441; Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor*, New York: Crown, 2011, p. 506; Woodward, *The War Within*, pp. 55-56, 160-161, 175, 264-266; Rumsfeld, pp. 713-715; *The Washington Post*, 11/11/2006)

October On the 20th, Rumsfeld and Pace are briefed by Abizaid and Casey on a military strategy review in Iraq. Rumsfeld raises the possibility of sending more troops to Iraq, but Casey says it is not necessary. (Rumsfeld, p. 702)

Bush has a teleconference on the 21st with Cheney, Rumsfeld, Pace, Abizaid and Casey where they reportedly discuss how long before Iraqi forces can assume a larger role in securing the country. (*The New York Times*, 10/22/2006)

November Bush announces Rumsfeld's resignation after the mid-term congressional elections on the 8th. (<http://www.cnn.com>)

Bush orders Hadley to merge his NSC review of Iraq with similar reviews being conducted at State and the DOD. Hadley's deputy, J.D. Crouch, leads the larger

review. The group begins meeting on the 15th and includes Crouch and O'Sullivan from the NSC staff, Lute, Steve Cambone, Peter Rodman, General Kevin Bergner, and John Sattler from the DOD, David Satterfield and Philip Zelikow from State, John Hannah from Cheney's office, and David Gordon representing the director of national intelligence. There is resistance to the surge option from the military. Lute is reportedly very skeptical and argues that any increase in military forces would have to be matched with equal emphasis on the political and economic side from civilian agencies. State also has serious concerns. (Peter Baker, *Days of Fire*, New York: Doubleday, 2013, pp. 510-511; Woodward, *The War Within*, pp. 207, 230-239)

Crouch presents his Iraq strategy review to Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Pace, Hadley, and Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson in the White House solarium over Thanksgiving weekend. Cheney, Hadley and the NSC staff support a surge to stem the violence and help the Iraqis train their security forces to take over. State and many top military officials including Casey, Abizaid, and the Joint Chiefs still largely oppose a surge. Bush says he will consider everyone's arguments and make a decision in the next few weeks. Bush decides in favor of the surge. (Rice, pp. 541-542; Woodward, *The War Within*, pp. 244-248)

December On the 6th, the Senate confirms Robert Gates as Defense Secretary with a vote of 95-2. (*The Associated Press*, 12/06/2006)

Also on the 6th, the Iraq Study Group presents its findings to Bush. 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. (Woodward, *The War Within*, pp. 314-315; *USA Today*, 12/06/2006)

Bush meets on the 7th in the Roosevelt Room with a group that includes Cheney, Pace and Rice. The NSC staff presents a compromise position between Cheney and Rice, which Pace argues against. "Either we're in or we're not in. Either we're operating or we're not operating." (Cheney, p. 449) Pace is reportedly open to the surge option, though concerns still remain among the Joint Chiefs and commanders on the ground in Iraq. (Bush, pp. 363-364, 371, 376; Rumsfeld, pp. 713-715; Woodward, *The War Within*, pp. 55-56, 160-161, 175, 264-266)

Bush and Cheney meet with Pace, Rumsfeld, and the Joint Chiefs at the Pentagon on the 13th to discuss the surge. Pace had met with Bush two days earlier to inform him that the Joint Chiefs are prepared to support the surge but have some reservations regarding Maliki's level of commitment, the need for other U.S. agencies to play a greater role in Iraq, and whether the surge would "break the military" by putting too much strain on the troops and their families back home. Rumsfeld later writes that he and Pace work with the Joint Chiefs to help allay their concerns. (Bush, p. 376; Cheney, pp. 451-453; Rumsfeld, pp. 714-715; *The New York Times*, 05/16/2007)

On the 18th, Gates officially takes over as secretary of defense. (AP, 12/18/2006)

