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This is an oral history interview with Mr. Robert S. McNamara, held in Washington, D.C. on April 3, 1986, at 4:30 p.m. The interview is being recorded on tape, and a copy of the transcript will be sent to Mr. McNamara for his review. Representing the OSD Historical Office are Dr. Alfred Goldberg and Dr. Maurice Matloff. As we indicated in our letter of April 16, 1985, we shall focus in this interview particularly on your service as Secretary of Defense from Jan 21, 1961, to Feb 29, 1968.

Matloff: We might start with the background of the appointment to the office of Secretary of Defense. What were the circumstances?

McNamara: I had been with the Ford Motor Company approximately fifteen years, and was elected president of the company early in November or late in October of 1960. My secretary had been with me for some time, and I insisted that she ensure that I return every telephone call that came in every day. I came to my office one morning in early December 1960, went out and returned, and a number of calls had come in. I ran down the list, and one of the names, Robert Kennedy, didn't mean a great deal to me—I didn't know him. When my secretary got to that call, Mr. Kennedy came on the line and asked if I would meet with his brother-in-law, Sargent Shriver, and said that the President-elect would be grateful if I would. I said that I would be happy to, the following week. He said they hoped I could do it much sooner, that afternoon. By this time it was eleven or twelve o'clock in Detroit, and I said that I thought that was unlikely. He responded that they would have Sarge in my office that afternoon at any time that I might designate. I said to come in at 4 o'clock. He came in (I had never met him either), and stated that the President-elect had authorized him to offer me the position of Secretary of the Treasury. I said that that was absurd, that I wasn't qualified. He replied that he was then authorized to offer me the position of Secretary of Defense. I

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said, "I question my qualifications for that, although I had served in the Army for three years during World War II and had followed defense matters in a rather superficial way through the press." Then he said that the President-elect hoped that I would at least give him the courtesy of meeting with him personally. I replied, "I would. When?" Sarge suggested the next day. So he left. My office adjoined that of Henry Ford II, and I stopped in his office to tell him that I was going to Washington that night or the next morning, and to indicate to him that there was no likelihood that I would leave the Ford Motor Company. Henry Ford had just gone to New York. I called the company transportation office and asked them to set up a company plane to take me to New York that night. I did get in touch with him that night.

After arriving in Washington, before I met with the President-elect, I stopped at the Pentagon to speak to Tom Gates, then Secretary of Defense. I had not met him, but we had friends in common. He had been a director of Scott Paper prior to becoming Secretary, and at that time I was a director of Scott Paper. I told Tom of the President-elect's request and that I didn't feel qualified, but felt that I could strengthen the basis for my refusal if I had suggestions to make to the President-elect as to who was qualified, and that I thought that Tom was. It was my intention to say so, even though Tom was a Republican. It was clear to me that, if asked, Tom would have been willing to stay on.

I then went to see the President-elect, whom I had not met before. He stated that he wished me to serve as Secretary of Defense. When I said that I was not qualified, he made a very interesting remark—that he

was not aware of any schools for presidents, meaning that in a sense he didn't consider himself fully qualified either—and that inexperience was not sufficient justification for refusal to serve as Secretary of Defense. We talked at some length. I said that I was not putting my obligation to the Ford Motor Company on the same scale as the obligation of a citizen to serve his government; that my refusal was based solely on the grounds that I did not feel qualified to handle the responsibility, but that I was quite interested in examining the opportunity for public service at some time in my life, in a position which was more suited to my experience and background. He urged me to think further about it and to meet him again the next week. I should have mentioned that this meeting took place at his house on N Street, and that the street was absolutely jammed in front of the house with reporters. But there was an alley behind the house, so I was able to get in and out without this visit being reported in the press. When I left, we agreed that I would return on Monday.

Goldberg: How did your name get to Kennedy?

McNamara: I read or heard that Ken Galbraith was asked by Kennedy to think about names of individuals who might serve in the Cabinet and that Galbraith put forth my name. I had met Galbraith while he was working on one or more of his books during the 1950s. He was interested in corporate structures and cultures and I was a rising young corporate executive. I am told that he put the name forward; and also that Bob Lovett did. I had not really known Lovett, but I had worked during the war in a part of the Army in which he was very much interested, statistical control.

Goldberg: I was in stat control, too, in England.

McNamara: Were you? I didn't know that. I was in England, in January 1943. Anyway, I returned to Ann Arbor, where we lived, and talked to my wife about it and we agreed that if the President-elect believed that I could serve effectively, we would accept his judgment on that point. However, I would not accept the proposed appointment unless he agreed that I could staff the upper echelons of the Department with the ablest available people, without any regard to party or their participation in support of him or the Democratic Party, and that I would condition my acceptance on his agreement that, in effect, I was to be a working Secretary, as opposed to what I called a "socializing" Secretary. Then my wife and I talked to our children. At the time I was one of the highest paid industrial executives in the world, not wealthy, but in a position to become so. My annual compensation, including stock options, was on the order of \$600,000 in 1960 dollars. We discussed the impact of all this on them—moving to Washington, a different life style, a substantial difference in financial compensation, which would now be \$25,000 per year. The children were not at all interested in wealth, had an aversion to it in a sense, and therefore even though the impact would fall on them, rather than on us, they were not concerned. So I concluded that I would accept Kennedy's proposal with the two conditions. I was uncertain how to negotiate with a President. I believed it would be wise to put the conditions in writing, but how to do it? I finally concluded that I might call him and say that since it was snowing, I could not travel that day and therefore I was sending him a letter, in which I would outline what I had planned to say on Monday, had I been able to meet him then. I

drafted a letter and called him to tell him this, but he was in Palm Beach, Florida. When I reached him there, he said, "Don't worry about it. It is snowing in Washington, and I can't get back either. We'll see you on Tuesday." Because it was essential to my strategy that the conditions be down on paper, I stated, "Mr. President, anticipating that I couldn't get there, I've already sent you the letter in order to facilitate the discussion. You will have it when I arrive."

So I went down on Tuesday, went in the back way through the alley, and found Bobby Kennedy with him, sitting on a love seat. I sat on a chair opposite, and showed the President a copy of the letter. He read it and passed it to Bobby, who read it and passed it back. The President said, "Bobby, what do you think?" Bobby said, "I think it's great." The President said, "It's a deal." I must say that never once, even under great provocation, did he deviate from that agreement, that I could appoint all of the individuals that were subject to political appointment in the Defense Department without any regard whatsoever to political considerations, or recommendations from the White House—and solely on the basis of merit. He said, "Fine, let's announce it right now." So he took a legal size pad and drafted a statement. We walked out on the front porch—the street was jammed with television and press reporters—and he announced it. My wife heard it on television that night before I got back home. I returned to Ann Arbor that Tuesday night, traveled to Washington on Wednesday or Thursday, and have only been back to Ann Arbor once since then.

I went into the Ford suite at the Shoreham Hotel and holed up there. I spent all of my time, from roughly December 10 until I went to Aspen for skiing at Christmas time, on recruiting individuals. I did it by taking a pack of 3x5 cards and calling people I knew—e.g. Lovett, Thornton, Galbraith—asking them for their suggestions for key positions in the Department—the Deputy Secretary, the Director of Research and Engineering, the Secretaries of the Services, personal assistants, etc. Then I cross-checked with various other people and finally began an interview process.

You will be amused to know that the day I arrived in Washington and went into the suite at the Shoreham, the left-hand column of the front page of the New York Times, as I recall, had a headline that Franklin Roosevelt would be Secretary of the Navy. I was so naive about the ways of Washington; I paid absolutely no attention to it. It made no sense to me. I didn't know Franklin Roosevelt, and what I knew of him led me to believe that he wasn't at all qualified to be Secretary of the Navy. Moreover, the President had promised me I could choose individuals solely on the basis of merit. A couple of weeks later, after I had recommended to the President several different individuals and he had approved them for appointment to various top positions in the department, he asked me one day, "What about the Secretary of the Navy, Bob? You haven't recommended anybody for that." I said, "That's right, Mr. President, it's hard to find the right men." He inquired, "Have you thought of Franklin Roosevelt?" I said that I had read the New York Times article, but that I didn't think that Roosevelt was qualified. He asked, "Have you met him?" I replied

that I hadn't, and he said, "Don't you think you ought to meet him before you come to a final conclusion?" I responded, "Sure, I will be happy to meet him." I vaguely recalled that Roosevelt was a Fiat dealer in Washington. I found his telephone number in the yellow pages, called him and said, "I'm Robert McNamara, may I come down to see you?" He damn near dropped the phone, you could tell. I went down to see him, and we talked. He was a very nice person, but inexperienced in managing large organizations. I called the President-elect when I came back and told him that I didn't think Roosevelt was qualified to be Secretary of the Navy. He asked, "Bob, did you follow the West Virginia campaign?" I said, "Mr. President, I was out in Detroit, and didn't know very much about the campaign, but I remember that there was a crucial test in protestant West Virginia of the importance of the religious issue and that you beat Hubert Humphrey, despite your catholicism. He responded, "Yes, that was absolutely one of the most important events leading up to the nomination, and Franklin Roosevelt played a very essential role." (I heard later that Franklin Roosevelt had spread rumors that Humphrey had tried to evade the draft in World War II). I said, "Mr. President, I still don't think he's qualified to be Secretary of the Navy." There was an absolute dead silence on the phone; you could hear a long sigh, and then, "I guess I'll have to take care of him some other way."

I think that it's crucial to understand that throughout my life I have believed that my success depended to an important degree on my ability to attract able people, focus them on important problems, and motivate them highly to address those issues in an effective way. I was certain

that my success in the Defense Department would depend on that, and that was why I laid down the condition. As I stated to you, the President never deviated from that. The result was, I believe, that our Department had the ablest group of senior officials that were ever assembled in any Cabinet office in the history of our republic. At a single time we had such people as Ros Gilpatric, Cy Vance, Joe Califano, Harold Brown, Charlie Hitch, Paul Nitze, John McNaughton, Bill Bundy, Alain Enthoven, Harry Rowen, Adam Yarmolinsky, Eugene Fubini, Paul Warnke, and a host of others, extremely able people. Whatever we accomplished there came about because of those people, plus the extraordinary group of senior military people whom we either inherited or insisted be put into the key posts. I was not very popular with the Air Force and Navy for a long time because we had three Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs in succession from the Army. The reason was that I thought they were the ablest people, and I didn't give a damn what color suit they wore, what service they came from, or whether the other services liked it or not. I was going to get the ablest person I could find as Chairman. It was a crucial appointment for me and the President. So, we manned the Department with the ablest military and civilian people we could find.

Matloff: What problems did you face, aside from those of manning, in the Department when you took over?

McNamara: The most important single problem was to think through how to formulate security policy and related strategy and force structure and, from that, to derive the financial budgets. A second problem that came up rather quickly was how to apply military force. Those were the two most

difficult challenges we faced. I didn't believe then, and I don't believe now, that there was in existence at that time an adequate intellectual foundation for security policy, military strategy, military force structure, and Defense budgets. We tried to develop a concept of how to proceed to obtain such policies, structures, and budgets. In substance, it was to start with foreign policy as given, since it wasn't our function to establish foreign policy, and to derive from that military strategy, and from that, force structure, and from that, Defense budgets. Obviously, it isn't quite as simple as I stated (e.g. it was an iterative process), but that was the concept, and that was why in my statements to Congress each year, the so-called Posture Statements, I started with a very long discussion of foreign policy. Many in the State Department who didn't understand what I was trying to do (and that did not include Dean Rusk, because Dean strongly agreed with my approach to developing security policy and strategy and force structure) thought that I was trying to usurp the role of Secretary of State. When we took the Posture Statement to the Congress, the foreign policy section had been reviewed in detail by the State Department. It was essential to begin with a discussion of foreign policy because that had to be the foundation of security policy. The articulation and the integration of foreign policy, security policy, military strategy, force structure, and budgets obviously were imperfect—I understand that. But intellectually that's the way we thought of it. I think that it was extremely important. I don't believe that it had been done previously—certainly not in as formal a way as we were trying to do it, and with as much emphasis placed on the necessity of integrating

the several parts—and I don't believe that it has been done on any consistent basis since.

Goldberg: Would you say that what you included in your Posture Statements on foreign policy was really about the only thing that was available? And that you did it because the State Department did not give it to you?

McNamara: Essentially, yes, that is correct.

Goldberg: It has always been a problem with the military, getting that sort of thing; it goes back to the 40s. If you look at this first volume of ours, you will see that they were trying to get it from State in the 1940s.

McNamara: I think that since that time the statement of foreign policy has been formalized to a greater degree than it was then—at least during some of the Kissinger years that was the case.

Matloff: How about the state of the Department of Defense itself when you took over—the nature of the working relations, the structure?

Were you satisfied with the state of the Department in those respects?

McNamara: I did not feel that the Secretary had been in a position to direct the activities of the Department in the formulation of policy.

The organization of the Department didn't facilitate that. The Secretary was inadequately served by staff, other than the staff that was under the Joint Chiefs or the service chiefs. The civilian staffs in the services were particularly weak, and the civilian staff in the Secretary's office was, I also thought, weak and poorly organized to lay the intellectual foundation for determination of security policy, military strategy, force structure, and budgets. I set about to correct that, and to do so I

brought in the "Rand intellectuals." It wasn't that I was seeking to bring in Rand people, but it happened that I found Rand to be a major source of what I call security intellectuals. I brought in a number of other individuals with experience in security policy--for example, Paul Nitze, who had been director of the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department, and William Bundy, who had had major experience in CIA, and elsewhere. The reason we were bringing them in was to bolster the ability of the Secretary of Defense to lead in the formulation of security policy and to avoid becoming a captive of the Joint Chiefs and the services. It was not that I didn't have respect for the Chiefs. I have a tremendous regard for them. But their ability to participate in the formulation of national security policy was severely limited by the very unwieldy and ineffective organizational structure of the Joint Chiefs and Joint Staff. Only now is that structure being changed by action of the Congress. It is interesting that the change is being stimulated by a former chief, David Jones, and it is being opposed by the present Secretary of Defense.

Goldberg: Don't you think that Gates was moving in that direction--greater policy formulation?

McNamara: Certainly Gates's action to introduce the SIOP was, in a sense, moving in that direction, but his moves were very limited and the staff was very weak.

Goldberg: But he, himself, was doing things.

McNamara: He was perhaps thinking that way, but the linkage between foreign policy and defense budget was totally lacking. There was no strategy that I was aware of which could serve as a foundation for nuclear

force levels, for example. There was no strategy that served as a basis for determining conventional force levels. I understand how difficult it is to develop intellectual foundations for conventional force levels, but we subsequently evolved the concept of a requirement for conventional forces sufficient to fight one and one-half wars simultaneously in support of our foreign policy commitments. That was a new concept.

Matloff: Your administration is associated with the introduction of PPBS and Systems Analysis as part of the machinery and processes in the Department of Defense. In doing some research, I came across William Kaufmann's assessment in his volume, The McNamara Strategy, with which I am sure you are familiar. According to Kaufmann, one of the benefits of the PPBS system was that it "reduced the need for the vast reorganizations that had shaken the Pentagon periodically since 1947. Responsibility for the management of the Department of Defense was clearly vested in the Secretary and he now had the means, through the planning-programming-budgeting process, to exercise his authority in a systematic and orderly way. In effect, he had found a substitute for unification of the Services and establishment of a single Chief of Staff." Would you go along with that?

McNamara: Yes. When I became Secretary, the Symington Report was on the table. Ros Gilpatric had been a member of a committee working with Symington, and the report, as I recall, proposed a very substantial reorganization of the Department and the services. It considered that a prerequisite for effective management of the Department by the Secretary. I had spent a good part of my life in managing organizations, and I agreed, in principle,

with many of the major points of the Symington Report. But I felt that it was extremely unlikely that that report, or any significant part of it, could be implemented politically. Parts of it would require action by Congress; all of it would require difficult decisions that I thought would lead to extended controversy and turmoil within the Defense Department. Therefore, while I reached the conclusion that the Department would have to be managed in ways quite different from before—that the Secretary must direct the formulation of policy, development of force structure, and the preparation of budgets—I also concluded it would have to be done essentially within the existing law and the existing structure. I was determined to do that. I have long felt that an optimal organizational structure is a desirable but not a necessary condition to major improvement of operations in most kinds of organizations. I was determined to get control of that Department without the organizational changes that had been proposed by the Symington Committee. I thought that could be done by recruiting the proper kinds of people, by laying out the approach to formulation of security policy—i.e., integrating foreign policy, security policy, military strategy, force structure, and budgets—and by developing the tools to apply that set of intellectual concepts. One of the tools was the program, planning, and budgeting system.

