

United States General Accounting Office

GAO

History Program

January 1990

Thomas D. Morris

GAO, 1970-1975, 1980-1982



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Preface

The General Accounting Office (GAO) was established by the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921. Since then, new legislation and modified policies have been adopted that enable GAO to meet the needs of the Congress as it comes to grips with increasingly complex governmental programs and activities.

GAO has a History Program within its Office of Policy to ensure that the basis for policy decisions and other important events are systematically recorded for posterity. The program should benefit the Congress, future Comptrollers General, other present and future GAO officials, GAO's in-house training efforts, and scholars of public administration.

A primary source of historical data is the written record in official government files. A vital supplement contributing to a better understanding of past actions is the oral history component of the program. Key governmental officials who were in a position to make decisions and redirect GAO's efforts are being interviewed to record their observations and impressions. Modern techniques make it possible to record their statements on videotapes or audiotapes that can be distributed to a wider audience, supplemented by written transcripts.

Thomas D. Morris served as a senior official in the United States General Accounting Office from 1970-1975 and again from 1980-1982. As a Special Assistant to the Comptroller General, he played a major role in the reorganization of 1971-1972, and later as an Assistant Comptroller General, he had responsibility for four operating divisions and subsequently for management services. When he returned to GAO in 1980, he again assisted in reorganizing GAO's structure for defense work.

On July 27, 1989, present and former GAO officials (see p. vi) interviewed Mr. Morris on audiotape at GAO. Although a number of editorial changes have been made, GAO has tried to preserve the flavor of the spoken word.

Copies of the transcript are available to GAO officials and other interested parties.



Charles A. Bowsler
Comptroller General
of the United States

Thomas D. Morris



Biographical Information

Thomas D. Morris

Thomas D. Morris grew up in Tennessee and graduated with a major in philosophy from the University of Tennessee in 1934. His long and varied government career began at the Tennessee Valley Authority, where he started as a messenger boy. After service in the Navy during World War II with the Navy Management Engineering Staff, he joined the consulting firm of Cresap, McCormick & Paget, where his duties included work for the first and second Hoover Commissions. In 1956-1957, he served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense in several positions, including Deputy Assistant Secretary for Supply and Logistics. From 1959 to 1961, he was Assistant Director for Management and Organization in the Bureau of the Budget and, from 1961 to 1969, he served in the Pentagon as an Assistant Secretary of Defense, first for Installations and Logistics and later for Manpower.

Mr. Morris's GAO service began in October 1970 when he became a Special Assistant to the Comptroller General. In February 1971, he was designated Assistant to the Comptroller General for Management Services, and in April 1972, he became Assistant Comptroller General with oversight responsibility for four operating divisions. When he left GAO in November 1975, he was Assistant Comptroller General for Management Services.

Between 1975 and 1980, he held several positions, including service as the first Inspector General in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and as Commissioner of Federal Supply at the General Services Administration.

He returned to GAO in 1980 as a Special Assistant to the Comptroller General, helping reorganize GAO's defense work. Since leaving GAO a second time in 1982, he has worked as a management consultant.

Among his many other activities, Mr. Morris has been a long-time member of the American Society for Public Administration and the National Academy of Public Administration.

Interviewers

Henry Eschwege

Henry Eschwege retired in March 1986 after almost 30 years of service in GAO under three Comptrollers General. He held increasing responsibilities in the former Civil Division and became the Director of GAO's Resources and Economic Development Division upon its creation in 1972. He remained the Director after the Division was renamed the Community and Economic Development Division. In 1982, he was appointed Assistant Comptroller General for Planning and Reporting.

Werner Grosshans

Werner Grosshans became Director of the Office of Policy in December 1986. He began his diversified career as a government auditor in 1958 in the San Francisco Regional Office and held positions of increased responsibility; he was appointed Assistant Regional Manager in 1967. In July 1970, he transferred to the U.S. Postal Service as Assistant Regional Chief Inspector for Audits. In this position, he was responsible for the audits in the 13 western states. In October 1972, he returned to GAO to the Logistics and Communications Division. In 1980, he was appointed Deputy Director of the Procurement, Logistics, and Readiness Division and, in 1983, he was appointed Director of Planning in the newly created National Security and International Affairs Division. In 1985, he became Director of the Office of Program Planning where he remained until going to the Office of Policy.

Roger R. Trask

Roger R. Trask became Chief Historian of GAO in July 1987. After receiving his Ph.D. in History from the Pennsylvania State University, he taught between 1959 and 1980 at several colleges and universities, including Macalester College and the University of South Florida; at both of these institutions, he served as Chairman of the Department of History. He is the author or editor of numerous books and articles, mainly in the foreign policy and defense areas. He began his career in the federal government as Chief Historian of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (1977-1978). In September 1980, he became the Deputy Historian in the Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, where he remained until his appointment in GAO.

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Abbreviations

ADP	automatic data processing
AFMD	Accounting and Financial Management Division
AU	American University
BLR	basic legislative requirements
BOB	Bureau of the Budget
CAMIS	Consolidated Administrative Management Information System
COGP	Commission on Government Procurement
DLA	Defense Logistics Agency
DSA	Defense Supply Agency
FGMSD	Financial and General Management Studies Division
FPCD	Federal Personnel and Compensation Division
GAO	General Accounting Office
GGD	General Government Division
GMR	general management reviews
GSA	General Services Administration
HEW	Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
ICAF	Industrial College of the Armed Forces
IPE	Institute for Program Evaluation
LCD	Logistics and Communications Division
MASAD	Mission Analysis and Systems Acquisition Division
NAPA	National Academy of Public Administration
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NSIAD	National Security and International Affairs Division
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
PAD	Program Analysis Division
PLRD	Procurement, Logistics, and Readiness Division
PSAD	Procurement and Systems Acquisition Division
S&I	Surveys and Investigations
TRADOC	U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command
TVA	Tennessee Valley Authority

Interview With Thomas D. Morris

Introduction

Mr. Eschwege

Good morning, Tom Morris. Nice to see you back at GAO. I kind of feel you've never really left, and you're still helping us and advising us on occasion.

You, of course, know Werner Grosshans, who is the Director of the Office of Policy, and Dr. Roger Trask, who is the Chief Historian at GAO.

I'm glad you could come here on this Thursday, July 27. We'd like to have an informal chat with you about your activities, primarily while you were at GAO, and some of your other activities involving the federal government. GAO has a broad interest in government activities, as you know, and the management of government, which I think is one of your greatest areas of expertise.

Biographical Information

Mr. Morris

Before we get into anything very substantive, I thought you might want to give us just a little bit of background on your early days in Tennessee on up to the time you came to GAO.

Well, I went to the University of Tennessee, where I received my liberal arts training. I majored in philosophy, which I've always respected as a way to teach people to think.

TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority] was just opening up, so I got into government work right out of college, as a messenger boy, and have loved government ever since.

From there, I went on into industry for about 3 years, before World War II, and had an opportunity to join the Navy staff under [James V.] Forrestal, who formed a small group called the Office of the Management Engineer, where a group of us worked for about 4 years.

Then out of that group came the formation of a new consulting firm called Cresap, McCormick & Paget, and I was its first staff member. I stayed with the firm 12 years. We did a lot of work for the government because of the background and the interest of the individuals in the firm, particularly for the first and second Hoover Commissions. That led me to go back into Defense with a Hoover consultant named Reuben Robertson, who became Deputy Secretary under Charlie [Charles E.] Wilson. I stayed with Robertson and went with him back to his company in

Ohio until Elmer Staats, whom I had met in my previous work in Washington, called me one day and asked me if I'd come to the old Bureau of the Budget (BOB) as the Chief of Management and Organization Studies. That was in 1959. I did join Mr. Staats until the Kennedy regime came in. [Robert S.] McNamara came across my name somewhere and asked me to come over to the Pentagon to work for him, which I did throughout the 1960s.

I saw Elmer rather frequently during that period in his Budget Bureau hat. I didn't see him at all in his GAO hat until 1970, when, as your record shows, I was fortunate to come to work over here.

Mr. Eschwege

Besides Elmer Staats, did you know anybody else in GAO before you came here?

Mr. Morris

I had, of course, in the Pentagon, constant contact with the GAO folks like Ken Fasick and Jim Hammond and Frank Weitzel, whom I got to know a little bit. They were all good contacts. McNamara was very high on quick action on GAO reports. That was one of his philosophies. All of us who worked for him picked it up pretty quickly.

First Appointment at GAO, 1970

Mr. Eschwege

So in 1970 you came to GAO. I assume Elmer approached you about that. How did he go about doing that?

Mr. Morris

Well, I had gone out to industry and spent 2 years after I left the Pentagon in 1969 and found life in industry very uninspiring after being an Assistant Secretary for the better part of 8 years. I did a lot of traveling abroad, and one weekend in London I wrote Elmer a note saying, "Gee, I'd love to come back to the government." He replied and said, "Come on in and let's talk."

So I talked with him and Bob Keller and with Jim Webb, whom he wanted me to sit down with—he leaned on Jim in those days for advice—and from that meeting came my joining GAO as a staff person.

Mr. Eschwege

Did Elmer outline for you what your role would be at that point in time?

Mr. Morris

No. I just wanted to come to work for him, and I think my title was Special Assistant. He knew me as a project person; that's what I'd been all my life.

Study of GAO Organization

Mr. Eschwege

But he did, if I recall correctly—and I had some early contact with you—give you an initial assignment that, I guess, lasted about 6 months, to kind of make a very broad survey. How did you go about doing that?

Mr. Morris

Well, initially, when I came in—I guess in the first 2 or 3 months—he just let me get acquainted, mainly with the administrative side of the house: the personnel shop, the administrative management shop, and so on. But, if you'll recall, there was being run in those days what was called the "executive forums" that Leo Herbert had developed. I fell in love with them and must have attended four or five in a row during the first few months. It was a wonderful introduction to GAO and to its culture.

At the end of that period, Elmer called me in one day and said he'd been thinking about the proper structure for the future of GAO during the remainder of his term. He'd been in office about 5 years, and he had very much in mind what he wanted to achieve, which he told me only very briefly. But he said, "What I want you to do now is to get out into the organization, both headquarters and field, at all levels, and get to understand the people and their aspirations. I don't want a management study in the sense of problem finding. I want you to get acquainted with the organization and its culture so that you can help me plan the strategy of restructuring when the time comes to do that."