Bush asks Gates, who is set to visit Iraq, to report back to him on the possibility of increasing troop levels. Pace accompanies Gates on the trip. Gates and Pace brief Bush at Camp David on the 23rd upon their return. Gates also reportedly recommends General David Petraeus to replace Casey as the commander in Iraq and for Casey to serve as the Army chief of staff. Pace tells Bush that Petraeus and General Ray Odierno, the number two commander in Iraq, would want the full amount of five brigades of troops under consideration in the surge option to be committed to Iraq. (Cheney, p. 454; *The Associated Press*, 12/24/2006; *The Washington Post*, 12/21/2006)

On the 28th, Bush meets with Pace, Cheney, Gates, Rice, Hadley, and Crouch in Crawford, Texas ranch to discuss U.S. strategy in Iraq. (*The Associated Press*, 12/30/2006)

2007

January On the 10th, Bush announces on live television a surge of five brigades, or roughly 20,000 troops, to Iraq. U.S. forces in Baghdad are to number over 30,000, which will work with 30,000 Iraqi army and 21,000 policemen to secure neighborhoods. The Bush administration also launches a political surge in 2007 with provisional construction teams integrating civilian, military and diplomatic workers to be embedded with local Iraqi leaders to help serve as mentors. The number of teams increase from ten to 24 from 2007 to 2008. The administration also begins a less public surge in Afghanistan over the next year. (*Associate Press*, 11/01/2007; <http://www.cnn.com>; *Knight Ridder Washington Bureau*, 06/08/2007)

February U.S. General Dan McNeil replaces British General David Richards as commander of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Lute notifies Gates that a military command problem exists in which some U.S. forces report to NATO and some to CENTCOM. All previous ISAF commanders had been from other NATO members, including Italy, Turkey, France, Canada, and Germany. (Robert Gates, *Duty*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014, pp. 205-206)

On the 8th, Gates meets with NATO defense ministers and asks for more troops for Afghanistan. The response from European members is tepid, with Spain, Italy, Turkey, France, and Germany all reportedly weary of sending more troops to the region. (*The Associated Press*, 02/08/2007)

Petraeus replaces Casey as commanding general of the Multi-National Force in Iraq on the 10th. He serves in this position through September, 2008.

On the 12th, Gates states that the U.S. will cooperate with Pakistan in an effort to secure Afghanistan. He also says that the U.S. does not plan on abandoning its

efforts in Afghanistan and is planning an increased coordinated assault in the country this spring. (*The Associated Press*, 02/12/2007)

The first additional troops from the surge arrive in Iraq on the 15th. Bush also announces the U.S. will extend the stay of 3,200 U.S. troops in Afghanistan. (*USA Today*, 02/16/2007; *Knight Ridder Washington Bureau*, 06/08/2007)

March

On the 7th, Gates approves a request to send more military police to Iraq prior to a security crackdown in the country. (*The Associated Press Online*, 03/07/2007)

Admiral William Fallon replaces Abizaid as CENTCOM commander on the 16th.

Ryan Crocker begins serving as the U.S. ambassador to Iraq on the 26th.

April

On the 16th, William Wood succeeds Neumann as U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan. He serves in this position through 2009.

With O'Sullivan announcing on the 2nd she is stepping down as deputy national security advisor for Iraq and Afghanistan, Hadley develops a proposal to create a new deputy national security advisor position at the assistant to the president level to take her place, arguing that the job requires someone with more authority to cut through the red tape of the Washington bureaucracy. The new position would manage the implementation and execution of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, coordinate with Hadley, and report directly to Bush. The new position would have "tasking authority" to issue instructions to agencies in Washington to help ensure the forces on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq receive all the support they need. Gates later writes that he supported Hadley's proposal but Bush, Cheney and Rice are initially skeptical. (Gates, pp. 66-67; Baker, pp. 544-545; *The Washington Post*, 04/13/2007, 05/16/2007; <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.gov>)

Lute says that the U.S. is in the process of assessing how far along the Iraqi security forces are in the training process. The statement comes amidst reports that the U.S. has de-prioritized training Iraqi forces and has decided to play a larger role in securing Iraq itself. (*Knight Ridder Washington Bureau*, 04/19/2007)

May

On the 4th, Crouch announces his departure from the NSC. James Jeffrey is named as deputy national security adviser. (*The Washington Post*, 05/05/2007)

