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The Early Retirement of Gen Ronald R. Fogleman, Chief of Staff, United States Air Force

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Editorial Abstract: Air Force chief of staff Gen Ronald Fogleman's early retirement in 1997 has caused great speculation. Was this a "resignation in protest"? Here for the first time, in an interview with former Air Force historian Richard H. Kohn, General Fogleman explains his thinking and his reasons for choosing this unprecedented course of action.

ON MONDAY, 28 July 1997, Gen Ronald R. Fogleman asked Secretary of the Air Force Sheila Widnall to be relieved of his duties as chief of staff of the Air Force and retired as soon as possible, a year before the end of his four-year term. At the time, the press and electronic media overwhelmingly interpreted General Fogleman's act as a resignation in protest over the secretary of defense's intention to block the promotion of Brig Gen Terryl "Terry"

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Schwalier to major general. Schwalier had commanded the 4404th Composite Wing in Saudi Arabia the previous year when a terrorist bomb had destroyed the Air Force housing complex known as Khobar Towers outside Dhahran Air Base, killing 19 airmen and wounding a total of some three hundred Americans. After one Department of Defense (DOD) and two Air Force investigations, Fogleman had concluded that Schwalier had done everything that could be expected of a commander and had no culpability in the tragedy; punishing him would have a chilling effect on commanders around the world who might then infer that protecting their forces outweighed accomplishing their missions.

Reports had circulated some weeks earlier that General Fogleman would resign if the secretary blocked Schwalier's promotion. But the truth of the matter was that General Fogleman's decision to leave was neither a resignation nor an act of protest; it was a retirement. Had he resigned in protest, he would have waited until after the secretary of defense announced his decision in the Schwalier case and explained publicly and unambiguously that the request for retirement was the product of disagreements over specific decisions and policies. Instead, General Fogleman chose to leave quietly. In a brief public statement written and issued the same day, the chief stated, "My values and sense of loyalty to our soldiers, sailors, Marines and especially our airmen led me to the conclusion that I may be out of step with the times and some of the thinking of the establishment. This puts me in an awkward position. If I were to continue to serve as chief of staff of the Air Force and speak out, I could be seen as a divisive force and not a team player. I do not want the Air Force to suffer for my judgment and convictions."

Until now, General Fogleman has not elaborated on or clarified that brief public statement he issued at the end of July 1997. His public statement at the time stated specifically that he "was driven by the desire to defuse the perceived confrontation between myself and the secretary of defense over his impending decision on the Khobar Towers terrorist attack." As he explains below, it "was a request for retirement versus a resignation. . . . My request was very carefully worded and consistent with historical practice and precedent. . . . I wanted to take that off the table and give him [the secretary of defense] one last opportunity to act on the Schwalier case on the merit and facts of the case, rather than the issue of the secretary of defense's power vis-à-vis some service chief." In leaving, General Fogleman recognized that a resignation in protest over policy would encroach on civilian control of the military, one of the foundations of American government and national defense, by setting a precedent that military leaders might resign instead of accept a decision they opposed. Fogleman knew that there was no tradition or practice of resignation in protest in the United States military.

Indeed, the causes of General Fogleman's action were complex and lay rooted in a series of issues that went back many months. He had contemplated early retirement for at least a year and a half. "I said publicly from the beginning that Miss Jane [Mrs. Fogleman] and I considered being chief a four-year tour, not a sentence. . . . There were certain things that I intended to accomplish, and when they were done, I felt that I might want to leave rather than hang on. I had watched people hang on into that fourth year and just did not think it was value gained for them or the organization." Fundamentally, he believed that his continued service depended on his effectiveness as an adviser to the national leadership and as an advocate for, and leader of, his service. While he had good relationships with the other chiefs and the chairman and vice chairman of the joint chiefs, he was disappointed in some of the discussions and some of the positions taken by the group. There had been disagreements over the modernization of the tactical aircraft inventory of the Air Force, Navy, and Marines; he disagreed with the determination of the Quadrennial Defense Review in early 1997 to reduce the number of F-22 airplanes to be purchased and, worse, was disgusted by the process which produced the decision. There were other conflicts: "Some serious resource allocation decisions were being made on the basis of superficial, often mistaken, thinking." In the summer of 1997, General Fogleman clashed with Secretary Widnall over the punishment of 1st Lt Kelly Flinn, the first woman B-52 pilot, whose impending court-martial for adultery, disobeying orders, and lying to an investigating officer led to national headlines, much criticism of the Air Force, and her separation with a general rather than an honorable discharge.

Then came the Schwalier decision. "As chief of staff of the United States Air Force, charged with providing military advice to the civilian leadership that the civilian leadership did not value for whatever reason, I had become ineffective as a spokesman." "When you sense that you have lost the confidence of the folks you're dealing with—almost to the extent where the service will be punished—that's one reason to leave." Another was that he had "simply lost respect and confidence in the leadership that I was supposed to be following." General Fogleman "watched the way the United States Air Force as an institution was treated, for purely political reasons, and the way an individual was treated and came to the conclusion that it was fundamentally wrong." He remembered, "You really do have to get up and look at yourself in the mirror every day and ask, 'Do I feel honorable and clean?' I just could not begin to imagine facing the Air Force after Secretary [William S.] Cohen made the decision to cancel General Schwalier's promotion. It wasn't only Cohen. It was the Washington scene, the pressure from the Hill—from people who were uninformed—it was the way DOD treated this man and the Air Force. To merely shrug this off and say, 'Hey, it's okay guys, we'll do better next time. . . .' "

General Fogleman had also recently read H. R. McMaster's *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam,* a book detailing how the joint chiefs in 1964–65 had failed to insist on giving their advice directly to the president and had gone along with having their views misrepresented, thus contributing to the decision to intervene in Vietnam and pursue a strategy of gradual escalation. "There was the incredible performance of the joint chiefs at that time and then seeing some of the things that were going on in the tank and now, maybe not on the same scale, but the same sickness . . . service parochialism, the willingness to collectively go along with something because there was at least some payoff for your service somewhere in there . . . a slippery slope."

Thus, as General Fogleman makes clear below, he had come to believe that he could no longer serve effectively as chief of staff. "I felt out of step—the [Quadrennial Defense Review], discussions, and decisions that I saw being made in the tank, problems with the Air Force leadership over the Kelly Flinn affair. A whole series of things convinced me that perhaps I was riding the wrong horse here. After a while, you look around and experience some serious doubts about whether you can be right and everybody else is wrong." As he concluded, "We also serve on a personal level. Unless you really believe, and see, that you are continuing to contribute . . . , when you begin to believe that your continued service is detrimental," then "the pressure" is to leave. "In my heart, I concluded that my continued service was not in the best interest of the Air Force."

In December 1997, some four-and-a-half months after his decision, the editor interviewed General Fogleman by telephone. What follows is a transcript of that conversation, transcribed by Ms. Jacqueline Gorman of the Curriculum in Peace, War, and Defense of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The transcript was then edited, reviewed by General Fogleman, annotated by the editor, and returned to General Fogleman for final approval. The purpose of publishing it is to clarify why he took the unprecedented step of asking for early retirement and doing so with so little explanation at the time—not resigning in protest but leaving out of a sense of obligation that the Air Force and the nation would be served more effectively if a new chief of staff were to take his place.

Interview
11 December 1997

Richard H. Kohn: General Fogleman, why did you decide to ask for early retirement?