So I did spend the next 6 months in a delightful interview period, and, if you recall, you were my very first.

Mr. Eschwege

Yes.

Mr. Morris

I've forgotten how many people I saw. It must have been a couple hundred, and it was a good listening experience at all levels. The field I found especially intriguing in those days. It's a special kind of management challenge in GAO.

That was the beginning of the organization planning period, so to speak.

Mr. Eschwege

Yes. Would you call it a survey of the organization or—

Mr. Morris

Not really, as much as fact-finding for the boss. It was more a matter of taking the pulse of the organization and its aspirations and its biases, if it had any, and determining whether it was prepared for the kind of change Elmer was thinking of.

Elmer had done this type of project in the old Budget Bureau. He had run the restructuring of BOB back in the 1950s and 1960s as I recall, and Elmer believed, as a professional man would, in what I call a “flat organization.” He wanted more access to the key program management leadership throughout the structure. He wanted better program planning, which he impressed on everybody. He wanted broader reviews—especially program evaluation reviews—and he wanted more functional approaches to some subjects like personnel. This was similar to what he had done in the BOB restructuring.

So I knew those things, or he pointed them out to me, as matters to have in mind as I listened to people and asked them questions about their own ideas and aspirations for the future of GAO.

Dr. Trask

As you talked to all these people, 200 or so, did you keep any records or did you keep notes for yourself?

Mr. Morris

I always made notes, but I don't have any today. If I had known that there was going to be this project, I would certainly have kept them.

Mr. Eschwege

But from your recollection, could you just give us a little bit of an idea of what your impressions were? You know, we're not just looking for the good things. We're looking to see where you felt that it might be possible to make some improvements and changes.

Mr. Morris

Well, as I say, my goal was to take the pulse, so to speak, and to advise Elmer. I recall that in my report back to him, he didn't press me at all. Several months after I started, he and Keller had me in the office for about 2 hours and I debriefed them on what I had done. I told Elmer that I thought the time was right to start planning the kind of flat organization—I don't know whether I used that word but that was his goal that he had in mind—and that I felt that it was a matter of planning the strategy of conversion.

He had in those days, as my little article in the Harvard Business Review pointed out, a structure that was sort of "all Gaul is divided into three parts": civil, defense, and international. But Elmer wanted to get down to the program level. He wanted to talk to key GAO managers about their plans to examine programs, and that's the reason he wanted a structure that gave him access to them on a continuing basis.

I was satisfied after several months that it could be done; that Elmer's leadership would be highly respected; that the old-timers, like A. T. Samuelson and others and I, weren't going to be around terribly long anyhow; and that Elmer ought to start getting close to the younger echelon that was going to be his leadership in the next decade, so to speak.

Mr. Eschwege

Now that addressed the operational part of GAO, but then you also looked at the staff support and the kind of information that was available to Elmer and others for managing the organization.

Mr. Morris

Briefly. These were, of course, things that he himself was pushing on. I didn't have to tell him very much about those. His program planning—and he brought Bill Conrardy in, as I recall, to get that rolling—was one of his key initiatives.

We got Clerio Pin in to head up the administrative management side. Getting better statistics on outputs and productivity was something that I watched for him constantly, to articulate to him the messages that we got out of those data. But that was just an instinctive need that he, as a manager, had.

Appointment as Assistant to the Comptroller General for Management Services

Mr. Eschwege

Actually, after that 6-month period, you got another title. You were Assistant to the Comptroller General for Management Services. Does that mean that from then on—that was in February 1971—you paid particular attention to this management area and the information systems, the services that were provided by those staff people? I'm talking

about assignment management, activity measures, library services and space, and all that sort of thing.

Mr. Morris

I played two different roles during about a 2-year period. Elmer got from the Hill authorization to appoint several Assistant Comptrollers General. Mose [Ellsworth H.] Morse was one, Sammy [Adolph T. Samuelson] was one, Phil [Phillip S.] Hughes was one. He gave me one of those titles. He assigned the duties.

The first thing he asked me to do, as I recall, after the reorganization period (and that was about 6 months after my study, the time this committee required to do its work, and I'd like to come back to that in a minute) was to watch over the four functional management divisions.

Mr. Eschwege

Yes. Well, that already gets into the reorganization. But was not there a period before that when Clerio Pin came and helped you with that?

Mr. Morris

Yes. Before and after that.

Mr. Eschwege

Two years later, you went sort of back into that?

Mr. Morris

Yes. Without any very special mission or urgency except to be an overseer for Elmer of that cluster of functions of personnel, management systems, administrative management, budget, and accounting for GAO. These were things I had an interest in over the years, and Elmer knew that and just wanted to use my background, with advisers and helpers to get on with the job, like Dick Brown and our librarian whom we brought in. That was a new function, and again it came out of Elmer's mind. He saw the need and he said, "Let's get with it and form a library."

Mr. Eschwege

One particular thing that I think you contributed to GAO that, in my opinion, is very important is that we stopped managing by staff positions and more so by staff-years.

Mr. Morris

That was an interesting episode in our work that Clerio and I and Dick Brown tried to do. We were getting criticized on the Hill every year for the shortfall in the use of our payroll budget. We typically fell short 5 to 6 to 7 percent, and Senator [Ernest F.] Hollings, as I recall, was particularly a critic of this. The Congress automatically cut our budget each year by this amount. Elmer said, "Let's stop this. Let's manage so that we make 100-percent use or get as close as we can." So we spent a good many months learning how to manage by staff-years, which was the

technique we developed. We succeeded pretty well. I've forgotten what we reached, but it was about a 2- or 3-percent shortfall.

The interesting conclusion to the story is that the next year we went before our budget committee and we proudly said, "Now last year we didn't have a shortfall. We used our resources fully." I guess it was Senator Hollings who spoke up and said, "That's not what we had in mind. We don't want you to use a staff-year that you don't need to use. You forced yourself to use all these." But it proved to be an effective management tool.

The Staats Reorganization of 1971-1972

Dr. Trask

You have alluded, in talking about your initial assignment and your study of people in personnel and so on, to a major reorganization that took place in 1971 and 1972.

We'd like you to talk about that now. There was a committee on reorganization, which you were involved in. What actually was the mandate of that committee?

Mr. Morris

His major objectives, which I tried to point out in my Harvard article, were to structure an organization where he, as the top leader, had direct access to and could work with the heads of the key programmatic areas.

Civil, defense, and international gave him a sort of geographic contact, but not a contact with Henry Eschwege's areas of interest, Greg Ahart's, Dexter Peach's, and so on. And he said, in effect, "I can tolerate a flat organization, one where, as the top boss, I can work directly with 10 or 12 program heads." So he asked this group of old hands to get together and come up with a plan that they thought would make good sense.

His other prescription was the functional approach in certain areas, like financial management, personnel, procurement, and logistics and communications. (The old LCD [Logistics and Communications Division], a name Elmer himself invented, was his idea).

Then that group reported back to him one Friday, as I recall, and he said, "I want to meet with you next Tuesday." And he worked over the weekend writing the directive he was going to implement in the organization plan. Then he handed it out at that meeting and asked us each to read it. It was quite short, about three pages as I recall, and he got accolades from Mose Morse and the others at the table. It was a good plan, and that started the ball rolling.

Dr. Trask

Did he feel before this reorganization that he was, in effect, too aloof from the organization or uninformed about a lot of details that he felt he ought to know about?

Mr. Morris

Yes, I think so. This was an experience he had had in the Budget Bureau, and it's an experience managers in professional organizations frequently have. I've been in a number of them and made studies. In such a management structure, you're not really driving the real strategic planning of the organization and are not close enough to its actual programmatic operations if you're two or three levels removed.

So he wanted to get close and he knew he could tolerate it. As a manager, he could afford to have 12 people reporting to him.

Dr. Trask

The organization there when he came was that essentially put in place by Joseph Campbell.

Mr. Morris

And that was sort of a typical organization for many structures, one that has a series of pyramids, so to speak.

- Dr. Trask Do you think he felt, right from the beginning, that this organization was defective, given his way of approaching things?
- Mr. Morris I think that he probably did, because he had lived through many years of the very same experience over in the Budget Bureau, and he had done there, through his own self-study, what he wanted to get done here, and did it in his own quiet, skillful way. He just took several years to do it, and, I think, he did it very wisely; he needed to understand the GAO culture very thoroughly before he moved.
- Dr. Trask Did the plan that the committee came up with and that he also developed address all his problems or all the shortcomings that were in his mind?
- Mr. Morris My general answer, looking back today, is that I think it came very close, because it reflected his wishes very closely. Bob Keller lived with him day to day and knew what Elmer was thinking, and Elmer wrote the directive to implement the plan.
- Dr. Trask Did the Committee on Reorganization serve any practical purpose then? I mean he had the plan in mind, apparently.
- Mr. Morris Well, he had the objectives in mind, and he never told any of us, that I'm aware of, what his detailed desires were in terms of division clusters and division names. He wanted that to come from his organization. He may have told Keller more than he told most of us.
- But he took the committee's work and, with a little tailoring and tinkering here and there, pretty well bought what they recommended, which wasn't too difficult, because, as I recall, Henry, the organization of the Civil Division was very similar to the divisional structure that emerged when Civil was replaced by the programmatic divisions.
- Mr. Eschwege We were actually cut in three, but we're still kind of performing the kinds of functions that he was talking about.
- Mr. Morris Yes. So there was a logic already in place, and the old Budget Bureau had parallels that gave guidance as to how best to restructure.
- The toughest area was defense, which Werner and I were involved in, because Elmer's interest (and I supported him) was to go more for the functional breakout of procurement, personnel, finance, and logistics and communications to get a governmentwide approach by a group of

GAO professionals who would specialize in that functional area, not confine it to defense, although the Defense Department would represent 75 or 80 percent of some of those areas, in terms of dollars.

So we were experimenting, I guess one would have to acknowledge, in the way that arrangement came out, and it's been changed in important respects since. It's reverted toward some of the earlier formulations. But this was one that Elmer wanted to try, and I certainly encouraged him.