Matloff: Had this been a new concept for you, or had you been working on this right along?

McNamara: My concepts of planning and control were formulated over a period of years beginning when I was a graduate student at Harvard. In a

budgetary planning course, we studied control systems that had been adopted by major corporations. Particularly, I remember the experience of the Du Pont executives who went into General Motors after Du Pont bought a major part of General Motors, about 1919. Between 1919 and 1923, Donaldson Brown, Alfred Sloan, and a number of other Du Pont executives laid out the planning and control system that was a major factor in GM's success over the next fifty years. I had studied the concept in the late thirties, and I had applied portions of it in the U.S. Army Air Forces, while I was in Stat Control. After the war, I went to Ford Motor Co., where I became assistant director and then director of the Planning Office, Comptroller, Ford Division manager, and subsequently president. In each of those positions, I applied the general concepts of planning as a major tool of management. I then came down to the Defense Department and tried to do the same thing there.

Matloff: You had not met up with Hitch before that?

McNamara: Never. I knew what I was looking for in the Assistant Secretary, Comptroller, but I couldn't find the right man. While skiing at Aspen during Christmas week, I continued to try to recruit individuals for the key posts in the Department. Using my three-by-five cards and references, I came across the name of Hitch and tracked him down. He was then employed by the RAND corporation, but he was a professional economist and was attending the annual meeting of the American Economic Association. I tracked him down and asked to see him. He said that it would be very difficult and, in any event, he wasn't interested in the job. He said that he had married late; he and his wife had just had a child, he was

happy in Los Angeles and he did not wish to move. I suggested that on his way back to Los Angeles we meet in Denver. So we did. I aroused his interest, and eventually he agreed to come to Defense. He was a superb "comptroller." The word connotes accounting, but his function was planning, strategic planning, and the derivation of force structure and the defense budget from such plans.

Goldberg: It wasn't accounting under his predecessors, either.

McNamara: But they didn't do what he did.

Goldberg: McNeil did a great deal.

McNamara: Not that. There were certainly no papers around that showed that.

Goldberg: McNeil didn't put much down on paper.

McNamara: You can't do policy formulation, strategic planning, and budgeting without putting it down on paper. You can't run that Department by the seat of your pants.

Goldberg: His people put the things down on paper.

McNamara: I will defy you to show me a written statement of the foundation for strategic offensive nuclear forces by McNeil or anybody else prior to 1961.

Goldberg: That's another matter.

McNamara: But that's very important, not just for force structure; it's important, as well, for formulation of strategy and the preparation of war plans. I didn't know anything about those matters, but I said to myself, "Now, a) we have some nuclear weapons, b) we have to think how might we use them, and c) we must determine what number we should have."

The questions led to the planning and analysis. You might say obviously we had weapons and we also had war plans, so somebody must have thought through how we would apply these things and how we decided how many to have. But I could find no evidence that had been done.

Goldberg: Bernard Brodie did it for the Air Force in the early 1950s.

McNamara: But you can't use early 1950 in 1960; it's a totally different world. I defy you to find any papers. That was my problem. When I came into the Department I couldn't find any papers. I couldn't find any intellectual foundation for either the application of force or the determination of force requirements that related to our foreign policy. The policy for application of force was "massive retaliation." We had on the order of 6,000 strategic warheads, so you say to the commanders, "Are you going to use all of those?" They reply, "Yes." Every one of the plans applied all of the weapons, with minor qualifications. You ask: "Why 6,000 instead of 3,000?" and there was no reply except, "We want to knock the hell out of them." And then you ask, "How will they respond?" And the commanders reply, "With whatever they have left." And you ask, "How much will they have left?" The answer of course is the Soviets will have more left than we want to be hit with. Not much of that was laid down in writing. You try to find a written statement that said: "We will launch six thousand weapons and knock the hell out of them, but they'll survive with tens of warheads which they will launch against us. We'll lose millions of people—not as many as they lost, but millions." There wasn't any such statement. The closest approximation of it—and it wasn't a statement of policy at all—was a war game done by the Net Evaluation

Subcommittee, a committee of four four-star officers that prepared one copy of a report for the President. It was the only piece of paper that related in any way to what I'm talking about—the application of force. It evaluated the exchange and it scared the hell out of you. No wonder they only had one copy of it, because it showed the bankruptcy of our strategy.

Goldberg: That was the first of the Hickey committees.

McNamara: That's right.

Matloff: Would you give some brief capsule descriptions of your working relations with various segments in and out of the Department; for example, how did you arrange the division of labor between you and your deputies—you had three in sequence?

McNamara: To a degree I looked upon them as alter egos—in a sense we shared my responsibility. I was spending much more time with the President than they were. They were spending much more time on details and administration than I was. On the major decisions of how to approach the problem of developing security policy and strategy and force structure, I had my deputies be part of my thinking every step of the way. In force application that was also true. On all of the major decisions I tried to treat them as my alter ego. We would discuss the matter, I would come to a conclusion, and I would expect them to follow it, whether it was what they recommended or not. It worked very well; it was superb.

Matloff: How about with the JCS? How close were you with the Chairman? Did you prefer dealing with the Chairman, rather than with the Joint Chiefs as a corporate body?

McNamara: Yes, I dealt with the Chairman rather than with the Chiefs as a corporate body. I wasn't overly concerned about what I thought was a miserable organization. I held the same view of it then that Davy Jones holds today and the same view that is reflected in the congressional legislation: the structure was very undesirable—the so-called collegial body, the confusion of power, the placing of the Chiefs in positions where their thought processes were circumscribed by the biases of their service positions and responsibilities. I thought that it was a very undesirable structure. I thought that I could deal with it without changing it, by treating the Chairman as the directing officer—the CEO, if you will—of the Joint Chiefs. That was clearly not his function in law. But one can behave with other human beings in ways that aren't prescribed by law. I treated the Chairman as my senior military adviser. I recognized that he, in turn, had to be responsive to the formal structure of the Chiefs, he had to reflect the views of the other Chiefs. It never bothered me that I overruled the majority of the Chiefs, or even occasionally the unanimous recommendation of the Chiefs.

Matloff: How did you handle the problem of splits within the JCS?

McNamara: It didn't bother me in the slightest. It made no difference to me. What I was looking for was the right answer, and if four people proposed the wrong answer and one person the right answer, I supported the one. If I thought all five were wrong, I selected another answer. Initially, that caused a certain amount of resentment and concern. But I believe if you were to ask Max Taylor if he approved of that system, he would say yes.

Goldberg: Did you pick Taylor for the job?

McNamara: I sure did. The President brought him back into the government after he retired as Army Chief, to assist in appraising the Bay of Pigs debacle—how we got into such a mess. Some people have said that I recommended to the President that Max be made Chairman to get him out of the White House so I wouldn't have to deal with the White House where he might look over my performance. That is absurd. I recommended he be appointed Chairman because I thought that he was the brightest, ablest, and most policy-sensitive military officer I could find. He was terrific. We didn't agree on everything, but that wasn't my objective. My objective was to get the ablest Chairman available. In Max, I had it.

Matloff: How about with the service secretaries, how did you see their role and how did you make use of them? Did you ever, for example, use them outside of the traditional interests of their departments?

McNamara: No. Nor did I use them perhaps in ways that they had been used in the past. Basically I didn't use them in matters relating to security policy, force application, or strategy. I used them in connection with logistics, procurement, and training responsibilities, which I thought were the proper responsibilities of their departments.

Matloff: On what kinds of issues would you normally be dealing with Secretary of State Dean Rusk?

McNamara: One of the first was the issue of nuclear weapons. In the early days after I was sworn in as Secretary, I received a very highly classified letter from Dean. I have forgotten the point that he was making, but it related to nuclear weapons. It said TOP SECRET EYES ONLY,

and I was so naive that I assumed I was the only one that had a copy. By God, I read about it in The Evening Star a day or so later. I just couldn't believe it. We ultimately found a general officer, an Air Force general, who, I am absolutely certain, leaked it. He leaked it in order to bolster a position that ran counter to the views of other senior members of the DoD. He leaked it to generate opposition to their position. I mention this simply to say that Dean and I had a very close relationship. He wanted my views on major foreign policy issues, and I wanted his views on security issues that had foreign policy implications.

Goldberg: It is generally considered that you did play a very substantial role in foreign policy matters during the period you were Secretary; more, probably, than any other Secretary of Defense.

McNamara: I don't know, because I don't know what role other Secretaries have played.

Matloff: Particularly in the Johnson period.

McNamara: I never, in even my private thoughts, conceived of my relationship with Dean other than one in which the Secretary of Defense was a servant of the foreign policy of the country, and therefore I conceived of Dean Rusk as superior to me. I don't mean in the line, but as having a function that put his view with respect to foreign policy above mine. I was mentioning today at lunch that Dean was one of the great patriots of our nation. One day he called me and said, "I want to come over to see you." I replied, "I'll come see you." He said, "It's a personal

thing." I responded, "I don't care whether it's official or personal, I'm coming to see you." So I went over to see him. The point simply is that I felt that the Secretary of State was senior. But I also believed that to the extent foreign policy carried security implications, it was the role of the Secretary of Defense to state what those implications were and to comment upon them. I never hesitated to do so. Much foreign policy does have security implications, and that is why I was frequently expressing views, publicly and otherwise, on those issues.

Goldberg: The other reason, I think, for this belief, was that presumably you had a closer and more significant relationship with the President than did Dean Rusk.

McNamara: I don't want to say it was closer than Dean's, but it was certainly close with both Kennedy and Johnson—that is true.

Matloff: Did your fostering ISA, or "the little State Department," as it is sometimes called within the DoD, complicate or facilitate your dealings with the State Department?

McNamara: It facilitated them. This is why I put so much care in selecting my ISA heads. I had Nitze, Bundy, Warnke, and McNaughton—absolutely superb people. It was one of the two or three most significant posts in the whole department.

Matloff: Did your relationships with Kennedy and Johnson differ in any way?

McNamara: They had different styles, but the relationships were very close.

Matloff: Did you get the feeling you were being used more in matters dealing with foreign policy under Johnson?

McNamara: Both Kennedy and Johnson used me in matters outside the Defense Department. Kennedy pulled me in on the steel price increase, for example; and both used me on many of the actions relating to civil rights, some of which had military implications because of the riots and civil disorders.

Goldberg: We put out a volume on that. Have you seen the Army volume on it?

McNamara: No, but it's a fascinating subject.

Goldberg: It has the whole story of that period.

McNamara: Johnson got me into a lot of different non-Defense matters, other than foreign policy, one of which was aluminum pricing, the rollback.

Matloff: How about your relations with Congress, particularly as time went on?

McNamara: I think in the public press it was thought then that my relationships with Congress were very bad. I don't think that was the case. I don't think that you can point to a single bill that I wanted that I lost, not a single one, whether it was a money bill or non-money bill. I don't think you can point to a single action that I wanted to take that the Congress prevented. We canceled the B-70 program after the Congress had authorized the funds for the program; I believe there were 40-odd thousand people working on it. Against the opposition of Congress, we dissolved 30 or 40 National Guard divisions; we closed hundreds of bases in the face of Congressional opposition. We got every single appropriation bill through. We canceled the nuclear airplane and the Skybolt missile.

We made the KENNEDY a diesel-powered carrier instead of a nuclear carrier. Rickover had a fit and the Joint Atomic Energy Committee, which was a very powerful committee, was absolutely determined that the KENNEDY would be nuclear powered. There was blood on the floor over these issues. That is why the press felt, and many in Congress felt, that my relationships were very bad. But I felt that my job was not to serve the Defense Department per se. I looked upon the role of a Cabinet officer differently from the way most Cabinet officers look upon their roles. And certainly most departments look upon the roles of Cabinet officers differently from the way I do. The Secretary of Education looks upon himself as the servant of a constituency; his constituency is the teachers. The Secretary of Health and Welfare looks upon himself as a servant of the health profession; Commerce the same way; Labor the same way; and so on. Many thought that the Secretary of Defense should think narrowly about security issues and about the role of the Defense Department. They believed he should function as a sectorial lobby, if you will, within the broader society. I felt that I was a servant of the President, that the President was the servant of the people; and that my function was to look upon Defense from the point of view of all the people, not just from the point of view of the Defense Department. That brought me into close and continuing conflict with some elements of the Congress, particularly the Armed Services Committees, which tended to be committees that represented the Defense constituency, both the military forces and the industrial contractors. The military-industrial complex never bothered me a damn bit. I thought that it was greatly overrated as a political force affecting decisions. I never let

it affect my decision, whether it liked them or didn't like them. The Congress always had the power to turn down a recommendation that I made in the name of the President, if its members could consolidate their power and use it. They never were able to. Although they tried awfully hard, I don't believe they were ever able to overturn one of my budget or force decisions. The B-70 controversy was a perfect illustration of this point. It led to that famous Rose Garden meeting, which was very serious. This was a potential conflict of a constitutional character. It was not at that stage a dispute over a weapon; it was a dispute over the relative powers of the Executive and Legislative branches of our government. There was no way to settle that other than through the Judiciary. This was a very dangerous situation which would have caused tremendous trouble to our nation, both then and later, had it not been for one amazing individual, Vinson. Vinson was thought to be either a pawn of, or the dictator of, the Defense Department. But when it came down to the wire, he was a great patriot. He understood the constitutional issues that lay beneath the surface of this controversy. He said to the President (the President, he, and I were the only people present in the Rose Garden) in effect, "You're a young President, I'm a senior member of Congress; but I have tremendous respect for you as President and for the office of the President. I understand the constitutional conflict that lies beneath the surface here. I don't want to surface that. You don't want to surface it. I led my troops up that hill, I was the leader of the B-70, I'll put them in reverse, and I'll lead them down the hill (i.e. he would not continue to fight over decision to cancel the airplane)."

Matloff: I take it that neither Kennedy nor Johnson laid down a list of priorities or a detailed agenda in the national security field that he wanted you to carry out. You had to feel your own way, basically.

McNamara: I think that Kennedy believed that I should examine the Department from the point of view of the adequacy of our forces in relation to our foreign policy commitments. He campaigned on the theme that the missile gap existed. I mention that because it indicates his mindset. He was concerned that our strategic forces were inadequate. It didn't take Ros Gilpatric and me more than three weeks to determine that there was a strategic offensive nuclear gap, but it was exactly the reverse of the kind that had been implied by the term missile gap.

Goldberg: Were you surprised at the extent to which political considerations played such a role in most of the major issues and decisions, when you first came in?

McNamara: I'm not certain I would agree that political considerations played such a role, but I do want to say something. In a book I have just written, I have a chapter on what I call misperceptions that endanger our security in the nuclear age. One of the misperceptions is that a military weapon which is irrelevant in a military context can be used for political purposes. This relates to what you're saying. I'll give you an illustration of that, the most extreme illustration I can think of. We canceled the Skybolt. It was a pile of junk; there is absolutely no question about that. The British, who would have had a right, had we produced Skybolt, to procure it, had led their public to believe they were going to maintain a nuclear deterrent force through procurement of Skybolt. When we canceled

the weapon because it was a pile of junk, they said, "You're going to overthrow the Macmillan government by this decision." We didn't want to do that. But they said that was what was going to happen: "Our retention of political power depends on maintenance and modernization of our independent deterrent." We said that Skybolt was a pile of junk. They said, in effect, "Let's not discuss the performance of the weapon, just go ahead and produce it." That is an illustration of a point you're making. I was surprised that in our own society—I won't say in the Kennedy and Johnson administration—events similar to that happened every day. For example, the governors knew very well the state National Guard divisions were not combat ready and in effect played no significant role in our defense structure. But would the governors support the elimination of those divisions? Not one of them would. When I pressed Johnson to approve disbanding the divisions, he said, "Bob, you're going to have trouble with the governors. Why don't you go to their annual meeting?" They met that year in Hershey, Pennsylvania, as I remember. I went there and spoke to the 50 governors, including such really outstanding people as Nelson Rockefeller. Not a single governor would support the elimination of the National Guard divisions, even though every one of them knew the divisions were hollow.

Goldberg: Were you surprised?

