



**Presidential Oral History Program**

2201 Old Ivy Road  
PO Box 400406  
Charlottesville VA 22904-4406

434.982.2974 *voice*  
434.982.4528 *fax*  
millercenter.virginia.edu

# **William J. Clinton**

## **Presidential History Project**

### **BRIEFING MATERIALS**

**Togo D. West, Jr.**

**July 18, 2006**

Prepared by Jill Abraham, Research Assistant  
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**MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED OR CIRCULATED**

| UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA

## **TOGO D. WEST, JR. TIMELINE**

*Prepared by Jill Abraham*

*Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 04/11/2006*

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- 1965** West earns a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Howard University. (*The Washington Post*, 12/3/1997)
- 1968** West earns a J.D. from Howard University. (*The Washington Post*, 12/3/1997)
- 1969-1973** West is called for active duty in the Army Judge Advocate General Corps (JAG). (*The Washington Post*, 12/3/1997)
- 1973-1975** West enters private law practice with the firm Covington and Burling. (Shirley Anne Warshaw, *Presidential Profiles: The Clinton Years*, New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004, p. 323)
- 1975-1976** West is Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Ford Administration. (Jeffrey B. Trammell and Gary P. Osifchin, *The Clinton 500: The New Team Running America 1994*, Washington, D.C.: Almanac Publishing, 1994, p. 176)
- 1977-1979** West is General Counsel to the Department of the Navy. (Trammell and Osifchin, p. 176)
- 1979-1980** West is General Counsel to the Department of Defense. (Trammell and Osifchin, p. 176)
- 1980-1990** West is Managing Partner of the law firm Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler. (Trammell and Osifchin, p. 176)
- 1990-1993** West is Senior Vice President for Government Relations of the Northrop Corporation. (*The Washington Post*, 12/3/1997)
- 1992**
- November* Governor Bill Clinton (D-AR) defeats President George H.W. Bush in the presidential election.
- 1993**
- September* President Clinton nominates West to be Secretary of the Army after Acting Secretary of the Army John W. Shannon resigns upon admitting to shoplifting. (*The New York Times*, 9/18/1993; *The Washington Post*, 9/22/1993)

*November* On the 19<sup>th</sup>, the Senate confirms West as Secretary of the Army. (*The Associated Press*, 11/27/1993)

## **1994**

*February* William J. Perry is confirmed as Secretary of Defense, replacing Les Aspin. (*The New York Times*, 2/4/1994)

*March* West approves awarding the Medal of Honor posthumously to Master Sgt. Gary Gordon and Sgt. Randall Shughard for attempting to rescue Army pilot Michael Durant, whose helicopter was downed during a firefight in Mogadishu, Somalia. (*The Boston Herald*, 3/22/1994)

*April* In northern Iraq, American fighter planes shoot down two U.S. Army helicopters as they are transporting a team of officials from four allied nations, killing all 26 people onboard. The fighter planes enforcing the no-fly zone over the Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq mistook the U.S. aircraft for Iraqi helicopters. (*The New York Times*, 4/15/1994)

*May* Six of the seven female U.S. Senators meet privately with West and other military leaders to discuss how the military can better address women's equality and more effectively handle sexual harassment cases. (*The New York Times*, 5/20/1994)

*June* President Clinton announces that he will seek to impose sanctions against North Korea for failing to halt the development of its nuclear program. North Korea warns that if the United Nations Security Council approves sanctions, it will attack South Korea. West, after returning from a trip to South Korea, tells reporters that U.S. soldiers' morale is very high and that they were "easily, person for person, the equal of anything that can be produced from North Korea." (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 6/5/1994)

West issues a memo to Defense Secretary William Perry that recommends women be allowed to serve in numerous positions previously closed to them, including the battalion headquarters of combat engineer, air defense, and field artillery units. He also urges that women be allowed to fly helicopters carrying special-operations troops. However, his recommendations receive harsh protests from military officials, including Army Chief of Staff General Gordon R. Sullivan, forcing him to retreat from his original proposals. (*The New York Times*, 6/17/1994)

*July* West goes on a fact-finding mission to Georgia to survey areas severely affected by flood damage. (*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 7/12/1994)

West and Sullivan agree to a compromise plan that opens more than 32,000 positions to women. They agree to allow women to be assigned to

air defense artillery battalions, helicopters that fly cover for tanks, and battalion headquarters of combat engineers and special operations forces. However, women will still not be permitted to serve in one-fourth of the Army's jobs, such as operating certain advanced field artillery weapons and flying helicopters carrying special operations troops. (*The New York Times*, 7/28/1994)