Mr. Eschwege

May I just ask you one question on this. You've already said, "Elmer took his time doing this." He was almost 6 years into his term when he implemented this. It seems like, even for a person who has a 15-year term, a long time to get into this. I had suspected, and I obviously am not correct on this, that he was first trying to cure some of these problems just through the planning process, as opposed to reorganizing. In order to get more exposure to the people, he brought them in droves into the briefing room and they talked about the plans.

Mr. Morris

Well, he would have to really answer the question, to be honest about it. My intuition told me that he had a very wise strategy in his mind from the very beginning. Doing the planning part first was by far the most important. I'm sure that's the priority his mind set, and I would, looking back today, agree with it. If you get your plans right, the likelihood of success with any structure is going to be much greater.

And his ability to bring in consultants from the outside and the use of panels, I thought, were remarkable. I had never seen these things done with such skill anywhere. And the way in which GAO's name became an automatic calling card, an invitation, an attraction, so to speak, to people both in and out of government to "come give us your advice," I thought, was just fantastic. It was an education for everybody, and that was part of his early strategies of orientation and indoctrination.

Then he felt, after all that had happened, that it was time to do a little more formalized restructuring in institution building, so to speak, which I described. The Harvard article I wrote tried to pick out three case studies, and Elmer illustrates this one better than any person I've ever known.

Dr. Trask

I would like to throw in another short question here. Did he anticipate any significant opposition to this reorganization? Was there that concern? Did that have anything to do with the kind of deliberate pace here?

Mr. Morris

This was part of his strategy. First he took several years to get his planning ideas moving along. He happened on me and asked me to go spend solid time, over several months, at all levels of the organization in listening to people. This had been my expertise in the consulting world, so, presumably, I was going to be able to help him do this.

Then he had the committee strategy, which brought all the key players together and made them fashion the product that was going to achieve his objectives. It's rare that you've got a leader who understands things so thoroughly and has the time to do what Elmer did.

Dr. Trask

So a part of the process was preparing people for a change.

Mr. Morris

Absolutely. No question. And the problem we're having today in Defense, for example, since the 1985 study of Packard, is just this. There's been, I'm afraid, no preparation, or far too little, down in the ranks. They've tried to just impose something without thinking it through. Elmer understood that you don't restructure a major organization that way.

Dr. Trask

It's probably easier with an organization of 5,000, though, than 3,000,000, as the Defense Department is.

Mr. Morris

Yes, it is, particularly when you've also got a term of office where you're going to be around for a while.

Mr. Grosshans

Tom, I want to come back to a point you made earlier about the triumvirate that existed as the civil, defense, and international areas. You talked quite a bit about your involvement in the restructuring of defense and civil. But, to a large extent, the international, in this reorganization, remained about the same. What was the reason for that? In other words, why wasn't that folded in as part of that?

Mr. Morris

Again, to be honest, I'm not sure that I can give you a studied answer. But that cluster seemed to stand on its own feet, from Elmer's perspective, and I certainly tended to share that feeling in my novice view of GAO in that 6-month interview period. You didn't need to restructure international. The proposition of combining it with defense and making

Mr. Grosshans

Did Elmer's concern on the defense side have a heavy influence on how you went about realigning defense? Now some of us working in that area had the feeling that he was much more comfortable in taking a risk on the civil side and calling it the way he saw it, than on the defense side. In other words, he seemed to be very reluctant to get into some of what he perceived to be the military judgment area. Did that influence at all what happened in 1972?

Mr. Morris

The philosophy—as I understood it, going back into GAO's history—was that GAO did not get into military planning and strategy problems. We looked at its management of resources, primarily. And I had been raised under McNamara in the Pentagon. We had a similar philosophy and culture in the installations and logistics shop and the manpower shop, which I headed. They were devoted to answering such questions as “How do we get people and supplies and weapons, and how do we maintain them and best utilize them?” Those were the things that Elmer readily regarded as being his functional objectives at that time.

Mr. Grosshans

Yes. I don't want to get too deeply into that, because we could debate that for the rest of the day.

Mr. Morris

That's right.

Mr. Grosshans

But what one calls doctrine or military judgment, to a large extent, also depends on how comfortable one is. Take, for example, a particular area on the civil side, where we basically challenged the need for a particular program, like the Job Corps or any other that we could name, I mean that is judgment on the wisdom of setting up that program. You might say it's a judgment question on how the program was structured and so on. So, to a large extent, it seems like we're much more willing to question some of that on the civil side than on the military side. However, a lot of the areas that we got into on the military side, in fact, did question whether that was a prudent way of doing it. That is not to say that we were going to develop strategy as to how to fight a war, necessarily.

Mr. Morris

Yes.

Establishment of the Financial and General Management Studies Division

Mr. Grosshans

Let me just maybe get a little more from you as to how this evolved. Part of that reorganization took place in the middle of 1971. The Financial and General Management Studies Division [FGMSD] was formed before the April 1972 main announcement on the remainder of the reorganization.

What was the rationale, as best as you can recall, for that? Was there a particular urgency to try to get that part of GAO realigned?

Mr. Morris

This was in the mill, so to speak, when I came aboard in late 1970. That is, it was being talked about. And what the driving forces had been and were, I'm not really sure, except that this plan was emerging. And I guess in my first work for Elmer, I did talk at length with Mose Morse and others to arrive at what Elmer wanted to create as a Financial and General Management Studies Division. There was more attention being given to accounting systems reviews and accounting systems approvals and ADP [automatic data processing].

Mr. Grosshans

Keith Marvin's shop was included in there.

The Productivity Issue

Mr. Morris

Also included was Elmer's great love of productivity, which I became deeply involved in.

Mr. Grosshans

I want to talk a little more about that.

Mr. Morris

All right. And that was part of that FGMSD at a later time.

Mr. Grosshans

Brian Usilaner at that time was involved in the external productivity issues.

Mr. Morris

Brian and Don Kull. We brought two or three men in who had special expertise in that area.

Mr. Grosshans You may recall that in my group, material management, we brought in Fred Haynes—

Mr. Morris Absolutely, I do.

Mr. Grosshans —and set up a small group of productivity types that dealt primarily with the internal government operations. As you see it today or reflect upon that, what prompted us to separate the external and internal?

Mr. Morris I don't think we did, Werner. The original Productivity Measurement Project that Don Kull and Brian Usilaner worked on was internal to government. Now you mean internal to GAO?

Mr. Grosshans No. We focused primarily on how well the government worked. They looked more to the broader—

Mr. Morris They looked at all agencies. I was involved in this day to day for many, many months. And, as to the measurable aspects, the Postal Service was our first model. It has the greatest productivity measurement system in history. We looked at the Social Security Administration and the Internal Revenue Service, and then we gradually got into other agencies, where measurement was very difficult, except in compartments. DOD has a lot of measurable activities, particularly in the supply and logistics area. You and Fred, I thought, made a wonderful contribution to that area. I've kept in touch with him over at Commerce. Of course, this is still an area of great interest now.

Internal Response to the Staats Reorganization

Mr. Grosshans I want to come back to that later, but sticking with the reorganization, once we got the FGMSD side in place, then in April of 1972, of course, like you indicated, we announced the realignment. What was the mood in GAO at the time? From the way I hear you describe this, the foundation apparently had been laid and most people seemed to be on board. But wasn't there a certain amount of uneasiness? I mean anytime you make changes, people are jockeying for positions and so on. How did you cope with that?

Morris and Samuelson Roles as Assistant Comptroller General

Mr. Grosshans

Tell us a little bit about the roles of you and Sammy. Maybe Sammy was more impacted than you were, because he was running one-third or one-half of GAO and all of a sudden, you know, he was kind of put in this position where he had to oversee generally what was going on. And you were in a similar position on the defense side. Tell us a little bit about how that worked from your view.

Mr. Morris

Well, I think that each of us undoubtedly proceeded in our own fashion and for different reasons. Sammy, of course, had an extensive background and had grown with the organization and its people. And, I guess, Sammy was looking toward the day when he was going to start phasing down anyhow and retiring. That's what I assume. I never talked to him about it. My own view of my role was that it was to be that of a catalyst, a communication link, an adviser, and a facilitator, both to Elmer and to the division heads—you, Fred [Shafer], Dick Gutmann, Hy Krieger, and so on. I didn't have any staff. I had one young assistant, as I recall—

Mr. Grosshans

Chip [George] Breen.

Mr. Morris

And earlier than that, Joe Lund had been my assistant. And I spent a lot of personal time on the productivity project. I had to write the reports on productivity. And I also worked on special projects for Elmer. He was interested in the American Society of Public Administration and its affairs, and he wanted me to spend about a quarter of my time, for a while, on helping it develop as an organization.

So, in a sense, I was a utility and a project free-wheeler, available to do anything that at the time seemed to be desirable and necessary. And Elmer understood that role, as far as I was concerned. He supported it. That's what he wanted me to be.

The other thought I always had in mind was that I was going to step out of that role at the time that made the best sense. And it was in 1974 that Sam Hughes and I sat down one morning and said, "The time has come to get out of the line," and let Elmer work directly (as he learned how to do) with these division heads.

And we went to Elmer and told him the time had come. He didn't disagree.

Mr. Eschwege

The organization chart really didn't disclose that kind of relationship. It looks like a straight line; every division had to go through either one of you Assistant Comptrollers General to get to Elmer. But that was not your understanding of how it went.

Mr. Morris

No. When Elmer had his weekly staff meetings, the people at the table who did the talking were the division heads, not Sammy and I. We occasionally had some comments to make. When we had the issue area planning sessions, it was the division heads who reported on plans that they had developed, and I did not, in my role, clear these reports.

I frequently got into individual cases, which Elmer had a special interest in, or which I did for some reason. But my concept was that I was in the line to do what Elmer wanted done, to be a facilitator, a communicator, and a helper to get this structure fully in place.

As far as I was concerned, that was a role I could play. I understood that role and liked it. I didn't want to be a line operator in the sense of having to drive the organization. Elmer wanted to be the top influence on that kind of leadership. I wanted to help him.

Mr. Eschwege

You think your division directors understood that kind of relationship?