McNamera: I was surprised. but we went ahead and eliminated them anyway. I was very surprised how often attempts were made to make defense decisions reflect political—i.e. non-military—requirements. But I never had the President say to me, "Bob, do this. I know you don't think there's any

military justification for it, but we've got to do it politically." Not once. I insisted that we make the decisions relating to: closing bases, adding forces, canceling forces, eliminating weapons, whatever, without regard to the political decisions. That is one of the things that got me into such hot water with the Congress. For example, Eddie Hebert wanted the military's medical services expanded. He wanted military personnel who were treated in civilian hospitals to be treated in military hospitals. He would then justify the expansion of the military hospitals, the addition of a medical university, and so on. It made no sense to me. Why should the wife of a military officer go to a uniformed gynecologist instead of going to a civilian hospital adjacent to the base? It made absolutely no sense to me, so I refused to support Hebert's program. I never would agree to building a medical university. The plan to do so wasn't passed by Congress while I was Secretary. I never would have allowed it to be passed. If it had been passed and it was within my constitutional right, I would have refused to spend the money for the project. Because of such views, I was in constant conflict with certain elements of the Congress. There is absolutely no question about that. The nuclear carrier was one illustration, the medical university was another, the bases, the Guard, you name it. But we got along. Eddie Hebert once said, "Bob, you've seen my office. I have all those pictures of the Secretaries. How about your picture? I want an autographed picture." I said in effect, "You son of a bitch, you've been trying to destroy me and now you want an autographed picture? I don't believe it." He said, "You're damn right I want your picture." So I gave him a picture and autographed it: "To the

greatest riverboat gambler of them all. With best wishes, Robert S. McNamara." He got a great kick out of it; it was placed on his wall. In sum, I would not allow political pressure to influence action contrary to what the President and I believed to be the interests of society.

Matloff: Let me ask you about perceptions of the threat. Do you recall what your initial perception of the threat facing the United States was, and did that perception change as the years went on?

McNamara: I don't know that initially I had a very clear perception of the threat. I knew what our treaty responsibilities were. It was alleged that the Soviets had both an objective of hegemony—of aggressive intent against Western Europe and other parts of the world—and conventional offensive force capabilities that greatly exceeded our defensive capabilities. It was perhaps not expressed exactly that way by Kennedy, but it was that general conception of the threat that led Kennedy to say, "Bob, take a careful look at our forces and see whether you think they're adequate."

Matloff: Did you see Communism as a monolithic bloc?

McNamara: No. Again, one of my problems with Congress was that exact issue—I got into a hell of a mess over my belief that Communism wasn't a monolithic bloc. In the latter half of the fifties, what were known as strategic seminars for civilians had been organized and addressed by uniformed officers. These were designed for the purpose of educating the public on the communist threat and the military forces required to meet that threat. In reviewing the statements that were made by the military officers, it seemed to me that they were exaggerating the threat, treating

it as monolithic, presenting it in a very ideological way. So, not believing that the threat was monolithic, not believing that it should be simplified to the extent of an ideology, and not wishing to exaggerate it, I insisted that all speeches of senior officers (one-star officers and above) be sent to a section we set up to review them. In that section I had both civilian and military reviewers, and I insisted that they lay down a set of guidelines against which they would review these speeches. One of them was to remove all language that conveyed an ideological or monolithic view of the threat. I remember that I insisted that they change words like "aggressive Reds" to "Soviet Union"—to try to take out the color words. That got me in one hell of a mess. Conservatives in Congress called for a special set of congressional hearings which eventually led to the only claim of executive privilege that had been put forward for years. The hearings came about because some of the officers, who thought they were being censored, persuaded their supporters in the Congress—one of whom was Thurmond—that I had infiltrated Communists into the Department, and particularly into this review group. They felt in particular that one of the Communists was Adam Yarmolinsky, my assistant, who was associated with the work of the review group. They insisted that I give the names of the reviewers. They knew very well who the reviewers were, but they wanted to put me on the spot. The reviewers included a major, other military officers, and civilians. I refused to give the names, because that would blacken the individuals. I had set up the group; it was following my policy; the whole thing was carried out in accordance with my wishes and my instructions. I said, therefore, that I

would assume full responsibility for it and I wouldn't allow Congress to have the names. We went through hearing after hearing in the Senate Caucus Room, a huge room jammed with members of the press and public, particularly women. The critical moment came in an exchange with Sen. Thurmond. He said, "Mr. Chairman, I would like the Sergeant-at-Arms to take to the Secretary this newspaper." It was a tabloid, and on the front was a full-page picture of a nude woman. He asked, "Mr. Secretary, do you see that?" "Yes." "Do you know where it came from?" "No." "Well that is what is sold to the sons of these mothers stationed at the US military base in Rhein-Main, Germany. Would you tell the mothers what you see on the front page." I replied, "Yes sir, the picture of a woman." He said, "You're just engaging in the evasion that you so customarily follow when testifying before the Congress. Tell me how she is clothed." I responded, "She has little clothing." He said, "Mr. Secretary, I've dealt with you before; that's what's wrong with you; you say she has little clothing. She has no clothing. Why don't you tell that to these mothers!" Then we went on from there to the procedures for "muzzling" the generals and his claim that I was screwing up the Department by infiltrating it with communists. Finally he said, "Mr. Chairman (Stennis was chairman), I ask that you direct the Secretary to supply the names of [the censors]." The Chairman said, "Mr. Secretary, you heard the Senator. I think that is a perfectly reasonable request." I said, "Senator, and Mr. Chairman, I've told you several times why I cannot give those names. I cannot run that department if people carrying out my orders are held responsible for my actions. I am responsible. If you want to remove me,

you can try to do so by engaging in whatever process is legal for that purpose. But I am not going to remain in that Department and give you those names." The chairman said, "I have to tell you, Mr. Secretary, we will hold you in contempt if you don't give those names." I said, "Mr. Chairman, I plead executive privilege." He said, "Mr. Secretary, you must understand that you cannot plead executive privilege without the written approval of the President." I said, "I do understand." He said, "Do you mean to say that you have that approval?" I said, "Yes, Mr. Chairman, I do." I pulled out of my pocket a letter from President Kennedy. It authorized me to plead executive privilege. After I read the letter there was a dead silence. The chairman said, "I've anticipated this moment for months (I think the hearings had been going on for about six months) and I've examined the history of our Republic on this subject. I find the following . . . (he had written on yellow legal-sized pages a report on the use of executive privilege, starting with George Washington). Based on that, I hold your use of executive privilege in accordance with the traditions of our Republic." He was terrific. It is, however, another illustration of why I was frequently in trouble with some members of the Congress. I never gave an inch on something I believed in. To return to your point about the nature of the threat--I wasn't an expert on the Soviet Union but I did recognize that a degree of paranoia existed in certain parts of our Republic with respect to Cuba, as an illustration. I think the problem that arose over the Bay of Pigs was in part a function of two factors: one, the failure to recognize the paranoia that led to an respect to the exaggerated view of the security risk of

a Communist government in Cuba; and the other, a totally erroneous judgment of the capability of the so-called freedom forces to free Cuba from Castro's rule. The latter came about because of the error of combining operations and intelligence. Some of our problems in Vietnam came about from the same cause. That was the reason for my request to President Johnson to allow me to go to CIA and to ask that the Director set up a special unit to evaluate operations in Vietnam. I didn't feel that the intelligence services of the Defense Department were capable of doing that. There was too close a relationship between the intelligence function and the operational responsibility. [How many times do we have to learn these must be separated.] So the answer to your question is that I did feel that the threat was misstated by parts of our society—parts of the military, parts of the Congress, and parts of the public—and I did seek to obtain a reevaluation of that threat by all of the parties.

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This is part II of an oral history interview with Mr. Robert S. McNamara, held in Washington, D.C., on May 22, 1986, at 4:00 p.m. Representing the OSD Historical Office are Drs. Roger Trask and Maurice Matloff.

Matloff: Mr. McNamara, at the end of our meeting on April 3, we had spoken about your perception of the threat facing the United States. We would like now to move on to discuss the role you played as Secretary of Defense in connection with strategic planning, with ways of meeting the threat.

How did you view your role in this area, and what was your attitude toward nuclear weapons, both strategic and tactical—their buildup, their use, and control? How did you see your role and your contributions in this field?

McNamara: You will recall that one of the issues of the presidential campaign in 1960 was the alleged missile gap. One of my first acts after assuming the responsibilities of Secretary of Defense on January 20, 1961, was to determine the extent of the gap, since I believed that I should act immediately to close it. Mr. Gilpatric, my Deputy, and I, during the first three or four weeks in office spent a substantial percentage of our time viewing the evidence on which the gap estimate had been made. We learned that in 1960 there were at least two different intelligence estimates relating to the balance of the strategic nuclear forces in the U.S. and the Soviet Union. One of the estimates was prepared by the A-2 in the Air Force, and it indicated that the Soviets had a number of missile warheads greater than that possessed by the United States. Apparently a copy of that intelligence estimate had been leaked to members of the Congress, and that was the basis on which the campaign charges were made. We learned,

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however, that another intelligence estimate, prepared by the CIA, came to a different conclusion. After reviewing all of the evidence, we were convinced that the CIA's estimate was more correct than that of the Air Force. If a gap existed in strategic nuclear weapons, it was a gap in favor of the United States. I mention this incident because from the beginning of my term in office I felt a responsibility to determine the appropriate level of nuclear weapons for U.S. forces. Many of the men whom I recruited for senior positions in the Department, for example, Messrs. Nitze, Hitch, Enthoven, Rowen, and later Harold Brown, were experts or had had substantial association with studies in the field of nuclear strategy, and I drew upon their expertise to examine the nuclear strategy that the U.S. had followed in past years and to consider whether changes in that strategy were desirable. On the basis of those strategic studies, we then developed the appropriate force structures. Because the risks to our population of confrontation between the super powers in the nuclear age were much greater than in prior years and not well understood by the public, we made a special effort to acquaint both the Congress and the public with the results of our studies, to the extent that could be done without a serious violation of classification.

Matloff: Your administration is usually known for its changeover in strategic concept from massive retaliation to flexible response. What led you to become a strong advocate of flexible response?

McNamara: I think the massive retaliation strategy, whether it had ever been applicable or not, was bankrupt by January 1961, because by that

time the Soviets had a sufficient number of nuclear weapons deliverable upon the United States, following a strike by the U.S. on Soviet nuclear forces, to inflict unacceptable damage on us. Hence the assumption on which the massive retaliation strategy had been premised was no longer applicable.

Matloff: How about the backdrop of your espousing the counterforce doctrine, particularly the speeches both in Athens and Ann Arbor?

McNamara: Yes, particularly Ann Arbor. It was not intended as a shift to a counterforce doctrine, but rather a statement of policy which we hoped would influence the Soviets, were we and they ever to be involved in a nuclear exchange, to limit severely the initial launches of nuclear weapons in the hope that we would avoid destruction of our societies.

Matloff: To quote from your speech, ". . . principal military objectives, in the event of a nuclear war stemming from a major attack on the Alliance, should be the destruction of the enemy's military forces, not of his civilian population." You also went on to call for more non-nuclear capability of the European allies.

McNamara: That's correct. That was part of the proposal to shift to flexible response, which was the main subject of both the Ann Arbor speech and the Athens statement.

Matloff: I think that you also went on to oppose the weak national nuclear forces that some of the European powers were espousing as being costly and of questionable effectiveness.

McNamara: And also dangerous.

Matloff: Were you disappointed in the European reaction to those speeches?

McNamara: The Europeans were reluctant to shift from massive retaliation to flexible response, believing that it might increase the cost of the conventional forces or reduce the likely use of nuclear forces, which they considered to be the main deterrent to Soviet aggression, whether it be conventional or nuclear. I thought then that they were wrong, and, with hindsight, I think they were even more wrong than I thought at the time.

Matloff: After the Ann Arbor speech, did you tend to deemphasize the no-cities approach?

McNamara: I think people looking at that speech totally misjudged the main thrust of it, which was to put forward the shift from massive retaliation to flexible response. A secondary purpose was to take account of what existed for a very short period of time—a very large numerical advantage to the U.S. in strategic nuclear warheads. As I recall the figures—these are approximately correct, I think—we had on the order of 5,000 strategic nuclear warheads and the Soviets had on the order of 300. The 300 were large enough that if they unleashed them all massively at our cities, either before or after we struck them, it would be a devastating blow to our society. We recognized the possibility of one side or the other initiating the use of nuclear weapons, and recognized that whether the Soviets launched first or second, if they launched at our cities the blow would be devastating. We therefore wanted to suggest to the Soviets that, in the event of a nuclear exchange, we each direct our weapons at the other's military targets, thereby minimizing the damage to our civilian

populations. I think, with hindsight, it was perhaps even a questionable doctrine then, although it was an indication of the recognition that we had of the great danger to civilian populations in a nuclear war and of the efforts we were making to reduce that danger. I never did believe in a counter-force strategy per se. What I was trying to suggest without labeling it as such was a damage-limiting strategy, premised on attacking military targets as opposed to population centers. It was only appropriate, I think, if it ever was appropriate, to that limited period when they had so few weapons, *relative to ours.*

Matloff: You brought a number of the Rand theorists into the government. How closely were you in contact not only with them, but also with the theorists who were still at Rand?

McNamara: My recollection is that when I came into the Department in January 1961, the Air Force had contracts with Rand under which Rand carried out studies paid for by the government, but the Air Force contracts prohibited Rand from delivering copies of those studies to any group other than the Air Force. I very quickly stopped that, because I was very definitely interested in the Rand studies and insisted that my office have access to those. We made great use of them.

Matloff: Had you done much studying of strategic theory before you became Secretary of Defense?

McNamara: No, I was quite inexperienced in strategic theory. I had served as an officer in the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II, in the bomber commands--initially the 8th Air Force, later the 58th Bomb

Wing, and then the 20th Air Force—and I had some experience in evaluating what air bombardment could and couldn't accomplish, but in terms of studying nuclear strategy, no, I was not at all familiar with it. However, as I suggested, since the election campaign in 1960 had in part been fought on the nuclear strategy, I considered it my first order of business to become familiar with it. It quickly became apparent to me that the risks associated with the strategy that had been followed by NATO up to that time were, I thought, quite unacceptable. They were not well understood, and when one understood them, I thought they were quite unacceptable.

Matloff: You remind me of Lincoln and Stanton during the Civil War reading up on strategy.

McNamara: That's exactly what I did. I just wrote an acknowledgement page in the book I'm writing, and in that I listed the names of all these people that I brought into the Department. I stated that they "tutored me" in how to understand the nuclear age and its implications for the strategy and risks to our people.

Matloff: Which theorists's writings particularly impressed you during this era?

McNamara: Certainly the ones I named a moment ago—Hitch, Enthoven, Rowen, Nitze, Brown—but there were a number of others as well.

Matloff: Did you agree with Brodie's notion that strategy had hit a dead end in the nuclear age?

McNamara: No, I don't recall that, but in any case I don't agree with it.

Matloff: Would you agree with Kissinger's, Osgood's, and Kaufmann's concepts of limited war?

McNamara: I don't recall exactly what Kissinger had written prior to that time, but my recollection is that he himself has changed about 180 degrees. So I don't know which concept we would be talking about, and I don't recall Bill Kaufmann's concept of limited war. I very quickly came to the conclusion that limited war wasn't possible. The Ann Arbor speech was designed not to fight a limited war per se, but rather to limit damage if we ever bungled into a nuclear war, which seemed to me to be possible, and very dangerous.

Matloff: Are you speaking about limited war with nuclear weapons, and also without?

McNamara: Normally the term limited war referred to limited nuclear war.

Matloff: That would have been Kissinger's notion. Kaufmann didn't go along with that, but rather the notion of limited war without nuclear weapons.

McNamara: I don't know what he would mean by limited war.

Matloff: How about in connection with the Presidents, did you find that both Kennedy and Johnson followed military strategy closely?

McNamara: They certainly weren't experts at military strategy. Partly as a result of the studies we presented to them, they became quite concerned about the risks that our society was facing in the nuclear age because of the strategy followed by NATO, where the strategy of massive retaliation would have led to very early use of nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union, almost immediately following any Soviet aggression, however slight.

Recognizing the number of nuclear weapons the Soviets had at the time, such an action by NATO would have led to totally unacceptable damage on the U.S. and its allies. It was that point which we made very clear to each of the Presidents shortly after he took office, and it was that which led to the proposal to change the strategy from massive retaliation to flexible response. I don't want to suggest that our studies were the first indication they ever had that unacceptable damage would be inflicted upon our nation by the application of our strategy. I don't recall how much either one of them knew about NATO strategy prior to the time he became President. I suspect not very much, because at that time there had been very little public discussion of the effects of applying NATO strategy or of a nuclear exchange. My recollection is that President Eisenhower had appointed a group of four 4-star officers, which I believe was known as the Net Evaluation Subcommittee. Only they had studied a dynamic exchange and evaluated the effect of such an exchange on our society, and the results of their analysis were so catastrophic and horrifying that only one copy of their report had ever been prepared and it had not been made available other than to the President. Having heard of that, when I came in as Secretary I insisted on obtaining a copy. The report was just what it had been portrayed to be—a horrifying evaluation of the effect of the nuclear exchange which would result from application of our existent strategy. What we concluded was that we should: a) change the strategy; and b) educate the public as to the effects of an exchange by, in effect, making available the conclusions of a report so highly classified that only one copy had been prepared.