Ronald R. Fogleman: The answer to that question is complex: on one level, simple. But on another, more complicated. Let me begin on one level. When I became the chief, I received a number of letters from people like you who essentially said that they thought the chief needed to restore the soul of the Air Force. That caught me somewhat by surprise because I was not sure exactly what the soul of the Air Force was, or what was required to fix it. But my conclusion was that somehow we had found ourselves, or allowed ourselves, through a series of decisions and actions, to lose sight of our values. The trouble came not from some overriding set of principles, but more from employing situational ethics (i.e., cronyism and other things) that made it seem as though the institution lacked integrity. So in the back of my mind, there seemed a necessity, or charge if you will, to work this issue on my watch.

Another factor grew out of a meeting in the fall of 1994 with all the other four-stars, before I became the chief, in which we discussed what we thought the Air Force needed more than anything else in the near term.[1] We concluded generally that the Air Force had been through an extraordinary period of change, most of it necessary in the altered world where we were heading. The change was both externally and internally driven. But it would be extremely valuable if we could give the Air Force some stability for a period of time from internal turbulence.

These two elements lay in the background as I began my tenure—my tour, if you will. I looked very carefully at the law specifying my duties as chief of staff: the responsibilities relative to organizing, training, and equipping the force and the separation of duties between the secretary of the Air Force and the chief.[2] So as I began the job, I thought I had a good understanding of what needed to be done in the Air Force. I did not have any special agenda. As we kicked off the tour, we ran into a series of things that we had to deal with: changing the uniform and a lack of confidence in the personnel system, promotions, and the evaluation system.[3] I think our decisions in these areas were generally very well received.

I had also inherited two pieces of unfinished business. One was the F-15 shoot-down of the Black Hawk helicopter over Iraq.[4] The other one was the B-52 crash up at Fairchild.[5] The F-15 shoot-down was making its way through the legal process, and there wasn't much I could do about it until the process called for my action.

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1. The day before taking office, General Fogleman met in the secretary of the Air Force's conference room in the Pentagon with the other Air Force four-stars, who were in Washington to attend the retirement of his predecessor.

2. The duties of the Air Force chief of staff are specified in *U.S. Code*, Title 10, chap. 805, sec. 8033 (1996).

3. General Fogleman's predecessor, Gen Merrill "Tony" McPeak, had overseen what many considered a radical change in the style and insignia of the Air Force officer uniform. A uniform board review in January 1995 reduced over twenty-five hundred suggestions to 363 proposals, 55 of which General Fogleman approved, including restoring the traditional shoulder insignia instead of sleeve rings to identify officer rank. See Suzann Chapman, "Last Uniform Changes?" *Air Force Magazine* 78 (May 1995): 24; and "Air Force Announces Uniform Changes," *Air Force News*, on-line, Internet, 11 September 2000, available from http://www.af.mil/news/Mar1995/n19950313_208.html.

4. On 14 April 1994, two F-15Cs of the 53d Fighter Squadron enforcing the "no fly" zone over northern Iraq mistakenly shot down two Army Black Hawk helicopters engaged in UN humanitarian missions for the Kurds, killing all 26 passengers, including 15 Americans; five Kurdish civilians; and British, French, and Turkish military officers. John F. Harris, "Four May Receive Court-Martial for Copter Mishap," *Washington Post*, 30 August 1994, 2; and Eric Schmitt, "Inquiry Urges Crew Stand Trial in Downing of Copters over Iraq," *New York Times*, 30 August 1994, A2.

5. On 24 June 1994, a B-52H of the 325th Bomb Squadron, 92d Bomb Wing at Fairchild Air Force Base (AFB), Wash., crashed while preparing to land after practicing maneuvers for an air show, killing all four crewmen. The pilot in command had over a long period of time demonstrated a disregard for Air Force flying rules and regulations, and this was known by the senior commanders in the wing. No appropriate action had been taken to discipline him or rein in his noncompliant behavior.

As I dealt with day-to-day business, stabilizing the Air Force (in terms of internal changes), I continued to think about the soul of the Air Force as an issue. As I dealt with these issues, the stress on accountability emerged—without my intending at the beginning of my watch to focus on accountability. At the completion of the court-martial of the AWACS captain at Tinker (I had been reading all the background investigation material), I was satisfied that the outcome was appropriate and just: no one was court-martialed who should not have been, or vice-versa, or issued letters of reprimand, Article 15s, and so forth.[6] But I was appalled when I asked the question, "Let me see the evaluation reports on the people." I discovered that none of what they had done was reflected in those reports, and from that, I then began to see the connectivity to standards, values, and core beliefs.[7] That's when I made the tape[8] in which I talked about Air Force values and accountability—not because I was some zealot, but because I have always believed that if you want people, or an institution, to do something, you must explain what you expect of their behavior. The rules and standards for the behavior of any individual, group, or unit must be universally known and uniformly applied. That tape was designed for an internal audience, but it got much more play than that, and from then on, I believe we began to see a change all through the chain of command on the issue of accountability. If anything, it may have started to go too far. Commanders were deferring to lawyers rather than taking action, short of legal action, to correct the shortcomings of people. As I continued to work on other things that I thought were very important—the long-range planning effort for one—this issue of accountability and standards took on a kind of life of its own. The secretary of the Air Force and I emphasized very strongly the ideas of core values: excellence in all we do, service before self, and integrity.[9] These became identified with me and with the secretary, but largely with me. This is important background leading up to the events of 1997.

On another level—viewing the Air Force from the outside as a military historian,[10] as someone who has tried to stay involved in academic affairs as well as national security affairs—I sincerely believed that the nation was at a unique crossroads, that the country had a tremendous

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6. Investigations by the Air Force resulted in charges of dereliction of duty against Capt James Wang, a crew member of the airborne warning and control system (AWACS) aircraft from the 963d Airborne Control Squadron controlling the airspace at the time, and charges of negligent homicide and dereliction of duty against one of the F-15 pilots and four other AWACS crew members. Captain Wang was acquitted, and charges against the others were dropped following Article 32 (the equivalent to grand jury) investigations. Altogether, eight officers were reprimanded, counseled, or admonished, and one punished nonjudicially. See news briefing, Maj Gen Nolan Sklute, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), 15 August 1995, on-line, Internet, 26 November 2000, available from http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Aug1995/t081795_tsklu-81.html; Susanne M. Schafer, "U.S. Pilot Charged for Downing Copters," *Chicago Sun Times*, 8 September 1994, 3; Owen Canfield, "Air Force Closes Case on 26 Deaths," *Chicago Sun Times*, 21 June 1995, 26; Frank Oliveri, "USAF Accuses Six in Iraq Shootdown," *Air Force Magazine* 77 (November 1994): 15; and Bruce B. Auster, "Strange Justice, Air Force Style," *U.S. News & World Report* 118 (15 May 1995): 42, 44. Article 15 of the *Uniform Code of Military Justice* outlines the punishments commanders can impose on the men and women under their command without resort to court-martial or other judicial proceedings.

7. In August 1995, General Fogleman (in the words of the Air Force judge advocate general) "concluded that the failures of certain officers to meet Air Force standards were not appropriately reflected in their performance evaluations" and "therefore, personally issued letters of evaluation . . . describing their failure" that became "a permanent part of each individual's record." For the two F-15 pilots, three officers on the AWACS aircraft, and two generals in the chain of command, this action effectively ended their careers in the Air Force. The chief of staff also grounded the pilots and AWACS crew members and disqualified them from duties in flying operations for three years. Sklute; Eric Schmitt, "Chief of Air Force Grounds 5 Pilots," *New York Times*, 15 August 1995, A1; and Chris Black, "Shifts in Air Force Policy Are Seen after Reprimands," *Boston Globe*, 16 August 1995, 3.

