Rand Beers '64
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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Transcribed by Karen Navarro

STEINBERG: All right, so this is Leigh Steinberg ['18] interviewing Rand Beers for the Dartmouth Vietnam Project. We are in Rauner [Special Collections] Library at Dartmouth College, and it is November 2nd, 2016. So, hi, Rand, how are you doing?

BEERS: I'm well. How are you today?

STEINBERG: I'm great. All right, so we're just going to start at the beginning of your life. So can you take me back where and when were you born?

BEERS: I was born in Washington, D.C. on the 30th of November, 1942. My mother and her parents had come to Washington in 1906. So I'm an unusual third generation Washingtonian, and still live there.

STEINBERG: And where was your dad from?

BEERS: My father was more recently out of Nebraska, where his father who had been a preacher had settled in Lincoln, and he went to Nebraska Wesleyan [University]. He was born in Boston, though, when his father was at seminary there.

STEINBERG: And so, what did your parents do when you were growing up?

BEERS: So, my father worked—he tried to enlist in the Second World War, but was not medically accepted, so he ended up working for the UN war relief agency [UNRWA (UN Relief and Works Agency)]. And my parents divorced in 1946. My mother was a stay at home mom until the separation occurred, and then she went to work in a variety of jobs, first as an ambulance driver. She had a college degree also from Syracuse [University], and then a master's degree from the University of Maryland [College Park, MD] in speech. My parents met on the stage in local theater in Washington, D.C.

STEINBERG: That's great. Was that a passion of both of theirs?

BEERS: It was a passion of both of theirs, and they were opposites in various love plays which got reviewed in *The Washington Post* during that period of time. So my mother remarried a naval officer. So we were living in Virginia in Alexandria at this time, and then my mother remarried a naval officer, and we moved to Florida for the wedding, and then began a trek all over the United States in terms of rotational assignments that U.S. naval officers have in their career. So, Florida; Indianapolis [IN]; Hawaii; Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania; Washington, D.C.; Newfoundland; Washington, D.C.; Macon, Georgia. And by that time I'm in college.

STEINBERG: Wow. So, what did that type of childhood, how did that impact you, do you think?

BEERS: Well, the first point I would make is, I certainly, being in a military family, was drawn to the military as a strong interest. And, being in places like Pearl Harbor, I think is probably where I really first developed a strong interest in history, although I read the small biographies before that, but that's really where I started reading history books as opposed to reading biographies, because there was so much history there. We had free range to go where we wanted to go on base or off base, because we had military ID cards, and we used to ride up into the hills off of where Pearl Harbor is located where there were by then unused military facilities that the Army had used during the Second World War, both for defense of Pearl Harbor in case there was a second attack, but also barracks and things, because there was a lot of additional forces there that were no longer in Hawaii after the Second World War. So it was a great place for a kid to go exploring, and very, very enjoyable.

It also gave me a sense that I hadn't had before of the diversity of our society, because the school kids came from all over the world; I mean, not all over the world, but from all over American society; but, also from the Philippines, from American Samoa, and places like that. And we were all, you know, thrown together in this Pearl Harbor Elementary School. Unlike Punahou [School], where President Obama went, which is a real upscale school [laughter] in Hawaii. So I was third, fourth and fifth grade there, and I loved every minute of it.

STEINBERG: So, what was your education like on these bases? Like were all the schools the same? What type of—

BEERS: So, there was just one school at this base. That's the only—is that the only? No, I went to a base school in Newfoundland also. The Pearl Harbor Elementary School was superb. I mean, the teachers there were really, really first class, and my best subject other than history was math. I struggled a little bit with English, but I had a really great fifth grade English teacher who taught me a lot of things that I didn't know and didn't always all sink in fifth grade, but came back to me as I went on beyond that. [Laughter.]

STEINBERG: So, as you moved around bases, did you find similarities, differences?

BEERS: Oh, absolutely. So, Pearl Harbor and Jacksonville were the two big bases we were on until Newfoundland. Indianapolis was just a Naval Ordnance Plant, and there were military quarters for the officers there, but that was, you know, there were about eight houses there. And then, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, was a much larger facility, but it was basically a naval supply depot, so it wasn't a lot of people there; it was just a lot of goods there in storage to be moved around the country. A larger complement of officers there. So there were about 30 officers that had housing on the base there, but we went to an elementary school that was not part of the military facility. It was a local elementary school, and then a local junior high school that we went to. And then back in Arlington, Virginia, after that, that was just suburban Washington.

STEINBERG: Yeah, so was your dad in Washington the whole time while you were moving around bases?

BEERS: No, after he left working for UNRWA, he moved to Chicago and worked for the March of Dimes. His profession, he was a communicator, a public affairs officer. And then, I want to say my sixth grade, when I'm living in Mechanicsburg, he moved back to Washington and worked for the Department of then Health, Education and Welfare [HEW], later HHS (Department of Health and Human Services) or Education. But, he worked in the public health sector as a press officer for the public health service.

STEINBERG: And what did you learn from him first being a UN employee, and then a public servant?

BEERS: I never really had much of a sense of his UNRWA experience, because it was one of the issues that led to the divorce, and so nobody ever talked about that either way. But, I mean, his coming back to Washington and working for HEW and my stepfather working for the Navy, was just a further commitment in my own mind of wanting to be involved in some form of public service. I say when I'm giving speeches, *I come from a family of preachers and teachers and public servants and I never thought of doing anything else.*

STEINBERG: That's great. Well, so, thinking about the world you lived in, you grew up after World War II and the Cold War. So, do you remember—

BEERS: Right, and the Korean War while we were in Hawaii.

STEINBERG: Yes. So, what do you remember like politically or just from the social environment of the country at that time?

BEERS: So, the first thing I remember was that when we moved to Hawaii, my stepfather went away for several months, and he wouldn't tell us where or why. He went, as far as we knew, to San Francisco. When he came home and when it was public, we learned that he had gone to a nuclear weapon test in Eniwetok in the Pacific, and the move to San Francisco was part of a ruse to deflect people before it happened. So, it was my first real sense, other than the Korean War going on at the same time, about the larger nature of international relations, although I'm probably embellishing what I actually remember at that particular time.

And then I remember the end of the Korean War, because we got out of school to go over to watch Eisenhower, who had pledged that he would go to Korea during the '52 election, having been in Korea, coming back to Pearl Harbor, getting off of a military plane, and driving down the main highway from the Air Force base to Honolulu International Airport to I guess catch a different plane.

STEINBERG: Yeah.

BEERS: I'm trying to remember whether he had been inaugurated by then or not, or whether he was still the President-elect. But it was sort of like *Oh wow, you know, there's the President and he is trying to end the Korean War*, which was I later learned

unpopular, although you wouldn't know that living on a military installation. And it was, you know, that sort of reinforced my interest in history and my interest in military history at the same time. So, it was a sense that there was this, that war didn't end with the Second World War, that there was still conflict in the world. But I was still, you know, I probably had to get to junior high school before I really began to understand what the Cold War was about, because my interest in history was not as much in current events as it was in how did we get to where we were at that time? So, I would read history textbooks in fifth grade. I remember that very distinctly.

STEINBERG: So, you said in junior high you kind of became aware of current events. So what was that realization like, knowing that you were living in the Cold War and a nuclear age and all of that?

BEERS: Well, it was certainly an appreciation that we were living in a nuclear age, and it was an appreciation that the Cold War meant that there was this combination of ideological tension, but also the kind of chessboard moves that were occurring in places around the world. So, '56, the Suez Canal crisis, where President Eisenhower actually rebuked the French and the British for invading Egypt, and the various other things that were happening both in the Middle East. I remember very distinctly when the revolt in Hungary occurred during that period. I was delivering some kind of shoppers' newspaper along this route and I took it up to one door and the newspaper was still on the stoop, and it had Hungary on the front page, and I stopped and I sat down and I read these people's newspaper, [laughter] not the whole article, but just *Oh my, what's really going on here?* I mean, I didn't listen to the news. We didn't have a television until I was in ninth grade. So…

STEINBERG: Did you talk to your stepfather about what was going on in the world?

BEERS: No. He wasn't a particularly communicative person. Not to me.

STEINBERG: Did you talk to your mom or your dad about it?

BEERS: No. I mean, it was mostly conversations among kids at school about this area. But, very much aware of the political

process. So, in the ’56 election, my mother decided that I needed to go see my paternal grandmother, who was still alive. So, she put me on a plane and I flew to Chicago where my uncle lived, who had fought in the Second World War. He was a social worker. He ran an orphanage in Chicago. I visited them when they lived in St. Louis, as well. And it was during the ’56 Democratic Convention and they were dyed in the wool Democrats. My mother and my stepfather were Republicans. My father was a Democrat. I didn’t entirely understand all of this at that particular point in time until then, but after that I definitely understood domestic politics. And in junior high school, we had a mock election, and I was Richard Nixon.

STEINBERG: [laughter] How did you get that role?

BEERS: By choice. By choice. No, no, I was… The old Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan [Ann Arbor, MI] where I went to graduate school said that by and large, people identify with the political party of their parents, at least initially. And so, I was a Republican. But I got a real dose of the Democratic Party when I went to visit my aunt and uncle. And so, I became fascinated by politics and the political maneuvering that went on about it. *So, is Adlai Stevenson gonna win the nomination or not? And what about Estes Kefauver and all of the people surrounding the back and forth?* Averell Harriman was also running in that particular time. And then, Stevenson decided he was not going to pick his vice-president, that he was going to let an open convention do that. And Kefauver won, and the person who was in second place was John Fitzgerald Kennedy, as a vice-president. So, that was sort of, I guess he was a congressman by that time—I don’t think he was a senator yet. But anyway, it was sort of his step up to prominence in American politics at that particular time. And I very much remember all of that. And I’m not sure I had an opinion one way or the other, although I have a tendency to root for underdogs.

STEINBERG: [laughter] So, that was 1956. You were in high school at the time?

BEERS: I was, I guess, still in junior high school. I graduated in ’60, so, summer of ’56 would have been—oh, where I went to school, junior high school was 7, 8 and 9.

STEINBERG: Okay. So you're still in junior high.

BEERS: So I'm still in junior high, for sure.

STEINBERG: So, what was your decision, how did you decide to go to Dartmouth? How did you end up here?

BEERS: So, I wanted to go to West Point, even though my stepfather was in the Navy. And I applied to all three military academies and got in two, but not West Point. At the same time, I thought I wanted to be an astronaut at that particular point in time because this is the Sputnik era.

STEINBERG: Space race, yeah.

BEERS: And John Glenn and all that. So, I applied to Cornell and MIT because they had really good engineering programs, and I applied to Worcester Polytechnic Institute as my safety school. And I applied to Dartmouth because the recruiter who came to my prep school was very impressive about Dartmouth. And I thought *oh, that sounds like an interesting place to go*. I did not know that John [G.] Kemeny—I didn't know who John Kemeny was, let alone that he was the head of the math department at Dartmouth. So it was kind of *okay, that sounds like an interesting place to go*.

And I also applied for the NROTC program, which was on campus in that particular period of time before they got thrown off in the '70s. And I was selected to come to Dartmouth. And it was the best financial aid package that I had at the time. And it wasn't like *oh, I'm gonna go to Dartmouth*. It was *oh, okay, that sounds great!* I did not visit a single college to which I applied. The only one that I had ever been to was the Naval Academy, because who was close to Washington, D.C.? [laughter] So, it was that almost random ending up coming here. Best decision of my life!

STEINBERG: So, were you a part of ROTC when you were on campus?

BEERS: Yeah, Navy. Navy ROTC, because back in the United States, it was the only military scholarship program at colleges and universities around the country. The Army and the Air Force ultimately had programs that also were basically a full ride; I mean, it was all your tuition and $50 a month and all your books.

STEINBERG: So, what was that experience like as an NROTC, and ROTC became more controversial on campus?

BEERS: So I left in ’64 before the Vietnam War really started, and we were, you know, just another group on campus. There was Army ROTC, there was Air Force ROTC. We had drill once a week, and in the naval program, you had to take courses. So we, instead of the 36 credits that you had to have, we had to have 40.

STEINBERG: So you took classes with specifically the NROTC kids?

BEERS: Right. So, and they were not all accredited by the college, which is why the difference in that. Two of them were clear history classes and they were accredited as history classes, but the orientation course was a course not accredited. Anyway. So, these were extra courses that we had to take.

In terms of the campus reaction to that—there may have been some, but I don’t think…it certainly wasn’t controversial. Dartmouth at that point in time, in terms of intake, had a conscious effort to try to distribute the student body around the country rather than just coming heavily from New York City, which is where most of the alumni at that particular point in time, I mean, the overwhelming predominance of alumni in the greater New York area were residing. And while colleges and universities always consider legacy issues, the college wanted to make sure that it wasn’t just a New York school. So there was from all over the country.

And, was it liberal or conservative? There were—I remember some discussions with James Buckley conservatives at that particular point in time who were, what was it called? The John Galt Society. Do you know what—it’s a reference to an Ayn Rand book. John Galt is a character there and it was a conservative group. But, more people didn’t follow current events that much. There was some hullabaloo—not hullabaloo. There was interest in the ’60 election, which was the fall term of freshman year. And John Kennedy, I think, was attractive to a lot of students, just because he was new. He wasn’t much younger than Richard Nixon, but he kind of represented a new vision. My next major memory of any political ferment on the campus was that I was—I guess it came out of a group—I don’t know if it’s still here—called a Dartmouth Christian Union?