On the 8th, the Pentagon announces that the U.S. may continue troop buildup in Iraq through December 2007. (*The Associated Press*, 05/08/2007)

Bush announces on the 15th he will nominate Lute as assistant to the president and deputy national security advisor for Iraq and Afghanistan. Lute is expected to have a civilian deputy for policy and a military deputy for implementation. (*ABC News*, 05/15/2007)

On the 20th, Gates, Rice, and Bush meet with NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer to discuss increased violence in Afghanistan. (*The Associated Press Online*, 05/20/2007)

June

On the 3rd, Gates warns Turkey not to attack the Kurds in northern Iraq. Turkey alleges that the Kurds are using northern Iraq as a base from which to launch terrorist attacks against Turkey. Gates' comments come after a military buildup by Turkey along the north of Iraq. Days later, Turkish forces raid northern Iraq. (*The Associated Press*, 06/03/2007, 06/07/2007)

On the 4th, General Bismullah Khah of Afghanistan calls on the U.S. to accelerate training in the region so that the Afghans can fight insurgents on their own. (*The Associated Press*, 06/04/2007)

On the 13th, Gates states that a "large number of shipments of weapons" are entering Afghanistan via Iran. According to Gates, "given the quantities (of weapons) that we're seeing, it is difficult to believe that it is associated with smuggling or the drug business or that it's taking place without the knowledge of the Iranian government." (*The Associated Press*, 06/13/2007)

U.S. forces begin a major offensive against al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia. (*The New York Times*, 06/17/2007)

On the 28th, the Senate approves Lute's nomination as deputy national security adviser for Iraq and Afghanistan by a 94-4 vote. In his new position, Lute will consult with senior military and civilian officials in Iraq and Afghanistan each morning and, after briefing Bush and Hadley, work with senior officials in Washington to resolve any issues as they arise. Hadley explains, "The goal is same-day service – identify the problem in the morning and fix it in the afternoon." (*The New York Times*, 5/16/2007) Lute also attends Bush's Monday video teleconference with Crocker, Petraeus, other top national security advisers, and, every other week, al-Maliki. Lute will oversee a staff of eleven. After winning Senate confirmation, Lute creates three lists of problems to be addressed, one to be handled by officials in Iraq, one by a lead agency in Washington, and a third that cut across multiple agencies to be handled by Lute. (*Associate Press*, 11/01/2007, 01/08/2008; *Buffalo News*, 07/01/2007)

July

With Crocker and Petraeus scheduled to testify to Congress on the formal assessment of the surge in September, the White House on the 12th releases the first of its congressionally-mandated interim assessment reports. The report—drafted by the National Security Council with input from Petraeus, Crocker, Defense, State and others—says that the Iraqi government has made "satisfactory progress" on 8 of the 18 political-military benchmarks established by Congress. While progress is mostly seen in military areas, the report cites unsatisfactory progress in 8 of the benchmarks that deal with political progress. The report comes amidst calls for Bush to accelerate the timetable for troop withdrawal in

Iraq, and a flurry of “defections” by Republican senators undercutting support for Bush’s war plan. The president states that he will not consider a new course until the official report from Petraeus and Crocker comes out in September. (*The Washington Post*, 07/12/2007, 07/13/2007)

On the 17th, Gates asks Congress for permission to reallocate up to \$1.3 billion in funding to speed up the construction and deployment of new bomb-resistant vehicles for Iraq. (*The Associated Press Online*, 07/17/2007)

August

Senator John Warner (R-VA) calls on Bush on the 23rd to begin to bring some troops home from Iraq by Christmas. (*CNN*, 08/23/2007)

Also on the 23rd, a U.S. National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq warns that the al-Maliki government is not yet able to govern effectively on its own and says a withdrawal of U.S. troops could seriously jeopardize the government’s stability. (*CNN*, 08/23/2007)

On the 30th, a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report finds that Iraq has made little political progress since the “surge.” (*The Associated Press*, 08/31/2007)

