

“Your Job Has Now Changed”

Interviewee: Joshua Bolten

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Project: George W. Bush Oral History

Joshua Bolten was President George W. Bush’s deputy chief of staff for policy. He recalls the immediate shift in Bush’s understanding of his presidency following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Bolten describes how Bush realized everything had changed and pivoted to preventing future crises rather than simply responding to them.

Joshua Bolten: He [President George W. Bush] seemed to have absorbed that immediately and knew that his Presidency had changed dramatically and knew that the jobs of all kinds of people had changed dramatically, including on 9/11 he addressed [Robert] Bob Mueller [III] directly and said, "Your job has now changed. You're not trying to catch people after they do bad things; your job is now to catch them before."

Interviewer: Where does that come from, from the President? Does that go back to what you've told us today about the leadership component, the leadership quality? How does he make that turn on a dime--I see everything changing?

Bolten: I think it comes from exactly the kinds of qualities I was talking about before and the understanding of the need for his persona to expand to the position that was required. You almost saw him physically get bigger and more serious and more determined, because I think he knew--he knew instinctively and very quickly that he was going to be a different kind of President.

End of excerpt.

Interview 2 with Joshua Bolten, July 13, 2016, George W. Bush Oral History Project, Presidential Oral History Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia. URL: <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/joshua-bolten-oral-history-part-ii>