Mr. Morris

I'd have to ask Werner. I know today that when I talk to people like Hy Krieger, they understood it.

Mr. Grosshans

Well, you've already indicated one area where you got very close. And I think we had a lot of contacts with you in the productivity area, for example.

Mr. Morris

Yes. That was my special love.

Mr. Grosshans

There are certain areas you kept very, very close to, and others from which you distanced yourself much further.

The Planning Process

Let me just follow up one additional item that we've talked about a little bit already, and I think it was a key part of both your style of management and Elmer's. That was the planning. Yet maybe it's worthwhile to just talk a little more about what your perception was and how you read

the boss, from a standpoint of how well it was being pulled off. We did go through several stops and starts during this period on this.

You already mentioned you brought Conrardy in after [Harry] Kensky, and so on. I worked with Conrardy and so did [John D.] Heller. You may recall the two of us came up with a more detailed, longer-range type of plan. We were guinea pigs on that, but nothing really ever came of it. Most of the organization was not interested in projecting beyond the annual work plan, yet I think that's really what most of you were looking for. Why was it so hard to get at those type of issues? I think we do a much better job today. I think Chuck Bowsher has really put the planning—that longer range perspective—in place in GAO. I'm curious about how you see that.

Mr. Morris

I can't really make very much of a contribution here because this wasn't something I was heavily involved in. It, again, I think, predated my coming in. I did run into Conrardy in Seattle and in San Francisco, and I told Elmer that here was a man who had a lot of imagination and ideas about how to structure the planning process. I believe that may have led to his being brought in. I admired that whole process of evolution during the period I was here, and I've admired it since. I think we were breaking new ground. We were trying to do something that hadn't been done. It's not done well in most agencies in the government. The concept of the issue area, and the hearings within GAO itself on those issues and how they translated into projects, I thought, was a discipline that, while untried and experimental, began to pay off rather early on, even though it's been improved immensely over time.

So I think we can be very proud of getting it going as we did.

I hope that out of efforts like this, certain lessons-learned case studies can be prepared for the right audiences. This is certainly one of the key candidates on how to evolve a planning process that works in a professional structure.

Mr. Grosshans

I think that the key in this whole area is to turn it from the specific job orientation to more of "Where's the organization going?" And we seem to have had a hard time making that turn, because I think most of us got fairly comfortable with talking about the specific jobs.

Mr. Morris

Well, I just think that it was the sheer difficulty of changing habits and ways of thinking that you find in any organization. The fact that GAO had the courage to attack this and learn as it went along was the really

exciting thing to me. Just the fact that you got together and talked about future job ideas, as compared with the alternative of a job at a time flowing through (on what was it, Form 100?) made all the difference. I was surprised that we did as well as we did. I remember that when Peter Drucker came in in 1975 and made a talk, Conrardy and I spent about 2 hours with Peter (before he made that talk in the auditorium) telling him about the issue area plan. And he was really complimentary and excited about what he was hearing.

Postreorganization Assessment and Changes

Mr. Grosshans

Was there any kind of postreorganization assessment? In other words, after a couple of years or so, did we ever sit down and review as to how well we pulled this off and how well it was going?

Mr. Morris

You would have to answer that, Werner, because I left, you remember, in early 1976, and I don't recall any formal effort. And perhaps that's one of the lessons we learned. We didn't do well in that.

Mr. Grosshans

Of course, we made some changes following that. And, I think that, to a large extent, environmental issues forced us into some changes, for example, establishing the Energy and Minerals Division, PAD [Program Analysis Division], and IPE [Institute for Program Evaluation]. And then later on we'll talk a little bit about your coming back in the 1980s time frame, when we again realigned the defense area.

Mr. Morris

Well, yes. And I think that in Elmer's mind—I shouldn't put words in his mouth—his ability to sit down once a week in these planning sessions and go over the agenda, as it were, and talk face to face with top management was, in a sense, a constant opportunity for assessment. If there were any real problems, they should emerge and surface in those sessions.

Role in the Federal Personnel and Compensation Division

Mr. Grosshans

One thing I neglected to touch on is your special role in overseeing the Federal Personnel and Compensation Division. It took a while before we assigned a director. You were pinch-hitting there for quite some time. Can you shed some light on that?

Mr. Morris

Well, you simply put it in the right way. I was pinch-hitting. There was a question in Elmer's mind as to whether we needed to augment the GAO talent base with somebody who was an experienced, remarkable expert in personnel matters. And we did some recruiting. I did it personally. While we found qualified people, we didn't find people who really fit our scene well. And I thought Forrest Browne, when he stepped in, did a marvelous job. We got people like Roz Kleeman, if you recall, and the others, and that function has done very well. And Roz, as you know, is one of the most respected personnel experts in Washington, D.C., today.

But that was the only reason I held that job on an acting basis for a while.

Mr. Grosshans

Your particular interest in that area and your background in defense, I would assume, had something to do with that, too.

Mr. Morris

I guess so, particularly the military side.

Mr. Eschwege

I would like to ask one more question on the Financial and General Management Studies Division. How did you recruit people for that division?

Mr. Morris

Except for the Productivity Staff under Don Kull, I didn't personally get very much involved. As I recall, Don Scantlebury pretty much led the way, and we helped him when he wanted help. But I think we looked to him to organize.

Mr. Eschwege

I guess what I'm really getting at is that there was some concern at the time that the people, especially in the accounting area, that were transferred over there were not those that were desperately needed by that division but those that the other divisions could easily do without. Did you get that kind of a flavor out of it?

- Mr. Morris I don't remember that I did, but it's quite possible that happened. And, if it was happening, I would have probably said, "Well, I understood why, even though I didn't like it."
- Mr. Eschwege I see. Werner alluded to some adjustments that were made to the reorganization of 1972, in fact, while you were still here. We had at least two new staffs established. One was the Energy Staff, and the other one was the Budget Analysis Group under Harry Havens. Did you get involved in those, too?
- Mr. Morris Not really, except to be supportive where I could and to admire the efforts of Harry from the very first day and the things he was able to accomplish.
- Now Elmer, to his great credit, was his own organization expert, his own management expert, his own leadership expert. He kept seeing things he wanted to do, and he moved when he felt the time was right, using people like me where we could make a contribution but quietly bypassing us where we couldn't, in his view.
- Mr. Eschwege Did you know Monte Canfield and Harry Havens before they came here?
- Mr. Morris No.
- Mr. Eschwege As you mentioned earlier, you kind of volunteered to get out of the line, with respect to the divisions, in 1974. But you stayed on for a while. And, again, on paper, it looks like you went back into this so-called management area with Clerio Pin and those people.
- Mr. Morris That's correct.
- Mr. Eschwege What was your objective there in that short period?
- Mr. Morris Well, when it looked like the mission that we had seen for the Assistant Comptroller General in the reorganization phase had been accomplished, I said to Elmer, "I'd like to resume what I was doing before the reorganization and work with Clerio and Dick Brown and the others in the administrative management side and then to take projects as they come along that you want me to work on." It was that simple.

passed a statute creating the Inspector General [IG] for HEW. It was the first statutory IG in town. And Joe says, "I don't know whether this will work or not, but will you undertake it?" I said, "I'd be glad to." And it turned out to be the most interesting position I've ever had. For about 3 years, we tried all kinds of important techniques of ferreting out "fraud, abuse, and waste," as the law put it, mainly on the part of providers of HEW financial services, through the states and so on. And the function was so pleasing to Representative [L. H.] Fountain, who was the author of the IG statute, that he sponsored another bill in 1978, creating IGs in 12 agencies, and the number has continued to rise.

At the end of the period, Joe Califano upset some of the White House staff and Carter asked him to step down. When Joe left, I decided that his IG ought to leave at the same time and allow the new secretary to have her own IG, which she did. And I was asked to go over to GSA [General Services Administration] and be the Commissioner of Federal Supply in 1980, which I enjoyed doing, until the end of the year, when Elmer got hold of me and said, "I'll be retiring in 1981 and I'd appreciate it if you could spend a little time helping me assess where we stand, particularly in the defense area, if you can." Well, I was free, and gladly did it.

Return to GAO in 1980; Work in the Defense Area

Mr. Grosshans

Well, you've already touched on your coming back. Can you shed some light on how you got involved in the next realignment of the defense groups? As you know, Bob Moot studied that from June to September of 1980, and I guess your entry back into the defense area must have had some relationship to that.

Mr. Morris

If it did, I'm not aware of it, Werner. I knew Bob had been here. He and I, I'm sure, had a brief chat, but it didn't contribute much to what I saw as the task that Elmer gave me when I came back.

Mr. Grosshans

Well, when you came back, you kind of assumed the role of pulling these various defense and even ID groups kind of together. Your office was set up in a way where you had Dick Gutmann helping you on the planning and operations side and Bill Martin helping you on the field operations

relations side, and the rest of the divisions kind of looked, I guess, to you for some guidance. Is that a good way of putting it?

Mr. Morris

You've got it far too broadly. [Laughter]

What Elmer wanted to do in that transition period, getting ready for the new President and Secretary of Defense, was to see how we were structured in the defense arena particularly —under Walt Sheley, yourself, and Don Horan in FPCD. Those are the areas that I have spent a lot of time talking to people about; thinking about; asking questions about; and talking to people who had left GAO, like Jerry Stolarow. I came to the conclusion that it was time to do a little reformulating that made sense, to me anyhow, by creating MASAD [Mission Analysis and Systems Acquisition Division] and PLRD [Procurement, Logistics, and Readiness Division].

Mr. Grosshans

That's right. But the changes that we made were really quite small, when you boil it right down. What we basically did was to shift the procurement from PSAD [Procurement and Systems Acquisition Division] into PLRD and we shifted C³I, the communications area, from the Logistics and Communications Division into MASAD. So it seemed to be a relatively small change.

Mr. Morris

That was the conclusion reached. Shifting C³I was one of the more important changes, I think. But Walt Sheley had spent a lot of personal time on it and had recruited the gentleman that came in from Defense as head of that function, Warren Reed. In the procurement area, we were, maybe in my mind, doing a little groundbreaking in that we were clearly separating out the major systems area that Walt Sheley and Don Day were running and hoping to give more attention, through Bob Gilroy, to the procurement function in the civilian agency sense and the GSA-DLA [Defense Logistics Agency] sense than you do when you've got them in competition with major systems. That was the idea.