STEINBERG: Uh-huh.

BEERS: Had a very charismatic guy who ran the organization, and one of the things that he had as an activity was a bulletin board in the Baker[-Berry] Library basement, and it was about articles about the civil rights movement. And I was interested in that and took responsibility for clipping articles out of the *New York Times*, which if my memory is correct, was the first time in college that I started actually reading the newspaper, [laughter] other than *The Dartmouth* daily. But, and so, this is a long story to simply say, so I put these clippings up and I was shocked to come in several times and discover that the clippings had been torn down, a presumed political reaction to anything about the civil rights movement. I was living in Macon, Georgia at that time.

STEINBERG: So, what was it like coming from Dartmouth's campus that you said was kind of politically neutral back down to Macon, Georgia during this time?

BEERS: Well, we lived on a Naval Ordnance Plant in Macon, Georgia, [laughter] so I didn't really get off the base very much. I don't remember any sense of that, although I was there. I had come back from one of my summer military obligations to Macon in the summer of '63, and watched the Martin Luther King speech while I was in Macon, that very, very moving speech which undoubtedly had a lot to do with why I wanted to be posting on that bulletin board in Baker.

STEINBERG: Yeah, so what sparked your desire to help out the Christian Union to clip these newspaper articles?

BEERS: I think it was that. I didn't realize—I hadn't thought about that until we started down this path, to realize that I'm sure that had a lot to do with… How aware I was of the civil rights movement before that? I don't know. But, that clearly sparked my interest in that. Which is also interesting, because my mother and stepfather were not interested in civil rights and had a very low opinion of African-Americans. My father, on the other hand, was very, very pro civil rights, so I knew those things because as my father moved back to Washington when I was in sixth grade and we came in and out of Washington, and I went to prep school in the Washington area for my junior and senior year, I got to know

him much more and know much more about his politics versus my mother's and stepfather's politics.

STEINBERG: So, what was your view of your mother and stepfather's politics? Did you have any personal feelings about it?

BEERS: Well, I certainly by the '60 election, I was a Democrat, not old enough to vote then, very supportive of that. I don't know when before that it started to happen, but my guess is the difference between Kennedy and Nixon was enough of a spark, and that could have been the spark itself, when it was clear in my mind, *Oh, if I could vote, I would vote for John Kennedy, not Richard Nixon*.

STEINBERG: And then, back on campus in the fall of '60, was there any open discussion or debate about the civil rights movement besides just taking down the articles?

BEERS: Not in '60. No, the paper wrote about the sit-ins and things like that. I mean, that is the period in which it became front page news.

STEINBERG: And, do you remember where you were when JFK was assassinated?

BEERS: I was walking from the Commons to Robinson Hall, when somebody said, "Did you hear?" And I was the president of Germania at that time, which was a German language club, which had its meeting room in Robinson [Hall] next to the radio station. Is the radio station still in Robinson?

STEINBERG: I think it is, yes.

BEERS: Because Germania isn't—because I went back up to see if it was there. I don't know where it is, but I was just curious where it was, because I spent so much time studying there, because they had big tables; you could all your stuff out on them, and it wasn't crowded like the Baker Library basement, and it was more pleasant than studying in your dorm room. So I ran up to the radio station and found out, in fact, what was on the ticker. That's a very, very, very vivid memory.

STEINBERG: And what was the campus reaction?

BEERS: Shock. I was living in a fraternity house at that time, and we all just sat in front of the television for days. Went to class, but—or maybe class was cancelled, I'm not even sure. But, several days. At least two, maybe three, because of the unfolding events with the capture of Lee Harvey Oswald, and then his own assassination.

STEINBERG: So, do you feel like it had an impact on campus environment, or just that immediate impact, and then everyone kind of moved on?

BEERS: I don't know the answer to that. It was certainly a subject of discussion. Did it have a political overtone? I don't think so. I don't think we understood how significant that change was really until after the '64 election, when Johnson was President in his own right and began to use his legislative skills to change the country.

STEINBERG: Yeah, so you talked about being really interested in the political process. So, what was your take on [President Lyndon B.] Johnson and his ability to manipulate it?

BEERS: Well, we need to go back to the election itself. So, I graduate in the summer of '64. I go to summer camp because I lost one of my summer cruises because I went to Germany in the foreign studies program, and that's in August, July and August. And I am commissioned in September. So I am now in the United States Marine Corps. Before I left campus, I got the town of Hanover to allow me to register to vote in New Hampshire, because I had no home. My parents were in Guam by that time. My stepfather and mother were registered in West Virginia because he was a resident of West Virginia. I never—I mean, I've been to Martinsburg, which is where he was born... And my father was in Washington, but lived in Maryland, and I never really identified with living there. So, I didn't actually feel like I had a residence, and I really wanted to vote, not because I entirely had appreciated Barry Goldwater, but I knew enough that I really wanted to vote for Lyndon Johnson.

And so, the real discussions on politics in that period happen when I am at basic school in the United States Marine Corps in Quantico, Virginia. And the military is, as a general proposition, more conservative than the population at large, and so the discussions were often about the difference, ideological differences: the big government/small

government; big taxes/small taxes kinds of things there. The rule in the Navy, and it applies to the Marine Corps, is officers don't talk about sex, religion and politics when they are eating dinner together. This is aboard ship, that's where it came from. But it was really in order to try to maintain the unit cohesion as opposed to differences. So, and there were some heated discussions during that period of time, and, you know, there was a lot of general discussion about people saying, "Well, if Goldwater wins, I'm going to move to Canada."

STEINBERG: The classic, yes. [laughter] Sounds familiar.

BEERS: Yeah, and so all of that was going on, as well. But it didn't really—I mean, the campaign hadn't coalesced enough by the time I left Hanover in June.

STEINBERG: So, let's go back to, so you mentioned you were at basics in Quantico, Virginia. So, when you were in the NROTC, did you know were going to be in the Marines?

BEERS: So, I did. On my first summer cruise, which was between my freshman and sophomore year, I was on a Destroyer Escort in the North Atlantic. And I hadn't really thought about what I would do in the Navy, and I was thinking about the Navy at that time because it was a Navy program. It was so boring. So, when you're at sea, you stand watch for four hours and then you're off for eight hours, but so that you don't repeat the same cycle every day, between the hours of 4:00 and 8:00 there are only two-hour watches. So, every day you're on a different watch schedule, and then after three days you're back on the one you were on. And, if you weren't on watch during the work day, what sailors did was swab the decks and chip paint, clean the bathrooms, called "heads," and it was just incredibly boring. The most interesting thing was when I was in the combat information center and I got to sit and watch the radar and sonar scope to see where there were ships, or maybe submarines.

So, in my sophomore year when the Marine officer came around and said, "Well, there is an option. You can go into the Marine Corps, and this is what we do," and so on. I mean, not "this is what the Marine Corps does," but "this is what the difference in your classes would be." And, given my interest in wanting to go to West Point and land forces, it just seemed like *so this will be clearly less boring, and if I'm*

ashore, maybe I can take some graduate school courses and things like that. Oh, by this time I took physics and I knew I wasn't going to be an astronaut. [laughter]

STEINBERG: How long did you hold on to that idea?

BEERS: Sophomore year. And, you know, I got C-'s in the two physics, I and II, which was required by the Navy, to take physics. So, I fell back on my history interest, and began to think about joining the foreign service during that period of time, because I wasn't sure I wanted to make the Marine Corps a career.

STEINBERG: Yeah. So, when you got your Marine Corps commission, did you go directly to Quantico?

BEERS: Yeah. All Marine officers except for people who come in through an aviation entry point go to Quantico, the aviation people. And not Academy graduates, not NROTC graduates. There's a program called Mar Cats; they're the only ones who went to Pensacola and started flight school right away. All, everybody else, whether you went to the Naval Academy, NROTC at any college or university, or people in the platoon leaders course, which was the other entryway outside of NROTC, went to Quantico. They wanted everybody to go through this initial orientation for the Marine Corps, and it was basically an infantry officer course.

STEINBERG: So, what type of classes did you take there?

BEERS: Tactics, Leadership, Weapons. Those were kind of the core curricula there. There were other things like some stuff on the Uniform Code of Military Justice, because as an officer you were going to be occasionally drawn into the military justice system in terms of trials.

STEINBERG: And did you also go through basic training at that point?

BEERS: That was it, yeah—I mean, no, I'm sorry. What you would call basic training I went through in the six-week course before I was commissioned. That was the sort of officer equivalent of going to boot camp. I mean, there was clear efforts by the drill sergeants to harass you.

STEINBERG: Yeah. So, what was it like being in that environment with all officers, who had come from different parts of the country,

but all gone through the NROTC program and were going to be officers?

BEERS: It was clearly on the part of the Marine Corps a notion of building a unified officer corps, since we all took the same courses. It was an effort to have you become friends with, colleagues with, other officers who you would see throughout your career if you made it a career, and who you would also see, even in a three or a four year period, which are the minimal periods that you had to stay in if you accepted a commission. It was a grind: up in the morning, muster with your unit outside in your fatigues, and do some drill, then go to the classroom, spend the day in the classroom except when you were in the field, on either marches to just show you what it was like to move in a formation at a speed where you covered two-and-a-half miles in an hour with a ten minute rest break included, to condition your feet for that long a walk; and then tactical maneuvers, or map reading tests, or things like that in the field, to give you all of the experiences that you would then experience in a peacetime Marine Corps, if that's what it was, where you would do those exercises again and again and again, in formations of your enlisted men, and to prepare you if you were going to end up in combat. So, one of the things that was taught very explicitly was, "There's a Marine Corps way and there's the John Wayne way." And John Wayne was: don't be a hero. It's not about being a hero. It's about doing the right thing in taking care of the people who are under your command.

STEINBERG: So, do you feel like there were those common Marine-specific values that were instilled in you at this time?

BEERS: Absolutely. The other one was: officers are last in line. When you go to get food, go to the chow hall or anything, you don't go to the head of the line. You go to the end of the line. The troops eat first. Other kinds of leadership.

STEINBERG: So, when did you become aware of what was escalating in Vietnam, and the fact that you might end up there?

BEERS: Spring of '65. So, I entered in September, and we graduated in March. And as we were graduating, the Marines went to Da Nang. So it became a possibility. But, that was a, I want to say it was probably a battalion sized maneuver and it was to protect the airfield in Da Nang. But I became interested in

what was going on in Vietnam in the spring—in early '65 before then, and devouring the reporting in the newspaper.

STEINBERG: And so, what were those reports—what were those initial reports coming out of Vietnam?

BEERS: Just that the South Vietnamese weren't doing very well against the Viet Cong, and that… I don't remember having a sense beyond the advisors, that there was actually going to be a combat unit deployed to Vietnam until the Marines were deployed to protect the Da Nang airfield. And the airfield was used, obviously, as a military airfield, and was a vital part of the Vietnamese effort. I don't remember whether we even had U.S. military aircraft there at the point, but it may have been that we deployed U.S. military aircraft to the Da Nang airfield at the same time that the Marines went in there to protect the airfield so that it wouldn't be attacked by the Viet Cong.

STEINBERG: And so, when did you get to Vietnam?

BEERS: So, after basic school I went to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and went to sea. Our battalion was sent on a Mediterranean cruise, which means you get on the ship in North Carolina and you sail into the Mediterranean and you sail around the Mediterranean for four months, and you do amphibious landings in Spain, in Italy, in Malta and Greece. So, oh, and France, too. Sardinia belongs to France, yeah. And then, getting to visit a number of ports in the Mediterranean. But, you know, when naval task forces come into ports, it kinds of changes the nature of it.

Long story short, so then I got back to Camp Lejeune in the fall and had orders to go to Camp Pendleton, California, in February in order to join the 1st MP Battalion, which was then going to deploy to Vietnam. But it was a new unit; it hadn't existed before then. So we spent, let's see, February, March, April—we spent three-and-a-half months trying to figure out what we were doing as MPs. So, we told a lot of traffic control to Marines, and we talked about running military prisons for POWs, because there was no clear sense of *why was this unit being organized to go to Vietnam? And was there enough business for that?* We had a canine unit within the battalion. So, we got there, and the guy who ran the Marine area said, "Okay, you're gonna guard the Da Nang airfield, so that I can take this pure infantry unit and put it

further out in the field." And we were a light infantry guard unit around the Da Nang airfield.

STEINBERG: So, just for the tape, what is "MP"? What is the acronym?

BEERS: Oh, I'm sorry. Military Police.

STEINBERG: Okay. So, is the Military Police always made up of Marines?

BEERS: No, no. There are Military Police units in every service. They're not always called MPs, because the Navy doesn't guard its own bases; Marines guard its bases. But the Navy has some police-like units, particularly at sea. They're called Shore Patrol and they go in and pick up drunken sailors and Marines who are in the bars—they're on liberty—in order to decrease friction with the local population when the men come ashore. [laughter]

STEINBERG: So, when you got to Da Nang, what was your role? Like, what was your unit doing?

BEERS: I was a platoon leader at that point in time, and had a sector of the perimeter that my platoon was responsible for. They were for—No, so each company had a sector of the perimeter and rotated 24/7 watches. So, that was basically your platoon was out or you were back, and it was eight on 16 off.

STEINBERG: And did you see any combat? Or did you have to do anything guarding the base?