In a very real sense, we introduced an equivalent analysis into the unclassified portion of my posture statement, and it was therefore published.

Matloff: Historians, of course, are going to be asking and trying to analyze what your strategic legacy was during your period of 7 years in the department. I came across two statements, which you may be familiar with—one is Bill Kaufmann's statement in his book The McNamara Strategy, in which he said that you brought about two major revolutions within the department. One was redesigning the military strategy and forces of the United States, and the other, installing a new method of decision-making within the Pentagon. In another, by Lawrence Freedman, who was part of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, writing in his book The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy, which came out in 1981, he stated, "Under McNamara the focal point for innovation in strategic concepts shifted back to the Pentagon (though to the civilian rather than the military officers), and away from the universities and institutes."

Would you go along with those judgments?

McNamara: In general, I think so. As I state in this little book I have written (^{Bleeding} "Hundering Into Disaster"), and as I stated in an article published in Foreign Affairs, I had concluded that under no circumstances could we—NATO and the U.S.—benefit from initiating the use of nuclear weapons. Therefore I had recommended to each of the two Presidents that they never, under any circumstances, initiate the use of nuclear weapons. I recognized then, and I recognize now, that that was contrary to the proposed NATO strategy of flexible response. The proposed change from massive retaliation to flexible response was put forward in May of 1962 at Athens, and I don't

think it was accepted until some time in 1967. In the intervening years, in a sense, we were bound by the strategy of massive retaliation. But both massive retaliation and flexible response contemplated the initiation and the use of nuclear weapons by NATO in response to a Soviet/Warsaw Pact conventional attack under certain circumstances. In the case of flexible response, the nuclear threshold was to be raised very substantially. It was proposed to be raised to the point where there was very little likelihood that NATO would ever initiate the use of nuclear weapons. However, I went further than that in my discussions with the Presidents. Having examined the detailed plans for NATO initiating the use of nuclear weapons and the probable Soviet response, given the fact that they then had weapons they could respond with, I could see no circumstances under which it would be to NATO's advantage to initiate such use. I therefore recommended against it. I mention this because it is an illustration of how far we were going in our thinking to change the nuclear strategy. Our thinking went further in the direction of changing the nuclear strategy than the official proposals to NATO, which in turn were not accepted by NATO for some five years after they were put forward.

Matloff: In your book on The Essence of Security you wrote, "Every hour of every day the Secretary [of Defense] is confronted by a conflict between the national interest and the parochial interests of particular industries, individual services or local areas." How serious a problem was interservice rivalry for you?

McNamara: It was serious in the sense that unless the Secretary of Defense exerted control and direction over the decisions made by the services, the

individual services would act in ways that were contrary to the national interest; not because they wished to subvert the national interest, but rather because in many cases they weren't in a position to be sensitive to or fully informed of the national interest or how their specific actions would relate to it. It was because of that and because the organization of the Joint Chiefs and the Joint Staff did not provide adequately for overruling or adding to the perception of the individual services that I set up such a strong component in the Office of the Secretary of Defense to assist me perform that function. I think that the law that is being put forward now that would strengthen substantially the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is simply a recognition of the problem to which I am referring. Without a change in the law, I felt I could deal with it, and I think I did in the '60s, by strengthening the organization of the Secretary and by never hesitating to overrule the individual service secretaries and/or Chiefs of the services, or, for that matter, never hesitating to overrule the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs, if I felt that they were insufficiently taking account of the national interest as opposed to the service interest.

Matloff: Was anything done about mitigating the competition itself?

McNamara: You could mitigate the competition by strengthening the role of the Chairman, which I tried to do by appointing strong chairmen and by backing them and letting them know that I expected them to overrule services that they felt were acting contrary to the national interest and pursuing a service interest. The Chairman faced difficulties because frequently the Joint Staff wasn't equipped to probe as deeply as I would

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have liked to have seen them probe into individual service proposals and the Chairman was also handicapped because by tradition the Chiefs tended to support one another when pursuing a service interest. To give you an illustration of that, I was absolutely amazed by the behavior of the Chiefs in November of 1966 when we reviewed, with the President, the budget which was to go to the Congress the following January. The meeting, held in Austin, Texas, was attended by the five Chiefs plus Cy Vance, my Deputy, and Walt Rostow, the National Security Adviser. At the time one of the major issues was whether we should or should not recommend an anti-ballistic missile system to the Congress. The Congress had already authorized and appropriated funds for it, which we had refused to spend. I thought then, and I feel just as strongly now, that such a system would be a total waste of money. There was absolutely no question that if we went ahead with it, the Soviets would counter it either with countermeasures or an expansion of the offensive force. I was certain that if they went ahead with the system they had already started to deploy that we could penetrate it. I knew for sure that at least some of the Chiefs shared my view that there was no anti-ballistic missile system that the Soviets then had in prospect that we couldn't penetrate. There was every reason to believe that the Soviets would be equally capable of penetrating any system we deployed. Yet, when the President asked the individual Chiefs for their recommendation whether or not to proceed with the U.S. ABM system, the Air Force Chief and the Navy Chief, each of whom had weapons that he knew could penetrate the Soviet system and each of whom had every reason to believe the Soviets

had weapons that could penetrate our system, nonetheless went along and supported the Army Chief in recommending an ABM system. This is just to illustrate that it was traditional for the Chiefs, under certain circumstances, not to take exception to recommendations of an individual service.

One further point on this conflict among the services or pursuit of individual service interests. I mentioned the way in which that was reflected in their recommendations on the ABM. But to understand how deep-seated the tradition was, you had to recognize that there was a lack of standardization throughout the Department. It extended into such things as individual service specifications for butchers' smocks, women's bloomers, and belt buckles. I mention this because if you can't get together on such a thing as a belt buckle or a butcher's smock, it's very unlikely you're going to get together and overrule one another or have a Chairman overrule on such fundamentals of the force structure as ABM systems.

Matloff: How serious a problem were the parochial interests of particular industries and local areas?

McNamara: There were very great pressures, but I didn't consider them serious problems. I had the full backing of the President to overrule the Chiefs or the industries in order to advance the national interest. I'll give you two illustrations of that. The Congress had authorized and appropriated funds for the B-70 bomber. But the President and I considered it was an unnecessary weapon and its production would waste billions of dollars. At the time we canceled the program there were

more than 40,000 people in 24 states working on the project. There was tremendous pressure from the congressional representatives of those states, corporate executives, and the labor unions to proceed with the weapon. But we canceled it nonetheless. The same thing was true of most weapon systems that we canceled—Skybolt is another illustration I could use. Lockheed was the manufacturer of the Skybolt missile. Lockheed put ads in Time Magazine boasting of the capabilities of the weapon and did everything it could to generate pressure to overrule us. But we held to our judgment and the weapon was canceled.

Matloff: On the subject of budget, could you summarize why you felt that changes were needed in the system?

McNamara: Because the system had many defects, one of the most important of which was that it did not extend the budgetary process over the period covered by the lead time of the decisions. If one were making a decision in 1961 to authorize the development and production of a new weapon system, the action following the decision might extend over a period of 5 to 8 years, but the budget would show only the first year's financial impact. It seemed to me that we should extend the budgeting process through the lead time of the decision so that one could see the full financial impact. We picked a rather arbitrary period of five years for that purpose, so we immediately extended the budgeting or financial planning period to cover a period of five years, as opposed to one year. There was tremendous opposition to that move. Many people said, for example, that we should not inform the Congress of the full financial impact of the decisions—to do so would reduce congressional

support for the action. That's exactly why I felt we should inform them, so they could see the full financial effect of the action. A host of other changes were made in the budget process. They were all designed to permit a greater understanding of the financial impact of the decisions that were being made, and a greater understanding of the financial impact of alternative decisions so one could choose more intelligently among alternatives and among options.

Matloff: Were you satisfied with Defense's share of the budget in both the Kennedy and the Johnson administrations?

McNamara: Yes. I never felt any limitation on money. It's hard to realize, but at that time the pressure from the Congress was to spend more.

Matloff: How about the constraints, was there any impact of domestic restraints in the Johnson period on the defense budget formulation?

McNamara: No. The reverse, in a sense, was the case. There was one very critical point at which we felt that to pursue a program recommended for Vietnam would result in very large additional expenditures, above those contemplated in the previously approved federal budget. We felt that if the decision were made to pursue the particular course of action associated with Vietnam, in recognition of the added budgetary expenditures taxes should be raised. I so recommended to the President. He accepted the recommendations relating to Vietnam, but he ruled against the recommended tax increase. He did so because he said that it wouldn't pass the Congress and that, rather than raise taxes, the Congress would cut back the Great Society.

Matloff: Do you recall what year that was?

McNamara: I believe it would have been the summer or fall of 1965.

Matloff: You've written in the same volume I quoted before, The Essence of Security, that the "uniqueness [of thermonuclear power] lies in the fact that it is at the same time an all-powerful weapon and a very inadequate weapon." Do you recall what you had in mind? I think you were thinking about the political leverage, or lack of it.

McNamara: I think that by the term "inadequate" I meant that I couldn't conceive of how to use a nuclear weapon militarily (other than to deter one's opponent's use). I never saw a plan that showed how we would benefit if we initiated the use of a nuclear warhead. There was no way that we could conceive of limiting the destruction to our society to an acceptable level following initial use of nuclear weapons. There was no such plan then, and I don't believe there's any such plan today. In this little book I've written I said that no human mind has ever conceived of such a plan. I have made that statement in the last year or two in the presence of senior civilian and military authorities and no one has ever taken exception to that.

Matloff: You mentioned that your administration had a number of controversies over weapons and weapon systems. ABM was one; TFX-111, B-70, nuclear carriers were others. Was there any aspect of your positions on those weapons that you would like to talk about or expand on?

McNamara: I think we won on every controversy we engaged in, in the sense that our decision was upheld by the Congress or the President. I think on every one of those not only were we right, but the controversy

ultimately led to action in the national interest, except possibly with respect to the TFX. In that case I think we were right in principle. The services should have agreed upon a single aircraft to perform their bombing operations. That was entirely possible, and would have been very much in the interest of the nation. As evidence, I submit the fact that the Air Force was able to use the fighter, the F-4, that had been designed specifically for the Navy. If they could do that, each service, the Navy and the Air Force, should have been able to use a plane that took account of the other's needs at the time of design. In the case of the F-4—the Air Force, as I remember, had a plane called the F-110, which for a variety of reasons didn't appear to me to be optimal. Therefore, over the objections of the Air Force, we canceled production of the F-110 and required the Air Force to adopt the F-4, the Navy aircraft. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force, LeMay, was very much opposed to it. After it was done, the Commanding General, Tactical Air Command, I believe it was Sweeney, was absolutely ecstatic about the F-4. The Air Force used it for 10 or 15 years thereafter and was very pleased with it. I mention this to say, with hindsight, that I believe that we were absolutely right in pursuing commonality of aircraft. However, because of the way in which the TFX was handled by the services, we did not achieve commonality and we fought a bloody battle that took a tremendous amount of time and effort.

Matloff: On the ABM, is it true in late 1967 you did decide to go forward with a thin ABM deployment, the "Chinese-oriented system?"

McNamara: What had happened was that Congress had passed legislation authorizing and appropriating funds for an extensive ABM system, which, it was believed, would develop into a "thick" system. There was tremendous pressure within and outside the Department to go ahead with the thick system. To avoid that, after having made a speech in San Francisco stating that there was no rationale whatsoever for any ABM system, we nonetheless proposed going ahead with the thin system, or so-called "Chinese-oriented system."

Matloff: Your administration also became involved in plans for reorganizing the reserves and merging the reserves with the National Guard. Why did you want to merge them?

McNamara: Because they were "hollow." Both the Guard divisions and the reserve divisions were understaffed, underequipped, and undertrained. We were spending a lot of money and not buying usable power for it. So we proposed to reorganize them, merge them together, and reduce the total number of paper divisions and replace them with divisions that had some combat potential. My recollection is that we were going to eliminate 20 to 30 divisions; I've forgotten exactly the number. I guess most of them were National Guard; I'm not absolutely sure of that. In any case, there were 20 to 30 of these reserve and Guard divisions that were going to be eliminated. All hell broke loose, because the Guard divisions that were going to be eliminated were the playthings of the governors and their adjutants-general and there was tremendous political pressure for us to change our recommendations. President Johnson said, "Bob, there's going to be a meeting of 50

governors in Hershey, Pennsylvania, and you'd better get yourself up there and convince them that there's merit in your proposal to eliminate the Guard divisions. There is tremendous opposition and it's going to be very difficult to proceed in the face of that." I went up to Hershey—I'll never forget it. There were 50 governors present, but not one single governor supported the elimination of these Guard divisions, including such rational, responsible, strong individuals as Nelson Rockefeller. Every one was opposed, but we went right ahead and did it anyhow. We eliminated the divisions.

Matloff: While we're talking about the reserves, may I jump ahead to the area problems? In connection with the crisis in Berlin in '61 and '62 and later on in Vietnam, did you favor the calling up of the reserves?

McNamara: Very much so, in both cases. In the case of Berlin, I favored calling up the reserves for two reasons: (1) we needed to make clear to the Soviets our determination and will to apply force if necessary to prevent them from taking over West Berlin, which was their objective, and (2) if we were going to apply force, we needed to have that additional force available. In the case of Vietnam, I felt we should call up the reserves for both reasons. I so recommended to the President. He did not believe it wise to do so and therefore we didn't.

Matloff: Did he ever give reasons why?

McNamara: Yes, his reason, an objective that I strongly supported, was to avoid war hysteria, or fueling the fires of emotion in the nation. We did everything we could during those years to avoid development of national pressures and feelings that might lead to the application of

power in ways that were contrary to our national interest—for example, in ways that would draw China and/or Russia into the war. With hindsight, I think that was a well chosen policy; however, I think it is one of the policies to which historians should give most attention. There is certainly a lot of controversy today about whether we failed to unleash the military and therefore lost the Vietnamese War. I think we were wise not to unleash our power. I don't believe that we could have changed the result of the war in Indochina, and the escalation of the conflict might well have triggered a confrontation with the Chinese and/or the Soviets.

Matloff: On this point historians have a lot of trouble trying to find the President on the record on this question of not calling up the reserves.

McNamara: You can't find him on the record because I submitted a draft memorandum (one of the reasons I called my memoranda to the Presidents drafts was so that I could submit the recommendation and if they didn't choose to follow it, I could withdraw it, and there would be no way that the press or anybody else could drive a wedge between the President and me). After all, I had no independent power base. Many of the people today don't seem to understand that. Presidential appointees aren't elected; this is not a parliamentary system. As a minister of government, I had power only to the extent that the President appointed me and delegated me the power. Many in our government today operate as though they were independently elected, and members of a parliamentary system. They will take to the press their recommendations to the President,

when he disagrees with them and overrules them. I did not believe that was proper then; I don't believe it is proper today. To avoid that circumstance ever developing, I labeled my memoranda drafts. In the seven years I was Secretary, I don't think there were two memoranda from which either President failed to accept the recommendations. I can think of one, the one referring to this subject of calling up the reserves. In the same memo, I had recommended both an increase in taxes and calling up the reserves.

Matloff: Historians will appreciate this information very much, I can assure you. Let's turn now to some of the area problems and crises. Was it your impression that the European allies were pulling their weight in NATO, or did you feel that the problem of burden sharing needed more looking into?

McNamara: We always engaged in discussions with Europeans, Germans in particular, about contributing more. Their economy was advancing rapidly. We had a balance of payments problem at the time; we pressured the Germans to purchase more from us and reduce the net foreign exchange costs of our operations in Germany. I mention that as an illustration of the fact that we were constantly involved in burden-sharing discussions.

Matloff: This is a period when the principle of the MLF came up. Did you agree with the principle, and with Norstad's view?