On the 31st, Lute meets with Bush, Cheney, Hadley, Gates, Pace, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to discuss the effectiveness of the surge strategy in Iraq. Petraeus had reported to Pace and Gates that security is improving but national reconciliation is taking longer than expected. Petraeus had recommended that the coalition take steps to begin ending the surge in December and turning responsibility for population security to the Iraqi forces. During the meeting, military leaders inform Bush that the “surge” is leading to a heavy level of stress on troops in Iraq. (*The Associated Press*, 09/01/2007)

September

On the 3rd, Bush, Lute, Rice, Gates, and Hadley travel to the Al Anbar province in Iraq to meet with Petraeus, Crocker, al-Maliki, and local tribal and provincial leaders in Iraq. The coalition has recently formed a new alliance with tribal leaders and former insurgents in the region who have turned against al Qaeda. Also, leaders of the Iraqi national government the previous week were able to come together and reach an agreement on how to best move forward in rebuilding the country. During the visit, Bush suggests that a troop withdrawal may be possible in the future, but he gives no particulars. On the 14th, Gates says that if conditions improve in Iraq, he hopes to decrease the number of troops there to 100,000 by 2008. On the 15th, Bush states that the U.S. is shifting more troops to support roles in Iraq, in lieu of combat roles. (*The Associated Press*, 09/03/2007, 09/14/2007, 09/15/2007; *USA Today*, 09/04/2007)

On the 10th, Petraeus and Crocker return to the U.S. to testify before Congress and issue their report on the situation in Iraq. (<http://defense.gov>)

On the 26th, Gates announces he is sending a fact-finding group to Iraq to examine the role of private contractors in the country. Gates' announcement comes after an incident with Blackwater, a private contractor based in North Carolina, where eleven Iraqi civilians were killed by the company. In addition to Gates' announcement, Congress is considering a bill to make all private contractors subject to U.S. domestic prosecution for illegal activities. On the 3rd, Gates' military fact-finding group suggests more military oversight for private contractors. On the 6th of December, the State Department and Department of Defense reach agreement on new rules and guidelines for private contractors in Iraq. (*The Associated Press*, 09/26/2007, 10/01/2007, 10/03/2007, 12/06/2007)

October

Lute meets with Iraqi National Security Adviser Mowaffak al-Rubaie in Washington on the 2nd, where they discuss how Lute can help to cut red tape in buying U.S. weapons for the Iraqi army. Al-Rubaie also informs Lute that the U.S. security forces are still taking the lead in fighting Sadr's insurgent militias and argues that the Iraqi forces need to start playing a bigger role. "Let us make mistakes while you're still around." (Woodward, *The War Within*, pp. 397-398)

On the 22nd, in a speech to the Southeast European Defense Ministers, Gates asks Europe to do more to help stabilize Afghanistan. On the 25th, from Heidelberg, Germany, Gates questions the commitment of some NATO members to the coalition in Afghanistan. (*The Associated Press*, 10/22/2007, 10/25/2007)

November

On the 1st, Gates states that Iran has agreed to stop the flow of weapons and bomb-making materials into Iraq. The announcement comes after a period of tension, where the U.S. accused Iran of helping Iraqi insurgents and even considered military options against Iran. (*The Associated Press*, 11/01/2007)

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf declares a state of emergency and cancels upcoming elections. In response, Gates and Rice both argue that the U.S. wants to continue to cooperate with Pakistan in the war on terrorism but also argue that Pakistan should follow democratic principles and the rule of the law. (*The Associated Press*, 11/05/2007)

Bush and al-Maliki sign a U.S.-Iraq Declaration of Principles on the 26th framing the U.S.'s emerging strategic relationship with Iraq. The agreement addresses political, economic, and security issues. Al-Maliki had requested on August 26th that the U.S. and Iraq begin to take steps to formally codify their long-term bilateral relationship. Lute expects that this process will result in the signing of a status of forces agreement to replace the existing UNSC mandate authorizing the continued presence of U.S. troops in Iraq. (<https://georgewbush-whitehouse.gov>)

On the 27th, the U.S. hosts a peace conference at Annapolis with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. (*The New York Times*, 11/27/2007)