Readiness, I thought, was one of the areas that it was time we gave more stress to. But these were refinements at best, as you say.

The other thing that was done in that period, and a time I look back on with pleasure, was that Elmer sent a letter to the new Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger.

Mr. Grosshans

That's right. We're going to talk a little more about that. First, how do you assess Elmer's action just a few months before he was ready to step

down to bring about this particular realignment? Was there, as you saw it, a compelling reason to make this change at that particular time? It seemed kind of late in the game, I guess, to some of us.

Mr. Morris

Werner, to be honest, it just never entered my mind as being a problem. Elmer wanted to leave a structure as tidy as he could for his successor. And, at that time, he didn't know who it would be. And that was strictly the only motivation I saw in it, and I guess that was one of the reasons it was not done with much fanfare and didn't involve much else. In looking back, as you say, a new Comptroller General is going to have to make up his own mind what his style is to be. And, had we known it was going to be Chuck Bowsher, we might not have wanted to do anything, because of his background.

Work on the Procurement Issue

Mr. Grosshans

You touched on an area we talked about earlier—productivity. Of course, that was dear to your heart. You touched on another one just a minute ago, and that was procurement. And I recall that you got very much involved in that, and you and Bob, in essence, did the survey in this whole procurement area and laid a foundation maybe for what we have today as a procurement issue area. I remember that you and he went around and interviewed most of the key agency officials in town.

Do you want to talk just a little bit about that and why you saw this as such an emerging issue in need of GAO attention?

Mr. Morris

Well, that was not a new feeling on my part. I had felt that way about procurement from at least 1961, when I became Assistant Secretary of Defense. And I think that history bears this out, as can be seen almost daily in The Washington Post. Procurement is a highly sensitive, highly volatile area because of its size and its impact on companies all over this country and because of the fact that we've never really solved the problem of how best to manage the function and its policy, both between the Congress and the executive branch. If you'll remember, a Commission on Government Procurement, COGP we called it, was formed in 1970 by the Congress, with legislative and executive branch membership—Hoover Commission style. Elmer was a statutory member; the group spent 2 years making studies. And Paul Dembling, Bert Hall, and I, among

others, were heavily involved in those efforts. Jim Webb was a member of the Commission.

COGP persuaded Elmer of the great importance of procurement as a vital and sensitive function. And he feels that way today. That's the reason we have this group called the Procurement Round Table. We're all very seriously concerned. We haven't been able to really resolve some of these issues well enough from a public point of view. We've made some progress technically, but not enough from a public credibility point of view. I think there are many years of work ahead of us.

Mr. Grosshans

The team that you put together there, in overseeing the defense area (we already touched on some of that)—Martin and Gutmann and so on—did you design that? Or was that pretty much in place when you came back into this picture?

Mr. Morris

I frankly don't recall any great effort on my part. We had Walt Sheley and Don Day in the Major Systems area, and that was an excellent team, we thought. You and Don Horan were outstanding with an outstanding team. The work that was being done was highly respected on the Hill. Bob Gilroy I had gotten to know a little bit and think highly of, and he was motivated to want to try that procurement area, and I thought that made awfully good sense. It was an opportunity. It's nothing more mysterious than that, as I can recall.

Management Style

Mr. Grosshans

Let's talk a little bit about the management style that you brought to GAO. I guess one way to describe you might be "workaholic." How do you react to that?

Mr. Morris

Well, I've been a "workaholic," in a sense, all my life, in that I've enjoyed my work and liked the fact that hard work often paid off. I've held about 20 jobs over a career, and each job presumably was more important than the last one.

I'm essentially a staff person. I enjoy doing hands-on work, working for people like Staats and McNamara and others who like staff help and want people who can do projects pretty much from start to finish, with small teams, and do them quickly.

That's the background I brought Elmer. He knew it. He had watched me work when I was in consulting. BOB used to hire consulting firms to make studies around town. I did one at HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] in those days and one at GSA for Elmer. So that style is simply my nature.

Mr. Grosshans

You're a prolific note taker. Some of us marveled about how much you could find to take notes about in some of those meetings, and I was amazed. I never knew exactly what you did with those. But I do remember being in your office one day, and you opened your right-hand desk drawer and pulled out one of those steno note pads. You went back and found notes from exactly that meeting that we were talking about, and you read back to us the notes that you had taken.

So, apparently, this is something that you have followed in your career, taking very careful notes and being able to find them. A lot of us take notes, but we cannot always find them again.

Mr. Morris

Well, that's one of the things you learn as a young person, in the management/consulting kind of work. Interviews, taking notes, and having recall for the client are all part of the game.

Mr. Grosshans

You did a lot of other things also that we haven't talked about, and I think you deserve an awful lot of credit. They included techniques in improving internal communications. You were big, as was Mr. Staats, on meetings, getting us together as groups to talk to each other and to review what was coming up in the coming week; you had breakfasts, lunches. Talk a little bit about that and about what your underlying motives were in using some of these techniques.

Mr. Morris

Well, again, not to bore you with simplistic things—teamwork, particularly in big organizations, is so important. It's again something that's been lost in our old Pentagon, I'm afraid, in the last decade. We learned over there that having breakfast meetings once or twice a week with our service counterparts, both military and civilian, was a way to get to know each other, to share ideas and problems, and to make progress together.

And that kind of lessons learned certainly followed me after the Pentagon days over here and elsewhere, and I would heartily advocate it for young staff people today.

Mr. Grosshans

You did something else, Tom, that you ought to talk a little bit about, and that is forcing us to go up with you to the Hill. I use those words very carefully because some of us kind of felt like we almost had to be dragged up there in some of the sessions we had with the Hill staff, particularly those with Armed Services, which was a very tough committee for us to get close to. We had much better relations with Appropriations. You may recall we used to go up there periodically, about every 6 months, and lay out for them what each of us in our respective areas planned to do. I think that probably has served us very, very well, and maybe some of the better relations that we have today were started with your program there.

Mr. Morris

Again, that kind of communication I learned in the early days with the Pentagon, when getting along with the Hill was an essential technique of being able to solve problems. Let me give you just one example. I became Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower in the Vietnam period, and things like minorities and open housing around bases were terribly important in those days, very controversial. The President was personally interested.

I went over to see Chairman Mendel Rivers, from South Carolina, and his staff director, Russ Blandford, and told them about our problems. I said, "Gentlemen, we've simply got to declare off limits housing that won't open up to minorities around our major bases." Rivers thought a minute, and he said, "I understand you; I can't approve it, but I'm not going to fight you." He stayed quiet.

Well, it was that kind of relationship that got things done in those tender Vietnam years, for example, and I just had learned the habit of how to do that.

Mr. Grosshans

You also did similar things for establishing contacts and maybe opening doors in the agencies. You may recall that we went down to TRADOC [U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command] and met with General Creech down there and got to know his team, and we briefed them on what we planned to do. What you really did was to take all of us down there, and they got, for the first time, a good appreciation of what GAO planned to do in the defense arena. We also brought in top agency people, and we set up the Defense Consultant Panel. Any other points that come to mind?

Mr. Morris

No. But you're really again touching on Elmer Staats' willingness to support that kind of outreach and open communication, which, I think, has

made so much of a difference. The briefing of new Cabinet members is something that Elmer believed in and had practiced in the old Budget Bureau. And I just think that you folks have done a marvelous job in that whole area.

Role in Special Initiatives

Dr. Trask

During both of your terms at GAO, there were a number of special initiatives undertaken. I think you were involved in these in one way or another, and let's talk about two or three of those now.

First of all, right now we're looking ahead about 7 years to GAO's 75th anniversary. But you were here when the 50th anniversary celebration took place; that was quite an undertaking. What was your role in that?

Mr. Morris

Well, I must admit that I don't vividly recall any particular role that I had, except to be one of the participants. Maybe my mind just doesn't recall it.

Mr. Eschwege

Well, I think, Tom, that you did some of it. And I don't know to what extent you were involved. But if you didn't get some of the guest speakers over here, at least you kind of advised us of what kinds of issues we might raise with them. For instance, I had a personal experience with George Shultz, who at that time was Director of OMB [Office of Management and Budget]. He came here and we were all allowed to ask him questions. So you kind of made sure that we focused correctly on some of the things that we might talk about. And, to that extent, I recall your role. But, of course, you know best what else you did.

Mr. Morris

I would say it's just not vivid. I know we did a good job, because Elmer wouldn't have done anything else.

Mr. Eschwege

It was a very festive occasion, and the talks were published, you know, in a book.

Dr. Trask

Another interesting development during these years was the controversy over GAO's review of the NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] Space Shuttle Program. Do you remember that?

Mr. Morris

Again, not with any vividness. I know that we met with the head of NASA on more than one occasion, but I don't recall any particular involvement.

Dr. Trask

What about your role in testimony at hearings? Did you do much of that and, if so, on what kinds of subjects?

Mr. Morris

It was quite selective. The last hearing I remember was one at which Bob Gilroy and Rollee Efros and I were the team who testified before Jack Brooks on the multiyear procurement idea that was then being promoted with high GAO interest. But that was because I had a special input to GAO support of multiyear procurement, and Elmer wanted me to testify.

At budget times, while I was in the administrative side, I was always part of the witness team, but not a particularly outstanding part of that team.

So I guess, on the whole, rather little testimony was my role. Elmer had an awful lot, of course, as did you folks, Henry and Werner, who really did the work that was so important to GAO's mission, in describing our contribution to the Congress.

Staats Letter to Weinberger, 1981

Dr. Trask

Another interesting subject that you referred to earlier was the letter from Mr. Staats to Secretary Weinberger in January 1981, on improving DOD operations. I have a copy of it here. The package is quite large. What were the origins and purposes of the letter?

Mr. Morris

I'm not positive of the origins, but when I came back in late 1980 to take a look at the existing structure, one of the early ideas that surfaced—and it may have been Walt Sheley who was involved—was that on the basis of our most recent years of reviews of defense, we ought to be prepared to brief the new Secretary of Defense on some of the key initiatives that he ought to attack. And just talking to the GAO staff people, we gathered together these key ideas and wrote a very simple letter, which Elmer immediately grasped and approved. He said, "That's the way to do it."