McNamara: I don't remember what Norstad's views were, but there was a basic political problem for which the MLF was put forward as a solution. I didn't believe that it was a very satisfactory solution, but I did recognize the problem. If the Europeans were willing to

accept the MLF as the solution to the problem, then I was willing to support the MLF, and I did so on that limited basis. It turned out the Europeans weren't willing to support it, and therefore we withdrew it. But the problem existed, and we ultimately came forward with another solution which I will mention in a moment. The problem was that the Europeans felt that we were secretive in our nuclear strategy. We had put thousands of nuclear warheads on their soil; NATO had officially adopted a nuclear strategy; we had war plans and tactics to carry out that strategy; but we had refused to disclose to the Europeans the numbers of warheads, the characteristics of the warheads, and the tactics and the war plans under which they would be applied. Our allies were, in effect, totally ignorant of our plans for utilizing nuclear weapons in defense of Europe. For two decades we had withheld all such information from the Europeans. At that time there was no intention to change the policy, so those who favored the MLF did so because it was a means of introducing the allies into a limited participation in nuclear strategy in support of the alliance. That failed. Then, after discussion with John McNaughton, my Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, I proposed to the president that we reverse our policy completely and fully inform the Europeans on all aspects of nuclear weapons and strategy. That led to the formation of the Nuclear Planning Group.

Matloff: Were you disturbed by the role of DeGaulle in this period, particularly his departure from military integration in 1967?

McNamara: I surely was. I thought that it was contrary to the interests of the alliance and quite irresponsible for France to: (a) force us out

of France (our logistical bases were on French soil for only one reason, and that was to support NATO and its defense of Western Europe); and (b) withdraw French forces from the NATO military command.

Matloff: Did you favor the Harmel Report, in 1967, the one that talked about NATO being used as an instrument of negotiation with the other side, the forerunner to the whole notion of detente? How did you view the future of NATO, particularly the American military role in it? Did you see it, or any part of it, as permanent?

McNamara: I don't know that I ever really examined the question of whether the role was permanent or not, but I certainly felt that it would extend over a substantial period. I didn't think it was likely to end in three, five, or seven years. I didn't think so then, and I don't think so today.

Matloff: Some have argued that when he originally proposed the military commitment, Eisenhower never viewed it as a permanent American military commitment. As for major crises, what role did you play in the Bay of Pigs affair, right at the start of the Kennedy administration?

McNamara: I was in the room at the White House when Kennedy asked all his advisers what their views were as to whether we should or shouldn't proceed with the Bay of Pigs. Because it was a CIA operation and not a Defense Department operation, the Department personnel were not experts with respect to the operation. And those of us who had just come in to the government 60-some days before were inexperienced in that or any other kind of military operation. Nonetheless, I deeply regret that at that time I didn't recommend against it. There wasn't a single member

of the administration who recommended, when Kennedy went around the room, that he not proceed with the operation. There were some of us—Dean Rusk was probably one and I was certainly one—who were less than enthusiastic about it, but we didn't recommend against it. The only person in the room who recommended against it was Bill Fulbright, not a member of the administration.

Marloff: What was the role of the JCS in this? Some of the members, one in particular I know of, raised questions whether its views were really sought, or whether it was adequately informed.

McNamara: The JCS were as well informed as anybody, outside of CIA. They were deeply involved, their people were deeply involved in the planning of it, military officers were on secondment to the CIA, and the Joint Staff and the Chiefs were fully informed. There were Chiefs in the room, certainly their representatives were in the room, on the occasion I mentioned, and their opinion was asked. They said, just as I, that they didn't recommend against it. There is no reason for anybody to try to weasel out of that. We were all there. After it was over, Kennedy, with great courage and political perception, assumed full responsibility for the debacle on national TV. After he did that, I went over to him and said, "Mr. President, I know where I was when you asked for the opinions of your advisers. I was in the room and I didn't recommend against the operation; I was wrong. I know very well what happened and I am fully prepared to say that publicly." He said, "Bob, I'm grateful to you for your willingness to assume some responsibility, but I was President, I didn't have to do what all of you recommended.

I did it, and therefore I assume full responsibility." My point simply is there is no use trying to walk away from that one. Every one of us was there, including the Chiefs.

Matloff: How about the decision to call off the air strike?

McNamara: That's another point. I am hazy on all of the details of this now, and therefore I don't want to get into it. In the first place, the operational responsibility was not ours, and secondly, my memory is not clear on the details. My recollection is that the President's decision to authorize the CIA to move ahead with the operation was with the qualification that they would not call upon or receive additional military support beyond that which was part of their initial plan. Then, my recollection is, they went ahead; certain events occurred that had not been anticipated; they felt the need for additional military support, and there was some feeling in the military that they should be provided that support, but the President ruled against it. Finally, with hindsight, it was said, and I think absolutely incorrectly, that had such additional air support been provided, the operation would have been a success. I don't believe it.

Matloff: There's at least one former Chairman who believes that had the air operation been pulled off it might have made a difference, and has said that the JCS were not informed when the decision was made to cancel the air strike.

McNamara: I don't think that the air strike was ever authorized.

Trask: When did you first become aware of this Bay of Pigs operation, or when was it contemplated? Was that right after you came into office?

McNamara: I don't recall, but what was the date of it—April, '61? My point is that it was less than 90 days after we came in and I was worried about the missile gap, and a hundred other things. I don't know when I heard about it.

Trask: Do you recall any discussion about this before that day of decision?

McNamara: There was some discussion, but not a great deal. It was a CIA operation. We were not deeply involved. It was becoming quite a political problem. My recollection of it was more as a political problem rather than an operational problem. It was alleged that these Cubans had been led to believe that a decision had been made in the Eisenhower administration to support them in their desire to free Cuba. They had been sent to Central America to train for that purpose, and were ready to go. They believed the Kennedy administration was reversing a decision that had been made. I'm pretty clear that Eisenhower hadn't made a decision to authorize the landing, but others had thought so. The Free Cubans were then threatening to demonstrate in the streets of Miami against this Communist administration which was withholding them from freeing their country. So there was that kind of a problem. But that doesn't justify the approval of it. It was a foolhardy venture. It is a good illustration of the foolhardiness of combining the intelligence function with the operating function. So many times I found that intelligence estimates that came from the unit that was associated with operations were tainted—not consciously, but just tainted by the biases that we all have in evaluating our own operations.

Matloff: That answers the question I have about conclusions or lessons for national security policy, planning, and operations drawn from that operation.

McNamara: Yes, separate intelligence collection and evaluation from operations. Recognize that military operations can achieve certain objectives, but not others. Liberating people and governments is not likely to be achieved by military operations in circumstances such as existed in Cuba or Vietnam or Nicaragua.

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Erection:

*McNamara's book
is entitled Blundering
Into Disaster.*

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Matloff: This is part three of an oral history interview with Mr. Robert S. McNamara, held in Washington, D.C., on July 24, 1986, at 4:00 P.M.. Representing the OSD Historical Office are Drs. Alfred Goldberg, Lawrence Kaplan, and Maurice Matloff.

Mr. McNamara, at the end of our meeting on May 22, we had begun to speak about the role you played in connection with international crises and problems of one kind or another, and you had spoken about your role in connection with NATO and the Bay of Pigs affair. We would like now to move to the Cuban missile crisis. How did you first learn that there was a crisis? How did that come to your attention?

McNamara: I don't recall exactly. My recollection is that early in the morning of that Monday in October I was informed that we had received photographs taken by a U-2 on the previous day showing that Soviet intermediate range missiles, presumably with their nuclear warheads, had been brought into Cuba.

Matloff: What course of action did you favor when it became clear that the Soviets had placed offensive missiles there?

McNamara: The discussions which began that morning were carried on over a period of days, and the formulation of a plan of action evolved over that period of time. As I recall, my own thinking began with the view that the emplacement of a small number of intermediate-range ballistic missiles did not change the strategic balance in any significant way. Therefore, I didn't see the problem as a military one, at least not in the narrow sense of the term, but rather as a political problem. At

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that time, we had something on the order of 5,000 strategic nuclear warheads and the Soviets had something on the order of 300. The fact that they had moved 20 or 30 intermediate-range missiles into Cuba and therefore had X-plus 20 or 30—say 300 plus 20 or 30—vis-a-vis our 5,000, did not change the military balance, even recognizing that those 20 or 30 were closer to the U.S. than the 300 which were in the Soviet Union or at sea. Nonetheless, I believed that politically we had to react forcefully to the Soviet action. So the question in my mind was how to react. We needed to persuade the Soviets to move those missiles out of Cuba, but by action that didn't lead to escalation in military terms. Very early in the week, I think on the first day, Ros Gilpatric and I had lunch together. Afterwards, as a result of our discussion at lunch, I suggested that we should respond to the Soviet action by establishing a blockade or a quarantine. This action would be in lieu of what was proposed by others: the use of air power, probably to be followed by a land invasion, to destroy the missiles.

Matloff: When you refer to the discussions and meetings, are you referring to the NSC, or the EXCOMM?

McNamara: The EXCOMM.

Matloff: Do you have any thought as to why Kennedy made use of the EXCOMM rather than the NSC for this crisis?

McNamara: The EXCOMM was both larger and smaller than the NSC. There were members of the NSC that Kennedy didn't think were needed in this crisis, and there were other people who were not members of the NSC who Kennedy did think were needed.

Matloff: He brought in McCloy, for example.

McNamara: Yes. So the EXCOMM was specially tailored to deal with the problem. I think the President was absolutely correct in his belief of how he should organize.

Goldberg: I think all the NSC members were present.

McNamara: Maybe they were, I've really forgotten.

Goldberg: It seems quite a small group by then.

Matloff: How closely were you in touch with the JCS during this crisis? Did you agree with their views?

McNamara: We were very close. The Chairman of the Chiefs was a member of the EXCOMM. To what degree did I agree with the Chiefs? I don't remember whether the Chiefs took a formal position on the response to the Soviet action, but I believe that the Chairman favored the air strike and recognized that the air strike very probably would have to be followed by a land invasion. In effect, he was recommending an air strike and land invasion, which I very much opposed.

Matloff: What differences, if any, developed with the Navy over the conduct of the naval blockade, particularly with Admiral George Anderson?

McNamara: The problem with George Anderson, who was Chief of Naval Operations, was that he, a very bright, able, and responsible man, had been trained as a naval officer to use naval ships as elements of military power, in military operations. In contrast, Kennedy and I conceived of the quarantine not as a military operation but a means of communicating a

political message to Khrushchev and to the Politburo. The political message was that we don't want war with the Soviets, and we're not engaged in or planning to overthrow Castro, but we insist that the offensive arms, which included airplanes as well as missiles, be taken out of Cuba, out of the hemisphere. We established the quarantine not particularly to stop the Soviet ships, but to convey as forcefully as possible the political message. The problem with George was that traditionally quarantines have been established to stop ships. The first ship was predicted to be at the quarantine line a few hours after a discussion George and I were having in "Flag Plot" I told them I didn't want that ship stopped by force without my personal approval. He considered that was contrary to established operating procedure for carrying out a quarantine.

Goldberg: Did the Navy go beyond its charter in sitting on the Soviet submarines?

McNamara: I know that's an issue of controversy at the moment, and quite frankly, my memory is not clear enough to say. I don't believe it did, but I'm not absolutely positive.

Goldberg: What about SAC, did it declare any alerts that went beyond what it was supposed to do?

McNamara: I'm almost certain it didn't. We took a lot of the SAC aircraft off their regular assignments and put them on photo recon.

Goldberg: There's been an allegation of high alerts.

McNamara: I suppose it's conceivable, but SAC was an extraordinarily well-disciplined force and I believe that we had procedures in effect for the declaration of alerts. I would be willing to bet 10 to 1 that SAC

didn't declare an alert that was not properly authorized. To the extent that the procedures allowed them to move to a higher alert status without permission from higher authority, they may have done so. But to the extent that the procedures required that the move to a higher alert status required permission from above, I am sure they obtained it. I'm almost certain that moving to any kind of an alert status that would have been visible to the Soviets would have required that permission.

Matloff: Did an exchange between you and Admiral Anderson on the night of October 24, 1962, stand out? What positions did you and he take?

McNanara: This was in the evening, around 10 or 10:30. I lived at the Pentagon, and slept there every night for 12 to 14 nights. In the evening I would go up to the flag plot, which was above my office, to be brought up to date on the events of the day and on the prospects for tomorrow with respect to the quarantine. The reason I lived at the Pentagon was that this was a very delicate operation. It was a means of communicating a political message to the Soviets. We wanted to be very sure that the message was communicated accurately and in a way that did not lead to consequences that we didn't anticipate or wish. It was a non-conventional military operation; in a sense we wrote the rules as we went along. On that particular evening I went upstairs to a relatively small room—there weren't enough chairs for all the admirals; there were perhaps 20 to 25 admirals in the room. I asked George to explain to me how the situation had changed since the previous evening. He said a Soviet vessel was moving toward the quarantine line and would reach it the following

morning. I asked him what he would do when it got there, and he said, "We're going to stop it." I asked him how, and he said, "We'll just hail it and stop it." I asked, "In what language are you going to hail it?" He said, "How the hell do I know? I presume we'll hail it in English." I asked, "Do the Soviets understand English? What kind of a ship is this?" He said, "It's a tanker." I asked, "Does the tanker crew understand English?" He said, "How the hell would I know?" I said, "If you're going to hail them in English and they don't understand English, they will sail on. What are you going to do then?" He said, "We'll use the international flags." I asked, "Suppose they don't stop?" He said, "We'll fire a shot across their bow." I asked, "What if they don't stop then?" He said, "We'll put one through the rudder." I said, "The damn thing may blow up." He said, "You've imposed a quarantine, and our job is to stop the vessels from passing the line." I replied, "Let me tell you something. There will be no firing of any kind at that Soviet ship without my personal authority, and I'm not going to give you permission until I discuss it with the President. We're trying to convey a political message, we're not trying to start a war. We don't know that that tanker captain has been instructed by Khrushchev as to how he should behave when he comes to the quarantine line. Khrushchev may not even know he's coming to the line. We don't know if the captain has radio communication with Moscow. We don't know that Khrushchev has had time, since he received our last message, to change the instructions of the tanker captain. We don't want to start a war because of a misunderstanding or lack of information." He said, in effect, "Mr. Secretary, the Navy has been carrying out

quarantines or blockades since the time of John Paul Jones, and we have been doing it successfully. If you'll keep your fingers out of this situation, we'll carry out this successfully." I replied, "George, there will be no firing on that ship without my permission. Is that understood?" It was not a very happy occasion, but the point simply is that he had been trained to use Navy ships for certain purposes and was quite right in saying that that training led him to conclude that under these circumstances he should behave in certain ways. But what he didn't fully understand was that this was not a typical naval operation.

Goldberg: There was also the issue of the line between civilian and military authority there, wasn't there? Isn't that implicit?

McNamara: I don't think so, really. I never had any problem with any of the Chiefs or the unified commanders objecting to an order from the President or from me, but there were frequent occasions when there was disagreement between me and the Chiefs or the unified commanders—over the bombing in Vietnam, for example, or in this case, in connection with the quarantine. Also, there were frequent disagreements between the military commanders and the Chiefs, so I don't think it was military versus civilian as much as it was just that George thought it was a stupid way to run a quarantine.

Goldberg: What I really meant was, where is the line drawn between the operational and the other end of the whole business? What is properly within the scope of the military? What is the operational authority? At what point are they on their own in making decisions as to what they do?

McNamara: I would say, when they are equipped to make sound decisions.

Goldberg: This is not what they were saying at that time, or subsequently, in Vietnam. Their position was: "You've given us a job to do; let us do it the way we know how to do it, instead of telling us how to do it."

McNamara: The job we gave them to do, in the case of the Cuban missile crisis, was to convey a political message without incurring unnecessary risks of military escalation. That was the job.

Matloff: What lessons did you draw from that crisis, in two respects: one, the question of how the national security apparatus was working, compared to the Bay of Pigs; and the other, what you learned about dealing with the Soviets?

McNamara: With relation to the operation of the national security apparatus, I think the lesson was twofold: First, get the right people in, in order to tailor the exploration of the problem to the circumstances at hand. That's why the EXCOM was formed—in the Bay of Pigs we didn't have the proper group. Second, having tailored the group to the problem at hand, insulate it from the pressure of time and other pressures to insure it has an adequate opportunity to consider the problem fully and thoughtfully. That certainly was not done in the Bay of Pigs.

Matloff: In the Bay of Pigs affair the new administration was just coming in and people hardly knew each other, I imagine.

McNamara: Exactly. And also, in the case of the Bay of Pigs, it was a CIA operation, not a DoD operation. The group addressing the issue was neither tailored to deal with a CIA operation, nor was it given the time and the opportunity to consider it thoughtfully and fully. One should deal with the Soviets from a position of strength, but in ways that permit

them to modify their behavior at the lowest cost possible to themselves, consistent with the U.S. achieving its objective.

Matloff: What did you think was the decisive factor in Khrushchev's retreat?