December On the 3rd, Gates visits Afghanistan to discuss the U.S. role in the country after a recent poll in Afghanistan found that nearly half of Afghans are growing increasingly unhappy with foreign troops in the country. After the meeting, Gates suggests that attacks by al Qaeda might be increasing in the country. In response, Karzai asks for more equipment and trainers to help improve security. After his visit to Afghanistan, Gates makes a surprise trip to Iraq to assess how the surge is working. During his trip, Gates says, "I believe that a secure, stable Iraq is within reach. We need to be patient." (*The White House Bulletin*, 12/05/2007; *The Associated Press*, 12/05/2007; *The Washington Post*, 12/06/2007)

On the 3rd, intelligence reports are released that find that Iran halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003. (*The Washington Post*, 12/04/2007)

On the 27th, Pakistani opposition leader, Benazir Bhutto, is assassinated. The next day, Bush meets with Cheney, Rice, Gates, Hadley, and military officials to examine how the assassination affects the War on Terror in the region. (*The Washington Post*, 12/29/2007)

2008

January On the 9th, Bush and Hadley visit Israel to try to advance the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Hadley says Bush plans to "encourage the parties to get after it, to stay focused. He will hear from the parties on where their negotiations and their discussions are." (*Federal News Service*, 01/09/2008)

The Pentagon announces that it plans to send an additional 3,000 troops to Afghanistan to help the country fight insurgents. The move comes after a year of increased violence in Afghanistan. According to Gates, the move is to bolster security but does not reflect "dissatisfaction" with the work of NATO troops. (*The Associated Press*, 01/10/2008)

The Iraqi parliament meets one of its first legislative benchmarks by passing a law making it easier for former Bathist Party members to return to government jobs and collect pensions. (*The New York Times*, 01/12/2008)

Lute announces on the 14th that the U.S. will begin negotiations with Iraq to create a long-term strategic partnership along the lines of the agreements the U.S. has with Kuwait. July is the target date for reaching an agreement. The negotiations with reportedly include a status of forces agreement. (*The Washington Post*, 01/14/2008)

February On the 1st, after receiving a letter from Gates asking for help in the south of Afghanistan, German military leaders say that they will remain in the north. Germany, along with France, Italy, and Turkey, have all refused to send troops to the war-torn south. On the 8th, Gates posits that European countries may not want

to help out in Afghanistan due to the war in Iraq. (*The Associated Press*, 02/01/2008, 02/08/2008; *USA Today*, 02/08/2008)

On the 10th, Gates visits Iraq to assess how political and military progress is proceeding. On the 11th, Gates suggests that the U.S. may need to slow down a scheduled drawdown of troops in Iraq over the summer in order to evaluate security and stability in Iraq after an initial drawdown in July. (*The Associated Press*, 02/11/2008; *CongressNow*, 02/11/2008; *USA Today*, 02/18/2008)

On the 13th, Iraqi politicians vote across sectarian lines to pass a comprehensive package of legislation signaling a major step towards national reconciliation between Sunnis and Shiites. Measures include a national budget, a law detailing the government's provincial powers, and an amnesty law that will affect thousands of detainees in Iraqi jails. (*The New York Times*, 02/14/2008)

Near the end of February, Turkey steps up military incursions into Northern Iraq. In response, Gates argues that military pressure will not solve Turkey's Kurdish problems. (*The Associated Press*, 02/27/2008)

On the 28th, the Army releases a revised operations manual. According to the manual, future efforts to secure U.S. interests will rely on successful nation building as much as traditional combat operations. (*The Associated Press*, 02/28/2008)

March Al-Maliki sends Iraqi forces to Basra on the 25th in an attempt to take back the city from Shiite militias. This is the first major operation the Iraqi army has planned and carried out. Petraeus is reportedly concerned, as he did not receive advanced warning of the Iraqi offensive and thus was unable to make preparations to offer initial U.S. military support. Rice and the CIA reportedly believe that his government could fall if he is unsuccessful. Lute later says, "Everyone here thought this was going to be a disaster." (Baker, p. 584) Bush reportedly is more upbeat, noting that the U.S. has been urging al-Maliki to play a stronger role in going after the Shiite militias. With last minute U.S. support, the Iraqi forces are able to take back the city. Al-Maliki, who is almost killed overseeing operations in Basra, emerges with a bolstered reputation. (Baker, pp. 583-583)