BEERS: We ran patrols not very far outside the perimeter, and set up ambushes in places that might have had Viet Cong trying to come up to the perimeter. There were some shots at the perimeter. I don't remember being mortared at any time. It was, as with all guard duty, kind of boring.

STEINBERG: Yeah. So, how long did you stay there?

BEERS: Six months. And then, the battalion commander said, "If you want to transfer to another unit, fine with me. I understand." And so, a large proportion of the officers, in retrospect probably all of the single men wanted to transfer. And so I went to the 3rd Marine Regiment as a staff officer, and I was in the operations component of the regimental headquarters

at a place called Camp Carroll, which is on the—not right on the DMZ, but it's on—

STEINBERG: Sorry, what is the DMZ? When you use acronyms, I just want to make sure.

BEERS: It was south of the Demilitarized Zone, and it was on the road between Dong Ha, which is on the coast, and Khe Sanh, which is close to the Laotian border. And it was responsible for looking north and west. There was another unit to the east of that and was not under the command of the regimental commander. So, the regimental commander had one or two maneuver battalions that he directed to run operations out in order to basically try to prevent infiltration of the area by North Vietnamese at this time; there were some Viet Cong in the area. So, my job was to try to help keep track of those maneuvers and chronicle what had been done.

I was also the regimental psychological warfare operations officer, which meant that primarily we passed out leaflets to the Vietnamese population which were designed to get them to be supportive of the government; also to offer amnesty to any Viet Cong who wanted to identify themselves and come in and be protected by the government, but hopefully that they would go into the counter-Viet Cong units and become guides and intelligence assets in much the way that the U.S. Cavalry used to recruit Indians during the Indian Wars.

STEINBERG: So, when you were doing this and you were interacting with the local population, did you have a sense of what the larger war effort was? And when did you start to form your ideas or opinions on the war effort?

BEERS: So, during the entire time I was in Vietnam, based on studying history here at Dartmouth, understanding the Cold War sense, I was very much fully supportive of the Administration's position about why we were in Vietnam to prevent Communism from taking over the rest of Vietnam in order to try to maintain the broader containment policy of successive administrations to not allow the Russians or the Communist monolith to encroach further on the Free World. As I reflect back, I don't know whether at that point in time I understood that China and the Soviet Union were not on the same wavelength, and that it was really mostly or all Russian support for the North Vietnamese, and China was more of a

hands off kind of participant to the extent that there was any participation on their part, given the history between Vietnam and China, and their natural antipathy, ethnic antipathy, whatever you want to—however you want to describe that. I cannot recall that I understood that at that particular point in time, although that may have finally penetrated when I became a company commander in the last six months that I was in Vietnam. But, I don't think I had…

I certainly felt that being in a military unit and being responsible for the people under my command, and this is more reflective of when I was a company commander, I had a responsibility to keep them focused on the mission that we were involved in, and not create uncertainty or ambiguity or things like that that might endanger them or the unit if we didn't operate as a coherent entity. However, and this really requires jumping ahead to when I became a company commander, but I want to stay with being a regimental staff officer, because there was a pretty significant event while I was a regimental staff officer, two of them actually.

The first one was: one of the maneuver battalions under the regimental commander was, the headquarters group was ambushed and overrun, and the battalion commander was killed, and the battalion operations officer was medically evacuated, because he was severely wounded. And so the regimental commander sent his executive officer to take command of the battalion and get it out of the place that it was, and I went along as the battalion operations officer at that particular point in time. I think I may have been a captain by that point in time. And, so that was the closest I came up to that point to being in a combat situation, although in the end it turned out to be we simply pulled the companies back and moved out to a place in which the whole battalion could be taken out of Vietnam. They were due to rotate out anyway. But that was the first time I was really in the field doing that, and had a sense, just seeing these Marines coming out of wherever they had been deployed forward of the battalion commander, and learning that their battalion commander, who was a very charismatic person—I'd known him from NROTC summer groups, and I knew him when I went to the MED, because he was the commander of the battalion that we relieved when we went into the MED. So, I'd known him and everybody loved him, and it was just very devastating to the people who—because we didn't say

anything on the radio. We just said, “Move here,” to tell them face to face.

STEINBERG: So, you told them that their battalion commander had been killed?

BEERS: And the whole command could have essentially been wiped out. It was—you know, it’s such a personal experience for them, and me, too, because I knew this guy and he really was a charismatic leader and would probably have been a senior Marine if he had lived. And we were mortared or rocketed at Camp Carroll, and we all had bunkers that we would go into when they happened. But, that’s much more of a distant kind of situation, even though it’s deadly, than this.

And the second one was what is the first battle of Khe Sanh the history books don’t talk much about. But, the North Vietnamese decided that they were going to take Khe Sanh. And I don’t know if you’ve done any of that history, but it’s a little bit like Dien Bien Phu in that at least 180˚ of the area around it is higher ground than the airfield, and the North Vietnamese were moving into the area. And so, the regimental commander decided that he would go forward to run the battle out there, and he took me along as his operations officer. And so, we weren’t directly in combat, although we got rocketed, but we were actually running a battle for about a week. And as the Marines became more successful, the regimental commander and I would go forward to the units as they were trying to clear the NVA (North Vietnamese Army) out of the bunkers that they had dug for themselves. They had really dug in around the perimeter in order to be able to rain fire on the perimeter, but be protected to counter-battery fire, which would be aimed back at them. Not clear that there was going to be an assault on the perimeter from this particular attack. In retrospect, it may have been more of a probing effort that then provided the information for the much more noteworthy battle of Khe Sanh that occurred several months later. So, that was the other time that I was close to combat.

STEINBERG: So, what did these two near combat or behind the lines experiences, what impact did they have on your experience? Was it kind of the first real taste of Vietnam?

BEERS: And being young and immortal at the time, part of the reason that I asked to stay on for another tour if I was given

command of a rifle company. So, shortly after… I don't remember whether it was before or after the Khe Sanh experience, but in that time frame I asked the Marine Corps if I could stay for—the extended tour was only seven months—if I could stay for another seven months if I could be sent down to a battalion and be given command of an infantry company. So, you know, my parents, "What are you doing?" [laughter] But it was my sense, and I really do say it was, having read too much Hemingway and thinking at the age of 24 that I was immortal, and that I could do this, and that if I was going to be in the Marine Corps and I was going to be in a war situation, that I should experience combat, not with any sort of John Wayne heroism sense, but just that *We're in the Cold War. This is a hot part of the Cold War. This is what our country needs to do in order to contain Communism*. So as I say, I totally bought into that whole sense.

So I come home, and my future wife, whom I had met my senior year in Macon, Georgia, at Christmas, was at Howard University with a kind of Upward Bound program for public high school kids in the Washington area to have a college experience in the summer. She was the only white person in the whole program. And, so this would be the summer of '67. And one of her experiences was during the riots, somebody came around one night and put "Kill Whitey" signs on the doors in the dorm in which she was staying except her door. And, you know, that was her experience.

But, so she was at Duke at this point in time, and the anti-war movement had escalated, and she went back to college and organized her dorm to send care packages to my company. And they were not just care packages for me; they were big packages that would come with food, things like that. But we also corresponded about the anti-war movement during this time, and so she says, "So, why are we in Vietnam?" and I would send back to her all of the geopolitical stuff that the Administration was putting out during this period of time. But, it is where she told me about, I mean, we had a newspaper called *The Stars and Stripes* in Vietnam. It was a military newspaper, and the military does this all over the world. So, there was stuff about the anti-war movement, but, you know, talking to her about campus vigils and things like that, so it was my first personal experience, through her eyes, about what was going on in terms of college campuses and the anti-war movement.

STEINBERG: And was she involved directly with the anti-war movement or just began to question it?

BEERS: Well, she participated in the vigils. As I remember them, the students would come out at night with candles and sit out on the lawn in front of some campus building, as a silent protest about the war. So yes, she was very much involved in that with some ambivalence, because we're kind of courting by mail.

STEINBERG: So, did you feel disconnected from home? Like did you feel a rift at all between what was going on at home and what was going on in Vietnam for you?

BEERS: I was totally focused on doing my best to protect the people under my command while still carrying out whatever missions were assigned to us. Now, we, during the time that I was back, we were involved in three firefights. The first one was when I was commanding the headquarter's company, because there wasn't a rifle company command that was open, and ended up bringing down reinforcements to the battle that was happening on the highway between Camp Carroll and Khe Sanh, where the NVA had tried to cut the road. As a result of that, the company commander was relieved of his command for not prosecuting the attack sufficiently, and then I took over command of that company. And then, two other situations where we were outside of our battalion perimeter maneuvering and ran into NVA units. One was a more significant firefight. The other was less significant. And we moved around from one perimeter to another along that area of the Demilitarized Zone.

STEINBERG: What was it like to make decisions as a company commander, knowing that your men are—their lives are in your hands but you have to carry out that mission, like that balance you said before? What is it like to be in the firefights and make those decisions in the moment?

BEERS: So, the one that was most significant… We were going through an area about half a kilometer or a kilometer to the west of the battalion perimeter, as part of what is generally done to make sure that there aren't enemy units that are moving up close to the perimeter of our stage of attack; and the point, the lead Marine of the whole company as we're moving through this area, spotted a, as he described it, an

MVA coming down the trail for him but hadn't been seen yet. So I told the battalion to stop, and let's see whether or not he walks into an ambush, but not one that we would try to kill him as much as we would try to capture him in order to try to get intelligence from that.

As the unit set down, after the guy didn't come any closer to the perimeter, we started receiving fire from a tree line on the flank of where the company was, and it was pretty heavy fire. And so, we basically settled in place, and I called the battalion for fire support in order to see whether we could suppress the fire by using indirect fire: weapons, mortars or artillery, because we had artillery in the perimeter. Because my thought was, we were in a situation in which if we had gone forward, it would have been a frontal attack, and standard tactics is you never attack frontally except as a totally last resort, and often as part of a much larger line where you're trying to simply get through the line in order to then roll up the line to your left and right. We didn't know how big the unit was. We just knew that it was a lot of fire, so I was trying to use indirect fire as a combination of fire suppression and recognizance.

And, after the first round of fire, one of the platoon commanders without orders decided that he was going to lead a frontal assault, and stood up and told his platoon to follow him. And he was immediately killed. And nobody else stood up. This I learned after the fact. All I knew was that he was killed. And that's John Wayne, and that's why that's such a searing experience for me. He was a just out of basics school second lieutenant.

What we did was we then provided a base of fire, meaning that we put down as much metal on the enemy emplacements while the battalion commander got another company to move out on the left flank of where this incident occurred. More artillery, a couple of aircraft strikes on the perimeter, and then the order to cease the base of fire, and the company that had come out did a flanking movement on it. So, that's kind of to describe what in my own mind was going on about that, which is: you don't put your people at risk without a plan, and the plan has to be: *What is the most effective tactical way in which to accomplish the mission?* Because we couldn't leave that unit there that close to the perimeter to be able to send scouts up at night to probe the perimeter and what-not. So the mission was *get them out of*

there. But the mission needed to be accomplished in the most effective tactically sound way to run that kind of an operation, which also does the most to protect the people under your command even though you are putting them in a deadly situation.

STEINBERG: So, do you feel like being a company commander was kind of the fulfillment of your duty as a Marine? Whereas, if you had just left after being an operations officer, you wouldn't have felt that?

BEERS: Absolutely. But in retrospect, because we lost the platoon commander and we lost a corpsman who was trying—that's a medical person; they're Navy. In the Marine Corps the doctors and the medical assistants are all Navy. We lost the platoon commander and the corpsman. I don't believe we lost anybody else, although we had people who were wounded. I had more people killed by friendly fire in Vietnam under my command than I did by the enemy. That's a pretty striking—and there's not a lot of people, but they were dead.

STEINBERG: Yeah. So, how do you grapple with that?

BEERS: So, the first thing you want to know is how did this happen? So that it doesn't happen again. One was a bomb that was dropped on the edge of our perimeter. We think it was a mistake rather than a mis-plotting. We had another one, which made me furious, which was we were outside the perimeter on maneuver, and we settled in for the night, and the battalion operations officer—I don't remember whether we were two companies or not—but the battalion operations officer plotted our position, and then asked for the battalion mortar section to fire what are called nighttime protective fire, so that they were firing where they would be asked to fire during the night. So you called in the fire, and then you adjust it where you want it to be at night, so that the mortar is then set for firing there, no adjustment, and it sits there all night with that registration. And he had mis-plotted our position, and it came into the perimeter and killed two people and badly wounded five. I so wanted him to be court-martialed. He got off free. My artillery officer who was with me—they're called forward observers—argued with him about the plot before the fire came. And he knew he was wrong. He knew—that's how I knew specifically why it had happened, because he was part of adjusting the fires. That's what a forward observer does. They had an investigation.

They talked to me. And he did not get punished. “Fog of war” or whatever. I have no idea what the investigation gave him. It just truly made me furious.

So, yeah, trying to figure out how to do what you’re supposed to do, but to do it in the most sensible way in a situation in which death or potential death is all around you. And try to be cool—I guess that’s the best—to maintain your ability to think rationally in what is clearly an irrational situation, when bullets are flying. So, those were the kinds of experiences that I brought back the week before Tet [Offensive].

STEINBERG: So you left the week before the Tet Offensive began?

BEERS: To go to Norfolk [VA] to be the guard officer, meaning protect the perimeter of the Norfolk Naval Base, with a couple of weeks’ leave in between.

STEINBERG: So, when did you leave military service?

BEERS: In September of ’68.