8. In a short videotape released in mid-August 1995, required to be viewed by every Air Force officer, Senior Executive Service civilian, and noncommissioned officer in the top three grades, General Fogleman reviewed the Black Hawk accident, as well as the actions taken against the individuals involved and the officers who wrote their performance evaluations. He used the affair to emphasize Air Force standards; personal accountability; and the necessity for officers to lead, to pursue excellence in the performance of their duties, to act always with integrity, and to place service before self. See transcript, on-line, Internet, 13 September 2000, available from http://www.usafa.af.mil/core-value/accountability.html. For background, see Sklute.

9. Sheila E. Widnall, previously professor of aeronautics and astronautics, director of the Fluid Dynamics Research Laboratory, and associate provost at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was secretary of the Air Force from August 1993 to October 1997.

10. General Fogleman earned a master's degree in history at Duke University and taught military history at the Air Force Academy from December 1970 to November 1972, when he went back to combat-crew training for his second flying tour in Southeast Asia.

number of internal needs, that the external threats were lower than we had faced in half a century, and that we had an opportunity—if we could have a serious discussion about national security strategy and defense issues—to restructure our military into a smaller, better focused institution to respond to the kinds of challenges coming in the next 10 to 15 years. It was not a military that was going to be shaped by some force-structure slogan like two MRCs,[11] and it had to include a fundamental understanding of whether there really was a "revolution in military affairs" and how we could and should fight future wars. So I had begun to speak out about the Quadrennial Defense Review,[12] and I was hopeful that the QDR would start us down that path.

In this regard, in "the tank"[13] I began to question some of things that we were doing, or that we were planning to do, based on old paradigms—but not very successfully. As we began talking more and more about the QDR, an event occurred in September of 1996 which kind of put the QDR in a context that struck me as all wrong. An Army two-star from the JCS came by to see all the chiefs, and when he came to see me, he sat on that couch in the chief's office and said, "I have a message from the chairman,[14] and the message is, that in the QDR we want to work hard to try and maintain as close to the status quo as we can. In fact, the chairman says we don't need any Billy Mitchells during this process." That shocked me a little bit. I replied, "Well, that's an unfortunate use of a term, but I understand the message." From that point on, I really did not have much hope for the QDR. I guess I lost all hope when Bill Perry[15] left because he had the stature to have given the services the blueprint, and I think the services would have fallen in line.

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11. MRCs were *major regional conflicts,* a term for large conventional wars in a limited geographical area, such as the Persian Gulf War of 1990–1991 or an invasion of South Korea by North Korea which would involve American forces. The shift in defense policy, planning, and force structure from deterring and preparing for a world war against the Soviet Union to focusing on regional conflicts began with the reconsideration that resulted in the Bush administration's base force policy of 1990. Lorna S. Jaffe, *The Development of the Base Force* (Washington, D.C.: Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 1993), 2–9, 11–13, 16, 18, 21–22, 25–26, 29, 33, 36, 45; and *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: White House, August 1991), 7–11, 27–29, 31. The ability to fight nearly simultaneously two MRCs (now called major theater wars) became the chief planning factor shaping the size and configuration of the American armed forces after the "Bottom-Up Review" of defense policy and force structure undertaken by the Clinton administration in 1993. Defense Department briefing, Gen Colin Powell and Les Aspin, subject: DOD Bottom-Up Review, 1 September 1993, Federal Information Systems Corporation, Federal News Service, accessed through Academic Universe, "bottom up review" Search Terms, 13 December 2000; and Les Aspin, *Report on the Bottom-Up Review,* October 1993, sec. 2, "Addressing Regional Dangers and Seizing Opportunities," on-line, Internet, 15 December 2000, available from http://stinet.dtic.mil/str/index.html (search "Les Aspin").

12. The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)—a comprehensive reconsideration of American national security policy, defense strategy, and force structure expected to be repeated every four years at the beginning of a presidential administration—originated in a recommendation by DOD's 1995 Commission on the Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces. DOD undertook its first QDR in 1996–1997; the report in the spring of 1997 listed a number of reductions, adjustments, realignments, and planned changes in defense posture. See *Directions for Defense, Roles and Missions Commission of the Armed Forces, Report to Congress, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,* 24 May 1995, executive summary, on-line, Internet, 26 November 2000, available from http://www.fas.org/man/docs/corm95/di1062.html; William S. Cohen, *Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review,* May 1997, on-line, Internet, 26 November 2000, available from http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/qdr/index.html; and Background on the Quadrennial Defense Review, May 1997, H.R. 3230, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1997, Title IX, subtitle B, sec. 923, Quadrennial Defense Review/Force Structure Review, on-line, Internet, 16 January 2001, available from http://www.comw.org/qdr/backgrd.htm. General Fogleman discussed the QDR at greater length with reporter George Wilson. See Wilson, *This War Really Matters: Inside the Fight for Defense Dollars* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2000), 38–44.

13. The "tank" is the conference room in the Pentagon where the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) meet, so named, according to popular lore, because "access to the entrance used by staff officers was down a flight of stairs through an arched portal, supposedly giving the impression of entering a tank." Ronald H. Cole et al., *The Chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 177.

14. Gen John M. D. Shalikashvili, US Army, was chairman of the JCS from October 1993 to September 1997.

15. William J. Perry, who had worked in the defense and financial industries in technical and executive capacities and served on the Stanford University faculty in engineering and international security, was secretary of defense from February 1994 to January 1997. He had been undersecretary of defense for research and engineering from 1977 to 1981 and deputy secretary of defense in 1993–1994. Roger R. Trask and Alfred Goldberg, *The Department of Defense, 1947–1997: Organization and Leaders* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1997), 121, 141.

Kohn: Did you or the other chiefs ask Secretary Perry to stay or to press for that?

Fogleman: I did. I went to see him in early November of 1996, after completing my second year in office. I had a policy of visiting him to talk about the year in review and the future. There were strong rumors that he would go. I told him, "Mr. Secretary, you have the stature and you have the confidence and the vote; if the QDR is going to go anywhere, you need to come down to the tank, and you need to give us your vision." Short of that, I said I didn't have much hope. A week later, he announced his retirement.

Secretary Cohen faced a very difficult challenge in the QDR and was, quite frankly, not as well grounded in real military issues as one might have thought, given his time on the Senate Armed Services Committee.[16] He worked hard but was at the mercy, like all of us, of his advisers, and particularly what I thought was a rather close circle of people who lacked much experience in the issues. Once Bill Perry left, work on the QDR went into suspended animation until Cohen arrived because no one wanted to get out in front of the new boss. He arrived with a very limited amount of time to deliver the QDR to the Hill, a difficult challenge. I came to believe that the QDR could not be completed in three months, or even six. To an extent, he tried to solicit the advice of his military people, but it became clear that this QDR was to be more a political response than a sincere effort to reshape our military. It was driven by the consideration to come up with $60 billion in savings to apply to the procurement of new weapons. From an Air Force perspective, we had no problem with procurement reform; our modernization program was fully funded, fully budgeted, so it was interesting to watch this unfold. The major issue that concerned me was TACAIR modernization.[17] This issue had been inflamed by Bill Owens,[18] who had incorrectly quoted some statistics that got over onto the Hill and into the public about how large a part of the budget the TACAIR program would consume vis-à-vis other things. This line of argument took on a life of its own. If you look at the history of TACAIR, anytime the amateurs mess with it, it gets screwed up; and when the pros put together a program and follow through, the result is a pretty solid program.