Mr. Grosshans

I think that for the record, I want to mention that to the best of my recollection you deserve full credit for that, Tom. You were the one who told us that this would be a good idea, and all of us then sat down and said, "Okay, what are the key issues?" It did give us an opportunity to talk about those broader issues that we felt very strongly should be addressed. And I think that was kind of an early form of the transition reports that Chuck Bowsher has issued in this past year. So I think, Tom, that you were kind of the initiator of those transition reports.

Mr. Morris

One other thing I recall that was a major input. Do you remember Lefty Anderson of the Surveys and Investigations [S&I] staff? He came over here and said, "I want to get all the GAO reports that are going to help me in this next administration." You took that one on, and we gave him the biggest bundle of good material that I think has ever been produced.

Mr. Grosshans

You and I also were up and testified before several committees on some of those issues. One item you may remember we had a hard time supporting is the 25-percent savings on competitive procurement.

Mr. Morris

Well, I'll tell you, that goes back a long way. [Laughter]

GAO first produced that figure in a Hassell Bell report in 1961. And McNamara said, "If GAO says it's 25 percent, that's what we're going to take credit for."

Dr. Trask

This letter to Weinberger in January of 1981 is very direct and very detailed. What kind of response did you get from Defense?

Mr. Morris

Well, Frank Carlucci came in as the Deputy Secretary and brought Vince Puritano as his assistant. They grabbed these ideas immediately. They produced what were then known as the Carlucci initiatives, of which there were 31 or 32, and I think, in fact, everything in that letter was involved in one or more of the initiatives.

But the one that grabbed immediate interest was the multiyear procurement idea, which we spent an awful lot of time on here at GAO. And Defense went to the Hill immediately and asked for a priority to do multiyear buying. They got it with some restructures that they're still complaining about, and we're responsible for the restructures. We agreed with Brooks that there ought to be a certain amount of caution in the way you go about this. But I think it's resulted in truly an important savings.

Mr. Grosshans Do you recall the heading we used for the multiyear procurement area?

Mr. Morris No.

Mr. Grosshans I think that, just for the record, we ought to introduce it. It was the second heading in the procurement area, and it read, "Second, multiyear contracting is an idea whose time has come."

Mr. Morris Okay.

Dr. Trask Did Mr. Weinberger respond personally? Or were there any contacts between Staats and Weinberger on this letter?

Mr. Morris We had conversations, I know, with Carlucci and Puritano, but I can't document them very clearly except to know that there was an immediate interest. And one would expect them to respond because they knew Elmer. They'd known him from the Budget Bureau era and the HEW era and so on.

Mr. Grosshans As I recall, we did get a response from the Secretary appreciating our identifying these areas. Now several of those, like you point out, Tom, have been implemented. On the other hand, others have not. Maybe toward the tail end of this discussion we can pick up on a few of those areas and just get your input. I had hoped we could talk a little bit about what your views might be on that or maybe get your counsel as to how we might even address them today. I think there are a couple of those areas that are still very much on the table but haven't been properly addressed.

Dr. Trask Did the press pay any attention to this letter? Or was it known that it had been sent? What was the reaction there?

Mr. Morris Yes. Again, I honestly can't document it. There was a major hearing that Werner referred to. Was it before the House Armed Services Committee?

Mr. Grosshans Yes.

Mr. Morris Les Aspin, I remember, was on the Committee. GAO witnesses were Elmer and a group of us, including Werner and me; there must have been five or six of us at the table on this letter and the initiatives.

Mr. Grosshans It did get press coverage. It was a public document.

- Mr. Eschwege There was an interim period where Milt Socolar was the Acting Comptroller General, and I'm sure you were helpful to him, too. All of us were a bit apprehensive, waiting to see who the new Comptroller General would be. Did you help Chuck in any way with getting ready for confirmation or any of those kinds of things?
- Mr. Morris I don't believe so. I did have several chats with him as he came aboard, on organization and management. But nothing very great. I came back for a while after my AU experience, where I broke my arm. I got involved at GAO for a short period on that CAMS Project.
- Mr. Eschwege This was not as a consultant to us though, was it?
- Mr. Morris No. As part of your staff, I came back for a while. I've forgotten the time interval exactly. I was of general assistance to Chuck, as I recall. I had my office down there where I'd been, and this was one of the things that Chuck asked me to keep an eye on for a little while.
- Mr. Eschwege I remember that very distinctly. Now that was an ambitious project to try and computerize not only our program operations but also our fiscal operations. And it sounded good, but it didn't really make much progress, did it?
- Mr. Morris Well, I don't think that it's anything I ought to try to comment on. I know you've made a lot of progress here at GAO in your management information systems, and GAO probably is one of the great leaders in this town today.
- Mr. Eschwege And then, of course, you continued to be involved in some of the NAPA [National Academy of Public Administration] activities, and you are to this day, I suppose.
- Mr. Morris Yes.
- Mr. Eschwege And that probably got you in touch with GAO, as Chuck Bowsher initiated the strong management reviews.
- Mr. Morris Yes.
- Mr. Eschwege And did you help on some of those?

Mr. Morris Well, I came back about 3 or 4 months with Gene Dodaro early in the GMR [general management reviews] period to help think about techniques, candidate studies, and things like that. We interviewed a lot of people, like Sam Hughes and Elmer Staats, as to their views of what we ought to be doing. I helped on that.

Mr. Eschwege This was not a full-time job though, was it?

Mr. Morris It was for about 3 months.

Mr. Eschwege What year was that? About 1982 or 1983?

Mr. Morris Yes. I think it was more like 1983, possibly 1984, when I helped Gene Dodaro and Earl Walter in their planning. And I've kept in touch a little bit with what they're doing. I think its one of those initiatives that has promise and importance if it can be done properly.

Mr. Eschwege You also helped Policy on one of their booklets that received a lot of acclaim.

Mr. Morris You gentlemen are the real producers. Well done.

Mr. Grosshans We appreciated that, Tom. I think it came off very well. Chuck was very pleased with it.

Dr. Trask Was this the Serving the Congress booklet?

Mr. Grosshans That's right.

Comments on GAO Personnel

Dr. Trask During your time at GAO, you worked with and got to know a lot of people and you studied the culture. I'd like to give you a chance to talk about GAO personnel, their strengths and weaknesses, and things of that sort.

Mr. Morris I would first like to observe that having been in management consulting all my life, I've seen a lot of organizations of many kinds, in and outside government, and I have to rate GAO at the very top of the heap. And I've

often wondered what makes for its greatness. I think there are two major factors. One is its leadership, the good fortune that it's enjoyed, the continuity of that leadership over a 15-year tenure, and such great incumbents as Staats and Bowsher.

But the other is the staff itself. Now I had this rare opportunity during that 6-month interview period to get out into every field office and to meet many of the staff people at the top for round-table discussions over a day or two at a time, and I can say that I can characterize in general terms the greatness of this staff, as well as some of the vulnerabilities that I think exist in maintaining that greatness.

First, I have not met anybody in GAO over the years I've known it who didn't possess the following characteristics. One is the courage and determination these folks had in doing their tasks. There's no fear of the unknown. There's absolute loyalty, dedication, and integrity. It's just an unusual personality trait. Second is a willingness to experiment and innovate, which in many government organizations is just nonexistent. Third is a passion to produce results, which is partly due to the kind of work we do and to the opportunity that it presents. Fourth is a great learning ability. Fifth is an ability to function without oversight and under the widest variety of working conditions, geographically as well as in other respects. Sixth is a versatility throughout a career.

There are undoubtedly many other characteristics that one could mention, but these are the ones that come to my mind as I think about why this staff is so good.

Now it has its vulnerabilities or limitations on its opportunities to be even better. One is the need for working experience in other cultures, especially the management culture and the management of government agencies in particular. There's a need for more external experiences of this type.

Elmer started introducing experiences like going to ICAF [Industrial College of the Armed Forces], the Interchange with Industry Program, and the rotation to the Hill and back. Those are great, great opportunities.

I often hope that there will be a way, for some people at least, to rotate in and out of the executive branch, so that they get to understand what happens inside those organizations on a day-to-day basis. It would just make them stronger.

Mr. Grosshans

I second that, because I've been involved, as you know, in such an exchange program on my own, not necessarily because of GAO. I spent a couple of years with the Postal Service during a time when it went through the change of becoming a government corporation. And you're absolutely right. When one sees what happens in an organization and views GAO, then one becomes much more appreciative of what the organization is all about and what it can do.

Mr. Eschwege

I think we've done a little bit of that through the Senior Executive Candidates Program. I remember Marty Ferber going to—the Navy was it? And that's a start.

Mr. Morris

That's good. And there might be some two-way-street opportunities, where you want to bring in people from the executive branch, like a Doc [David O.] Cooke in Defense, for a tour.

Another of the vulnerability areas is the obsession with the thrill of being the critic, or the whistle-blower. That's natural in this kind of environment, but I think it's something people have to watch, so as not to get overly obsessed with that motivation.

Another vulnerability to watch is what I call a passionate stubbornness, once satisfied with the facts, that can lead to distorted perspectives. Again, I'm as guilty as others, but it occurs so easily in this environment.

Another is getting overly accustomed to latitude without checks and balances. The freedom that your folks have under decentralization is really phenomenal, and to learn how to conduct oneself with integrity in that environment is an objective that one has to watch and be aware of.

And, lastly, I would note a temptation to be overresponsive to clients and a temptation to please too much and to lose a little bit of objectivity because of that.

But these are just observations of pluses and things to watch for.

Dr. Trask

One of the things that has interested me about GAO personnel is the number of people who have spent their whole careers here or who have had long careers here. And it seems to me that this is more prevalent in GAO than it is in the executive agencies, at least to the extent that I know about. What effect do you think this has on GAO?

Mr. Morris

Well, I think it has a tremendous effect. And the fact that GAO is able to go to campus and has been doing so for many years, doing hands-on recruiting, is important. I think that once you get people in this environment, the motivation is so great and so strong that you're going to keep some of the very best indefinitely and should try to, with training of a rotational nature being available.