STEINBERG: And so, what was it like adjusting back to civilian life?

BEERS: [laughter] So, this is ’68. So, New Hampshire, McCarthy wins, Lyndon Johnson withdraws, Robert Kennedy enters the race, Martin Luther King is assassinated, Robert Kennedy is assassinated. I’m still in the Marine Corps. We went on heightened alert after both of those assassinations, in case there was a reaction either by the African-American community after King or the anti-war movement after Kennedy. I remember most of the units under my command, most of the Marines under my command—not most, but probably somewhere between a third and a half were African-Americans, and the conversation about riot control after Martin Luther King in talking to them about the mission that they might be called upon to do was—well, I talked quite frankly about what they might have to do, and it wasn’t that they were going to have to shoot, but they were going to have to hold the line if we were trying to prevent people from coming on the base. But I’m by now opposed to the war.

STEINBERG: So, when did that transformation happen, that shift?

BEERS: Tet. I mean, I was probably headed in that direction anyway, because of the various elements of my experience of seeing war up close. But I certainly—I mean, I think the—I was clear by the time of the New Hampshire primary, which is not very far after I came back.

STEINBERG: Uh-huh, that you were anti-war.

BEERS: And, but I was still in the military. And so, all of this is occurring now. Where do I go to graduate school? The University of Michigan, the home of the Students for a Democratic Society [SDS]. I arrive right after the Chicago Convention. I arrive with a Marine Corps haircut. And nobody gave me any grief. I wasn't like *I am now anti-war* label on my—but people were, they were curious, and when they understood that I was opposed to the war by that time, there was never any reaction. The only strong reaction I got, which was really befuddling to me, was my wife and I were in a bar, and my hair was longer by then, although it was never shoulder length. It was just long hair, and I had a ridiculous looking mustache.

STEINBERG: It was the late '60s. [laughter]

BEERS: No, I wanted it to twirl up at the ends. [laughter] It was ridiculous. And this young person said he was in the Marine Corps and he was going to Vietnam, and I said I was in the Marine Corps and I went to Vietnam. And I never said anything about pro- or anti-war or something. And he took a swing at me. I have no idea why. I just said, you know, "Come on, chill, there's nothing going on here." I can only imagine that because my hair was long, he might have thought I was lying that I had been in the Marine Corps and been to Vietnam. Or what? I don't know. I don't know. But it was just the only reaction, and I don't know why. People wanted me to march at the front of parades and make anti-war statements and I said "no" to them. That's not my style. I'm perfectly prepared to march in parades, but I don't want to be an out front person with the anti-war movement. So, you know, went to Washington for some marches, marched once, I think, in Ann Arbor, and we spent three years there, watching America go through all of that strife, including the '68 election which I had dearly hoped Hubert Humphrey would win.

STEINBERG: So, do you feel any relief that you left Vietnam before it escalated to the "point of no return" kind of thing?

BEERS: Well, I mean, the way I read it, the escalation stopped after Tet, and Johnson said, "We will not commit more forces." And the effort on how to find a path out that he pursued: "Let's think about peace talks," "Let's bomb the hell out of Hanoi," and all of that, in the brief period that he was still in office until a year later… No, I was there during the escalation, not the de-escalation. I wouldn't have called it de-escalation so much during Johnson's period, more with Nixon, but the peace negotiations were going on, and they became more and more serious because of China and all of those things that created a geostrategic environment. That looked a little more friendly to accepting the withdrawal from Vietnam, and the *no matter what we did*, the inevitable fall of South Vietnam. I mean, I was in the State Department at this particular point in time, and one of my Foreign Service mentors was put in charge of the expanded security assistance program for the South Vietnamese, which was to give them as much weaponry to defend themselves as we were pulling out completely of South Vietnam. So, you know, while there was a de-escalation and while the peace talks were going on, we were still obviously trying to at least make the effort to look like we were trying to save South Vietnam, as opposed to simply accepting what was more likely, given the fact that the country itself was fractured, and the North Vietnamese were on the side of one of the factions.

STEINBERG: Yeah. So, what did you go to grad school for?

BEERS: Military history.

STEINBERG: And so, how did studying that kind of parallel or interact with domestic environments at that time?

BEERS: Well, I came home from Vietnam, and by the time I got—well, I looked at joining the Foreign Service in the summer of '67 when I was home, and then, when I got back in February, I really went into the State Department and said, "I want to join the Foreign Service," and they said, "Well, sorry. You missed the Foreign Service exam in December. If you'd gone to Saigon, you could have taken it there. And we're not giving a Foreign Service exam this year."

STEINBERG: Why not?

BEERS: I think they thought they had enough people, because a number of people take the Foreign Service exam and a number of people are called qualified and they are put into rank order, and I think they had enough people who had qualified that they would simply go down to the bottom of the list, rather than having another group of intake in having to figure out whether to move on to the next list and leave qualified people who were lower ranked. I don't know the answer to that, but that's kind of what I thought. So, I come back from Vietnam thinking, you know, *We are in this war because the Pentagon was given freedom of action and it doesn't seem to me that the State Department was a very loud voice at the table to talk about alternatives other than use of force. And why is that? Don't they have enough people who can argue military strategy credibly with the Pentagon, now or in the future?* So, I studied military history to go work in the State Department to be somebody who could be in a position to do that.

STEINBERG: So, when did you join the State Department?

BEERS: '71. So, I took the Foreign Service exam in '69. They didn't give it in '68. And then I wanted to at least get through my M.A. and take my prelims for a doctorate before I left. So, I was qualified by the summer of '69, but I deferred entry until they told me in the spring of '71 that my eligibility would expire [laughter] if I didn't come in the September class of '71.

STEINBERG: So, were you a Foreign Service Officer? And so, where were you stationed?

BEERS: So, when I was a Foreign Service Officer, I was in either the first or second class in which large chunks of the class were sent to Vietnam to be advisors in the field, political advisors in the field, not embassy officers in Saigon, although some did that, but in the field. Nobody from my class was sent, and they decided that people who were political officers, which is what my specialty was, would not go overseas, so I spent the first two years in the Bureau of Political Military Affairs, where I would have wanted to serve given my interest.

And then, my first and only posting was as a deputy political advisor to the Supreme Allied Commander of Europe, which is the military command, not the NATO Civilian

Headquarters in Brussels, but the military command in southern Belgium, near Mons, and I did that for two years. And it was interesting, but this is during Watergate, and so, I'd first of all been tainted by working in Washington, as opposed to overseas, and I was so fascinated by what was going on domestically politically that I realized I, from my own personal level, preferred working in Washington. And my wife was a schoolteacher and she ran a crafts program at the rec center there, not particularly interesting kind of employment. So, she is also a naval officer's daughter. She had moved around and hated it. I'd moved around and thought it was really cool. She came with me, but we went back, both of us, "oh, let's not do this." So, I went back still a Foreign Service Officer, with the intention of either going back and getting my Ph.D or transferring to the Civil Service in Washington, so I could stay at the State Department and not be required to move every two to three years. So, one posting.

STEINBERG: And so, you did decide to go to the Civil Service? Yeah. So, why did you do that instead of going back and getting your Ph.D?

BEERS: I took leave without pay for a year and tried to finish my dissertation. I was unsuccessful. And we were both running out of money. And, I mean, my wife had employment, but it wasn't particularly high paying. She was doing preschool kind of teaching then. Teaching isn't remunerative either, but that's a whole other issue. And we had bought a home with another couple, and then divided it up into two living spaces, and they wanted to leave, because their family had grown too big for the living space. And we didn't want to, and we were going to have to buy the home at a much more significant price than we had bought the home. So, it was a pending mortgage of, gosh, six times more than we paid for the house, because we had bought at the rock bottom, and the neighborhood went out of sight in D.C. So those two things came together, and I came back from leave without pay to work in the Bureau of Political Military Affairs.

STEINBERG: So, what year are in now?

BEERS: We are now in '78. No, no, '79. So, I was out from early '78 to sometime in '79.

STEINBERG: And so you came back, and what was your initial role in the State Department when you came back?

BEERS: So, I was originally assigned to work on strategic arms control, and the preparation for the next round of strategic arms talks, on the assumption that the START II Treaty which had been negotiated by that time would be ratified by the Senate. So, I was working on direct energy weapons arms control. This is lasers and particle beams and things like that; anti-satellite weapons. And then the START [II] talks collapsed, the hostages were taken, and the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. And a European historian suddenly became a Southwest Asia political military officer, and worried about *What if the Soviet Union continued south into Pakistan? What would the U.S. do?*

STEINBERG: And so, what was the environment like in the State Department during the hostage crisis and then afterwards?

BEERS: Well, a lot of the officers who were more senior to me or who had served in the Middle East knew people, and I'm working with the Middle East Bureau at this particular point in time. It's a lot of deep concern about that, and coupled with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and other uncertainties in the world, and the perpetual confrontation across the boundary between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, it was a time in which the prospect of a broader war was more tangible than any time I remember before then, although with limited perspective after the Cuban Missile Crisis, or any time I remember after, from then till about '82 or '83. I don't remember precisely where, but… People in the State Department were looking for ways in which diplomacy could be useful, backed up by military force not to use but to act as a deterrent. You know, we're talking about nuclear arms reduction, and we can't get it through the Senate, and deterrence is dependent upon Mutual Assured Destruction. So, I remember telling my wife after reading some book which was, if it wasn't called *World War III*, it was about how World War III might happen, and feeling quite concerned.

STEINBERG: So, how do you feel like the Vietnam War changed American international politics and how we approached conflicts such as the ones in the late '70s and early '80s?

BEERS: Well, one thing it did pretty clearly is the post-World War II sense that politics stops at the water line fell apart. I mean,

pre-World War I, we had isolationists, a strong current of isolationism in the country. So it wasn't like this was forever the way that the parties thought about international relations. And there was still a sense that Republicans were more hawkish than Democrats, but Hubert Humphrey started the Americans for Democratic Action after the Second World War in order to make the point that Democrats were just as concerned about national security as Republicans were. So now we have a much deeper divide between the two parties, and what was it that Bob Dole said in one of the debates, in his Vice-Presidential debate? Something like "all our wars started under Democrats," when he was being criticized for being too hawkish. Which is true, at least in the 20th Century. So that's the first thing.

The second thing is, there was a clear skittishness on the part of Democrats and the public at large that the lesson about Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers and all the other literature that was coming out at this time was a caution, or heightened caution about entering into force, into use of force situations in which the ability to clearly be able to control the outcome was something about which people in the national security arena should be very wary, because of the loss of public support in relationship with Vietnam. Even though you can say, "Well, Richard Nixon won the '68 election, and he was the more hawkish of the two candidates"; even though you could say his silent majority was probably a majority in the country at that time, it was still a period of extraordinary political turbulence within the country, and I think people were worried about that. And when the end of the Vietnam War occurred and you count the number of dead and wounded from the war, and you look at what the results of the war was, the question about *Was it worth it?* is a viable question that people who might have supported the war could ask.

So, we entered into short lived events during that period of time. The hostage rescue mission was a very limited and narrow operation. The invasion of Grenada was a quick in and out operation. And the turmoil in the Middle East and the Marine barracks bombing by Hezbollah before we knew who they were in Lebanon, and *are we really going to get involved in a shooting war in the Middle East in a situation in which that Arab-Israeli struggle has gone on for years and years and years, and they have fought—you know, by that time we had the '65 and the '73 wars?* We had the Camp

David peace between Israel and Egypt, but—and ultimately in the Clinton Administration, the Jordanian peace agreement. But the Syrian border and the Lebanese border were still conflict zones, and they weren't going to not be conflict zones, unless somehow another peace process could occur. But the rejectionists, Iran, Iraq, Syria, were not making it easy, even though there were negotiations with the Syrians.

So, after that, yeah, there was a discussion in the Reagan Administration: *so, should we go in or not?* And we decided to pull out. And that was Ronald Reagan. Ronald Reagan may have been presumed to be a hawk, but either his advisors or his own thinking wasn't prepared to do that… Until the first Iraq War, and then, people start to think differently. And then, we started to get involved again, you know. Victory in four days changed the way people thought about it. We entered into Somalia and failed, and withdrew. The second Iraq War. The Afghan War. All of that. I mean…

STEINBERG: So, before we get to the second Bush Administration, just focusing on the '80s and '90s, what was your view on, first, Reagan pulling out, and then the increased involvement in the Middle East?

BEERS: So, I am certainly a child, so to speak, of really being wary about use of force; and having clear objectives or a clear concept of how you're going to end the war, your "exit strategy" as it was called, I thought that Colin Powell's notion of the use of overwhelming force in order to end those kinds of conflicts as quickly as possible, also a Vietnam veteran, very much influenced by the way the war ended badly, and to look at less than use of force options.

I was also, though, attracted by the hopeful period after the first Iraq War in which it seemed like the United Nations and peacekeeping operations might be a successful form of conflict resolution that could be introduced as a non-opposed intervention to separate parties and give peace a chance, in the old Vietnam lingo. And was hopeful that might have been the case in Somalia, but it didn't turn out to be. And the other interventions that we tried in the Balkans and other places, which were more successful, although the Bosnian intervention, because it was a non-use of force intervention, was initially unsuccessful, and the Serbs massacred a number of Muslim Bosnians, and the Dutch peacekeepers

stood aside because they were not under a use of force mandate. So, that kind of thinking was tried and wasn't always successful and was viewed by some, more likely Republicans than Democrats, as inefficient and a waste of money. "Why should we pay the UN to do that? Why don't we just intervene directly or with a coalition?"