April On the 4th, Gates suggests that the U.S. will increase troop strength in Afghanistan in 2009 regardless of troop levels in Iraq. Gates' comments come after a deterioration of Afghani stability. (*The Associated Press*, 04/04/2008)

On the 9th, Gates states that he no longer believes troop levels in Iraq will reduce to pre-surge levels by the end of the year. Gates also says that Iran is increasing support again for Iraqi militias. (*The Associated Press*, 04/10/2008, 04/11/2008)

May Bush visits Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt to discuss the peace process. (*The New York Times*, 05/19/2008)

- June* On the 26th, Gates reports that there is a “real concern” regarding Afghanistan’s security after a recent rise in attacks. According to Gates, part of the problem is Pakistan’s failure to stop insurgents from entering the country. (*The Associated Press*, 06/26/2008)
- July* On the 31st, Bush announces that recent victories in Iraq may lead to further troop reductions by the end of the year. According to Bush, “The progress is still reversible, [but] there now appears to be a degree of durability in gains.” (*The Associated Press Online*, 07/31/2008)
- August* On the 5th, Gates extends the deployment of 1,250 Marine trainers in Afghanistan and announces an additional 200 troops to support the trainers. According to reports, the move is an effort to bolster support for the trainers after positive gains. (*The Associated Press*, 08/05/2008)
- Fighting breaks out between Russia and South Ossetia, Georgia. Rice visits Georgia on the 15th to help facilitate a cease-fire agreement. (*The New York Times*, 08/16/2008; *NBC News Transcripts*, 08/16/2008)
- Summer/Fall* Bush directs Lute to lead a review of U.S. strategy in the Afghanistan region. The move comes amidst reports that, though the situation on the ground is destabilizing, CENTCOM will not be able to meet the request of General David McKiernan, the commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, for additional troops until 2009. It is reported that Bush wants to put the pieces in place to help the next administration hit the ground running in the war on terror. Lute travels to the region with a team of State Department, DOD and CIA officials. After returning to the U.S., Lute holds a series of extensive meetings over six weeks with State, the DOD and CIA. Lute’s review also draws heavily on recommendations from the military, including CENTCOM, Petraeus, McKiernan, and the Joint Staff. (Bob Woodward, *Obama’s Wars*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010, pp. 40-44; Gates, pp. 221-223; *Christian Science Monitor*, 10/01/2008)
- September* Top military leaders recommend delaying troop withdrawal from Iraq despite improved security in the country. On the 10th, Gates defends the recommendation in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee. (*The Associated Press*, 09/05/2008, 09/10/2008; *USA Today*, 09/05/2008)
- On the 16th, Gates travels to Afghanistan to assess the security of the country. During his visit, Gates meets with Karzai, as well as top military leaders. During his trip, McKiernan asks for more troops. On the 19th, Gates says that NATO states should help with financial burden in Afghanistan. (*The Associated Press Online*, 09/16/2008, 09/19/2008; *The Frontrunner*, 09/17/2008)
- Odierno replaces Petraeus as the commanding general of the Multi-National Force in Iraq on the 16th. Petraeus replaces Fallon as CENTCOM commander. (<https://georgewbush-whitehouse.gov>)