The Clinton Administration sends troops on a humanitarian mission to speed distribution of aid to Rwandan refugees. (*The Washington Post*, 7/30/1994)

*September* In an address to the nation from the Oval Office, President Clinton warns Haitian military leaders to give up power immediately, saying, "Your time is up. Leave now or we will force you from power." He signs an order authorizing Secretary Perry to call up 1,600 reserve personnel to active duty as part of the force to carry out the invasion. (*The Washington Post*, 9/16/1994)

Former President Jimmy Carter leads talks with Haitian military officials in last-minute negotiations and gets them to agree to step down, thereby avoiding a U.S. invasion. (*The Washington Post*, 9/19/1994)

Secretary Perry announces that the Administration is reversing its policy that U.S. soldiers will not engage in stopping Haitian violence. Appearing with deposed Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide at the Pentagon, he says that more than 1,000 soldiers in Haiti will have "the specific function of overseeing and monitoring the functioning of the Haiti police force to ensure that they do not use unreasonable restraint in trying to deal with crowd-control problems." (*The Washington Post*, 9/22/1994)

*October* Iraq increases troop presence near the Kuwait border, presenting a potential threat to the country. In response, the Pentagon announces it will send approximately 40,000 ground troops, 28 ships and more than 650 aircraft to the region. (*The Washington Post*, 10/13/1994)

*November* West visits with U.S. troops stationed in Haiti. (*The New York Times*, 11/22/1994)

West announces that American troops sent to Kuwait in October will be home before Christmas. (*The New York Times*, 11/24/1994)

*December* Secretary Perry briefs lawmakers on an Army downsizing plan drafted by West and Sullivan. The plan proposes to close division headquarters at Fort Riley, Kansas and Fort Carson, Colorado, and cut 18,000 troops. This will complete the military downsizing plan proposed by President Clinton to adjust to the post-Cold War order. (*USA Today*, 12/1/1994)

West reinstitutes coed basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina and Fort Leonard Woods, Missouri. (*Houston Chronicle*, 12/4/1994)

## 1995

*February* In a report to Congress, West recommends that the Army Corps of Engineers turn over operations of two water treatment plants that serve the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to a regional public authority. West reasons that such a move would make needed improvements to the plants less expensive for customers. (*The Washington Post*, 2/3/1995)

*March* West travels to Haiti for the transfer of authority over recovery efforts from the U.S. to the UN. He remarks that the Army has been able to restore order and minimize casualties throughout the country, as well as “breed trust and confidence” among its people. (*USA Today*, 3/31/1995)

*April* The Army and Air Force announce that they will award the Purple Heart to fourteen American service members who were killed in April of 1994 when two U.S. fighter jets accidentally shot down two U.S. helicopters over northern Iraq. The decision is reached after West, members of Congress, relatives of the dead, and Secretary Perry pressure General Sullivan, who had resisted awarding the Purple Heart because their deaths did not meet the requirement of suffering injury or death from a hostile force. (*The New York Times*, 4/5/1995)

*May* Perry announces that the U.S. will permit American ground troops in Bosnia to protect UN peacekeepers. This is a shift from the Administration’s previous policy that it would only send troops to protect an evacuation of UN peacekeepers or to oversee a peace agreement. (*The Washington Post*, 5/31/1995)

*October* Deputy Secretary of Defense John White orders West to cancel production of a laser weapon designed to blind foes. (*The Washington Post*, 10/13/1995)

*December* West accompanies President Clinton on a trip to Bad Kreuznach, Germany, where he visits with troops who are about to be deployed on the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia. (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 12/3/1995)

White soldiers in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, North Carolina murder two black civilians in what police conclude was a racially motivated attack. At a press conference, West announces that the Army will conduct an investigation to determine the extent of soldiers’ involvement in hate groups. (*The Washington Post*, 12/13/1995)

## 1996

- March* The Army releases its report on the existence of hate groups within its ranks. While the report finds “minimal evidence of extremist activity,” it also voices concern about gang-related activity on and near Army installations. (*The Washington Post*, 3/22/1996)
- November* President Clinton defeats Senator Robert Dole (R-KS) in the presidential election.
- The Army announces that it has suspended about twenty military supervisors from jobs at a training facility in Aberdeen, Maryland because of allegations that they raped and sexually harassed female recruits. West says he will set up an advisory panel to assess the Army’s sexual harassment problems. (*The Washington Post*, 11/9/1996)
- West orders the Army’s Inspector General, Lieutenant General Jared L. Bates, to take over the inquiry into sexual harassment in Army training centers, after deciding his initial decision to allow the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command to investigate its own centers would be a conflict of interest. (*The New York Times*, 11/23/1996)