Kohn: Do you mean the design of the aircraft, its requirements, its role, and its mission?

Fogleman: Exactly. After the Second World War, the Navy, in its battles internally over carrier air, essentially allowed their program to atrophy. The Air Force, on the impetus from Arnold[19] and the others who came after him, worked very hard to achieve a balanced program. When Korea[20] came along, the Air Force had an air superiority fighter, a fighter-bomber, bomber forces coming on stream. In the air superiority realm, there are many similar experiences in the past. In Korea, who had the aces? Who did the daytime patrolling? It wasn't that there weren't great naval aviators or great Marine aviators, but the Navy did not have equipment since they had been diverted to thinking about things other than the core issue of airpower. Who thinks about airpower full-time for the nation? The Air Force.

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16. William S. Cohen became secretary of defense on 24 January 1997. A lawyer and former elected official in Bangor, Maine, he served in the US House of Representatives (1973–1979) and US Senate (1979–1997), where he was a member of the Armed Services and Governmental Affairs Committees. Trask and Goldberg, 127. For a more personal profile, see John Donnelly, "The Evolution of William Cohen," *Boston Globe Magazine*, 22 October 2000, 14–15, 28–36.

17. The 1997 DOD tactical air (TACAIR) modernization program proposed to replace completely by the year 2030 the A-10, F-15, F-16, and F-117 aircraft of the Air Force and the F-14, F/A-18, and AV-8B aircraft of the Navy and Marine Corps with F/A-18E/F, F-22, and Joint Strike Fighter aircraft, for the air superiority, anti-air-warfare, suppression of enemy air defenses, fleet air defense, interdiction, short- and long-range attack, reconnaissance, and close air support missions. The overall purpose was to secure "overwhelming air domination for US forces" for the next generation. See *Statement of Dr. Paul G. Kaminski, Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology before the Subcommittee on Research and Development and the Subcommittee on Procurement of the House Committee on National Security on the DOD Tactical Aviation Modernization Program,* Committee on National Security, Military Research and Development Subcommittee meeting jointly with the Military Procurement Committee, US House of Representatives, 105th Cong., 1st sess., 5 March 1997, 242–66, on-line, Internet, 16 January 2001, available from http://www.acq.osd.mil/ousda/kaminski/aviation_modernization.html.

18. Adm William A. Owens was vice chairman of the JCS, March 1994–February 1996.

19. General of the Air Force Henry H. "Hap" Arnold was chief of the Army Air Corps and commanding general of the Army Air Forces from September 1938 to his retirement in June 1946. His five-star rank was awarded by act of Congress in 1949, the year before his death.

20. The Korean War began in June 1950.

After Korea, TACAIR lost to the domination of nukes. So the Air Force began building fighter-bombers like F-105s. The Navy studied airplanes like Vigilantes that could deliver tactical nukes off of carriers. The US did not possess an air superiority fighter when Vietnam began.[21] We did a dismal job in Vietnam in the air-to-air business and used not an air-to-air fighter but a missile platform, the F-4, and it became the backbone of the forces. But it was never a great air superiority fighter.

Kohn: Was the issue at this time (1996 and 1997) the F-22?

Fogleman: No, the whole TACAIR program, not just a single aircraft. But eventually it came down to that, and so we took a fully funded program, the F-22, into the QDR, whereupon the folks at OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] decided to make major disruptions in this program for no good reason at all.[22] On the one hand you have somebody who is fairly well grounded in the airpower business giving advice to the senior leadership, and on the other side a bunch of number crunchers, and in the end, the decision gets made, I think, on political grounds more than anything else.

Kohn: How did this differ from most major aircraft programs or even most major defense issues, historically and in the last 20 years? Isn't what you describe the nature of the business—in "the building" [the Pentagon], in the budget process, and in programming?

Fogleman: Yes, in the macro sense. But in the micro sense, I'm not so sure because of the internal nature of the debate. If somebody can show me that something makes sense from a resource allocation or budgetary standpoint, or similarly reasonable measures, I'm more than willing to lose the argument—and have lost lots of those arguments, walked away none the worse for wear. But this was an issue in which the nature of the presentation, the nature of the discussion, and the rationale for the changes, were basically going to upset an integrated tactical air modernization program that included the F-18, the Joint Strike Fighter, and the F-22. I think just fundamentally, OSD ignored the military rationale.

Kohn: Is it inconsistent to speak about a fundamental restructuring of the armed forces, in part to prepare for a possible revolution in warfare and a lower threat than at any time since the 1920s, while advocating a modernization program that looks to many on the outside as incremental: that is, purchasing some old technologies, even purchasing the newest technology (the F-22), which could, perhaps, be skipped? How would you respond to that criticism?

Fogleman: If this was argued by someone in OSD, I would ask if they knew the true capability of this airplane. In the "black world" [very highly classified programs], the F-22 is a truly revolutionary airplane. On the surface, it looks conventional, like an F-15 with some stealth capabilities. But the combination of stealth, supercruise, and integrated avionics is a quantum jump. It will allow the United States to cease worrying about air superiority for the first 35 years of the next century. With air superiority so critical to everything we do and considering the double-digit SAMs [surface-to-air missiles] of the next 10 to 15 years, it looks like a program we must have. One of the side benefits of the end of the cold war was our gaining access to foreign weapons; we discovered that the SA-10s, -11s, and -12s are much better than we thought. In planning for asymmetrical warfare—people's ability to deny us things we need in

21. The United States intervened with its own ground-force units and Americanized the Vietnam War during the first half of 1965.

22. The QDR reduced the total planned procurement of F-22s from 438 to 339, to provide three wings of the aircraft. Ramp-up to full production was to be slowed, and the maximum production rate reduced from 48 aircraft per year to 36. However, DOD promised in the future to consider other F-22 variants to replace F-15E and F-117 long-range interdiction aircraft "when they reach the end of their service lives beyond 2015." Cohen, sec. 7, 45. For an analysis of the QDR, see Wilson, 25ff.

such situations as the Taiwan Strait crisis, when we sent two carriers in and watched the Chinese move their SA-10s up—we need that airplane.[23] Those two carriers did nothing more than make a political statement, which is fine as long as that is all that's necessary. So one understands why a service chief begins saying he will try and be as balanced in his tour as he possibly can be, as joint, but then a weapon system comes along that truly is revolutionary. There are only two revolutionary weapon systems in the entire DOD budget: the F-22 and the airborne laser.[24] There are no others. I will acknowledge that I may be wrong on this, but I don't think so. I guess my problem was arguing from facts and knowledge and finding decisions being made by people without a fundamental understanding of what the weapon system contributed. Somehow that just didn't strike me as right.

Kohn: In the past, some of your predecessors and some other service chiefs would have taken this fight into the bureaucratic world of beltway and national politics. They would have leaked, they would have struggled, they would have made allies, they would have gone to the Congress. . . .

Fogleman: I think I did a lot of fighting in that arena. That's how we were able to get a lot of the funds restored. And the fight is not over. We will get the F-22, but the issue from my perspective was this: you pay me to give you military advice, and I'm giving you military advice; I'm watching not just whether or not you take it but how the advice is considered, part of a larger web of what became my relationship with Secretary Cohen and OSD.

Kohn: Can you translate this background into the decision to retire early?