- October* On the 6th, Gates suggests that reaching out to Afghan militants who may be “reconcilable” may be the key to winning the war in Afghanistan. According to Gates, similar policies helped change the course in Iraq. (*The Associated Press*, 10/06/2008)
- On the 8th, while speaking at the Southeast European Defense Ministerial, Gates asks Southeast European states to shift their troops from Iraq to Afghanistan to help with security and drug-trafficking problems. According to early reports, NATO allies “balk” at the idea. However, on the 10th, NATO defense ministers authorized their troops to attack drug cartels in the country. (*The Associated Press Online*, 10/08/2008, 10/09/2008, 10/10/2008)
- November* On the 5th, the Pentagon announces that the U.S. military will pull out two combat brigades from Iraq in November. The withdrawal comes two months earlier than originally anticipated. (*The Associated Press*, 11/05/2008)
- The U.S. and Iraq sign a status of forces agreement on the 17th governing the presence of U.S. troops stationed in Iraq. It sets June, 2009 as the deadline for pulling out U.S. combat forces from local cities and villages. (*Agence France Presse*, 12/14/2008)
- On the 21st, Gates says that he wants to increase troop levels “significantly” in Afghanistan before the 2009 Afghan elections. (*The Associated Press*, 11/21/2008)
- Lute completes his strategy review of Afghanistan, which finds, “We’re not losing, but we’re not winning, and that’s not good enough.” (Baker, p. 43) The review argues that governance must be improved in Afghanistan and that the opium trade and terrorist safe havens in Pakistan are significant problems. The review goes on to call for more military and civilian resources and emphasizes counterinsurgency, including greater cooperation with Pakistan. Bush holds a national security meeting on the 26th to discuss the review. He decides not to publicly release the report and instead quietly pass it along to President-elect Barack Obama’s transition team without a public roll-out. (Bush, p. 218; Cheney, p. 500; Baker, pp. 40-44)
- December* Lute joins Bush on a surprise trip to Iraq to sign the strategic framework agreement with al-Maliki on the 14th, marking the transition to a new era in the U.S.’s relationship with Iraq. During the signing ceremony, an Iraqi journalist throws his shoes at Bush. This is Bush’s fourth trip to Iraq since 2003. (Baker, pp. 622-624; <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.gov>)
- The Bush administration reportedly plan to send up to 20 Special Forces teams to Afghanistan in 2009 to help bolster the ability of Afghan forces to fight terrorist groups. The administration already plans to send additional conventional forces to

Afghanistan in 2009. Lute is reportedly a key advocate of increasing force levels in Afghanistan. (*Christian Science Monitor*, 12/23/2008)

2009

January Obama is sworn-in as president on the 20th. Lute stays on to serve as special assistant and senior coordinator for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Lute continues his work in the Obama administration conducting a strategic review of U.S. policy in Afghanistan, as well as preparing for Iraq's provincial elections on the 31st. (*Christian Science Monitor*, 02/19/2009)

TIMELINES

- Doug Lute News Timeline, prepared by Rob Martin, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 03/19/2014.
- Timeline of the Bush Presidency, prepared by Justin Peck and Bryan Craig, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 04/30/2010.

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- “Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino and General Douglas Lute, Assistant to the President for Iraq and Afghanistan,” 11/26/2007, <<https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov>> (03/20/2014).
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- George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010) pp. 355-394, 217-218.
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- Robert Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014) pp. 66-67, 70-74, 205-206, 221-226.
- Peter Baker, *Days of Fire: Bush and Cheney in the White House* (New York: Doubleday, 2013) pp. 510-512, 544-545, 583-585, 622-625.
- Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008) pp. 230-248.
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- Nancy Youssef, "Old Problems Plague New Security Plan for Iraq," *Knight Ridder Washington Bureau*, 06/08/2007.
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- Deb Riechmann, "Bush's War Coordinator Tries to Speed Progress in Iraq, Afghanistan Despite Many Obstacles," *Associated Press*, 11/01/2007.
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DOUG LUTE SUGGESTED TOPICS

Prepared by Rob Martin

Miller Center, University of Virginia, 03/28/2014

Early Relationship with George W. Bush

- When did you first meet George W. Bush? What were your early impressions of him?
- Comment on the transition from the Clinton to Bush administration during your time as executive assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Defense Department