STEINBERG: And so, how do you feel like your Vietnam experiences shaped your views later on, being wary of the use of force, and you mentioned Colin Powell, how did you guys, how you grappled with the fact that you came out of Vietnam with completely different views of how to approach these conflicts later in the 20th Century?

BEERS: I wouldn't say we were different. I would simply say, and I'm not sure he wasn't either, if you look carefully. "Don't start using force until you have exhausted diplomacy. But if you use force, do it in a way in which you can resolve the conflict as quickly as possible." So, he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs at the first Gulf War, and the first plan that Schwarzenegger [sic; General Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr.] brought forward was basically a frontal assault through Kuwait. I don't know if he opposed that plan specifically, but he certainly then presided over the revision to the plan, which led to an envelopment movement and a holding pattern; I mean, attack along the Kuwait front, but only as a holding pattern while the enveloping force comes around in behind the Iraqi forces that are in Kuwait and into at least southern heartland, not all the way to Baghdad, of Iraq. And [Secretary of State] James Baker, as you may recall, spent a lot of capital trying to see whether or not there was a negotiated settlement that might be had at the UN—through the UN, before hostilities began, even though we had already massed the forces in Saudi Arabia in order to go forward. So, that's a long way around to say I'm not so sure that Powell and I necessarily disagreed. He was obviously in a much more senior position than I was in the first Gulf War. So…

STEINBERG: Were you both influenced by your Vietnam experiences?

BEERS: Oh, absolutely. There is no question about it. And when we both get to the second Gulf War, we are really influenced by it.

STEINBERG: In what ways?

BEERS: Well, he was shut out of the deliberations on the second Gulf War, because he wasn't sure that we needed to go to war. Yes, he did finally go to the UN, and he did make the case for why we needed to go into Iraq after an extraordinary amount of cajoling and arm twisting by, if not the President, [National Security Advisor] Condi [Condoleezza] Rice. And he spent a lot of time going over what he was going to say and testing all of the intel propositions that were put in front with him, and then he made George Tenet go to the UN with him and sit behind him, so that the senior most intelligence officer of the U.S. Government was there right behind him. And he discovered he was wrong.

But, you know, when I resigned from the White House before the war actually started, and came back to the State Department and talked to the Deputy Secretary [of State], Rich Armitage, he said, "Well, we're here out of a sense of loyalty." But, you know, Powell left after the first term, and my sense is feels that he didn't do enough, even though we all said, "If you had stood up, you might have changed the course of history." Because after 9/11, we had a global consensus of dealing with the terrorism issue without having to debate the Arab-Israeli issue. We didn't have to debate "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." The UN resolution went through without that debate associated with it. The intervention in Afghanistan was globally supported. People in Tehran demonstrated after 9/11 in support of the United States and the tragedy that occurred in the United States. We had an opportunity to shape the global national security environment at that particular point in time. Communism was dead. Iraq blew that.

STEINBERG: So, before we get to the Iraq War, I want to take you back to 9/11. So, where were you on 9/11 and what was that day like in the aftermath?

BEERS: So, I was with Colin Powell, and we were in Lima, Peru, and we were in a conversation with the President of Peru [Alejandro Toledo] when Powell's aide comes in and said "a plane just hit the World Trade Center." But, if you recall, the initial report was: "a mistake." It wasn't even—I think originally it wasn't even thought to be an airliner. Second plane hits. Same aide comes in, second plane, Powell knows what it is. We all knew what it was. He excused himself from the meeting and we all left. He ordered the

plane to be refueled. It wasn't, because we weren't leaving until late in the day. So, he couldn't take off. And, so he gives his planned speech to the Organization of American States meeting that was happening in Lima, Peru, which was the primary justification for going to Peru, not that it wasn't but we wouldn't have gone to Peru. We were going to then go to Colombia, and I was along on the trip because I was the Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, and Plan Colombia was my program.

And we then got on the plane, and he retreated to his cabin and spent much of that time on the phone either with NSC [National Security Council] meetings—no, there wouldn't have been NSC meetings because the President wouldn't have been in those meetings—with principals committee meetings, which means that it's an NSC meeting without the President; or talking to his Deputy at the State Department. And we're all somberly sitting in the back of the plane.

STEINBERG: Was there any thought of not flying home?

BEERS: No, not at all. It was a copy of Air Force One. The Secretary of State basically has the last Air Force One before the upgrade, or a mere copy because of the communications requirement and the fact that when the Secretary travels internationally, he basically takes the whole administrative infrastructure of the State Department with him in order to be able to communicate, but also to process memos and all kinds of things like that, and then substantive staff for wherever he's going, and in some cases, some press on that plane. We had some press on that plane coming back. So, even though my close friend, Richard [A.] Clarke, [National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and Counterterrorism] had closed American air space during this time, we were the last plane to land on 9/11 in the country.

STEINBERG: And where did you—did you go back to D.C.?

BEERS: We landed in Andrews Air Force Base right outside of D.C. on the Beltway, and by then the traffic jam of people exiting the city was gone. This is 9:00-ish. And I had left my car there and drove into Washington on nearly empty streets into the heart of Washington to my son and daughter-in-law's apartment where my wife, whose birthday it was, was also. And I had seen the photos when I went back to the hotel in Lima, but then just sat through them in the same way that

the Kennedy assassination went down, just sitting in front of the television for hours and hours, even though it's much the same reporting, certainly of showing the pictures of the planes impacting the World Trade Center, and then the collapse of the World Trade Center.

STEINBERG: And the attacks on the Pentagon.

BEERS: And the attacks on the Pentagon, and then the reports about the plane in Pennsylvania.

STEINBERG: So when did you return to work?

BEERS: The next day.

STEINBERG: So, what was the state of the State Department?

BEERS: I don't remember whether it was the next day or the day after that, but at the senior staff meeting, Powell said to us, "I want you to go and talk to your people about their feelings and experiences during that day. I am worried that we may have some people who are wounded psychologically by this, and I want to get—I want you to be in touch so that they know that we care about how they are dealing with this. This isn't business as usual anymore." Which is so typical of somebody in the military to say something like that.

STEINBERG: To check in with your people.

BEERS: Right. PTSD still wasn't quite as prevalent an acronym or concern, even though we obviously had a lot of people come back from Vietnam psychologically scarred.

STEINBERG: And so, when you did go and talk to your people, what was the feeling?

BEERS: So, first of all, just being awestruck and feeling extraordinarily anxious immediately, the frustration of getting stuck in traffic when you didn't know what was going on, the ability in some of the people who worked for me whose windows faced the Pentagon and could see the smoke coming up from the plane hitting the Pentagon. I don't remember anybody actually having observed the plane flying into the Pentagon.

No one was severely distressed that I talked to, but I think it was more the anxiety of: *What does this mean?* I remember, separate from this part, just going down to the [National] Mall, and a kind of Vietnam War candlelight vigil around the Lincoln Memorial. And I remember a sense of having to do something about it, I remember George [W.] Bush in the speech at the National Cathedral trying to calm the country, but still sound firm. And I remember this curious question, I think it was my brother, who had also served in the military, and he said, "Doesn't this make you feel more patriotic?" And I said, "No. I don't know how I could feel more patriotic. It's been my entire life, if you want to call it that." I don't even think of it in that term. But the point I made earlier about I never thought of doing anything else. It's just so deeply embedded in my way of life, my way of thinking. That seems to be a superfluous question.

STEINBERG: And so, knowing that the nation feels this way, was there a big call to action or urge to respond within the State Department?

BEERS: Oh, yeah. And that's why I say, what was remarkable about that period of time: the awfulness of the act; even though, let's be candid, in the Second World War, strategic bombing killed a lot of innocent people, and Hiroshima and Nagasaki are emblematic of how many innocents died in order to try to end that war. The comparable situation was Pearl Harbor, which was a—while it was a (quote) "sneak attack," it was still a military to military engagement. And this was not that, and flew out of this terrorism notion and a group of people who had already bombed the embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, killing a number of innocent people—put the U.S. Cole attack aside, because that was a military vessel—but other kinds of acts of that nature. To do something about it and not have it be like the cruise missile attacks on Bin Laden's camps in Afghanistan, but to go in and take away their ability to conduct any future attacks, I think was a view resonant both in the State Department and the country at large. I think President Bush had the full support of the country to move in that direction, and the support of the UN. NATO for the first time invoked its article for use of force, and urged all NATO powers to support the effort in Afghanistan. So, it was an opportunity to do something against the threat that had manifested itself not just on 9/11, but most dramatically on 9/11. But we're going through

immediately, and it's becoming public immediately about the "and then Iraq" discussion.

STEINBERG: So, what were those discussions like? Were you part of any of them?

BEERS: No, I wasn't. I was totally drawn into *well, I'm still at the State Department doing the police training law enforcement support for the post-conflict situation in Afghanistan*. We had in the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Bureau become the principal police trainers for U.S. participation in post-conflict situations. No, but, as I said earlier, Dick Clarke is my very good friend, and we had numerous discussions all during this period and, you know, it started leaking into the press that those very early discussions were "and Saddam [Hussein] was probably behind this" or "Saddam was behind this," or whatever. And so you'd get people like [Vice-President] Cheney and [Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul D.] Wolfowitz who see this as: "They were involved, and if we do something about Iraq, we'll finish the first Gulf War which we didn't finish, and if we take away one of the irreconcilable countries who oppose Israel, maybe we will be able to get some movement with an isolated Syria, for example, who will be more willing to come to the peace table with Israel." So, "the road to Jerusalem leads through Baghdad" sentiment that was occurring in the country at this particular time.

STEINBERG: And then, so you became the Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Combating Terrorism, yes? Do I have that right?

BEERS: You do.

STEINBERG: So, what was that role like? I mean, 2002, right after 9/11, and the country's turn with the creation of the Department of Homeland Security to combating terrorism and the fear of national security?

BEERS: So, it was basically back to the NSC for my, that would be my third time there. What we were trying to do was coordinate our global effort to work with a number of countries where there were Al Qaeda or Al Qaeda-sympathetic organizations. Spent a lot of time looking at Southeast Asia again: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the groups that were there that were both sympathetic, if not

affiliates of Al Qaeda, and were also reinforced by those members of those communities who had been in Afghanistan who were able to get out and go home in order to continue that struggle. We looked at Africa, as well, and Saudia Arabia and Yemen, trying to follow the money, trying to look at programs that would help those countries be in a better position to resist terrorism within their own countries. That was basically what the mission was.

Oh, we also drafted the first counterterrorism strategy while I was there. We looked at psychological operations or counter messaging kinds of activities, all trying to coordinate the different departments and agencies that were involved in this. This was also the, as you correctly point out, the time in which the Department of Homeland Security was created, and the guy who I worked for whose title was Deputy Assistant to the President for Combating Terrorism was [inaudible] with the Homeland Security Office, as well, so he worked for both Condi Rice and for Tom Ridge [Assistant to the President for Homeland Security, and later the first U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security] at the same time, and we interacted with Ridge's staff a great deal.

One of the things that we looked at was, "What can we do with commercial airliners?" Because this was a time in which somebody took a shot at an El Al [Israel Airlines] plane coming out of Kenya going back to Israel. Missed, but the question was, "So what if terrorists get hold of shoulder fired anti-aircraft missiles? What happens to the global aviation industry if a plane is hit and taken down by that particular method?" So we did some R&D research to try to figure out if there was a solution, although ultimately came to the view that the anti-aircraft countermeasure suites that were on military aircraft were too difficult to maintain on regular flying aircraft, and the aviation industry wanted the government to pay for it, and it was a hugely expensive effort, so it kind of just dribbled off into oblivion as a result of that.

This was the period in which the effort to finally settle the bureaucratic rivalry between CIA's counterterrorism center and the FBI's counterterrorism center and the creation of a unified organization, which ultimately became the national counterterrorism center, but was originally called TTIC, which stands for Terrorist Threat [Information] Center. But it was created by Executive Order, rather than by Congressional fiat, and it was a direct effort to avoid

transferring that terrorism function to the new Department of Homeland Security, out of concern that setting up a new organization in which you threw a whole bunch of different bureaucratic entities into a new structure would be too dysfunctional to have the principal intelligence organization for dealing with terrorism within it while it got its feet on the ground. So, the independent entity was created by agreement between the Attorney General, the FBI Director, and the head of CIA. So, those were all the issues we worked on.

But, all during this time, the march toward Iraq is rising to the surface, and we're seeing some of the people who could try to deal with Afghanistan more effectively being withdrawn to get ready for the invasion of Iraq. And, so I'm arriving in August of 2002 when all this is going on. In November or early December, we get tasked to organize a NSC meeting to make sure that we are not taking our eye off the ball on the terrorism front while we invade Iraq.

STEINBERG: And is this domestic or international terrorism?

BEERS: International terrorism. In other words, are we creating the proverbial "perfect storm" by doing this and neglecting that? So, John [A.] Gordon [Deputy National Security Advisor for Combating Terrorism] and I organized the meeting, and we want a discussion of: "Will entry into Iraq provide Al Qaeda with a narrative that will allow them to make Al Qaeda stronger?" Because remember Bin Laden predicted that the West wanted the oil, and taking over Iraq would feed that narrative. So, it was on the agenda, and the first person to speak to the subject was Paul Wolfowitz, who said, "Mr. President, I think there's a serious issue here and I think we're gonna have to figure out how to deal with it." So, put his other views aside, this is a guy who was Ambassador to Indonesia and he actually had some experience with Muslim extremism, even though it was a much more benign—or less deadly issue when he was Ambassador to Indonesia. George Tenet spoke next. Same thing. Condi Rice spoke next and started to say the same thing, and the President stopped her and said, "Listen, our victory in Iraq will take care of that problem. You don't have to worry about it."