McNamara: I think the clarity and firmness with which Kennedy stated his objective and intention in that cable that went out Saturday, 27 October.

Matloff: How did you view the rise of Communist China and its impact on conflicts in Southeast Asia?

McNamara: Wrongly. I think the heroes of the Cuban missile crisis—
unsung heroes—were Messrs. Thompson, Bohlen, and Kennan. Kennan was then Ambassador to Yugoslavia; Bohlen literally went to Paris the Tuesday after the Monday that we received the information on the photos. So in a sense, they weren't full participants in the discussion, but their lifetime of scholarship and study of the Soviets was a basis for their contribution, through cable and otherwise. Tommy Thompson was with us literally 24 hours a day throughout the two weeks. He was tremendously valuable in explaining Soviet behavior, reasons for Soviet actions, and potential Soviet reaction to our alternative actions. This gave us a much sounder foundation for decisions than we would have had otherwise. In connection with China in the early to mid-1960's there were no Thompsons/Bohlens/Kennans. You can't name me a single senior official of the government with the knowledge of China that Kennan, Bohlen, and Thompson had of the Soviet Union. As far as I know, they had been forced out of the government during the 50s. The result is we were singularly ill-informed—particularly me, but not only me—on a correct appraisal of China's geo-political

objectives and the actions they would take in support of those objectives. I think we took Lin Piao at his word. If you read Lin Piao's writings or statements, they implied that China was going to use the power of the gun to extend its influence over the countries of Southeast Asia.

Matloff: Was any thought given during either the Kennedy or the Johnson administrations, from your perspective, to a possible tilt toward China? to play the so-called China card, as it was later termed in the Nixon-Kissinger period? Was this anticipated in any way?

McNamara: No, I don't think so. I think that we made great efforts, and this was a conscious policy and objective, to avoid: a) bringing China into the Vietnam War openly and with regular military forces, and b) pushing China back into the arms of the Soviet Union. Those were two clear objectives which we pursued—to prevent a war with China and to prevent the Soviet Union and China moving together.

Goldberg: Did you think that there was as much likelihood of the Chinese coming into the Vietnam War as there had been, for instance, in the case of Korea?

McNamara: I thought that there was considerable likelihood that China would come in, yes—particularly if we attacked China or attacked forces in the southern part of China that were presumably supporting Vietnam.

Goldberg: No, I meant just if we confined our efforts to Vietnam alone, if we did not make any aggressive moves against China.

McNamara: I'd have to go back and refresh my memory, but my recollection is that I didn't believe that China would come into the war with regular military forces if we limited our action to achieving our objective,

which was not to occupy North Vietnam and not to endanger the regime in North Vietnam, but simply to prevent North Vietnam from subverting South Vietnam. Under those circumstances, if we achieved that objective, I did not believe China would come into the war.

Goldberg: In retrospect, do you think that if we had invaded North Vietnam, the Chinese would have come in?

McNamara: Almost surely. That was the kind of an action which at times was recommended or considered, and which I opposed, because one of my objectives was to avoid open war with China.

Goldberg: Was this opinion generally shared in the administration?

McNamara: I think Dean Rusk, the President, and I shared it. It wasn't so much that others wanted war with China. I don't think that anyone wanted war with China. But others either believed China wouldn't openly enter the war, or they were willing to risk it, one or the other.

Malloff: What was your attitude toward our involvement in Indochina? What did you think was at stake for American security or national interests? Along with this, did you believe in the domino theory, for example?

McNamara: I think that early on in, say, 1961-62, there was reason to accede to Diem's request for assistance to help train his forces. I believed that to the extent that we could train those forces, we should do so, and having done it, we should get out. To the extent those trained forces could not handle the problem—the subversion by North Vietnam—I believed we should not introduce our military forces in support of the South Vietnamese, even if they were going to be "defeated". Consistent with that belief, some time in the latter part of 1963, following my

return from a trip to South Vietnam, I recommended to President Kennedy that we announce a plan to begin the removal of our training forces. There was great controversy over that recommendation. Many in the Defense Department, as well as others in the administration, did not believe we had fully carried out our training mission. Still others believed that, in any event, the South Vietnamese weren't qualified to counter the North Vietnamese effectively. They therefore concluded we should stay. I believed that we had done all the training we could, and whether the South Vietnamese were qualified or not to turn back the North Vietnamese, I was certain that if they weren't, it wasn't for lack of our training. More training wouldn't strengthen them; therefore we should get out. The President agreed. Then there was an argument over whether we should announce the decision. I thought that the way to put the decision in concrete was to announce it. So we did. It was agreed that it would be announced that day. I think you will find that, following the meeting, there was a public announcement which said that the U.S. mission in Vietnam was to train; we were completing that mission; therefore we would begin to withdraw our training forces; and that we would withdraw X by Christmas time. I believe we had around 16,000 men in Vietnam at the time and I think we agreed that the first withdrawal would be 1,000. Those who opposed the decision to begin the withdrawal didn't want it announced since they believed, as I did, that if it were announced, it would be in concrete.

Matloff: Had President Kennedy consulted with you on his initial decision to increase the number of military advisers? He brought it up to 16,000. Had you gone along with that, initially?

McNamara: Yes.

Matloff: You mentioned Diem—were you surprised when the coup against him took place?

McNamara: I don't remember the extent to which I, through the cables and through intelligence reports, had been informed of possible coups. I have no recollection of that. But I do remember very clearly being shocked at the death of Diem.

Matloff: What was the basis for the feeling of American officials in 1963 that Americans would be able to end their military role by the end of '65?

McNamara: Just as I have stated, that their military role was a training role, and there's only so much you can do to train. If the student can't learn, after the training period is completed, there's no use in your staying on. If he can learn, he will have done so by the end of the training period and you can go home.

Matloff: From your perspective in your dealings with Kennedy, how do you evaluate his role and objectives towards Vietnam?

McNamara: He believed that South Vietnam was a country seeking to move towards self-government and that North Vietnam was seeking to dominate it. South Vietnam had asked for assistance to train its forces to prevent North Vietnam from achieving domination, and it was consistent with our ideals and policy to provide such support. Particularly, this was thought to be true in an area of the world in which potential Chinese expansion was in prospect.

Matloff: Were you encouraged or discouraged about the American involvement, at the time of his death?

McNamara: I think you will find in my reports—probably in the one in October 1963, a month before Kennedy's death—evidence that I felt there was considerable doubt as to whether we had succeeded in training a Vietnamese force that would be capable of defeating the attempts of North Vietnam or China to subvert the government of South Vietnam.

Matloff: To get to President Johnson's administration, did he make use of you in any way differently from Kennedy, in questions of Vietnam?

McNamara: He had a totally different method of operating. I was close to both Presidents and both always solicited my views on what should be done.

Matloff: Did you find your role as troubleshooter, for example, expanding under Johnson?

McNamara: Johnson frequently asked me to undertake assignments not normally associated with the function of the Secretary of Defense. For example, on one occasion the Aluminum Co. of America raised the price of aluminum at a time when we were trying to avoid inflationary pressures in the society. Johnson called me and said, "Get that price down." It was obviously not a function of the Secretary of Defense to be engaged in price control, but that was an illustration of the way Johnson acted.

Matloff: I was wondering whether Johnson may have leaned on you more than Kennedy in connection with Vietnam.

McNamara: I don't think so.

Matloff: When did you first learn of the Tonkin Gulf incident, in August 1964?

McNamara: I was in Newport, on Sunday morning, and received a telephone call giving me the information. I went to the naval station and flew back to Washington.

Matloff: Do you recall any doubts about whether there were two strikes, one strike, and all that?

McNamara: Yes. I didn't know whether there were any strikes. It seemed such an absurd action and we wanted to be very careful in obtaining the facts. We went to great lengths to determine whether the North Vietnamese actually had fired on our destroyer. I believe I'm correct in saying that before we concluded that they had, we had actually received statements that pieces of metal that were part of a North Vietnamese shell had been recovered from the deck of our vessel. Therefore, we based our conclusion that they had fired, not on sonar readings or sightings, or anything else, other than this metal from the actual firing. I don't remember all of the details, but I believe that to this day there would be some question as to whether there was a second attack.

Matloff: Were you consulted at all on the drafting of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution?

McNamara: I don't recall.

Matloff: Do you remember any reaction to the resolution?

McNamara: What I do remember about those events are three points: first, I think it is absolutely incorrect to charge that Johnson, or Bill Bundy, or Dean Rusk, had in advance of the Tonkin Gulf incident conceived of the desirability of either forcing an incident or taking advantage of an incident, in order to obtain some blanket power from Congress to expand

U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia. I think that is absolutely without foundation. Second, I think it is totally false to say that the U.S. did in some fashion consciously lure the North Vietnamese into attacking the Maddox. Third, I think it is false to say that the U.S. administration, having lured the North Vietnamese into that attack, then sought to hide the action. The reason some of the charges were made—that the U.S. did lure the North Vietnamese into the action and then sought to hide it—is that we had been carrying on for some time, or assisting the South Vietnamese to carry on for some time, very feeble covert actions against North Vietnam. They included, for example, having a patrol boat go along the coast to put ashore two or three men to bomb a gasoline tank. They included as well the dropping of agents by aircraft. As I remember, every single one of these agents was rolled up, whether infiltrated by sea or air, and the attacks on shore installations by sea were negligible. The covert operations were totally ineffective, so it never occurred to me that those actions would have been the basis for the North Vietnamese attacking the Maddox. Nor do I know that they were. But I think what happened, in terms of time, was that about the time of the North Vietnamese attack on the Maddox, we had had one of these covert operations moving forward, a patrol boat of some kind, of which I suppose I had been informed prior to the time we received the information that the Maddox had been attacked. But it didn't enter my mind that such an operation was being carried on at the time. It never occurred to me that conceivably the North Vietnamese might have thought they were attacking part of that

covert operation when they attacked the Maddox. I don't know to this day that they thought that. I suppose by now there is some information whether they did or did not think that. But what happened was that when we began to testify before Congress, either then or later, we didn't mention the covert operations as having taken place at or about the time of the attack on the Maddox, not because we were trying to hide anything, but because it never occurred to us that that had anything to do with it. Later the Congress learned of this and believed that: 1) we had withheld the information from them; 2) the operations had been planned by us to draw fire from the North Vietnamese; and 3) we had then used this as an excuse to escalate the war. That is absolutely false.

Goldberg: Who in the administration conceived and pushed the resolution?

McNamara: I would imagine the State Department. I don't think anyone was particularly opposed to it. It wasn't thought of as a major event, except in the sense that the President had had the experience of watching administrations that had initiated military operations without congressional support and he did not wish to do so. He thought that he might have to escalate, and he wanted the Congress in the act. That was the purpose of the resolution. It was never intended as a broad authority to go to war, but rather the authority to carry out additional military action.

Kaplan: Do you recall if Fulbright's voice was an important one at that time?

McNamara: Yes, it was. He was chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and he was the floor manager of the resolution. The time for him to have objected to the resolution was before he floor-managed it, not later. He

objected to it later, and he then explained his failure to object to it at the time on the grounds that he had been misled by the events, along the lines I have just recounted.

Matloff: Did President Johnson consult with you in 1965 on two key decisions: 1) to bomb north of the 17th parallel, and 2) to commit American ground combat troops?

McNamara: Absolutely.

Matloff: Did you go along with that?

McNamara: Yes. What I think happened was that early in 1965 I had come to the conclusion that our Vietnamese program was quite ineffective—it was not achieving its objective—and we either should get out or do more. It wasn't entirely clear to me which should be done, but to continue as we were was certain to lead to failure. I believe that, in the early part of 1965, McGeorge Bundy and I sent a memo to President Johnson saying this. I think there was then a discussion of the memo. I believe State, at the time, thought we should continue as we were. Mac and I felt that to do so would lead to certain failure. We believed we should either get out or pursue an expanded military and an expanded political track—endeavoring to move toward negotiations—that would ultimately lead to the withdrawal of North Vietnamese support of the attempt to subvert the South Vietnamese government. I went out to Vietnam sometime in the spring or early summer of 1965 and came back with the statement that if we were going to move forward instead of getting out, we should do it in the following way. I laid out a program which the President accepted, with

two notable exceptions. In the initial draft memorandum to the President I had said that if we pursued that program, we should call up reserve forces, and we should put through a tax increase. He decided not to do either one of those.

Matloff: Last time we touched on his position on the reserves and your advice to call them up and his refusal. That is a very key point for historians, because the record is barren on this.

McNamara: That's why I called them draft memoranda. So that if the President didn't agree with my initial recommendation, I could change it and there wouldn't be a memo on the record that in effect said the Secretary of Defense believed something should be done that the President didn't do. That can be disastrous in an administration. If such a memorandum were to be leaked, you would have evidence of conflict in the upper echelons of the administration and it would reduce the effectiveness of the administration. To avoid that, I used the device of draft memoranda.

Matloff: Was that your idea?

McNamara: Absolutely. I had been doing that for years. I did it through the whole seven years. However, that is the only time I can think of when I made a major recommendation, to either of the Presidents, that he didn't follow.

Goldberg: Before you went out to Vietnam, were you leaning one way or the other about intervention?

McNamara: I don't recall with certainty, but I don't believe so.

Goldberg: And after you went?

McNamara: I think the way I felt then was that we were on a certain course of defeat; that it wasn't clear to me that we could avoid defeat by any action in our power; that if we were to expand militarily, we must expand politically as well, because it wasn't at all clear that military action alone could achieve our objectives. Moreover, it wasn't clear that expansion of military action along the lines discussed in the memo would not have to be followed by still further military expansion. I did not believe then that military victory could be assured, and I wasn't certain that with additional military action we could even achieve what would be called a political success. So it was a dilemma, and there was no course that was desirable. Some alternatives were less desirable than others.

Matloff: Were you consulting with the JCS during these years from 1963 onward on military policy and strategy?

McNamara: Yes. Every visit I made to Vietnam was with the Chairman, either Max (Taylor) or Bus Wheeler.

Matloff: Were there any major differences in the approach to the war itself?

McNamara: I'm sure there were, but not great differences. There was a difference at various times on bombing, and later, in the latter part of '67, there was considerable difference between me and Westmoreland on the size of the force to be committed to Vietnam. Westy wanted to add 200,000 people, or something like that, to which I was very much opposed. I don't remember exactly what the Chiefs' views were on the 200,000. The Chiefs generally, or some of them at least, particularly the Air Force Chief, were in favor of a greater bombing program than I was. We were

frequently arguing about the targets, the size of missions, etc. But the magnitudes of the differences were not as great as one might suspect from reading the newspapers. It was not, for example, as great as existed between me and Admiral Felt. I think that he would have wished to go all out on the war, even if it brought in China. I don't think Bus Wheeler wanted to do that, and I don't think Max Taylor wanted to do that.

Matloff: Did your view toward the bombing campaign undergo a considerable change; for example, when you advocated a halt to the bombing?

McNamara: It didn't undergo a change. I had been an Army Air Force officer during World War II, and I knew something about bombing. I never did believe bombing could win wars—the kind of bombing that we were doing. And I didn't believe bombing could stop the infiltration, or "destroy the war-making capacity" of North Vietnam. I did believe that under certain circumstances the bombing might either force the Chinese back into the arms of the Soviets and/or lead to Chinese intervention. As to the bombing pauses, as I suggested earlier, I did not believe that it was likely we could achieve a military victory. I did believe that the military action should be used as a foundation for pursuing a political track. To increase the chance of initiating or achieving movement on the political track, I thought that we should experiment with a bombing pause—to see if that would stimulate interest in the North Vietnamese in political negotiation.

Matloff: Had you ever thought that military victory was a possibility in Vietnam?

McNamara: I don't think so. I think the memos of 1965 are critical. I think that you will see in them a sense of great uncertainty about achieving a military victory.

Goldberg: Why the delay in bombing or mining the ports?

McNamara: I think my belief was that: a) the mining of ports wouldn't stop infiltration because the North Vietnamese didn't need the ports to infiltrate the small amount of tonnage that was being moved in—it could be done over the beach; b) mining of the ports might well lead to an escalation of military action involving the Chinese and/or the Soviets.

Matloff: We were talking about your "disillusionment with the war," if you accept that phrase.

McNamara: I'd rather not use the word "disillusionment," but I don't think I ever believed that a military victory, in the normal sense of the words, was achievable. It became very clear that the South Vietnamese weren't capable with training alone to defend themselves. And it was not at all clear to me that, if we couldn't achieve a military victory by the South Vietnamese alone or with U.S. military assistance, military actions would lead to substantial political movement. Therefore it was a very difficult situation. I think that you will find in my memoranda to the President statements such as, "There is no good course."