Fogleman: Let me draw one more thread, one more part of the equation: Khobar Towers.[25] My side of that story has not been well told. I watched with great interest as that event happened and subsequent events unfolded. I watched people in Washington make statements on the basis of no factual knowledge whatsoever. I waited for about a week until after all the high-profile people had gone through Dhahran and then went to Saudi Arabia myself. I sat down with the commander,[26] listened to what he had to say—to include his offering to retire to remove any kind of a target for people to attack both the institution and individuals. I told him at that time that I did not want him to retire but to get the facts out. "This goes beyond you. This is an important issue having to do with whether we support our troops in the field when

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23. In March 1996, prior to the election for president on Taiwan, the People's Republic of China moved military forces to its coast on the Straits of Taiwan and fired missiles over the island in an apparent attempt to intimidate Taiwan into voting against Lee Teng-hui, who had taken steps that appeared to move the island toward independence. In response, the United States repositioned into the area the aircraft carriers *Independence* and *Nimitz* with their support vessels, implying that any attempt to invade or harass Taiwan with military force would be opposed by the use of US forces. News briefing, Kenneth H. Bacon, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), 19 March 1996, on-line, Internet, 16 January 2001, available from http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar1996/t031996_t0319asd.html; Geoffrey Crothall and Dennis Engbarth, "US Sends Second Carrier, Support Ships to Strait," *South China Morning Post,* 12 March 1996, 1; Geoffrey Crothall, "Li Warns US against Show of Force in Strait," *South China Morning Post,* 18 March 1996, 1; and Michael Dobbs, "Chinese Revert to Mao Formula in New War of Nerves on Taiwan," *Washington Post,* 16 March 1996, A20.

24. For a more extended discussion of the F-22 program, see Michael J. Costigan, *The F-22: The Right Fighter for the Twenty-first Century?* Air War College Maxwell Paper no. 9 (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, August 1997). The airborne laser (ABL) program originated in the aftermath of the Gulf War to find a defense against theater ballistic missiles. Transferred from the Strategic Defense Initiative Office to the Air Force in 1992, the program has been developing a high-energy laser mounted in a Boeing 747 designed to destroy missiles during their boost phase. In 1995 General Fogleman listened to a briefing on the program at Kirtland AFB, N. Mex., and threw his full support behind the effort. "The Airborne Laser is going to be to directed-energy weapons what the F-117 was to stealth and precision munitions," he told an interviewer. John A. Tirpak, "First Force: The USAF Chief of Staff Talks about Airpower, the Air Force, and the Future," *Air Force Magazine* 79 (September 1996): 41. "Given the nature of this revolutionary weapon system, the ABL will be studied in other roles. . . , other uses will be found." Johan Benson, "Conversations . . . with Gen. Ronald Fogleman," *Aerospace America* 34 (July 1996): 15. See also Suzann Chapman, "The Airborne Laser," *Air Force Magazine* 79 (January 1996): 54–55; Airborne Laser History, on-line, Internet, 26 November 2000, available from http://www.airbornelaser.com/special/abl/history; and Capt Gilles Van Nederveen, "A Light Dawns: The Airborne Laser," *Aerospace Power Journal* (PIREP, Spring 2001).

25. On 25 June 1996, terrorists exploded a large truck bomb outside the American air base at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 19 airmen and wounding some three hundred Americans in the high-rise housing complex named Khobar Towers.

26. The commander of the 4404th Composite Wing (Provisional) was Brig Gen Terryl J. Schwalier, USAF.

we send them out there, and if you have screwed up, you can expect to be held accountable. If you haven't, then I will support you." I then watched the way the investigations unfolded.[27] I watched the way the United States Air Force as an institution was treated, for purely political reasons, and the way an individual was treated and came to the conclusion that it was fundamentally wrong. I think a hell of a lot of other people came to that same conclusion.

As chief of staff of the United States Air Force, charged with providing military advice to the civilian leadership that the civilian leadership did not value for whatever reason, I had become ineffective as a spokesman. This was a crowd that took any kind of military advice that ran counter to administration policy or desires as a sign of disloyalty on the part of the person providing the advice. That was one element; the other was based on what I had seen and the way the Khobar Towers tragedy had been handled. I simply lost respect and confidence in the leadership that I was supposed to be following.

Kohn: By this do you mean OSD?

Fogleman: Yes.

Kohn: JCS, too?

Fogleman: Not so much the JCS, although I was disappointed in the JCS. There were some discussions and decisions in the tank that I thought were just absolutely absurd, some at fairly high levels of classification. More and more in the tank I found myself being the one who was raising the b- - - - - - - flag, and it resulted in a couple of fairly high-profile articles on arms control—things of that nature—that made some of the civilian leadership uncomfortable.[28]

Kohn: Relative to theater ballistic missile and strategic nuclear defense?

Fogleman: Yes, both.

Kohn: Did your disenchantment with the leadership extend to the president, the NSC [National Security Council], or Congress?

Fogleman: I don't think so. I had one confidant within the NSC with whom I would talk occasionally. This really did not involve the president; frankly, my dealings with the president, both as a CINC[29] and as a service chief, led me to conclude that he executed his commander-in-chief responsibilities pretty well, at least his interface with the military. As a service chief, your primary responsibility is to advocate for your service, and when you sense that you have lost the confidence of the folks you're dealing with—almost to the extent where the service will be punished—that's one reason to leave. Then there was the internal pressure which says: here's a guy who has talked about integrity, talked about doing what's right, talked about taking care of the troops and all of these things, and you realize that the secretary of defense is going to make a decision that is just fundamentally wrong.

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27. The bombing was investigated by Congress (hearings before the Senate Armed Services and House National Security Committees); a task force appointed by the secretary of defense and headed by Gen Wayne A. Downing, USA, Retired, the most recent former commander of US Special Operations Command; and by two separate Air Force groups, the first headed by Lt Gen James Record and the second by Lt Gen Richard Swope (Air Force inspector general) and Maj Gen Bryan Hawley (Air Force judge advocate general). Matt Labash, "The Scapegoat: How the Secretary of Defense Ended the Career of an Exemplary Air Force General," *The Weekly Standard* 3 (24 November 1997): 20–29.

28. In an interview with Bill Gertz of the *Washington Times*, described on 10 March 1997 ("Service Chiefs Fear Missile Defense Deal with Russia Could Blunt U.S. Edge, General Says"), General Fogleman was reported as saying that "the military service chiefs are worried that an agreement being negotiated with Russia could impose harmful restrictions on future U.S. missile defenses as part of a side agreement to a U.S.-Russian defense treaty. 'All the chiefs have great concerns about this,' Gen. Fogleman told *The Washington Times*. 'I would hate to see us negotiate away any kind of advantage we might have in space-based sensors, or in the airborne laser or anything like that.' " The previous week, there had been discussions in Moscow over a possible side agreement between the two countries "expanding the . . . 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty to cover short-range missile defenses."

29. General Fogleman was commander in chief (CINC) of US Transportation Command, August 1992–October 1994.

Kohn: Many people believed that perhaps General Schwalier should not be punished, but promoting him after such a disaster seemed to fly in the face of any sense of accountability. How would you respond to that point, and who, if anyone, should be held accountable for the Khobar Towers disaster?

Fogleman: Well, I recognized, and I think General Schwalier recognized, everybody recognized, that no matter what happened, his career was over. This was a man who had, at the tactical and operational levels, done everything reasonable (and beyond) to protect his troops. Have you seen an article by Matt Labash in the November 24, 1997 issue of *The Weekly Standard?*

Kohn: No.