STEINBERG: So, did Bush have blinders during this time and just didn't want to listen to the people in his Administration?

BEERS: Powell's not even speaking to this subject. Powell is in this meeting. He's not talking, or he didn't get a chance to talk. The President, I think, had been mesmerized by the "shock and awe" phrase that was current at that time, that U.S. military power was so overwhelming that the war would be over immediately, and our military predominance would be so manifest that countries who had terrorism problems would do the necessary work within their own countries, never mind how they might have chosen to do it, to suppress any terrorist actions. [Secretary of Defense Donald H.] Rumsfeld certainly bought into the "shock and awe," although he did not want to stay in Iraq, and would have left after Baghdad fell as quickly as possible if he'd have had his way. He was not a neocon.

And so, having been troubled by [Senator Clarence] Saxby Chambliss in his Senate race with [Joseph M.] "Max" Cleland, calling Max Cleland unpatriotic because he was concerned about unionizing—because Cleland wanted certain parts of the Pentagon that were being reorganized into what became the National Geospatial Agency, that he was in favor of unionizing them, and Chambliss was saying, "You can't unionize people who work for the Pentagon." I certainly felt, *Yeah, how can anybody call Max Cleland unpatriotic, when he lost most of his limbs in Vietnam?* This was the straw that broke the camel's back for me, and I knew I was going to leave the Administration.

STEINBERG: So, how did that process fold out, of leaving?

BEERS: So, in January, John Gordon, the guy I was working for, and I told Condi Rice that we wanted to leave. She said, "Will you stay until after the invasion, so that the potential press play for dissent doesn't interfere with launching the invasion?" And we both said "yes", but that was more because we thought it was going to happen right away, at least from my perspective. So we get up to the 48 hours before the mark, and I just said, "I can't stay." I said I was resigning for personal reasons, because I didn't want to become a story in advance of Americans ordered by the President to put their lives at risk. I didn't want to be part of a story that would create a sense of ambivalence. The war was going to happen. I wasn't going to stop it. But I was senior enough in the White House that it would have been a story. So, when I put it out it was for personal reasons, Karen DeYoung from the *Washington Post* called me and said, "So tell me what's

really going on?" and I said, "Karen, I'm resigning for personal reasons. End of statement." I told her later that I lied to her, and I told her why.

STEINBERG: So was it difficult for you in that moment to lie about that, about why you were resigning?

BEERS: So, what I told my staff was, "I am leaving because I don't support the war, and I can't ask you to do more for the President than I am prepared to do at this point in time. It's not fair to you, and frankly it's not fair to the President not to have somebody who fully supports him at the time of a difficult decision for him." So, that's definitely a reflection of where this process all started when I went to Vietnam and came home.

STEINBERG: So, in your comments, or feelings against the Iraq War, were you thinking about your experiences in Vietnam? In what ways?

BEERS: That we were about to embark on a war that was unjustified, even more than perhaps how we thought about the Vietnam War at the time we entered into the conflict, although the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution turns out to have been a little hyperbole over what actually happened in the Gulf of Tonkin. And I read the National Intelligence Estimate, and I knew, because it was there, that the terrorism connection justification was bogus. It wasn't there. And all three of the elements that were in there were clearly sufficiently ambiguous, and were all subsequently proved to be false. There was no biological warfare program. The person who gave that information was, to put it mildly, suffered from enhanced interrogation on the part of the Egyptians, who locked him in a box. The notion that [Abu Musab] al-Zarqawi, who had been wounded in Afghanistan, was being taken care of in Iraq at Saddam's personal request, when the Baghdad regime didn't even know he was in Iraq. And the notion that this group of Al Qaeda affiliates on the border with Iran was an Al Qaeda terrorist camp that was experimenting in chemical and biological weapons; the source of the report was the Iranians who were worried that they were on their own border and might be a threat to them. It is true that Baghdad sent a minder out to check in on them occasionally, but they weren't being guided or anything. So, I knew that wasn't true. And the WMD, I didn't frankly have an opinion about, but if they're not related to Al Qaeda, I didn't

feel there was a justification for calling it an extension of the global war on terrorism. So, that was enough for me.

STEINBERG: Yeah. And so, do you feel like if we had had stronger intelligence, that would have outweighed the post-911 sentiments in America? Or there was such a feeling, such an anti-terrorism feeling that it would have gone anyway?

BEERS: Oh, I absolutely feel if the American public had been allowed—let me see, how would I put this? We had a debate. The points were made. The Administration from the bully pulpit that the President of the United States has, simply overwhelmed and denigrated the opposition. And I actually don't remember what the pro/anti-war polling said back at that time. I don't remember how close it was, but there were certainly—most Democrats were opposed to another war. I certainly didn't know how badly the war was going to go. That's not why I resigned. I just felt it was an unjustified war. But there were enough other people who also predicted that it would create an insurgency. So I left, and joined John Kerry's campaign—

STEINBERG: Yes! [laughter]

BEERS: —for regime change in Washington.

STEINBERG: So, what was that transition like going from being in the White House, advisor to the President, to working on a campaign and trying to win an election?

BEERS: Well, first of all, you had to live through the campaign from, okay, there's Joe Lieberman over here, and there's "who is [Governor] Howard [B.] Dean [III]?" This is in the spring of '03. And [Senator] John [F.] Kerry, and who was the guy from Missouri who was the minority leader in the House – I can't think of his name [Representative Dick Gephardt]. Anyway, a lot of serious candidates. I thought John Kerry because of his anti-war position with respect to Vietnam, a returning war veteran, a decorated returning war veteran, was an extraordinarily strong candidate who had also spent much of his time in the Senate on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and had a lot of experience in this area, was the strongest candidate. And I had a connection with him because one of my deputies when I was the Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics [and Law

Enforcement Affairs] had been one of his staffers before he came to work in the government.

I put out feelers and they hired me for free [laughter] at no pay, and a pension, because in resigning I could also—I was old enough to retire with enough years in service. So, I went to work for the campaign about six weeks after I retired. But I'd been talking to them almost immediately. And I talked to a bunch of people who had worked on campaigns in national security before, and two things that I most remember is, "You will have very few opportunities to talk about national security. Nobody talks about national security and Democrats only talk about domestic politics." And these are by national security people who had worked on the Clinton campaign; [National Security Advisor Samuel R.] Sandy Berger, in particular. And the second thing is, "You have a lot of people who will want to become your friends in hopes of positions in a Kerry Administration, and they will want to offer advice, and you will want to be as open and receptive to them as possible, because you will want them to be supportive of the campaign, and, in fact, some of them may become officials in a Kerry Administration. But there will be more of them than there will be possible places for them to serve. So, one thing you are doing is creating the illusion of inclusion."

STEINBERG: That's a good phrase. [laughter]

BEERS: Isn't it? [laughter] I don't know if it was evident before, but it is. Everybody knows that phrase who works on campaigns on the campaign staff with how you deal with people who are outside the campaign who want to help or offer advice. So, I mean, in the current campaign, for example, there are multiple working groups, and everybody says they're getting too large, and too large is there are 35 people on your working group.[laughter] And that's for a discreet issue.

STEINBERG: So, but going back to the first piece of advice you got, did—I don't remember the 2004 campaign vividly, but you did get to talk about national security because it was in the middle of Iraq.

BEERS: Because it was the Iraq War. And he gave more speeches. In one of them he had two big stumbles. One, one of his staffers inserted that he was going to use Jim Baker to deal with the Arab-Israeli issue, along with Jimmy Carter and

some others. And Democrats writ large, and Jewish Democrats writ small, were livid. Large because he was part of the campaign post-2000 election that fought the ballot issue in Florida, and with the American Jewish Community, because he was the one who said after the first Gulf War to the Israeli Government, “You’ve got my phone number. Call me.” Like “I’m not gonna deal with you guys. If you want some help, just call.” So, Kerry, who was already being accused as a flip flopper by then, was reluctant to take that out of his speech because his press secretary had leaked key ideas in the speech the night before. And we sat down in the room before he went downstairs to give the speech and debated whether or not we should take it out or not, and he chose not to, mostly on the advice of his press secretary.

STEINBERG: What was the other big stumble?

BEERS: The other one was the big flip-flop, which was, “If you knew then what you know now, would you have voted for the Iraq War?” And Bush posed that question: “Even if I had known then what I know now, I would still have supported the war, if we knew then that there were no weapons of mass destruction.” And Kerry, at the advice of my deputy at the time who was riding with him on the plane, said, “No. Even if I had known that, I would still have voted for the Iraq War.” So that was—and my deputy had been a press spokesman for Madeleine Albright, so he was a communicator. So, the Democratic rank and file started making noise, and he finally did change his position, so he did flip-flop, [laughter] in New York City, and said, “On reconsideration, if I…” But, it was a difficult decision for him. We sat up with the entire senior staff of the campaign and Joe Biden on the telephone, and he just had a difficult time making that decision, although everybody, everybody who was advising him said he shouldn’t. Oh, and then there’s the Swift Boat issue. Do you remember that?

STEINBERG: Well, so he was on swift boats in Vietnam.

BEERS: He was on swift boats in Vietnam. And he was being charged with inflating his resume, and even writing his own Silver Star nomination. And they had gathered a bunch of swift boat comrades who were prepared to be critical of him, and they argued that the radio communication in which his nomination was sent to a higher command—and he did not write it—but at the bottom of it it said, “J.K.” initials, and they

pointed to that being the fact that he had written it, even though those initials are the initials of the radio operator. And if you were in Vietnam, you knew that, so that you knew who sent the communication. But, it was the radio operator, not… Anyway, so, the communicators in the campaign said, "It's not on the major networks yet. It's only on cable news, so we're not gonna comment on it." I lost that battle, too.

STEINBERG: So you seem to have lost a few battles in this campaign with Kerry, so how was—like what was your relationship with him and how did you struggle with that, having just lost the major battle in the Bush Administration and leaving, and then jumping to the Kerry campaign?

BEERS: I didn't know how significant they were at the time. I did not particularly have a close relationship with him. I did not know him before the campaign. I met him during the campaign. I was on every trip that he took when he was going to make a major foreign policy speech, and some other… And I went with him to debate camp for both the foreign policy debate and the debate which could be both foreign policy and domestic policy. So I know him, but we did not remain close after the election. He went off in his direction and was still thinking seriously about running again.

And I wanted to create a non-profit that tried to help Democrats think about messaging that didn't always leave them looking like they were weak on national security, because the polling, generic polling, Democrats and Republicans: "Who's stronger on national security?" always came out favoring Republicans, and I felt that part of that was how you talk, rather than what you end up doing, because if you look at the national security establishments in the Democratic Party, I won't say they are more hawkish, but they are quite centrist in terms of the way national security policy is formulated and executed.

STEINBERG: So, did you form the non-profit?

BEERS: Yeah. It's called the National Security Network. That's what it ultimately became. And we played a, I like to think pretty important part in the '08 campaign. We trained—that's not the right word—we advised a number of candidates in both '06 and '08, focusing primarily on the Senate. Those are all or almost all new candidates, because if a person was running for re-election, that person's staff felt they didn't

need any help. Or, they didn't want any intrusion. Take your pick. So, you know, [Senator Robert P.] Casey [Jr.], [Senator Amy J.] Klobuchar, [Former Senator Claire C.] McCaskill, [Senator Tom S.] Udall.

STEINBERG: So there was a strong or favorable reception to this new type of rhetoric within the party?

BEERS: Right, right.

STEINBERG: And do you feel like the Democrats have kind of adopted that and are still talking that way?

BEERS: Yes and no. Yes and no. I mean, I think there's still particularly among party loyalists, not candidates, this strong feeling that we spend more on defense than we should and less on domestic issues than we should. So, candidates are still going to hear that from the activist wing of the Democratic Party, and they're going to have to be responsive, because they want those activists to be out there activating. But, I do think that particularly on the Iraq War language, that the people we talked to ended up using, except with one notable location with one notable person who ran for a House seat, they really took the notion that even if you are advocating ending the Iraq War, you have to talk about it being done in a deliberate fashion, because doing it quickly both creates risks for actually doing it to the people who are doing it, as well as leaving you open to the charge that you're just going to let Iraq collapse, even though it did. But it took several years, just like Vietnam.

STEINBERG: Well, so, we still have I feel like a lot to go through with your time in the Obama Administration, and Homeland Security. I need to go to class, so I'm just going to pause this. (Pause)

So, we are back for a second session. This is Leigh Steinberg with Rand Beers in Rauner [Special Collections] Library, November 2, 2016. Okay, so when we left off, you were the security advisor for the Kerry campaign, and he lost the election in 2004. So, where did you go after that?

BEERS: So, I basically tried to form a non-profit called the National Security Network to get progressives—we were a non-profit, so I couldn't say Democrats—to talk more sensibly about national security issues, instead of the perception by many, particularly in the polling, about who was better on national

security, that Democrats were interested in doing less on national security or do more on domestic programs. And it wasn't so much to convince the national security establishment on the Democratic side of the aisle as it was to convince people who were running for office, who were often in appropriate responsiveness to their constituents.