## 1997

- January* Senator William S. Cohen (R-ME) replaces William Perry as Secretary of Defense. (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 1/24/1997)
- February* West testifies before the Senate Armed Services Committee regarding sexual harassment in the armed forces. (*The Washington Post*, 2/10/1997)
- September* The Army releases the findings from its investigation of sexual harassment within its ranks. The panel finds that pervasive sexual harassment and job discrimination exists against women in the Army. The panel also finds that the Army “lacks the institutional commitment” to treat men and women equally and that its “passive leadership has allowed sexual harassment to persist.” (*The Washington Post*, 9/12/1997)
- October* The Panama Canal Commission chooses West to serve as its Chairman. The Commission is a bi-national body that was created two decades prior in the Panama Canal Treaties. (*The New York Times*, 10/5/1997)
- November* Assistant Army Secretary Sara E. Lister resigns after calling Marines “extremists” in a speech. (*The Washington Post*, 11/15/1997)
- Insight* magazine publishes an article saying that White House officials sold burial plots at Arlington National Cemetery in exchange for large

campaign contributions. The magazine also accuses West of approving these burial waivers for unqualified, non-veterans. West denies that his decision to grant waivers to particular individuals had anything to do with contributions to the Democratic Party. He releases the names of and background information about the individuals granted waivers in order to end the criticism. (*The New York Times*, 11/20/1997, 11/21/1997, 11/22/1997)

*December* On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, President Clinton nominates West to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs. West serves as Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs, effective January 2, 1998, until he is confirmed by the Senate. (*The Washington Post*, 12/3/1997; *USA Today*, 12/3/1997)

## **1998**

*January* The General Accounting Office releases a report showing that political contributions did not play a role in selecting people to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. (*The New York Times*, 1/28/1998)

*February* West testifies before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee in his confirmation hearings. (*The Washington Post*, 2/25/1998)

*April* By a voice vote, the Senate confirms West as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. (*The Seattle Times*, 4/29/1998)

*May* West approves the name for the new Abraham Lincoln National Veterans Cemetery in Joliet, Illinois. However, Representative Ray LaHood (R-IL) complains that naming the cemetery after the former President may cause people to confuse it with Abraham Lincoln's actual gravesite, which is in Springfield, Illinois. LaHood gets the House to block the cemetery name by passing a bill containing a provision that retroactively removes West's authority to name cemeteries. (*The Washington Post*, 5/25/1998)

Congress cuts funding for medical care for veterans suffering from tobacco-related illnesses. In a letter to Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-GA), West defends the budget cuts, saying that the Clinton Administration believes that the use of tobacco, like the consumption of alcohol, is not a requirement of military service. He also says that veterans who become ill as a result of smoking should not be compensated by the government. (*The Washington Post*, 5/30/1998)

*October* Matthew Shepard, a gay student at the University of Wyoming, is beaten to death. President Clinton calls for a new hate crimes law and announces that he is sending West to Shepard's funeral in Casper, Wyoming. (*The Washington Post*, 10/16/1998)

*November* White House Chief of Staff John Podesta meets with West and other Cabinet members to review assessments of the congressional midterm elections. (*The Washington Post*, 11/25/1998)

## **1999**

*February* Some House Republicans say that West failed to get enough funding in the President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2000 for veterans hospitals, potentially forcing some facilities to close. (*The Washington Post*, 2/13/1999)

*April* West approves a plan to lay off more than 1,100 workers at veterans hospitals. (*The Washington Post*, 4/16/1999)

*July* *The Washington Post* reports that West has informed the White House he plans to resign as Secretary of Veterans Affairs, though no date is set for his departure. A spokesperson for the Department of Veterans Affairs says that West does not intend to leave anytime soon and will continue to work through the formulation of the fiscal year 2001 budget. (*The Washington Post*, 7/8/1999; *The New York Times*, 7/9/2001)

West tells a veterans convention in New Orleans that health programs for veterans will receive a \$1 billion increase in next year's federal budget. (*Times-Picayune*, 7/28/1999)