Dr. Trask

One of the things Mr. Staats did—and you're a good example of it, of course—was to bring in some people from the outside, particularly at upper levels. Is that a necessary activity?

Mr. Morris

I think a little bit of that is quite useful, if you pick the people carefully. But just as important, maybe more so, are these panels of outside advisers and consultants that we've used so effectively over the years. They give you perspectives that are just unavailable to most executive branch agencies.

Reflections on GAO Career

Mr. Grosshans

Tom, at this stage, what we'd like to do is just talk a little bit about your reflections on the various exposures you've had to GAO. As you pointed out, you've been in a number of different roles. You've helped us in some of the tough reorganization periods, you've been with us for several stints, and you have even helped us after that on a consultant basis. What would you say, looking back at all these experiences with GAO, are some of your accomplishments that you would want to talk about? What comes to mind from some of those experiences that you feel particularly good about?

Mr. Morris

Well, I hadn't thought of answering that question in that particular light, but the opportunity to have gotten to know GAO and to contribute to its leadership and structuring has been one of the highlights of my whole life, without any question.

I think the real challenges are to be sure we sustain the leadership greatness that we've enjoyed, to encourage the Congress to maintain the standards it set when it chose Chuck Bowsher through this new congressional committee technique, and to support the continued enhancement of the personnel side of this organization. And, finally, I

think that GAO offers many opportunities for lessons learned. You need to introduce other organizations to achievements like your personnel system, for example.

I read the other day about some of the plans that Frank Conahan has for the use of case studies and lectures to graduate student classes at Harvard and elsewhere as a means of stimulating an interest in coming to work for GAO.

That's a great idea. It's the kind of innovative thinking about how to attract and hold the best people that ought to be encouraged. I think the idea of external rotation—and bringing some of the executive branch leadership folks in to be exposed to this environment—has a lot of appeal.

Otherwise, just sustain those six strengths I outlined a little earlier in the people who make this one of the great institutions of all time.

Mr. Grosshans

If you had an opportunity to do things over, would you do anything differently?

Mr. Morris

I honestly don't think of anything important that I would want to necessarily do differently. I'm sure that what was done could be done better the next time around, but I'm not disappointed or unhappy at all with the outcomes of the initiatives.

Productivity at GAO

Mr. Grosshans

We've talked about some specific areas, of course, that I think you can be justly proud of, because I think you helped us get on the right track. And procurement is one of those. The manpower area, obviously, from your comments earlier, is one where you've made a major mark. Productivity, you pointed out early on in our discussion, is another area that's very dear to your heart.

Just from my reading of that, I guess my sense would be that we didn't get accomplished there what you set out to do. Would you care to comment any more on that area?

Mr. Morris

I think we've learned an awful lot about what the word "productivity" is all about. It's an inexact science, the measurement of productivity,

even in the private sector, and I think that your labor statistics folks would have to acknowledge that if they were sitting at this table.

But inexact as it is, it's very important that we try to gauge what's happening. You had the 2 years in the Postal Service. It must gauge its productivity versus its staffing at all times when it can. And the emphasis on measuring quality, as well as quantity, of output is getting much more recognition these days. I think you're fortunate to have people like Brian Usilaner, who's a real scholar in this business, and the support that Elmer has given the subject.

But you're quite right. It's not a field where we can sit back and say that we've solved the problem and that we know how to really gauge the productivity of our nation. We just have crude measures, for the most part.

Mr. Grosshans

Getting it back down to the area that we know best, GAO, how would you assess productivity for GAO? In other words, we've talked a lot over the years about productivity of other organizations and industries, but we're still struggling and trying to manage our own assignments and trying to come in on time. Chuck Bowsher has done an awful lot on that. He's got an indicators project now, and he puts much more attention on that, but we're still struggling. Why haven't we, in our own organization, been able to do more in this particular area?

Mr. Morris

I think that you're just typical, in that sense, of professional and service organizations. The fact that you're working constantly on the problem, year after year, is the important thing. You've simply got to do it.

Now GAO's quality control is not what Joe Pois called the "quest for infallibility." I have the highest regard for it. You can overdo those things, but I think that persisting in them is terribly important to real productivity.

The publication of GAO accomplishments and the more vivid portrayal of those results in more current annual and other reports are important achievements, not only in communicating your productivity to your own staff but to the outside world as well. I think you've got to continue this. There's no magic solution.

Mr. Grosshans

I think that's a good point. Maybe when we first started out, we looked at this too much as a magic solution. And I think you're right. Maybe our expectations were too high.

Mr. Eschwege

Would you also agree that it's probably more difficult in a professional organization than it would be at the Post Office or someplace like that?

Mr. Morris

By far. Of course, public accounting firms and consulting firms survive and prosper by the measure of their productivity.

Another area I was going to mention is the Inspector General function. It has learned a lot from GAO, and GAO can be a great help to it. It has survived. It's met a need, and it's a respected operation around town. I would urge GAO to continue supporting the function and to help the IGs develop their work programs. It's worth doing.

Mr. Grosshans

I think that's a very good point. And, as you know, we've done quite a bit in that particular area and have been very supportive of their function. In our quality assessment reviews, we've also looked at how well they've carried out this function. The Office has supported that function as a very vital one.

Is there any unfinished business that you feel that you haven't gotten to that you would have liked to?

Mr. Morris

Well, I've mentioned it more than once already, but I think the idea of case studies is one to keep thinking about. For example, this presidential transition, especially in our defense establishment, has been almost weird in the minds of a lot of people. Here we are over 6 months into the administration, and we don't have a good part of our key jobs filled yet, including the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, which is the leader of a hundred-plus-billion-dollar area.

What's the cause of this? Are the ethics and revolving door rules a major factor here? We're told that 30 people have turned the job down. Now this is a fact that ought to be documented and some explanation developed that's going to help us avoid these kinds of problems in the future. I think GAO has a role to play. I haven't said that to anybody before, but I really think you could make a contribution by seizing opportunities like this one.

Mr. Eschwege

Do you think that executive pay has a lot to do with it too? Do you think that the pay is too low?

Mr. Morris

Well, it may be, except it seems to me that when you get people in the past, like McNamara—the newly elected president of the Ford Company—to come to Washington and stay here for 7 years, there was a

public spirit motivation that was awfully important. The pay of a secretary in those days was one heck of a lot less than it is today.

Have we lost some of that? I'm not sure. But there are some wonderful names that have been in the press as having been offered key jobs that turned them down. I think we ought to document why they turned them down. Was it pay? Was it revolving door problems? Lack of public spirit motivation? What's happened?

Comments on GAO's Current and Future Roles

Mr. Grosshans

You touched on one of the areas just now in defense, and maybe for the remainder of the time, we ought to talk and get your ideas on what you see GAO's current and future role to be on some of those areas. Defense is one of them, and you, of course, are very close to that. How do you assess what we do today? Do you have any words of advice for us in that particular area?

Mr. Morris

Well, I really hesitate to pontificate. I've had a chance to observe the Conahan approach to this whole set of responsibilities, by following the press and attending a number of hearings. And I've been very, very pleased with the contribution that GAO is making. I think the new approaches have given you new vistas. You've attacked new kinds of issues. As you mentioned a little earlier, some of the sacred no-no's of the past we've been able to push aside, and we've been able to look at more specific problems of military planning and strategy perhaps than we've done in the past.

So I would just encourage that continued innovation. I will always be unhappy with the procurement area until we do a better job. And I frankly had high hopes for the PLRD-type approach, that is, the across-the-board look at procurement in all agencies, with civilians getting some sustained attention as well. I think that still is a challenge that needs to be looked at. And you're doing it pretty well in AFMD [Accounting and Financial Management Division], in financial management, and in personnel, even though I did like the idea of the old FPCD bringing together the military and civilian personnel. I think that ought to be kept in mind as a possibility for the future.

But these are not important issues, just opportunities to be aware of. The one area of greatest interest has been the GMRS. It's an experiment. It's an area that people might argue (have argued in the past) is not GAO's role. This is something, some say, that OMB should be responsible for. In fact, I was in that role for a year.

The fact is that OMB has never been staffed up and had the motivation and opportunity to do the job that needs to be done. Elmer came close in 1960, but it really hasn't happened. Hence, I think GAO's been filling a very important need here, and I hope that somehow we'll keep our patience and our stamina and continue to do the good job that is being done. Maybe someday, we should help a transition to others doing the job, at least in part. But let's not let the GMR program die. That's my message here.

Mr. Grosshans

That's a good point. I was going to ask you that, and, of course, you have been a strong supporter of that. How do you assess the impact of those GMRS? You're aware of what we're doing, and you've also, through your contacts in NAPA and others, had pretty good sources. What's your feeling on the impact of the GMRS?

Mr. Morris

I don't really have a broad enough data base in my mind to generalize. I know it's always going to be a mixed picture. I think you had some marvelous results at the outset in the Department of Labor work. Internal Revenue was quite impressive to me. The OMB product that came out within the last 2 or 3 months, I thought, was a very professionally done piece of work. The one on OPM [Office of Personnel Management] I was quite proud of. These are very difficult things to do, and they require a lot of courage on GAO's part to undertake.

On the whole, I think they have been sufficiently successful that, as a citizen, I would be very unhappy if you let that momentum lapse. The GAO Journal devoted one issue to this, and I thought that was well done. We ought to do that about once a year.

Mr. Grosshans

Okay. You've talked about the strength of GAO staff earlier. Do you have any kind of views at all on the size of GAO—about right, too big, too small—with the mission that we perform these days? Anything you want to say on that?

Mr. Morris

Not really. I think that you're fortunate to be at the size you are in terms of having resources and being able to cover your subject matter pretty well. So my impression is that you're reasonably well off. But that's not

to say that you shouldn't continue to grow. By contrast, the Budget Bureau [OMB] has never been anywhere near large enough, and there's a built-in inhibition over there to growth, which I think has been one of its great problems.

Mr. Grosshans

How about the balance between staff and line? There has been much discussion about that within GAO, and, of course, we've gotten feedback from the Hill on that. Do you have any observations at all in that area?