The activist wing of the Democratic Party is much more interested in what candidates say about domestic programs than national security programs. They are in many ways in 2004 and, but going back a number of years, part of the anti-war generation from the Vietnam War. So, I thought it was important, particularly because Kerry was representative of a strong national security candidate, not because he was anti-war, but because he had participated in national security debates for his entire term in the Congress after coming back from the war, and was a very centrist kind of a national security advocate. So, it seemed to me that trying to help candidates, especially new candidates, talk effectively in this area instead of giving opposition Republicans the opportunity to be highly critical of their inability to talk forcefully about national security issues.

STEINBERG: So do you think that as the Iraq War started to go negatively for the Bush Administration that Democrats kind of gained their footing talking about national security?

BEERS: They did, but you had to be careful about that, because I think when you had quite prominent and more hawkish members of the Democratic Party coming over to taking strong positions about the Iraq War, it became easier for other members of the party to do that. But then it became a question of, "So you're opposed to the war. What do you want to do? And if you want to get out, how are you going to get out? What ought to be the strategy for disengaging, or what are the other alternatives?" And I think many in the party began to talk in that way, but there were still individuals who were running for office who felt so strongly about the war that they wanted an immediate withdrawal instead of a deliberate withdrawal. One of the things I tried to tell people was, "Retreat is the most difficult military operation that one can run. It is much easier to go forward than backward." And some people understood that; others were so strong about withdrawing that they continued to advocate that. I mean, I understand the strength of their views, but it's a difficult

position to be if you want to protect yourself from being labeled weak or soft. And they're even "it's okay."

STEINBERG: Yeah. So, looking now at 2008, turning point, a Democrat in the White House, how did you end up at the Department of Homeland Security?

BEERS: So, this was in the era before the major campaigns were basically told by Congress that they had to organize a transition process before the election. In prior times it had been done secretly, so that the candidates weren't presuming to be elected, but doing the appropriate planning. This is a result of the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, but turned into actual legislation which created offices in Washington for transition teams to begin to hire people and set up offices. Back then in '08, in August I got a call saying would I be interested in working on the transition team for the Department of Homeland Security and the intelligence community? They were to be run as a joint project. And I said "sure," and then, within a week I was asked if I would like to run it, because the person that they had originally selected to run it because he actually had served for most of his career in the intelligence community, but had also been somebody who worked for [Former Secretary of United States Homeland Security] Tom [J.] Ridge on organizing the Department of Homeland Security and worked on the House Homeland committee.

I had some work in the intelligence community while I was at the White House, and I had co-authored, or co-edited a book on Homeland Security. But I had been briefly in the Administration at the beginning just at the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. So, in secret about eight of us set off to write transition papers, and then I was told to pick the people who would be on the transition teams for both of these transition teams, and then the week before the election, I think on Friday, I was told that I would run the intelligence community transition team, and then on Saturday I was told no, I would run the Homeland Security transition team. And that's how I ended up…

STEINBERG: Did you have a preference as to which one?

BEERS: No, I really didn't. But I did feel that there were certainly people who knew more about the intelligence community than I did who, because obviously the Democratic Party had

a bench with respect to the intelligence community from the Clinton Administration and before, but no bench in the Democratic Party other than Congressional staffers who never served in a Department of Homeland Security. So I guess I had about as much experience on paper as others who might have been thought of to run such and such a team. My co-leader was a former Republican IG from the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security. The other people were predominantly Hill staffers

But, I mean, I had to figure out what were the skill sets that we needed to put that kind of a team together, knew enough about the organization to know what kinds of things to ask for: somebody from Intelligence, somebody who knew the budget, somebody who was from law enforcement, somebody who had some knowledge of the various what are called components of Homeland Security, like the Coast Guard, TSA, Customs and Border Protection, ICE, Secret Service. Those are the kind of largest parts of Homeland Security. The headquarters is quite small compared to all of the components which—you know, the big ones are 50,000 people. The Department's the third largest in the federal government, almost 250,000 people, with the VA and the Defense Department being the only two that are larger.

So, there was a lot of work to be done, and nobody quite knew from the Department of Homeland Security how to do a transition, because they had never done a transition before. And then they went out and had the staff write these multitudinous briefing books, all tabbed nicely with slick paper and everything else. And, I mean, they were well in profession, but it was probably way over the top and not what the Homeland Security Department now, having gone through a transition, is preparing, because I was asked to come in and critique what they were doing for whoever won the election. So, you know, we went in and we started work.

After about three weeks, [Former Governor] Janet [A.] Napolitano was announced as the nominee for being Secretary. She had a huge amount of experience as a border state governor about immigration and about state and local issues. She had also been one of the Justice Department prosecutors who worked on the Oklahoma City bombing trial, a different kind of trial, but a terrorism trial in the United States. But by her own admission, she had little or no knowledge of national security issues writ large which

Homeland Security was going to be involved in. And she knew about terrorism from the Arizona end, and her complaint was, “You guys in Washington never give us enough information to actually be able to do anything if you really want us to do something.” It was an important issue that needed to be rectified, but it was not what working on national security in Washington, D.C. really focused on, so… Because I had had so much experience in this issue and was reasonably current, I was able to help her learn her way around that part of Washington. The other thing was her Justice Department time in Washington was very distant from the level that she came back at, and didn’t entirely understand bureaucratic politics in Washington, so I was able to help her a little bit on that, as well.

STEINBERG: So, what was your role in the Homeland Security Department once the Administration started?

BEERS: So, she asked me if I would be the Assistant Secretary for Policy, and I really wasn’t interested in that. I really wanted to work on infrastructure protection and cyber. So, I said, “Could I have the job which is called National Protection and Programs Director?” which it’s about physical and cyber infrastructure protection; that’s what it’s about. It’s a totally obscure title [laughter] for what it actually involved. But, I also knew that she was going to have as her first confirmation after herself—and she was confirmed before the inauguration, which was what the 9/11 Commission recommended for all of the national security cabinet positions—that she was going to first of all have to get a Deputy Secretary confirmed.

And then she asked me if I would be the Acting Deputy Secretary until the Deputy Secretary was confirmed. But, the point that I made to her, knowing that there was going to be a delay before my name could even be put in nomination, and knowing that when your name is put in nomination, you have to recuse yourself from anything having to do with the office to which you’ve been nominated, unless you are acting in the capacity of that because you were in the line of succession to move up. You already had to have been in the organization. So I said, “Look, what I think makes the most sense for our relationship is, you just hire me as a political appointee as your special advisor, and I will be able to work in the Department and help you find your way through Washington until we get to the point that my nomination

goes forward, and even then, I can continue to work on things as long as they don't have anything to do with the position for which I've been nominated." And that certainly proved to be more true than I realized, because the role that she asked me to pick up was to be the senior counterterrorism official in the Department, which eventually morphed into something called the CT Coordinator.

So, I really went to work on the 21st of January, and served as the Acting Deputy Secretary from early February until May when the Deputy Jane Holl Lute was confirmed and became the Deputy. And then I continued to work as a CT senior official until I was—well, not until I was confirmed; I did that the entire time she was the Secretary. But then I was also confirmed to run the cyber and physical infrastructure protection office.

STEINBERG: So, how had the world and the world of terrorism changed since 9/11? How did we get to where we were in 2008 to what you were working on in the counterterrorism and cybersecurity worlds?

BEERS: So, we were obviously caught by surprise in a truly tragic way on 9/11, and what happened after that was the creation of a whole new apparatus of security activities both within the United States and overseas. So, when I left in 2003, TSA had been created, but it was a brand new organization finding its way around. Our borders were, I won't say porous, although the Southwest border was extraordinarily easy to cross back then. But, through the official ports of entry, we didn't have a lot of coordination about: here's CIA or the intelligence community over here saying, "This person is a threat," and maybe having some biometrics on that person. And over here, the people who administered the immigration desk when you step up to the border and show your passport or your visa in order to enter the United States. And we clearly didn't have anything that forced the passenger manifests which were required to be filed as the plane was taking off connected with the intelligence community which said, "That person on that list is somebody we need to keep track of," and in some cases actually prevent from getting on airplanes.

So there was a whole lot more information connected, and there was a whole lot more information that was coordinated, which is not in any way to say that coordination was perfect.

The underwear bomber in 2009 over Detroit was a first rate example of that. The CIA had gotten information from his father, but through a combination of slowness and somebody not being at their desk when the report finally got to CIA Headquarters, it never crossed the transom to somebody who could take that piece of information and do anything with it. I mean, his father basically said, "I'm pretty sure my son has been drawn into Al Qaeda, and he went from London to Abu Dhabi to Yemen, and was in school there.

So, that became another thing, another area that we had to work on, just like the mistakes that happened with tracking the elder of the two Boston Marathon bombers who there was a lot of information about, but wasn't, either wasn't followed up on or wasn't coordinated adequately. But, the short point I'm making is there was a huge additional amount of information, and there were other opportunities to use that information that became really the heart of a lot of what I ended up working on at the Department of Homeland Security, because border security is a primary mission for the Department, whether you call it immigration or counterterrorism. So, there was a whole lot of effort in those days to make sure we were doing what we were doing and to learn from the mistakes that, where we saw problems, that we could fix them.

STEINBERG: And what changes did you see within the five years moving from the Bush to the Obama Administration? Did Obama make changes directly that impacted the Department when his new administration came in?

BEERS: Actually, not so much that affected the Department, but that affected the broader national security apparatus, not that the Bush Administration didn't try, but to try to reduce and get rid of the number of prisoners that were at Guantanamo Bay, to make clear that the guidance was that whatever you called it, torture or enhanced interrogation, were no longer policy options for people who were involved in that kind of effort. There was this effort, but it would have happened in any administration, to take each of the intelligence or coordination failures and make sure that you could fix them.

During the early days of his presidency, we would have weekly or biweekly meetings which would talk about terrorism issues, which were as much a learning process for

the President as they were an opportunity to bring the community together and talk about what people were doing in different parts of the federal government. You know, after about, and I couldn't tell you how long it went on in that format, but it certainly wasn't longer than a year and it may not have been longer than six months, it changed to the other half of what it was for, which was to bring people together to share the kinds of activities that they were working on.

And, you know, they were opportunities for the President to give guidance, but he would never speak in these meetings until last, in order for everybody else to put whatever they wanted to put on the table; but certainly from my perspective to follow one I think of the prime rules of leadership is, you want people who work for you to share with you, you got to listen before you talk, because when you talk, that means you will shape what they will say, to some degree. Not with everybody, but with most people, because the leader has spoken, has given guidance.

There was one publicly reported incident which was one of the very few times that I have seen the President really irritated, and it had to do with what happened after the failed underwear bomber plot in Detroit, when we had a meeting. And it was known that the Justice Department had read the individual his Miranda rights after a very cursory period of asking him about any other terrorist plots that he might have known about. It is a legal exception to the Miranda rule if there is a danger, if the person may know of an imminent attack, to try to find out if that is the case. And what he did have knowledge of was the training factory that he went to in Yemen. And what irritated the President was, he wasn't sure that the Justice Department hadn't fully exploited the information that the individual might have before—

STEINBERG: Before reading his rights.

BEERS: Before reading him his Miranda rights. And he was basically chewing out Eric Holder in public—not in public, but I can tell you this story because it was reported later on in one of the books about Holder's relationship with the Administration, not that it in the long term suffered. They were close. They had differences. I mean, the President was irritated with the way that Holder rolled out the effort to bring the Guantanamo detainees that were unable to be placed in foreign countries

in the United States for trial and incarceration, because it ended up creating enough of a firestorm that the opposition in the United States could push back and Congress could create legislation that prevented that from actually happening. But, of course, people make mistakes.

STEINBERG: So, walk me through the chain of events that led you to become the Acting Secretary of the Department.

BEERS: So, after the 2012 election, and everybody who were serving in senior level positions, as tradition does, were asked before the election, more than six months before the election, "If you're going to leave, leave now. Don't leave in the last six months before the election. What we don't want is to have to break in somebody new in that period, and have a mistake made for lack of knowledge or experience in a time in which we may be dealing with a transition." It wasn't like, okay, "Obama's gonna win a second term." You still have to plan for the alternative. And, but you also, because the President is running for re-election, not want him to suffer from a mistake that might have been avoided if you had left early.

So then, after the election, Napolitano says, "Well, what do you want to do?" And I said, "Well, you know, I'd like to be the Deputy Secretary, if the Deputy Secretary is going to leave. And other than that, I don't really know. And I'm not sure I want to stay much longer, because I promised the person who I had hired to be my deputy that I would be leaving soon, I would be leaving that job soon, and that she would be my successor. So, you know, put that aside. I want you, if you are in agreement, to put her forward as my replacement."

So that went forward, and then Napolitano said, "Indications are that the Deputy is leaving." And she did finally leave in May, but the White House chose somebody else to be the Deputy, although, even though Napolitano had recommended me. And, but as fate would have it, he ran into a confirmation problem, because he had accepted a visit from Terry McAuliffe, who was at that point not the Governor of Virginia—it may have been after he failed to win the nomination for the prior election, which would have been a 2009 election because the Virginia governorship's a year off. So, I'm sure he had run, and not even won the primary, and he was looking to get some high net worth individuals to

come to the United States under a special visa that if you bring $500,000 with you and invest it in the United States, you get a visa, assuming you pass all of the vetting that you're not a terrorist or a crook or things like that.