Fogleman: Labash has done as fine a job of researching and reporting on Khobar Towers as I have seen anywhere.

Kohn: Does that article explain your view of what really happened and who should be held accountable, if anyone?

Fogleman: Yes.[30]

Kohn: When did you first consider the idea of leaving office early?

Fogleman: First of all, I said publicly from the very beginning that Miss Jane and I considered being chief a four-year tour, not a sentence. I had not been the choice of the Air Force to become chief. Frankly, that had a sort of liberating effect on me because I felt I could deal on a different level with the secretary. There were certain things that I intended to accomplish, and when they were done, I felt that I might want to leave rather than hang on. I had watched people hang on into that fourth year and just did not think it was value gained for them or the organization.

Kohn: That they had ceased to be effective?

Fogleman: Yes. They were going through the motions rather than working for the good of the institution.

Kohn: Were some other items involved in your decision to leave early? Perhaps one was personnel issues, such as the pilot shortage, the lower retention of airmen, the promotion system, the dominance of below-the-zone promotions, and the difficulties of the OER [Officer Efficiency Report] system, a lot of which were related to the ops tempo of the force. Were frustrations in those areas at all involved?

Fogleman: No. In fact, those were what I considered unfinished business and really argued against leaving because early on in the tour, we addressed the issues of confidence in the OER and personnel system.[31] We did that very openly, and we seemed to put that stuff to rest.

The real challenges that I saw facing us as I got ready to step over the side was pilot retention, and we put into place nine months before I left, some of the actions that are starting to bear fruit now, specifically the ops tempo problem.[32] We have worked that in several ways. We

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30. In "The Scapegoat," Labash, a staff writer at *The Weekly Standard,* used numerous interviews with (and public statements by) people involved in the incident and the investigations afterward, as well as the conclusions of the investigation reports, to argue that General Schwalier had been extremely aggressive and had done everything in his power to protect the people under his command, and that political pressures to hold someone accountable for the deaths led the secretary of defense to deny Schwalier promotion to major general.

31. The changes in the officer promotion and assignment systems in 1995 were outlined in Bruce D. Callander, "A New Shot at the Officer Promotion System," and "The New Way of Officer Assignments," *Air Force Magazine* 78 (July 1995): 70–73, and 78 (September 1995): 90–93, respectively. A quality-of-life survey (answered by 356,409 Air Force uniformed and civilian members) in 1995 revealed that 50 and 53 percent of enlisted and officers, respectively, did not think their promotion systems were fair. See Peter Grier, "The Quality of Military Life," *Air Force Magazine* 79 (December 1996): 33–34. Dissatisfaction with the evaluation and assignment systems diminished in the 1996 survey. See Suzann Chapman, "USAF Survey Shows Positive Trends," *Air Force Magazine* 79 (October 1996): 12.

32. Predictions about a pilot shortage and retention problems were detailed in Bruce D. Callander, "And Now, the Pilot Shortage," *Air Force Magazine* 79 (March 1996): 70–74.

went to the chairman and got relief from the responsibility for some weapon systems.[33] One of the ideas that I was disappointed did not succeed (although I knew it could) was the Air Expeditionary Force. We wanted to demonstrate to the CINCs that because of technology and logistics—mobility—forces did not have to be stationed in deserts to be responsive within 36 or 48 hours. We could demonstrate that the Air Force had the capability to deploy very rapidly and had several times. We were just on the verge of getting to that next step.

But what frustrated me was that some serious resource-allocation decisions were being made on the basis of superficial, often mistaken, thinking.

Kohn: Was your relationship with Secretary Widnall involved in the decision?

Fogleman: I think we generally had a good relationship right up to the Kelly Flinn controversy.[34] Until then, I thought the Air Force senior leadership, both civilian and military, understood the issue of accountability and how important it was to apply the UCMJ [Uniform Code of Military Justice] universally. I don't know what pressure Secretary Widnall was getting, but I came into work one morning, and she indicated that she was contemplating an honorable discharge for Kelly Flinn. I said, "Madam Secretary, if you give her an honorable discharge, you can also select a new chief of staff." That was the only time I ever talked that way to any direct supervisor or leader because I felt so strongly about it.

Kohn: The Flinn case sounds like one more drip on the forehead, moving you towards something that you had been thinking about increasingly for six months or so previous to the decision.

Fogleman: Yes. The Flinn case was a cut-and-dried thing as far as I was concerned, and I had studied the facts intensively.

Kohn: Was Gen Joseph Ralston's failure to be appointed chairman of the JCS part of the decision at all?[35]

Fogleman: No, not really, although it was a great personal and professional disappointment because we had worked for a long time to give him an opportunity. First of all, he was the right person for the job. Secretary Cohen was more a victim of circumstance than anything else. I don't have harsh feelings about this.

Kohn: What historical precedents guided you in the decision? Did Vietnam, and particularly H. R. McMaster's book *Dereliction of Duty*, influence you?[36]

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33. General Shalikashvili permitted General Fogleman for a period of time to set the level of tasking for certain weapon systems like the AWACS and airborne battlefield command and control center—which were small in numbers of aircraft but in almost continuous use—for the purposes of training crews and expanding their numbers.

34. 1st Lt Kelly Flinn, the first female B-52 line pilot in the Air Force, graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1993 and joined the 23d Bomb Squadron, Minot AFB, N. Dak., in October 1995. At the base, she had a brief affair with an enlisted man and then with the husband of an enlisted woman in her wing. She was ordered to break off the affair and allegedly told investigators first that she was not involved with the man and then that she had ended the relationship when she was at the time living with him. Her case became national news when she asked the secretary of the Air Force for permission to resign from the service with an honorable discharge rather than face court-martial. See Frank Spinner, attorney, "Military Career of Lt Kelly Flinn," 20 May 1997, on-line, Internet, 26 November 2000, available from http://www.kellyflinnfoundation.org/military.htm; David Van Biema, "Sex in the Military: The Rules of Engagement," *Time* 149 (2 June 1997): 36–37; Elaine Sciolino, "Air Force Chief Has Harsh Words for Pilot Facing Adultery Charge," *New York Times*, 22 May 1997, A1, B12; and editorial, "The Discharge of Kelly Flinn," *New York Times*, 23 May 1997, A30.

35. Gen Joseph Ralston, USAF, the vice chairman of the JCS, was named by the secretary of defense to succeed General Shalikashvili, but in June 1997, in the wake of the controversy over Kelly Flinn, General Ralston withdrew from consideration because of involvement in an extramarital affair some 13 years earlier, when he was a student at the National War College. "Ralston: Uproar Ends Bid," *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, 9 June 1997, on-line, Internet, 16 January 2001, available from http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/jan-june97/ralston_6-9.html.

36. H. R. McMaster argues in *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997) that the joint chiefs contributed to the American failure in the Vietnam War by not expressing their disagreements—with the policy of gradual escalation—directly to the president, and by allowing their views to be misrepresented to Congress and the public by the Johnson administration in 1964–1965. According to McMaster, the chiefs went along with a policy they opposed in part out of loyalty to their civilian superiors, in part because of benefits each gained for their service in bargains with the secretary of defense, and in part because they expected later to be able to negotiate changes in the policy and strategy. The editor was McMaster's primary adviser at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for the MA and PhD theses on which the book was based.