Matloff: This would be early '65?

McNamara: I would guess you would find it in several memoranda. They were written very carefully and were quite controversial at the time. I have done more talking on Vietnam in this interview than I have ever done in the past 15 years, and I don't want this made public without my permission. I have tried to avoid public statements on Vietnam for the reason that I felt as early as when I started the Pentagon Papers—in the second or third quarter of 1966—that we weren't succeeding and that the nation

would need a retrospective look at the process by which we had gotten in such a hell of a mess. That retrospective look needed to be taken by scholars—by skilled political scientists and military experts who would need as raw material the documents, intelligence information, memoranda, notes and minutes of meetings, etc., that reflected our knowledge and our thought processes. These documents were scattered all over the government and might well be destroyed in the process of time. I wanted them pulled together. That was the origin of the Pentagon Papers. As it turned out, the man to whom I gave the assignment, John McNaughton, died shortly afterwards. I said to John that I didn't want to have anything to do with the project because I didn't want to taint the process by my participation. I didn't want anybody to think that I had selected the documents or in any way colored the information that was available to the critics. Therefore I wanted him to supervise it, and I didn't want to have anything further to do with it. When he died, the job was turned over to another person with whom I didn't discuss it. That person went beyond my intention of collecting raw material, and developed an analysis and evaluation of the materials. So the Pentagon Papers came out differently from what I had anticipated. However, they serve as raw material for historians. I don't believe that to this day there has been an adequate study and evaluation of the decision-making process in relation to Vietnam, nor have the lessons been drawn from it that can and should be drawn. Under these circumstances, I don't believe that a participant should be the source of comment and evaluation and, therefore, I don't wish my statements to be made public at this time. I have stated to you

what I believe today I believed then. But I know that, unconsciously, individuals tend to color their statements to be consistent with what they would like their behavior to appear. I have tried very carefully not to do that. I don't think I have. However, let the historians go back, examine the records, and draw their own conclusions.

Matloff: You may be interested in some of the speculation on the Pentagon Papers that Dean Rusk gave me. I talked to him last week in Athens, Georgia. He brought up the question of the Pentagon Papers and gave me a piece from the broadcast of 1977 on BBC radio, in which there were four participants, and the speculation on the Papers in that broadcast. The participants were Leslie Gelb, William Bundy, James Greenfield, and another party. Gelb offers three speculations. One was: "One answer might be that at that point in time, 1967, Mr. McNamara was deeply troubled . . ."

McNamara: In the first place, the point in time was 1966.

Goldberg: Yes, I was almost a member of that group.

Matloff: ". . . by that war in a way he hadn't been before and he was after answers to questions that he never asked himself before, however late it was to ask them." Gelb goes on that the other two possibilities could be that you were trying to do a favor for Johnson, who might be getting ready to run again, giving him ammunition to answer difficult questions about the war; or third, that you might have been doing it for Bobby Kennedy, for a Kennedy insurgency against Johnson for the Democratic nomination.

McNamara: What was Dean's point?

Matloff: He doesn't know.

McNamara: A) Gelb doesn't know; B) it's easy enough for Dean or Gelb to ask me, and not to speculate. I'm the one who started it and the only person that I can recall talking to about it, who had any reason whatsoever to understand why I did it, was McNaughton, and he isn't alive. I was deeply concerned about how we had gotten ourselves in such a awful mess. It was clear to me at that time that we were not achieving our objectives. Somebody had to stand back and say, "How did we get here, and how can we avoid ever doing this again?" That was the sole purpose of it. It had nothing whatsoever to do with Johnson or Kennedy because of the form in which it was to be done. The form was to be raw material, not evaluation, and all the raw material.

Matloff: I think what Dean Rusk has trouble understanding from his perspective is why he was never consulted for his position while the project was on.

McNamara: Because it was simply a raw material collection process. Perhaps I should have consulted Dean.

Goldberg: To whom did you turn it over after McNaughton?

McNamara: The Assistant Secretary after McNaughton, Warnke. You would have to ask him, but I don't think I ever talked to him about it, or had anything more to do with it after McNaughton got it underway before he died. I think Gelb was in charge of it, but I don't think I ever talked to him about it.

Kaplan: Did you object at any time to the new change?

McNamara: I don't think I knew about the change.

Kaplan: But after you had known about it?

McNamara: I don't think that I ever knew about it until I got a copy of the Pentagon Papers, which was after I had been at the World Bank. I didn't read them, ever, but I have since opened one volume.

Goldberg: They're not easy reading.

Matloff: I must tell you that I had a previous discussion with Dean Rusk, when I was teaching one semester at the University of Georgia. I was then Army Chief Historian on leave, and he asked me if I at any time had been drawn in on the subject. I said no. That was another question that mystifies him: Why weren't the official historical offices used?

McNamara: In the first place, I don't know if they were. I just said to John, "This is a damn mess. We must insure that those who at some point will wish to study the action and draw lessons from it will have all the raw materials they need. So collect all the raw materials and be sure they are available to historians. How he did it, I don't know. I was doing a thousand other things at the time.

Matloff: One thing you can anticipate in future years is there will be doctoral dissertations on this subject. There are now, already.

McNamara: Why aren't there dissertations or thoughtful, definitive studies of the process and the lessons to be learned from it? That's what needs to be done.

Matloff: What was your reaction to the Tet offensive? There has been so much writing on this subject.

McNamara: I think my reaction was that it showed that the North Vietnamese had a lot of fighting power left in them. I don't think I looked upon it

as a major defeat of the North Vietnamese, which would change my feeling that we couldn't achieve a military victory.

Matloff: Did you find toward the end of your tenure that your views and those of President Johnson and Dean Rusk were diverging more? If so, in what way?

McNamara: It was very clear to me that there was no military solution. I wasn't certain there was a political solution, but I felt we should put more emphasis on it. I shouldn't speak for the President or Dean.

Matloff: Rusk felt his views had not changed. He had a sense, possibly, of a change in yours, but from his own standpoint he didn't change his own views, apparently, as he looks back on it. I guess that he was more sanguine.

McNamara: I think he was, that's right. I think that he felt that we could achieve our objective. I felt that we couldn't. I was strongly opposed to enlarging the war beyond what we had. I didn't want to bomb southern China, or level North Vietnam; I didn't want to add 200,000 more men, as Westmoreland did; but I didn't have a military solution. It was very frustrating for the President for me to oppose the field commander on his plan, which the field commander implied could achieve a satisfactory military solution. I said that: a) it wouldn't, b) I didn't want to go along with it, c) I didn't have a satisfactory military solution. It was bound to be frustrating for the President. Therefore, tensions developed. There is no question about that.

Matloff: How useful did systems analysis prove to be in this war? Let me quote Alain Enthoven's book, the one he wrote with K. Wayne Smith, How Much is Enough? in 1971. "The Systems Analysis Office did not have a

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prominent, much less a crucial, role in the Vietnam War. . . . In Vietnam, no one insisted on systematic efforts to understand, analyze, or interpret the war. . . . this most complex of wars never got serious and systematic analysis." Elsewhere, he goes a little further and says, "The problem in the conduct of the war from Washington was not 'over-management', but 'under-management'." This I find puzzling, given the strong interest in effective management. Is this a good appraisal of that time?

McNamara: It's probably correct, but what stood in the way of him, or me, or anybody else carrying on a "systematic analysis" was that nobody knew how to do it. He was there. I didn't stop him from doing it. What are they doing about a systematic analysis of Nicaragua today? or of South Africa? These are tough things to "systematically analyze". I wrote a speech on South Africa delivered at the University of Witwatersrand three years ago. I read it the other day, and it almost exactly predicted what is happening. I said that the blacks were going to govern themselves down there, that it was going to come to a military conflict, and that South Africa was very likely going to ask for U.S. support. At that time I said they weren't going to get it, and they had better understand that and guide themselves accordingly. I gave a time period, and it has come at the short end of that time period. I mention all this simply to say that that wasn't "systematic analysis," but neither was it widely accepted three years ago. In Vietnam—read some of those memos. I had to read one for the Westmoreland trial, I think it was the June 1965 memo, and, with hindsight, I thought it was a very good statement. That was the result of the best analysis we could do, done by the brightest people I

had, John McNaughton and his associates. I remember talking to Dayan, the Israeli Defense Minister, and to the British officer who had been in charge of the troops in Malaysia.

Goldberg: Brigadier Thompson?

McNamara: Yes. I remember talking to Dayan and Thompson and anybody else I could get my hands on that could "help in systematically analyzing" the situation. The reason I was interested in body counts was, in a sense, to get systematic analysis. You had to have some means of deciding whether you were moving forward or not moving forward. We counted villages that were within our control. We did everything we could to try to determine whether we were achieving our objective and whether we should shift to some other form of military pressure and/or political move. It was not so much that it was under-managed as that there were mistakes in judgment. The reason I wanted the Pentagon Papers set up was so that historians, political scientists, and military experts could examine the mistakes in judgment and in a sense could carry out retrospectively the analysis that in the future could be carried out prospectively.

Goldberg: Did you pay much attention to the efforts to exploit the Viet Cong prisoner of war data and analyses?

McNamara: I remember very clearly at some point asking that the interrogation capability be expanded so we would learn as much as we could from them, yes. Beyond that, I didn't do too much with it.

Goldberg: Did you pay any attention to reports you were getting from RAND? Were you influenced by them?

McNamara: Yes.

Goldberg: There were stories that the President used to carry them around in his back pocket and haul them out and show them to people.

McNamara: What I did try to do that bears on this analysis point was to pursue analysis as fully as possible. I didn't believe DIA was fully capable of independent analysis, not because they weren't intelligent people, or responsible, but they were part of the department that was responsible for decision-making. You never should have the decision-maker judge his own performance. Somebody else should judge his performance. DIA in a sense was part of the decision-making process, and judging the decisions was not the role they should be in. Therefore, I asked the President to allow me to have the CIA set up a special analytical group to report on the progress of the war—which they did. I used their information as a basis for my judgment as to whether we were or were not making progress on bombing, or were or were not stopping infiltration, or whether pacification of the countryside was progressing. So an effort was made to intellectualize the approach, and to analyze the process and the alternatives, but it was so hard, for several different reasons. First, we didn't have the Thompsons, Bohlens, and Kennans and we misjudged the Chinese geopolitical objectives. That was a very serious error which was the beginning of an erroneous analytical process. Secondly, we didn't understand fully the incapability of the South Vietnamese even to maintain a government within South Vietnam that was independent of North Vietnam. Thirdly, I had some gut feelings—but I had no way of knowing the process of analysis by which we could establish what I think was a fact—that the

military tactics being pursued by the U.S. were ineffective in that situation. How we would have known these things at the time is not clear to me.

Kaplan: Did the counter-revolution in Indonesia in 1966 affect your judgment about this?

McNamara: Not in any way I can recall. On the process of analysis, one very important point I would urge you to study is the degree to which the alternative of withdrawal was adequately considered after January 1965. I don't believe the option of withdrawal was ever thoroughly studied. I think that was a deficiency and I think the Pentagon Papers would throw light on that—the raw materials would throw light on whether the option of withdrawal was properly and fully examined by the President and the NSC. To that extent, I think what Alain Enthoven said is perhaps correct.

Matloff: I hesitate to bring up this question, but I guess we must—would you want to comment on the role of the press in reporting about Vietnam during your tenure? How honest did you find it? how objective?

McNamara: I would say that the majority of the press reporting was objective at the time. I don't think they were consciously misreporting. It was difficult for anybody to get a comprehensive view. I had far more resources at my disposal than any reporter, and I had a hard time getting a comprehensive view. So a single reporter was going to have difficulty getting a comprehensive view. As I suggested a moment ago, I think all of us carry around unconscious value judgments that shape our comments or views on particular events. I'm certain that is true of reporters. The problem wasn't the press. The problem was that we had an ineffective program. It's true that the press might have made it more difficult to

carry out an effective program. But if we had had complete censorship, our program would have been ineffective. One comment on the press, however, is that the judgment—which was expressed in bold headlines at times, particularly at the time of the disclosure of the Pentagon Papers—that the difficulties in Vietnam were a function of leaders of government misleading the American public, is just not correct. If that were the problem, you wouldn't need the studies I'm talking about, because generally the American public is not going to elect leaders who mislead them. The problem is much more serious than that. The problem is not lying and deception, but rather misjudgment, and you are very likely to have leaders in the future who make the same mistakes in judgment that were made then, unless you learn from those mistakes.

Matloff: The question will be raised about whether it was a failure of national policy or military policy. What went wrong?

McNamara: What went wrong started with the elimination of our knowledge of those societies. That's where it began, and then that error was compounded.

Matloff: How about the factor of American public opinion? Was that taken sufficiently into account by the theorists as well as by the policymakers? How American opinion would react to a protracted war?

McNamara: In the first place, nobody in 1961-63 believed it would be a protracted war.

Goldberg: 1965?

McNamara: You'd have to read the memos. Usually in those memos, I think, I put in a projection for the period. Certainly by 1966 I was saying that

there was no good alternative: while recommending that we add 100,000 troops, I was saying to the President, if you do, I might well be back 12 months later suggesting another 100,000. By then we were beginning to think about protracted war, but there wasn't a lot of opposition then, in 1966. The first major incident on a campus on the east coast occurred in October or November 1966, when there was a riot at Harvard against me.

Goldberg: Is it your recollection that the military services at the beginning of 1965 were pretty confident that they could bring about a military solution in Vietnam?

McNamara: They were more confident than I was, that's for sure.

Matloff: Have you, in retrospect, had a chance to think about what the significance of Vietnam was for either strategic theory, or the limited war option on the part of the government?

McNamara: I don't want to speculate. To this day, there is still a difference of opinion between me and some of my associates about the purpose, the desirability, and the effectiveness of our operations in Vietnam, and I just don't want to get into an argument. You historians write it as you see it, without regard to my judgment.

Matloff: In the Berlin crisis, you recommended calling up reserves, and did. Do you remember any other recommendations, particularly when the wall was erected in August of 1961?

McNamara: I don't recall my reaction then. My belief today is that my reaction then was that there wasn't a lot we could do about it, speaking of the erection of the wall.

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Goldberg: Do you remember that in the meetings and discussions of the period there was a feeling that you [RMcN] couldn't possibly think of an escalation to a nuclear level in connection with this?

McNamara: Absolutely. In this little book that I am publishing, in the first chapter I recall quite clearly that in the midst of the Berlin crisis I called in a very senior NATO officer and I said, "The Soviets have done A, we did B, they did C, we did D; how is this going to evolve?" He said, "I think they will do E and we should do F, and they'll do G, and we should do H." I asked, "What's going to happen then?" He said, "They'll do I, and we should use nuclear weapons." I don't remember whether Lord Mountbatten was in the city or whether I asked him to come to Washington—he was then Chief of the British Defence Staff. In any case, I asked him to come to my office and I put the same questions to him: How was this going to evolve? What would the Soviets do and how should we respond? He said, "They did A, we did B, they did C, we did D, they've done E, we did F, and they will next do G, and we should do H, I, J, K, and so on." I asked, "What then, what should we do after they do that?" Finally I said: "You haven't suggested that we use nuclear weapons?" He replied, "Are you crazy?" I fully agreed with Mountbatten. Never did I think at that time that we should use nuclear weapons, even though we had a tremendous numerical superiority.

Matloff: A general question along that line—did you ever, in any of the international crises, seriously consider the use of nuclear weapons?

McNamara: No, absolutely not. Never.

Goldberg: This is in general true of most people in the administration, wasn't it?

McNamara: I think so. I have heard it said that there was a plan for the use of nuclear weapons in connection with Berlin and that this was discussed with Kennedy. I don't believe that. I don't believe any such plan was discussed with me. And I'm sure that if it was not discussed with me, it wasn't discussed by anybody in the Pentagon with Kennedy.

Matloff: To go on to the Dominican operation, in 1965-66, that was the intervention in April '65 with troops. Do you recall what your role was?

McNamara: There my memory is very hazy, I'd rather not talk about it.

Matloff: How about the Middle East operation in June 1967, what roles you and OSD were playing during that period?