And, so he had a meeting with this guy, Alejandro [N.] Mayorkas. And Alejandro is such a straight-laced guy, I have no sense in any way that all he did was accept a meeting with McAuliffe to hear his case out, and said, "Thank you very much. We'll look into it," because that was his MO. Because I went to him when friends would ask me, and I'd say, "Ale, I'm not asking you to change the case. I just want to know, can you give me a sense of how long the review is gonna take before somebody has an answer?" And sometimes he would say, "I can't even tell at this point" or "call somebody else." And sometimes he would say, "Well, I think it's gonna be in the next several months," and he can't be sure of which way it's going to go. But he was very, very cautious, so I don't think he did anything.

But, the Hill decided to hold him hostage, and so he went up for a nomination. And I was third in the line in the Department, so I became the Acting Deputy Secretary when the incumbent left, by virtue of the line of succession within the Department. And then, he is not confirmed and not confirmed and not confirmed. And, about the same time his name went forward, Napolitano accepted the job as the President of the University of California university system, so it's the head of all of the UCLA and Berkeley and UC-Santa Barbara, and all of the institutions. She had told me that she had been asked if she wanted to be a candidate earlier than that, and she said, "I don't think I have much of a chance, because at an earlier point in my life, I was asked if I wanted to be a president of the University of Arizona, and I was not chosen because I have no education background. I'm a politician, and a lawyer." She'd been the state Attorney General. So I think she was genuinely surprised when she told me. So she said to me, "So you're the Acting Deputy now. You are also the third in line to be the Secretary Acting if the Secretary position is vacant, and at this point, there's no saying whether Mayorkas will be confirmed or not." And so she left in September, and I moved up to be the Acting Secretary. Had Mayorkas been confirmed, he would have been the Acting Secretary. And that went on from September to December.

And he was only confirmed because Senator [Harry M.] Reid invoked the (quote) “nuclear option” for confirmations except for the Supreme Court, which meant that it only took a majority vote. It did not require cloture in order to have that. So, he was confirmed. There was a nominee for Secretary by that point in time. He was confirmed as the Deputy Secretary a day before Jeh [C.] Johnson was confirmed. Johnson was not a controversial figure, and he would have been confirmed under any circumstance. So, I was no longer the Acting Secretary or the Acting Deputy Secretary, which I wasn’t at the time. You can’t hold both positions at the same time.

So, I had been offered a job at the White House that summer before it was clear that I was going to have all of this Acting-ness, and I went—after the Christmas holidays, I went over to the White House to be the Deputy Homeland Security Advisor. So, that’s how I got to be the Acting Secretary, purely a result of Congressional dysfunctionality. Well, now you can say that there—I won’t say that they were legitimate reasons not to confirm Mayorkas, but there was definitely a degree of partisanship involved in that, because it had more to do with the fact that he talked to McAuliffe as McAuliffe, and he was the person who was on the other side of the conversation.

STEINBERG: So, during those four months, what was that experience like? How did your role in the Department change as you ascended?

BEERS: So, one of the great joys that I had was I got to be the head of the Department during the shutdown [laughter] of 2013 when Congress couldn’t pull a budget together, or a continuing resolution. That’s probably the most noteworthy event that came about during that. But, I certainly was of the view that, because it took so long to even get a nominee for the Secretary’s position—she left in September; they started looking in June. Several people turned the job down, and they didn’t finally settle on Jeh Johnson until, I want to say October, and it may have been late October. So, it was also about 45 days after she had left the position. And, getting ready for confirmation, and then going to the hearing, and then getting a vote by the full Senate is not generally an expeditious process, with the exception really of the 9/11 Commission recommendation to confirm the entire national

security cabinet between Congress' return in early January and the 20th of January, so that they were all fully confirmed.

STEINBERG: So, during the shutdown, did that impact any of the programs that the Homeland Security Department was running?

BEERS: Yeah, but I would say the result was minimal, with the possible exception of things like security clearances being processed so that people could be hired. I mean, the Government doesn't close down completely. Operational activities, particularly national security operational activities, go on, and the Department is mostly that. So, Customs and Border Protection has to continue to man the borders; TSA has to continue to do aviation security; the Coast Guard has to continue to protect the ports of the United States; Secret Service, of course, has to continue to protect the President; and ICE has to pursue criminal cases within the United States. So, some of the administrative people that supported the field operations didn't come to work, but I would say, you know, along with the major national security agencies, I wouldn't even venture that they were less than 50% manned. Maybe the logistics part, things like that. But, heavily operational agencies still brought their people to work, and they were still expected to be paid, even though there was no money.

STEINBERG: So, overall was it a positive experience being—

BEERS: Oh, yeah, it was really fun. I mean, fun is not the right word. It was really an interesting and challenging position. However, one of the things that was a little frustrating, and in this case I suffered from too much information, I knew what was going on down below because I had been down below, and sitting in the office and wanting to preserve the notion that there's a policy process that percolates things up as opposed to going down and say *Where the heck is that?* unless it was a time urgent issue, was a frustrating situation to be in, because I had worked for a number of micromanagers in my job and I knew what it felt like to have a micromanager for a boss [laughter] and didn't want people to do that.

I also wanted to be careful to not change direction too much, because I wasn't going to be there forever. And the person who was going to succeed me, Jeh Johnson, was probably

going to have some things that he wanted to do that would be changes, and this back and forth. I mean, I did the same thing when I was the Acting Deputy. There were some things that I let go on because I didn't want to change them and then have my successor—this was when I was Acting Deputy the first time, before Jane Holl Lute became confirmed as the Deputy Secretary, because I didn't know what she would want to do in terms of changing those procedures.

We had a huge morning staff meeting which was pretty much a waste of time, particularly because some people—because the previous Deputy wanted everybody who could possibly be there in person to be there in person, and DHS is all over the district and northern Virginia and suburban Maryland. So, getting from places to the headquarters meant that some of those individuals would sit in cars coming and going. That took a half an hour to get there. And, you know, I would have done away with it. And she did as soon as she started, because I told her, "This is something you may want to look at. I mean, do it, but you may want to look at this because this is the cost to operational efficiency."

STEINBERG: So, when you went back to the White House, what was it like to be back working directly with the President?

BEERS: Well, I mean, it was the most senior position I had in the White House. And every White House is somewhat different. This White House, as many administrations do in the latter years of second term Presidency, had accumulated a lot more White House staff, and ran a lot more things more directly than most administrations start off, because the President asked somebody to run a cabinet position, you don't tell him, "But I'm really gonna run it for the White House and you're just a functionary sitting in a chair that has to be filled." [laughter] So, some of that had happened, and I had been on the other end of that in the Department as a regular attendee at Deputy's committees, and then principals committees or NSC meetings. But, you know, it suffered from the fact that in the process of micromanaging, the White House not only chaired all the meetings, which had become traditional, but they wrote all the papers for the meetings. And in earlier administrations the department that had the lead responsibility often would write that paper. And the only department that was accorded that privilege was the

Pentagon, because they were—often involved military activity.

STEINBERG: Classified?

BEERS: No, this is all—most of it's classified. It was, White House staff are not in the military chain of command. Alright? They should not presume to write military plans. That is for the military to write for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense and the President of the United States. Thank you very much. So, the State Department and other departments and agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security, had most of the papers written with little or no direct input to any of those papers by people in the White House, and the people who went to the meetings at a lower level were desperate to find out what the papers were going to be, because the White House clearance process, as flat as the bureaucracy is there—I mean, they could produce a paper faster than any department or agency could produce a paper, because of the clearance process that's much more cumbersome than that.

But, the frequency in the meetings was also very high, which meant that you were writing a paper for a meeting two days forward after you were completing having had a meeting on the same subject that day. And so, the papers often didn't get to people who were coming to the meeting until the night before or the morning of the day of the meeting, because the writer had to write it and the office director had to clear it and it had to be cleared laterally, and then it had to go up to the Deputy National Security Advisor or the National Security Advisor, depending upon the level of the meeting for clearance. And some people just can't resist marking papers up.

So, being back there, it was interesting to be on the other side, and it was interesting to see how concerned White House staff was about how slow the departments and the agencies were in responding to issues that they, of course—we, of course, viewed as Presidential priorities, or we wouldn't be having these meetings. And they, I'm sure, viewed as quasi-usurpation of responsibility for issues that people who knew a lot more about them existed in the departments and agencies.

So, we had a lot of ad hoc meetings to bring people together. I mean, the kinds of issues that I was involved in during this period of time were Central American migration; Ebola. Not traditional national security issues involved a lot wider range of cabinet officials than the traditional ones, because [Departments of] Justice and HHS: Justice on the immigration issue; HHS on Ebola; we also did some cyber stuff, some natural disaster issues, and things like that. It was interesting to see the White House acting in a non-traditional national security way under the rubric of the National Security Council, and that was all the result of 9/11 and the creation of the Homeland Security Council, and then the merger of the Homeland Security Council staff with the National Security Council staff. So, it was different, tremendously different in that way from being a counternarcotics or counterterrorism or a peacekeeping or an intelligence official in the more traditional part of the NSC.

STEINBERG: So, do you feel like domestic and global politics and national security has changed so much that it really is starting to influence government and how government needs to adapt to the changing national security issues?

BEERS: So, I guess the way I would think about it is that two things happened at the same time, without thinking about them consciously. What was consciously thought about was, homeland security was an aspect of national security, and it was an artificial distinction to try to separate them too much. But, when you moved homeland security together with national security, some of the baggage—that's not the right word—some of the agenda of homeland security is national resilience, which is FEMA, which is, except in rare instances where they're sent overseas to advise disasters in other countries, is or could be seen as a purely domestic issue, except that what they do in their resilience portfolio is they protect or restore the economy, as well as public safety for the lives of individuals and their own personal economic security in the form of the damage or loss of their dwellings and things like that. So, but if you would ask people before 9/11 and before this was all brought together, people wouldn't have articulated that in that way.

The other thing that I don't think anybody thought about was, for the longest period of time, the distinction between a well-oiled national security establishment having an interagency process where people came together and dealt with

problems that crossed agency boundaries, was well-known, and it never happened on the domestic side. And until the Clinton Administration, even the economic aspect of an interagency process didn't happen until the National Economic Council was formed in the Clinton Presidency. But there was still a Domestic Policy Council, and it really didn't run an interagency process, because many things weren't interagency.

So, here you take a bulk of things that had been traditionally thought about as domestic affairs, and you bring them into the national security apparatus, and all of a sudden, you have a process that people understand that can actually run these things in a way that they weren't ever run in a coordinated fashion before. Domestic drug policy. We created the Office of National Drug Control Policy to try to do that; it wasn't entirely successful. And you have these unrelated programs all over the federal government dealing with drug control. And that's just one example that I'm really familiar with, because when I was at State and did it, I was doing international, not domestic.

And, so you have this apparatus that actually has teeth and can bring people to meetings and force issues to be pulled together, and a reporting chain to the President about an issue that would probably have had the same kind of coordinated effort, as with the Ebola situation particularly, particularly after Mr. Duncan died in the Dallas hospital, when it wasn't just trying to deal with this issue overseas; it was trying to make sure that we could create enough stability and domestic preparedness to make the American public feel comfortable about our ability to deal with it at home, because if we weren't going to be able to deal with it at home, we weren't going to be able to deal with it overseas as effectively, and you run into all kinds of restrictions and problems overseas.

So, you know, when you step back and look at all that, you say, "Oh, yeah, I understand that." But, the process of changing what we did at ports of entry and having hospitals upgrade their preparedness and get a $6 billion emergency supplemental, the largest proportion of which was to give hospitals domestically the equipment and ability to manage an Ebola case in this country. And we had only one other uncontrolled entry of someone who had Ebola, and that was a doctor who had been treating people overseas and didn't

show any symptoms until he came back to the United States, even though he should have been monitoring his symptoms. Which is not to—you know, the guidance was "monitor your symptoms and don't make a point of large scale interactions with other people."

STEINBERG: So, when we finished the first session, you said to ask you who the two most important people in your life are besides your wife?

BEERS: So, early, early in my time at DHS, I don't remember who the reporter was that the question was, "Who is the most important person in your life?" and it was focused primarily on my professional career, and I said, "Well, except for my wife who also influenced my career"—let's be clear about that—I said, "it was Lyndon Johnson and George W. Bush, because I went to war because of Lyndon Johnson and learned a lot about how blunt an instrument it is and how careful people need to be making decisions about war and peace, because the impact on the average American who goes out to fight can be very significant, whether it involves death or wound or psychological trauma. And George W. Bush because the memory of what I learned about Vietnam caused me to retire from government.

STEINBERG: Very interesting. So, really kind of the bookends of your political and professional careers.

BEERS: Uh-huh. As I certainly didn't think I would be back in government when I retired.

STEINBERG: So, overall, obviously I think that answer sums it up, that Vietnam really had a lasting legacy on you personally and professionally. Is there anything else that you would like to share about either Dartmouth, Vietnam, your professional career, anything else that you want included in the interview?

BEERS: Yeah. I have often been asked specifically about the Dartmouth experience, and what I always say is, when I was growing up, I was not a very good writer, but I went to a very strict high school and they taught me how to write. But Dartmouth taught me how to think. And that's truly, truly my experience, as a history major, as a German major, and also in preparation for going into the United States Marine Corps.

So, I am back here teaching today because of what I owe Dartmouth.

STEINBERG: Well, I think that's a great place to end it. Thank you so much for coming in.

[End of interview.]