

The New York Times

Frank C. Carlucci, Diplomat and Defense Secretary to Reagan, Dies at 87

By **Robert D. McFadden**

June 4, 2018

Frank C. Carlucci, a troubleshooting Republican who worked for four presidents in a wide-ranging government career that reached its zenith when he served as national security adviser and secretary of defense in President Ronald Reagan's second term, died on Sunday at his home in McLean, Va. He was 87.

His wife, Marcia Myers Carlucci, said the cause was complications of Parkinson's disease.

In posts that carried him into international controversies, occasional dangers and Washington's highest echelons, Mr. Carlucci was a daredevil diplomat, an expert budget-whacker and, to presidents and cabinet secretaries, the indispensable No. 2 man who ran things: the day-to-day affairs of America's anti-poverty programs; its health, education and welfare systems; its intelligence services; and its military operations.

After years in the administrations of Presidents Richard M. Nixon, Gerald R. Ford and Jimmy Carter, Mr. Carlucci was named national security adviser by President Reagan in 1986, succeeding Rear Adm. John M. Poindexter, who had resigned as the Iran-contra affair, and his role in fostering it, came to light.

The appointment aimed at restoring confidence in an administration shaken by the scandal. Mr. Carlucci, the fixer, soon cleaned house at the National Security Council, abolishing Lt. Col. Oliver North's political-military affairs section, which had hatched the covert plot to sell arms to Iran to finance right-wing guerrillas, known as the contras, fighting Nicaragua's leftist government.

A year later, President Reagan named Mr. Carlucci defense secretary. He succeeded Caspar W. Weinberger, who had resigned for personal reasons but who was also under pressure in the Iran-contra affair.

Mr. Carlucci was cool, experienced and knowledgeable — once more a good fit. He had been deputy defense secretary under Mr. Weinberger in Reagan's first term, and had ably managed the big Pentagon bureaucracy and overseen budgets, procurement, weapons planning and deployment of the nation's global military forces.

**You have 4 free articles remaining.
Subscribe to The Times**

Though he was defense secretary for only 14 months, Mr. Carlucci was not a caretaker. He presided over \$33 billion in budget cuts, closing domestic bases while maintaining strength abroad as the Cold War wound down. He shared Reagan's faith in space-based missile defenses and mobile missiles on rail cars, which were not developed. But he also backed arms control agreements with Moscow.

Leaving government when President George H. W. Bush assumed office in January 1989, Mr. Carlucci joined the Carlyle Group, a Washington investment partnership. He retired as its chairman in 2003.

Frank Charles Carlucci III was born on Oct. 18, 1930, in Scranton, Pa., to Frank Carlucci Jr., an insurance broker, and Roxanne (Bacon) Carlucci. He graduated in 1948 from Wyoming Seminary, a prep school in Pennsylvania, and in 1952 from Princeton, where he studied with two future cabinet secretaries, Donald H. Rumsfeld (Defense) and James A. Baker 3rd (Treasury, State). He then served two years in the Navy.

In 1954, he married Jean Anthony. They had two children, Karen Romano and Frank IV. The marriage ended in divorce, and in 1976 he married Marcia Myers. They had a daughter, Kristin Carlucci Weed. In addition to his wife, he is survived by his children; a sister, Joan Kleinrock; and six grandchildren.



Mr. Carlucci, left, in 1977 with Andrew Young, who at the time was the United States ambassador to the United Nations, in Lisbon. Mr. Carlucci was President Gerald R. Ford's ambassador to Portugal from 1975 to 1977. Associated Press

Mr. Carlucci studied business at Harvard for a year, but after bailing out of a brief unsatisfying business career, he joined the State Department in 1956. A year later he began a 12-year diplomatic career that took him to South Africa, the Belgian Congo (now Congo), Zanzibar and Brazil.

Arriving in the Congo in 1960 amid the chaos of struggles for independence, he was stabbed in the neck, beaten and challenged at bayonet point by soldiers, but he helped rescue 20 Americans from a mob after a traffic accident had left a Congolese dead. In June 1961, the Congolese authorities accused him subversive activities and expelled him from the country.

Years later there were allegations that Mr. Carlucci had been a covert C.I.A. agent in the Congo and had conspired with American and Belgian operatives to assassinate Patrice Lumumba, the country's charismatic leftist independence leader, who was abducted and murdered in 1961. Mr. Carlucci vehemently denied the allegations.

Still, Mr. Carlucci was a globe-trotting diplomat who might have stepped out of a John le Carré spy story. He was short and compact, with an athletic build, a high forehead, a preference for cardigan sweaters and an enigmatic smile that looked perilously like a grimace. His voice was a razor's edge: modulated, decisive, accustomed to getting things done.

He was expelled again on his next posting, from Zanzibar in 1965, after the leftist government of Tanzania accused him of plotting to overthrow the government. (Zanzibar and Tanganyika had merged in 1964 to form Tanzania.) American officials called it retaliation for Washington's support of Moise Tshombe, a right-wing leader in the neighboring Congo. Tanzania had supported a leftist rebellion in the Congo. Later, at the American Embassy in Brazil, Mr. Carlucci incurred the enmity of colleagues by overseeing large staff cuts.

Back in Washington in 1969, he jumped from relative obscurity to a series of high-profile jobs in the Nixon administration — deputy director, then director, of the Office of Economic Opportunity, succeeding Mr. Rumsfeld, in 1971; deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget, under Mr. Weinberger, in 1972; and, in 1973, Mr. Weinberger's deputy in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

From 1975 to 1977, Mr. Carlucci was President Ford's ambassador to Portugal. He was credited with helping to keep Lisbon's leftist government allied with the West by persuading the White House to support the regime despite strong opposition from Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger.

While Mr. Carlucci's previous appointments had been made by Republicans, it was President Carter, a Democrat, who named him deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency under Adm. Stansfield Turner in 1978. Mr. Carlucci shut down many covert operations to restore the reputation of an agency tarnished by abuses of power.

After Reagan became president in 1981, his defense secretary, Mr. Weinberger, insisted that Mr. Carlucci, his former deputy at the budget office and H.E.W., be his deputy. Mr. Carlucci lacked experience in defense matters, but his nomination sailed through Senate confirmation.

In December 1983, after two years at the Pentagon, Mr. Carlucci resigned to become president and chief executive of Sears World Trade Inc., a new export trading subsidiary of Sears, Roebuck & Company. It was not a successful venture.

And in 1986, as Iran-contra rattled the White House and President Reagan sent up distress signals, Mr. Carlucci took over the troubled National Security Council — glad, friends said, to be back in his element.

Daniel E. Slotnik contributed reporting.

A version of this article appears in print on June 5, 2018, on Page B12 of the New York edition with the headline: Frank Carlucci, Defense Chief to Reagan, Dies at 87