Fogleman: Yes, I did read that book, as you know, and I must say that it did play a part. History is a series of events, and when you analyze major crises and reconstruct chains of events, asking, what could someone have done at one point or another that might have changed the outcome, you are encouraged to act. There was the incredible performance of the joint chiefs at that time, and then seeing some of the things that were going on in the tank and now, maybe not on the same scale, but the same sickness . . . service parochialism, the willingness to collectively go along with something because there was at least some payoff for your service somewhere in there.

Kohn: In other words, horse-trading and being bought off.

Fogleman: Yes, and it is a slippery slope.

Kohn: How would your leaving alter that equation?

Fogleman: In two ways. One is personal; you really do have to get up and look at yourself in the mirror every day and ask, "Do I feel honorable and clean?" I just could not begin to imagine facing the Air Force after Secretary Cohen made the decision to cancel General Schwalier's promotion. It wasn't only Cohen. It was the Washington scene, the pressure from the Hill—from people who were uninformed—it was the way DOD treated this man and the Air Force. To merely shrug this off and say, "Hey, it's okay guys, we'll do better next time. . . ." It wasn't just the Air Force. The other services' commanders—lieutenant commanders, marines, Army types—were really watching this case. People who are or will be out there as tactical commanders are a lot less comfortable today than they were before this decision. They may not have read the detailed reports, but I think they've read the articles. There was an incredibly large number of people at Dhahran, and what is interesting is the number of letters I received from various locations around the world, from people who were there sometime during that year, who watched the kinds of actions and preparations that were being taken. These people exist almost as emissaries within other organizations. In the same way morale is established and affected—you know, the whisper factor, not a major force but they are there—this will affect our military forces.

You asked a larger question: what difference will it make? No one has told me this, but as I have sat and observed what has occurred in Washington since my departure, I can give one example of how my leaving may have made a major difference or had some influence, and that is the big debate about whether the United States would sign the land-mine treaty.[37] This was an item that the service chiefs cared very deeply about. We said, "Look, these things are critical to us in Korea, and while we are committed to working for some replacement, to allow some very altruistic motive to put our forces in the field at risk is wrong." And so we had consistently opposed signing the treaty. But about the time I made my decision to leave, tremendous pressure was being exerted by people within the NSC and elsewhere, and it began to have a telling effect, I think, on the chiefs because we were about to get beat up worldwide in the media over the US not going to Ottawa to sign the big treaty. My departure may have alerted people to remember to pay attention, every now and then, to the military judgment of the chiefs because those guys over there have other options than to sit still and take their licks. I can't prove that, but I suspect it very strongly. I think the politicians were reluctant to take on the chiefs because they didn't want somebody else to step over the side.

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37. The treaty to ban the development, production, acquisition, and use of antipersonnel land mines in war, and to remove those in use and eliminate stockpiles, was signed in Ottawa, Canada, in December 1997. Some 133 countries signed the treaty. Because of opposition from the Pentagon, but after much consultation and last-minute diplomacy, the United States refused to be a signatory. Raymond Bonner, "U.S. Seeks Compromise to Save Treaty Banning Land Mines," "Land Mine Treaty Takes Final Form over U.S. Dissent," *New York Times*, 17 September 1997, A6, and 18 September 1997, A1, respectively; Dana Priest and Charles Trueheart, "U.S. Makes One Last Pitch on Mine Treaty," Dana Priest, "Mine Decision Boosts Clinton-Military Relations," Howard Schneider, "Dozens of Nations, but Not U.S., Sign Land-Mine Treaty," *Washington Post*, 16 September 1997, A14, 21 September 1997, A22, 4 December 1997, A33, respectively; editorial, "Land Mine Foe Wins Peace Prize," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11 October 1997, A20; and "Land Mine Treaty Goes into Effect—Without the U.S.," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 2 March 1999, 18.

Kohn: Whom did you consult about your decision and when? What, in general, did your advisers say?

Fogleman: I really did not consult. To the extent that I talked to anybody, I corresponded with you by E-mail and with Perry Smith.[38] This was a very personal decision. When I left home that morning, I had not made the decision to submit my request for early retirement. When I went to work that morning, Miss Jane and I had talked about it over the weekend. It was Monday, the 28th of July (I had recently returned from a trip overseas). I don't think there was any one thing that day that triggered it. It was just that when I went in, and sat there, and thought about events—saw what was coming up, looking down the road—I decided I was going to preempt the decision on the Khobar Towers so that my leaving would not be in response to the decision on General Schwalier, to defuse that conflict.

Kohn: You did not want your request to be seen as a reaction to Khobar Towers?

Fogleman: Correct. And, in fact, the reason it was a request for retirement versus a resignation is that it was consistent with everything that I had said up to that date—which was, this is a tour and not a sentence. My request was very carefully worded and consistent with historical practice and precedent.[39]

Kohn: So you do not view your departure as a resignation in protest?

Fogleman: No.

Kohn: You wrote specifically about stepping aside to avoid a perceived conflict with the secretary of defense. What, exactly, did you mean and have in mind?

Fogleman: There had been stories in the media that I had gone to the secretary of defense and threatened to resign if he canceled Schwalier's promotion.[40] That was simply untrue, but the secretary being a political animal and having watched him respond more to press stories than to the intel briefings, the perception of a conflict was clearly going to affect his decision. So I wanted to take that off the table and give him one last opportunity to act on the Schwalier case on the merit and facts of the case, rather than the issue of the secretary of defense's power vis-à-vis some service chief.

Kohn: Was there anything further that you hoped to accomplish by stepping down, beyond what you have said previously about losing your effectiveness with the civilian leadership and timing the request to avoid a confrontation?

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38. Maj Gen Perry McCoy Smith, who retired from the Air Force in 1986, served with General Fogleman in the F-15 fighter wing in Bitburg, Germany, in 1977. A PhD in political science from Columbia University and the author of numerous books (most recently a biography of the hero Jimmie Dyess), General Smith is also a television analyst and teacher of leadership, ethics, and strategic thinking to corporations and nonprofit and government organizations. He lives in Augusta, Georgia.

39. General Fogleman's handwritten note, misdated "27 Jul 97," read in its entirety: "Secretary Widnall[,] I request that I be retired from active duty at the earliest possible date, but not later than 1 Sep 1997, the fifth anniversary of my promotion to my current grade/rank. Very Respectfully[,] Ron Fogleman [signature] [,] Ronald R. Fogleman[,] General, USAF[.]"

40. In June, reports reached the press that General Fogleman was telling associates privately that he might seek early retirement if General Schwalier's promotion was withdrawn. See Bradley Graham, "Cohen Near Decision on Fatal Saudi Blast," *Washington Post*, 29 June 1997, A4; Michael Hedges, "Air Force Chief Decides to Quit," *The Detroit News*, 29 July 1997, on-line, Internet, 27 November 2000, available from http://www.detnews.com/1997/nation/9707/29/07290078.htm; and Susanne M. Schafer, "Head of Air Force Asks to Step Down," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, 29 July 1997, on-line, Internet, 27 November 2000, available from http://lvrj.com/lvrj_home/1997/Jul-29-Tue-1997/news/5796823.html.

Fogleman: My statement to the troops captured my perspective in very general terms.[41] I felt out of step—the QDR, discussions and decisions that I saw being made in the tank, problems with the Air Force leadership over the Kelly Flinn affair. A whole series of things convinced me that perhaps I was riding the wrong horse here. After a while, you look around and experience some serious doubts about whether you can be right and everybody else is wrong.

Kohn: Are there guidelines under which military leaders working directly for the highest civilians can—appropriately—request early retirement? Did you consider the precedent you might be setting and try to think through what is proper and what is improper in our system of government?