Mr. Morris

Nothing based on a real close-up current knowledge. I did not feel when I was last here on a daily basis that that was true. I think there was staff growth during Elmer's period, which I helped contribute to, but I thought it was very sound staff growth, growth in the right functions.

Mr. Grosshans

How do you see the impact that GAO has on the Congress and also on the executive branch and maybe any change that you've seen in the media in reporting on GAO's products?

Mr. Morris

Only in the sense that I think you get a great deal of favorable publicity, and I think you've had a Public Affairs Office now for some years under Pat Moran that's been very effective. The new GAO Journal, I think, is one of those imaginative developments in the communications area that is making an impression. So I would only feel good about the evidence that I see.

Mr. Grosshans

Do you see any future need to revise GAO's mission at all? Do you see any need at all for any kind of change?

Mr. Morris

I have no great ideas. I think that continuing to do what you have been doing in program evaluation efforts, economy, efficiency, and financial management, the GMRS, and your willingness to try variations in your work are all quite important.

Mr. Grosshans

I think you've already talked very favorably about the current organization, so I guess that, judging from that, generally you feel we're in pretty good shape. Or do you see any major need for reassessing our structure?

Mr. Morris

I think that every organization ought to be reassessed from time to time. But I see no compelling need to do that today.

Mr. Grosshans

One area that we haven't talked about is an approach that GAO started and then quickly abandoned, and that was called the "team concept." I'm sure you're aware of that, and I'd like to get some of your reactions

on that. And regarding the whole question of region-headquarters relationships, as you pointed out, you took an early reading on that when you first came in 1970. And I'm sure you've kept close to that. Is there anything there that would concern you?

Mr. Morris

I think that you're always going to have a need for team relationships. Take defense and GGD [General Government Division] as an example in the procurement area. If you're going to have review of the functions split, you've got to be prepared to do team reviews in selected fields.

Headquarters-field relationships I've been away from now for quite a long time. But I found it a fascinating challenge as to how you achieved the best interface between headquarters and field back in the early 1970s. I suspect that will always be a challenge.

I was quite satisfied in those days, however, that the field was responsive and that the headquarters respected the field. The important thing is to motivate the people out there so that they are making their contribution and getting recognition for it. You just have to keep working on that.

Mr. Grosshans

When you were here, our request work was about one-third and two-thirds was self-initiated BLR [basic legislative requirements] work. That has flip-flopped; we're currently at about 80-plus percent request work and a much smaller portion of self-initiated work. Is that any concern to you? Would you like to comment at all on that?

Mr. Morris

Well, it is a concern to me. But then I have no ability to really judge it carefully or to make any statements of what the right answer is. I thought that the great latitude you had, when you were in the 50-percent self-initiated range or better, made all kinds of good sense, and gave freedom to people like yourself and Bowsher to plan the most useful efforts at the right time.

Let me give you an example that just comes to mind and one of the things I am proud of as I think back. At one point in time, Senator [William] Proxmire asked Elmer to make a study of the Air Force Academy turnover among freshmen year cadets. We looked into it and found that this was a problem, not only in the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force but in the Coast Guard as well. We concluded that if we were going to make a study, we had better study them all.

So Elmer pulled together an outside panel of people like Hale Champion from Harvard and others, and we did a year's work on the problems of turnover in the military academies. I thought it was a great contribution. We had the freedom to do that, even though Proxmire was interested only in the Air Force.

Well, that's an anecdote to illustrate why I think adequate latitude makes an awful lot of sense.

Mr. Grosshans

Sure. Of course, those figures may be a little bit misleading, because to the extent that you do the planning well, which is one of the key areas that Chuck Bowsher emphasizes, and you have an opportunity to influence what comes in, then you've really got the best of both worlds. You get to do what you want to do, and you've got a ready sponsor to take action on it. So I think we watch that very closely and, up till now, feel that we're in pretty good shape. But it is an area, like you say, in which we want to make sure we've got enough flexibility. I left the best for last, Tom, and I'm going to try to get you to help us on how we deal with the logistics area. Because that's one that we've been struggling with. In fact, we're going through another planning phase. We've got a new director for logistics. In some basic areas—we touched on them earlier in discussing that Weinberger letter of January 21—concerning how the whole defense structure is organized in the support of logistics, there exists a myriad of responsibilities from the wholesaler to the retailer to the various types of investment fund users. The Department of Defense plays all these games about its components selling to each other and trying to figure out what is needed and puts all these additional layers of safety levels in. It ought to say, "Okay, we've got a manager here, and he or she ought to determine what we need." How would you tackle this? This is an area that I've been very much involved in over the years and feel that it's an unsolved and open area. And, of course, with your background, how do you think we could get at that?

Mr. Morris

Well, I haven't given any particular thought to that recently and didn't know you would ask the question. So I'm not prepared with a sophisticated answer. But I agree with your observation, and I think that we have deteriorated in our attention to a field that is a very important one in terms of its size, its complexity, and its impact on readiness and performance.

I guess one idea that I would urge you to consider, if you have the time, is to pull together some very thoughtful minds, like Paul Riley, Rowland Freeman, Herbert McCarthy, and Bob Moot, to spend 2 or 3 days with

you, taking stock of the current situation, its strengths and weaknesses, and the best way to deal with this from a GAO perspective looking ahead.

I'm sure it has to be done. We have badly served ourselves, I'm afraid, going back to 1977, when we combined Manpower, Reserve Affairs, and Logistics in the Pentagon. That's never been straightened out since. I told Harold Brown that it could be done. I thought that it could be, but you had to put the right team together to do it.

The great obsession with acquisition, a word very few people know how to define on the Hill, on the part of the public and the press has tended to downplay the importance of the function that you and I call logistics. It embraces supply, distribution, maintenance, transportation, communications, and other support services.

As a result, you bring in a person like the new Under Secretary for Acquisition and you give him not only acquisition, but logistics as well, which he probably isn't going to have any time to spend on at all. It's just a mistake. The area badly needs to be refocused. GAO can make a marvelous contribution here. It requires knowledgeable, motivated people.

Mr. Grosshans

How do you develop the right type of support at the right levels to bring this off? We talked earlier about military judgment, but one of the real traditions in the military is that "I need complete control over my resources." And that's at the heart of the issue. How do you overcome those type of things?

Mr. Morris

Well, you and I lived through the formation of the Defense Supply Agency [DSA] that became today's Defense Logistics Agency. The Defense Department took 15 years to bring that into being. It has survived. I think it's one of the great achievements in the unification of the Department of Defense, because it was done with skill by leaders who understood what this was all about, starting with Secretary McNamara.

I think we're going to have to revisit it. In those days, logistics was of great interest to Congress. Senator Paul Douglas and Ray Ward and others on the Hill paid a lot of attention to it because the money was so visible, and the overlap in common supplies among the services was so blatant. Getting a DSA set up was a real achievement, and the Hill supported it strongly.

That's been done. That doesn't bother me anymore. But the rest of logistics, which is tremendous—maintenance particularly—has never been given the attention it needs.

I think you've got to get more brains, like Paul Riley represented in his day, and younger people who understand this and have a great desire to do something about it. I don't see the inclination in the Defense Department itself to want to jump in and spend a lot of time on it. It's worrying about the acquisition of major weapons. The Cheney Report is just out, and it's interesting reading. It's a good document. But it really focuses on this one huge and sensitive major systems area and leaves what we're talking about untouched because most people don't understand it.

Mr. Grosshans

It's interesting that you point to DLA as the big success, and I share your view. But you're aware of the fact that Air Force mounted a major effort in the late 1970s and early 1980s to reverse that, after some 12 years of very successful performance.

Mr. Morris

Well, I can tell you the facts. The Air Force fought DLA from step one. It was against it. It just didn't want any part of it. But McNamara decided, and he was supported by the rest of his team. And Gene Zuckert as Secretary [of the Air Force] came along.

General Polk, I know, was never an enthusiast, and that's understandable. But I think the record is quite clear. GAO did a nice GMR at DLA, which I thought was creditable.

The thing that has made it succeed is that it has been a service and support organization, and that's its mission. It must stay, in my opinion, a service and support organization and avoid becoming a control organization. It can't dictate to the services what their requirements and standards are going to be. It can help them decide, but it shouldn't dictate.

Mr. Grosshans

Well, it's an interesting area, and, like I say, we could probably spend the next few days on that. We're not going to solve that in a short session here.

Mr. Morris

Well, don't let it get away from you.

Mr. Grosshans

No, we are focusing attention on it, because we're somewhat frustrated that we haven't been as successful in this area as in some of the others.

Are there any areas that we haven't talked about that you would like to comment on?

Mr. Morris

I think I've philosophized far too much already. And I mentioned practically everything that I had jotted down in my mind: the Inspectors General, the GMRS, and the culture of GAO itself, which is really the most important point. And I see no evidence of any weakening here.

Mr. Grosshans

Henry or Roger, is there anything else that you want to add?

Conclusion

Mr. Eschwege

I just wanted to make one comment here. I think it's been very useful having you discuss these issues, Tom. And I think Elmer Staats, back in 1975, said it best, that "Mr. Morris is one of the outstanding public servants in the federal service and has contributed greatly to the work of the Bureau of the Budget, the Department of Defense" and, at that time, it was "during the past 5 years to GAO." I could probably add a lot of other agencies by now. Here it is 1989. You've been, as you mentioned, to HEW, GSA, and Brookings and so many other organizations, and you're still making contributions. I think you have to come back in about 5 years and tell us what you've done since then. [Laughter]

So I just thought it was very useful for me, GAO, and everybody.

Mr. Grosshans

We certainly want to thank you, Tom. I've appreciated the chance to reminisce a little bit, and I want to thank you for coming in and sharing some of your thoughts with us. I'm sure we all feel that the comments that you've made are going to be very helpful to us. And like you pointed out earlier, I know an awful lot can be learned from some of our experiences, and I think your willingness to share those with us are greatly appreciated. I want to thank you on behalf of GAO.

Dr. Trask

I would just add that, since I've been at GAO only 2 years, I find these interviews extremely informative; they are an opportunity to see and hear people who played important roles in the past. I learn a great deal myself, and I can say with confidence that you have contributed to our historical record in an important way. We thank you for that.

Mr. Morris

Thank you.

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