*August* The General Accounting Office releases a report saying that the Department of Veterans Affairs is wasting a lot of money maintaining underused veterans hospitals. The report says that if they were to shut down some buildings, the Department would be able to use the extra money to provide health care to veterans in outpatient clinics and at private hospitals closer to their homes. (*The New York Times*, 8/1/1999)

*October* A Department of Veterans Affairs' Inspector General's report finds that West violated government regulations by using military aircraft instead of commercial flights for two trips to Louisiana and Alaska in 1998. (*The Washington Post*, 10/2/1999)

## **2000**

*April* The Department of Veterans Affairs finds a link between diabetes and exposure to Agent Orange among Vietnam War veterans. West rejects a recommendation that the federal government offer compensation to those veterans suffering from adult-onset diabetes, but does order more research into the matter. (*The Denver Post*, 4/15/2000)



*July*

West announces his resignation as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. He is succeeded by Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Hershel W. Gober. West will return to private practice with the law firm Covington & Burling. (*The Washington Post*, 7/11/2000)

**2004**

West becomes Chief Executive of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a think tank for issues affecting African-Americans. (*The Washington Post*, 9/23/2004)

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## **TOGO D. WEST, JR. SUGGESTED TOPICS**

*Prepared by Jill Abraham*

*Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 04/11/2006*

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

- When did you first meet Bill Clinton? Describe your initial impressions of him.
- Did you have any role in the 1992 campaign or transition?
- How did you come to be appointed Secretary of the Army? Did you have any prospective discussions with the President, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, or anyone else about what they wanted from you as Secretary of the Army?

### ***Secretary of the Army***

- Describe your major duties as Secretary of the Army. What issues occupied most of your time? What were the most pressing issues facing you upon entering office?
- Did you regularly interact with President Clinton in your position as Army Secretary?
- With whom on President Clinton's foreign policy team did you work most closely? Evaluate your relationship with senior officials on the foreign policy team and with key members of the White House staff.
- With whom in the Defense Department did you work most closely? In particular, discuss your working relationships with Defense Secretaries Les Aspin, William J. Perry and William S. Cohen. Compare the different management styles of Aspin, Perry and Cohen.
- Did anything in your prior service in the Defense Department prove to be especially helpful to you as Army Secretary?
- Describe the debate among senior Administration officials over deploying troops to Bosnia, Iraq, Haiti, Somalia, and Rwanda. What role did you play in these decisions? Discuss the level of coordination between the Defense Department, the White House, and international bodies such as the United Nations and NATO during these events.
- Characterize your role in formulating the major defense policies affecting the Army (i.e. gays in the military, sexual harassment and job discrimination against women, investigation of hate groups, etc).
- Did you have a role in the Bottom-Up Review of defense policy and strategy?
- Were you involved in discussions over how to handle nuclear disarmament in North Korea?
- Discuss broadly President Clinton's relationship with the Pentagon during your time there, especially your sense about how those in the military viewed Clinton and his presidency. Evaluate the relationship between civilian appointees and military officials within the Defense Department during your tenure.

### ***Secretary of Veterans Affairs***

- How did you come to be appointed Secretary of Veterans Affairs? Did you have any discussions with President Clinton about what he expected from you in this position?

- How did your relationship with the President change from when you were Army Secretary? How regularly did you meet with President Clinton? On what occasions would you typically meet with him?
- Comment on your relationship with other members of the Cabinet. Describe Cabinet meetings during the Clinton Administration. What was President Clinton's role during the meetings?
- How would you characterize President Clinton's management and decision-making style? What was his view of the relationship between the White House and the Cabinet? How heavily did he rely on the Cabinet as an advisory and a policymaking body?
- Describe your working relationship with members of the White House staff. With whom did you work most closely?
- Did you have a close working relationship with any members of Congress? Did you work with any particular members closely on the budget or other matters?
- Characterize your relationship with veterans groups. How much of your job included outreach to them?
- What were the major policies affecting veterans during your tenure as Secretary? Discuss in particular policies affecting VA hospitals and medical care for veterans. What was your role in formulating and implementing such policies?

### ***The Clinton Presidency in Retrospect***

- What do you consider your greatest accomplishments in your positions in the Clinton Administration?
- What role, if any, did you play as a liaison for the Administration to the African-American community?
- What features of the Clinton Administration and your role in it were overlooked or misunderstood by the press?
- What will be President Clinton's lasting legacy as a foreign policy leader and a world leader? What will be his lasting legacy in the area of veterans affairs?
- How should the Clinton presidency be viewed in history? What episodes or events are especially instructive or revealing for the historian trying to assess this presidency?