Fogleman: I thought it through to this extent: when you reach that level, you are a product of all your years, and hopefully one of the reasons you are appointed is that people recognize that you possess some kind of internal moral compass and some expertise in the profession of arms in a democracy. I was not thinking about trying to establish some future norm; I was thinking about it more in terms of my own personal views and perspectives on the substance of my service as chief of staff. I think I was selected because folks thought I knew something about the business and that I stood for certain values. When you reach a point in your tenure where (1) you think you've accomplished most of the things that you set out to do and (2) you begin to see evidence that your values and your advice, your expertise, are not valued by those in charge. . . . Having spent three tours in Washington, I have watched how people can be gracefully continued in a position but just frozen out of any kind of effective participation. Knowing how bad that is for an institution, it is better to step aside and let the leadership appoint someone who they are more comfortable with, who will be able to represent the institution and play in the arena.

Kohn: Why did you choose a retirement ceremony in Colorado rather than in Washington, D.C.?

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41. The entire statement, written personally by General Fogleman and dated 30 July 1997 but released on 28 July, was published in *Air Force Times,* 11 August 1997, 15:

> As my tenure as your chief of staff ends, I want to tell you what an honor and a privilege it has been to represent everyone in the United States Air Force.
>
> The timing of my announcement was driven by the desire to defuse the perceived confrontation between myself and the secretary of defense over his impending decision on the Khobar Towers terrorist attack. The decision to retire was made after considerable deliberation over the past several weeks.
>
> On one level, I've always said that my serving as the chief of staff was a "tour" not a "sentence" and that I would leave when I made all the contributions that I could. After I accepted this position in 1994, I met with other senior leaders of the Air Force to discuss our goals for my tenure. We wanted to take care of the troops and their families, to stabilize the force, to set a course for modernization and to develop a new strategic vision. During some difficult and challenging times we have worked hard to accomplish that and more. Certainly there is more to be done, but the framework of the plan and the leadership [are] in place to move forward with the support and efforts of the magnificent men and women of our Air Force.
>
> On another level, military service is the only life I have ever known. My stock in trade after 34 years of service is my military judgment and advice. After serving as chief of staff for almost three years, my values and sense of loyalty to our soldiers, sailors, Marines and especially our airmen led me to the conclusion that I may be out of step with the times and some of the thinking of the establishment.
>
> This puts me in an awkward position. If I were to continue to serve as chief of staff of the Air Force and speak out, I could be seen as a divisive force and not a team player. I do not want the Air Force to suffer for my judgment and convictions. In my view this would happen if I continue as your chief. For these reasons I have decided to retire and devote more time to personal interests and my family . . . but the Air Force will always be in my thoughts.
>
> Miss Jane and I have met a lot of wonderful American service men and women—active duty, Guard, Reserve, civilians and family members—and they will continue to be a part of our lives. We have been proud to represent the men and women of the United States Air Force around the globe and to serve in the finest Air Force in the world. God bless and keep you all as you continue to serve this great nation.

Fogleman: Well, first, I was in Colorado [establishing residence after leaving Washington on terminal leave] and, second, I was the first Air Force chief of staff to graduate from the Academy. It seemed to complete a circle for me.

Kohn: The location was not a statement about not wanting the Washington establishment to be present at your retirement?

Fogleman: No, it really wasn't.

Kohn: Why have you remained silent about leaving until now? Do you plan to write anything or grant other interviews?

Fogleman: No I don't, particularly, and I have grave misgivings about this interview. Perhaps, some day, I may want to write something, but I am not sure that (1) I would be able to present this in a way that made any sense, and (2) I do not consider myself to be bearing any particular cross. I don't believe anybody out there is breathlessly awaiting the Ron Fogleman story. That's just sort of my take on all of this. This may be a story that does not need to be told.

Kohn: Reflect on the pressures in the Office of Chief of Staff in general. Would you do anything differently in your approach, style, or relationships in the office as you look back upon it now?

Fogleman: It's kind of interesting. I don't know if I would categorize this as the pressures of the office, but I had never really thought about the fact that the senior military guy in a service finds himself in a unique position. As you come up through the ranks, if you are the A Flight commander and somebody screws up in A Flight, you are responsible for that. But you are also in a position to take some direct action to try to fix that; the squadron is not necessarily harmed by what happened in A Flight, nor the wing or higher echelons. Think of it at every level. If you are the squadron commander, or the wing commander, the responsibility is finite, and the impact of decisions or disciplinary actions or whatever is always finite, all the way up through and including commanding a major command. In other words, as you look at the institution, if you happen to be in C Flight and someone messed up in A Flight, you felt a little sorry for the A Flight commander, but there was never any blow to you personally, or to your beliefs. When I was the Air Mobility Command commander and I read something about an event in Air Combat Command or Materiel Command, I thought, "I'm sure glad that's not happening in my command; I wonder what I can do to help them." The problem is for that commander. But for the chief of staff of the Air Force, no matter where something happens within your institution, it's a personal blow for you. When you see both accurate and inaccurate representations of events in the media, it's a different kind of feeling.

The Washington routine never pressured me greatly. I knew when I went there that my job was to deal with the Washington scene. That was my job. As I moved from one position to another in my career, I tried to read the job description, bring to bear all the expertise that I developed through the years, and apply it to the current job and not worry about the fact that I'm no longer wearing a G suit, or in the case of the chief of staff, no longer in command. And so Miss Jane and I, I don't think, found it onerous from that perspective.

Kohn: You felt you were prepared for the job? Three tours in Washington, having the historical perspective, ready both by experience and personality.

Fogleman: I never felt any trepidation from that perspective. I remember a social occasion when General Piotrowski was the Ninth Air Force commander.[42] Someone was flattering him and asked, "Well, General Pete, what did you do to prepare yourself to be the Ninth Air Force commander? How did you do that?" General Piotrowski thought for a moment and then replied, "I did it one day at a time." I think that's how you find yourself in whatever job you are in; you prepare yourself one day at a time.

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42. Gen John L. Piotrowski commanded Ninth Air Force from October 1982 to July 1985 as a lieutenant general and then was promoted to four stars to serve as vice chief of staff of the Air Force and commander of US Space Command. He retired in March 1990.

Kohn: My last question is a tough one, Ron. You have been a very respected and popular chief. But there are people in the force who are unhappy with your decision to step down. They disagree with you, feel a sense of loss and in some very few cases, perhaps, even a sense of betrayal. They—officer and enlisted—identified with you, believed that you were in step. If you think you were out of step, then they think they are out of step also. How are they supposed to carry on? Do you have any thoughts for them?

Fogleman: I may not have a good answer. But I go back to our ethic that says we serve on two levels. First, we serve as part of a profession: service before self, integrity, strive for excellence in all that you do. From this perspective, the answer is that it doesn't matter what happens. You ignore it. You keep soldiering on, you just keep slugging away. But we also serve on a personal level. Unless you really believe, and feel, that you are continuing to contribute to the Air Force and thus to the country and to the national defense, when you begin to believe that your continued service is detrimental to the Air Force, the pressure is in the opposite direction. Then the institution becomes more important than the individual, and, looking at the core value of service before self, the choice becomes staying another year and going through the motions or stepping down. In my heart, on the personal level and on the professional level, I concluded that my continued service was not in the best interest of the Air Force, in Washington where I was serving, given my beliefs, and considering the advice I was offering to our national leadership.

It is not worthy for a great State to fight for a cause which has nothing to do with its own interest.

—Otto von Bismarck, 1850