- Tell us about your work in the Bush administration at the Defense Department, including your time in Kosovo and Germany.
- Describe your work at CENTCOM as director of operations. Tell us about your relationship with the CENTCOM commanders you worked with, such as General John Abizaid, Admiral William Fallon and General David Petraeus. Tell us about your relationship with the commanding generals of the forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as with the U.S. ambassadors in each country.
- Tell us about some of the biggest challenges you faced as director of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, such as training the Afghan and Iraqi forces, fighting insurgents, and providing security to help create a stable environment for elections and political reconciliation to occur. What challenges did you face from the bureaucracy in Washington, D.C.? Did you feel you received all the support you needed?
- Discuss your work as director of operations for the Joint Staff. How did you come to serve in this position? Discuss your work with J.D. Crouch on his NSC review of Iraq. Who were the key players in the review process? Do you feel that the advice from military leaders and the Council of Colonels was given enough consideration? What were your primary concerns about the surge? Why was it important to include a political component to the surge from civilian agencies?

Bush White House

- How did you come to serve as deputy national security adviser for Iraq and Afghanistan? Why was this position created? How did it differ from the position previously held by Meghan O'Sullivan? What were your primary responsibilities? Do you recall having any conversations with the president about his expectations of you in this position? Was it unusual for you to continue serving in the military while holding this White House position?
- With whom did you work most closely? Tell us about your relationship with Bush. How often would you meet with the president? Discuss your relationship with the vice president and his staff. Tell us about your relationship with Stephen Hadley. You held the title of deputy national security adviser but, like Hadley, also served as the assistant to the president level, reporting directly to Bush. Did this present any challenges?
- Describe the policy-making process in the Bush administration regarding Afghanistan and Iraq. Which actors had the most clout? What role did you play?
- How well did the interagency process work in providing support to the forces on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan? What were the biggest problems you identified? Comment on the authority you had to issue instructions to agencies in Washington to fix problems and cut

bureaucratic red tape. Did you ever face any resistance, such as from principals and cabinet secretaries? What issues tended to occupy most of your time?

- Tell us about the different interagency groups that you set up to oversee the implementation and execution of the wars.
- Comment on your relationship with the civilian and military leadership at the Defense Department, including Bob Gates and the commanders of the coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. How did your relationship change after you moved to the White House? Tell us about your relationship with the U.S. ambassadors in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as with the director of National Intelligence, the State Department, and the other civilian agencies with whom you worked.
- Tell us about your relationship with the local and national political leaders in Iraq and Afghanistan, including al-Maliki and Karzai. Which political leaders in Iraq and Afghanistan proved to be the most difficult to work with?
- Comment on challenges posed by neighboring countries such as Iran, Syria and Pakistan. What impact did developments in the Middle East peace process have on the wars?
- Comment on Petraeus' and Crocker's 2007 reports on the surge. How was it received within the Bush administration? How was it received by Congress?
- Tell us about the challenges you faced preparing for the 2009 elections in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Discuss some of the key agreements signed by the U.S. and Iraqi governments, such as the 2007 declaration of principles and status of forces agreement. Tell us about Bush's signing ceremony with al-Maliki in which the Iraqi journalist threw his shoes at the president. How did the status of forces agreement affect the way the U.S. carried out operations in Iraq?
- Tell us about al-Maliki's decision to independently launch an Iraqi offensive in Basra in March 2008. What was the reaction like in Washington? How did the successful conclusion of the battle affect al-Maliki's standing in Iraq and the U.S.?
- Tell us about your review of U.S. strategy in Afghanistan in 2008. Why did Bush ask you to conduct the review? With whom did you consult? What were your primary findings? How was it received by the Bush administration? By President-elect Barack Obama's transition team?
- Comment on your decision to stay on in the Obama administration.

The Bush Presidency in Retrospect

- What do you consider to be your most important accomplishments during your time in the Bush administration? What were the most challenging parts of your jobs? What were the most rewarding?
- How was it different serving as senior coordinator for Iraq and Afghanistan under Obama?
- How did Bush's decision-making style differ from Obama's?
- What were Bush's greatest assets as commander in chief? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Bush presidency with regards to national security and defense?
- What features of the Bush presidency were overlooked or misunderstood by the press?
- How should the Bush presidency be viewed in history?