McNamara: I remember it well. We were intimately involved in it and very much concerned about it. I remember first, that our intelligence sources indicated that the Egyptians were building up; were probably going to move to attack the Israelis; and that the Israelis were very likely to preempt. For that reason, Johnson asked Dean Rusk and me to join him one evening on the second floor of the White house to meet with Eban, the Israeli Foreign Minister. At that meeting Johnson said to Eban that under no circumstances would we support a preemptive attack. If the Israelis went ahead with such an attack, in effect, we would deny them any support thereafter, no matter what happened to them. It was absolutely contrary to our advice and to our policy for them to preempt. I further remember that Prime Minister Wilson came to Washington in June 1967, before the war started (the meeting had been scheduled to discuss some other subject),

and I recall that the British and U.S. intelligence estimates of the Israeli capability vis-a-vis the Egyptians were almost identical. One service believed the Israelis would prevail in 7 days, the other service believed they would prevail in 10. I also recall that we very much wanted to avoid the war. We didn't know how it would escalate. We were concerned about potential Soviet intervention. We made great efforts to organize enough Western support, which meant NATO support, to Israel's cause, to deter the Egyptians from attacking. We had a terrible time gaining such support. We couldn't even organize a "freedom of the seas" intervention in the Gulf of Aqaba. The Europeans would not go along with that. It would not have involved any military action whatsoever, but would have involved maintaining the right of access to the Gulf of Aqaba. I remember, as well, that Dean and I went up to the Senate to talk to a group of around 40 senators to see whether they would support U.S. military intervention in the event that seemed necessary to maintain the independence of Israel. We got a very negative response. I recall that, after the Israelis preempted and appeared to be achieving a military victory, for the first time the hot line was used. The first message gave us some indication that the Soviets wished to avoid intervention in the war, if we stayed out. Over the next day or two events moved in such a way that we had another message that said: "If you want war, you'll get war." The reason was that we had had the Sixth Fleet moving west on a training exercise toward Gibraltar, but upon learning that Israel might possibly be faced with Syrian intervention, we turned the fleet around and sent it back toward Israel. Our purpose was not to attack Egypt, but to defend

Israel. The Soviets misinterpreted that as an indication of our intention to escalate the war, attack Egypt, and destroy the Egyptian government. It was at that point that the message from Kosygin came in saying if you want war, you'll get it.

Matloff: Did the President consult with you on the exchanges on the hot line?

McNamara: Yes, always.

Matloff: One other incident, the Pueblo, which came toward the very end of your tenure, January 23, 1968, were you consulted during that affair, and what did you recommend?

McNamara: Yes, my recommendation was that we would do what we did, which was, essentially, nothing.

Matloff: This is a good point at which to end this session.

Goldberg: I have a few more questions, if we can come back another time.

McNamara: Yes, I would be very happy to see you again. I want to repeat what I said before: please check all this; don't depend on my memory.

Goldberg: We always check, but there are things that aren't in the documents, which, together with the documents, certainly clarify and expand on them, so it's very valuable and useful to us.

Matloff: A perfect example is the Pentagon Papers.

McNamara: The whole purpose of the Pentagon Papers was to permit a retrospective look and the drawing of lessons.

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Matloff: This is part IV of an oral history interview with Mr. Robert S. McNamara, held in Washington, D.C., on August 27, 1986, at 3:20 P.M. Representing the OSD Historical Office are Drs. Alfred Goldberg, Lawrence Kaplan, and Maurice Matloff.

Mr. McNamara, at our last meeting we discussed the role you played in connection with various international crises and foreign area problems. There are a few questions left over from that topic that we would like to raise before going on to discuss the role that you played in connection with domestic disturbances during your tenure.

Goldberg: With particular reference to Vietnam, again, by June 1965 you had substantially improved the size, composition, quality, and the logistics of the general purpose forces. Do you think that this greater military capability on hand influenced the incremental decisions that took us into Vietnam—that is, the existence of a capability?

McNamara: No. I don't think so, because: a) the force requirements, as we visualized them for Vietnam, didn't involve forces of such magnitude as to have been limited by whatever limitations there were in the conventional forces before they were strengthened; and b) the danger of Vietnam triggering requirements for much larger conventional forces outside of Vietnam—for example, in reaction to Soviet pressures—were not considered to be very great. Therefore, I don't believe the increase in the strength of the conventional forces affected the decisions relating to Vietnam, one way or another.

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Goldberg: Still on Vietnam, in retrospect, what would you have done differently?

McNamara: That's a subject I don't discuss. I think, in the first instance, it's the responsibility of scholars to examine the options that were available to policy makers. After that has been done, then perhaps it would be appropriate for the policy makers to discuss, with hindsight, what they would have done differently. But the scholars have not completed their task, and therefore I'm not prepared to comment.

Matloff: You served during a period when race relations were quite tense and civil disturbances were a serious problem. What measures did you take in DoD to assist the state and local authorities to restore and maintain law and order?

McNamara: Both President Kennedy and President Johnson asked me to participate in the discussions of the government's response to the race problems that existed in the country. In that connection it became clear there were contributions that the Defense Department could make, apart from the personal contribution I could make to formulation of national policy. On several occasions we were deeply involved. For example, in 1965, at Easter time, on the occasion of the Martin Luther King march on Selma, Alabama, there was a great controversy over whether or not the president should federalize the Alabama state guard. The possibility of violence was great. I believed that Governor Wallace was unlikely to maintain order with the forces at his command, and I,

therefore, strongly urged that we federalize the Alabama national guard. We did so. As a result, serious loss of life was prevented. Similarly, in connection with the disorders in Michigan, particularly in Detroit, the same question arose as to whether we should federalize the state guard. Governor Romney had a different attitude than Governor Wallace, but nonetheless the situation had deteriorated in Michigan to the point where disorder was widespread. Detroit was burning; shots were being fired; there was great potential for loss of life. We federalized the guard and I sent Cy Vance, Warren Christopher, the Deputy Attorney General, and some of our leading military officers to Detroit. They personally took command of the situation and brought peace to the city. I believe I'm correct in saying that, after they arrived, there wasn't a single injury due to gunfire by either the police or the military.

I mention those two as illustrations. There were many others. They occurred in both the deep south and in other parts of the country.

Matloff: I was going to ask you if you got involved in the problem of the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi in 1962.

McNamara: Yes. A close friend of mine was associated with that, Nick Katzenbach, the Deputy Attorney General; and, of course, Bobby Kennedy and the president were very deeply involved. I was a participant in the conversations which led to the formulation of our policy. And the Defense Department provided certain of the personnel--General Abrams

for example, was sent down to Mississippi in civilian clothes—to appraise the situation and to recommend action.

Matloff: What role, if any, did you see for DoD in the whole area of alleviating domestic social problems?

McNamara: The Department's primary responsibility, of course, is to protect the nation against external threats. But I saw no contradiction between pursuing that objective on the one hand and addressing certain domestic problems on the other, so long as the latter activity could be carried on without prejudice or penalty to our primary role. As an illustration, we used our influence to reduce civil rights violations. We found, for example, substantial discrimination against blacks—blacks serving in the military forces—in off-base housing. We concluded that we could both overcome a discriminatory action against military personnel, and at the same time provide an example of how to deal with housing discrimination, by declaring off limits to military personnel, whether they were white or black, housing that discriminated against blacks. We, therefore, issued an "open housing order" before there was any federal law covering that subject. I'll give you another example. In the '60s we were prohibited by law from drafting individuals whose grades in the Army's classification tests were in the tenth percentile or below. But by a policy decision we did not draft those between the 10th and 30th percentiles. This was inequitable. Moreover, I believed

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that by passing through the military conscripted service of two years individuals between the 10th and 30th percentile, we could, at no penalty to the military, increase their functional literacy and job skills, and add substantially to their productivity when they were passed back into the civilian society (it was estimated their optimal productivity would increase 300 percent). We began a program—later known as "Operation One Hundred Thousand"—to draft one hundred thousand of these individuals per year. Finally, as another illustration of the way in which we used DoD to advance domestic interests, we initiated a project to facilitate the transition of draftees, who were moving out of the military, back into civilian life. This program began when I read in The Washington Post one day that there was a shortage of police in Washington. I couldn't believe it. The military, each year, were turning out of the service, at the end of their conscription period, thousands of military police. Many of these were blacks, and all were well trained policemen. I concluded that we could both assist these individuals in relocating into civilian life and at the same time meet the needs of the civilian society by setting up a transition program. We did so. It provided, during the last weeks of the two-year period of military service, both training to adapt military skills to civilian requirements and employment counseling. Tens of thousands of individuals benefited from the program.

Matloff: There were a number of specific measures and programs set up to alleviate domestic problems.

Goldberg: Who was your chief assistant in integration matters?

McNamara: The Assistant Secretary for Manpower. However, Cy Vance and Adam Yarmolinsky, who was my personal assistant, played major roles as well. For example, Adam came to me a year or so after I had become Secretary and said, "We have some really serious problems of discrimination in the services." I responded, "I can't believe it, you must be wrong. One of the first things we did was issue an order to ensure there was no discrimination." He said, "That's a piece of paper. It didn't accomplish the job." I asked, "How do you know?" He said, "I have plenty of evidence." I asked "How are we going to get at it?" He replied, "Why don't we set up a 3-man committee of outsiders to look at this thing? They will come in, collect the evidence and analyze the extent of the problem." I asked, "OK, whom do you have in mind?" He said, "There is a man named Gesell in Washington (he is now a federal judge) who would be excellent. I'll see if he will do it." Gesell did serve as the chairman of a small committee, and we did find widespread discrimination, particularly as I mentioned earlier in housing.

Matloff: May I ask a few general questions about Cold War policies? Did you believe that containment was a realistic policy; that its assumptions were valid?

McNamara: Yes. I did then, and I do today.

Matloff: How about detente? Did you think that it was a more realistic policy?

McNamara: Yes, I surely did, and I do today.

Matloff: You felt both were correct?

McNamara: Absolutely. I don't think that they are contradictory.

Kaplan: I know that General Lemnitzer, when he was SACEUR, was very disturbed about detente, at least as it appeared in Europe, and I wonder whether any of his reservations were communicated to you in the 60s, after the Harmel Report?

McNamara: I can't answer specifically. I don't have a clear recollection of the degree to which detente advanced during that period. I believe detente, as a policy, evolved after the mid-'60s. But as an objective, I certainly felt we should have more communication with the Soviets. And I believed that containment was a lot easier to achieve in an environment of detente.

Matloff: You are absolutely correct about the policy. There may have been the foreshadowing of detente in the Harmel Report in 1967, that Lemnitzer would have known about.

Goldberg: The term didn't really come into use until the 70s.

McNamara: I don't think detente as a term came up then, but detente in the sense of communication, of lowering tensions, was a subject that was certainly focused on. We were supportive of it in the 1960s, while at the same time stressing containment.

Matloff: Another general question, how effective was military aid on the basis of your experience as a tool for political leverage in the Cold War?

McNamara: One can look at Iran as an illustration. Certainly military assistance to Iran was an important element in strengthening the ties

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between Iran and the U.S. The same thing could be said in connection with Thailand and the Philippines. Military assistance was effective as a tool for political leverage in the Cold War, but it could have been made more so. We made an effort to do that. For example, when the Shah came on his first visit to the U.S. during the Kennedy administration, he wanted additional military assistance. President Kennedy and I agreed that we would not provide it unless the Shah agreed to cut back his military budget, reduce the number of men in uniform, and use the savings to finance an expanded program of economic and social advance. We were sensitive to the problem of excessive military expenditure and the penalty that that imposed on a society. I think that we perhaps could have done more than we did to stop it, although we did a great deal. Indeed, I'll never forget the Deputy Prime Minister of India coming into my office after the India-China war asking for more military assistance. We thought it was unnecessary. At that time the Indians were in such a trauma after the defeat imposed upon them by the Chinese that they went wild in terms of expanding their military force and raising the military budget. And they wanted a lot of military assistance from us. We didn't think that they needed it and we refused to provide it. Similarly, one of the Latin countries, I believe it was Argentina, wanted to purchase military aircraft from us. We refused to sell to the Argentines for fear that if we sold to them, it would trigger purchases by the Chileans and there would be an escalation of force on each side, which would be costly and risky to both. We turned the

Argentines down (they subsequently bought the aircraft from Europe). It is correct to say that military assistance did provide political leverage. But it is also true that there was a great danger that military assistance could stimulate unwise increases of local defense expenditures at the cost of economic and social advance. We were very sensitive to that. This is not a revisionist view of history. I made a speech on the subject in Montreal in 1966. I said in effect that U.S. security depended in part on economic and social advance in the developing countries, and that at the margin we could buy more security by applying DoD expenditures to economic assistance rather than to military assistance.

Goldberg: That was the original intent of the assistance programs in the late '40s. When we really got underway, we were spending three to one on economic aid. The Korean War turned it around completely.

McNamara: My Montreal speech was very controversial when it was presented. I was severely criticized in some quarters.

Goldberg: From the White House?

McNamara: Yes.

Matloff: We should get that speech and add it as an appendix to this interview.

McNamara: I think you should. It has been reprinted in many volumes and is quoted frequently today.

Goldberg: You have the 41 volumes of Public Statements, don't you?

McNamara: I surely do.

Matloff: Did you regard alliances as the most effective way of linking American and friendly foreign military power and achieving American strategic aims?

McNamara: Yes, but there was one notable relationship that wasn't formalized in an alliance then or now, and that's the relationship with Israel. I believe the U.S.-Israeli relationship strengthens my point that a formalization of security commitments is highly desirable. If there is a formal security commitment it provides a deterrent effect. We don't have a formal treaty with Israel, and I think that it is a serious penalty to each of us.

Matloff: On the topic of arms control and disarmament, what were your views on them during your tenure as SecDef and did they differ in any way from those of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson?

McNamara: I don't believe my views differed from those of the Presidents. Arms control, as it related to nuclear offensive weapons, particularly strategic weapons, was intellectual in its infancy in the 60's. The first major action in the direction of arms control was the limited test ban treaty in August 1963. I strongly favored the treaty, as did President Kennedy. There was tremendous opposition to arms control in many parts of our society at that time. There was a great fear that the Soviets would violate the agreements, and that we would not be able to verify them. As a result, formalization of arms control objectives—particularly as they related to limits on offensive and defensive forces—had not advanced very far. But as we proceeded with the development of our nuclear forces, it became clear that our objective should be to build a deterrent and not a first strike capability. We concluded that in the nuclear age neither side could permit the other to achieve a

first strike capability. Therefore, additions by one side would trigger action by the other. There would be a ratcheting upward—an action and reaction effect—which would lead both to continued increases in numbers and increased crisis instability. Hence we began to give thought to limiting the force expansion by some form of formal agreements. While those thoughts were evolving, we came to that critical meeting in Austin in November 1966 when the ABM was a major issue. At that point, Cy Vance and I suddenly saw an opportunity to move forward and attack both the ABM problem itself and, more generally, the offensive arms problem. We proposed that we enter negotiations with the Soviets on both subjects. That was done. But my recollection is that there had not been a great deal of discussion of offensive force limits, and what we did, in effect, was to begin the formulation of arms control objectives at that time.

Matloff: You anticipated my question of the relationship between your position on the ABM and your views on arms control and disarmament.

McNamara: They are linked together. We concluded that if the Soviets continued to deploy their ABM system, we would have to respond by expanding our offensive forces. This action would be unfortunate for both us and the Soviets. Therefore we felt that it was essential to negotiate defensive force limits. But we also felt that it would be wise to have offensive force limits. The latter could never be agreed to unless we had the former. It would be suicide to agree to an offensive force limit while allowing the Soviets to build an unlimited defense. Hence,

the offensive force limit was dependent on the defense limit. The defense limit was desirable in its own right because it would tend to dampen down the escalation of offensive forces.

Goldberg: Did you think that you perceived an action/reaction process during this period, a substantial one?

McNamara: Yes. And I commented on it in a speech in San Francisco in September 1967. I believe I actually used the words "action and reaction." My thinking on that subject had evolved over a period of time.

Matloff: Did you play any part in connection with the establishment of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency?

McNamara: I don't recall. And I don't remember what proposals the Agency was working on in the early 60's.

Matloff: Certainly that 1963 limited test ban was the earliest formal one.

McNamara: I don't believe that there was any proposal from the Arms Control Agency to negotiate a limit on ABM deployment in 1966. There may have been, but I have no recollection of it.

Matloff: How about in connection with the nonproliferation treaty that was signed on July 1, 1968, after you left? There was a move to hold strategic arms limitations talks that got postponed to the next administration. Were you involved at all?

McNamara: To some degree. I and some of my associates in Defense were very strongly in favor of prohibiting proliferation, but there was a

lot of controversy in the government on it. When Gene Rostow became Under Secretary of State, I recall that he had serious doubts about whether antiproliferation measures were in our interest. I mention this in passing to illustrate that there was far from unanimity of views on a number of the arms control issues.

Matloff: Were you drawn in on any of the discussions of holding strategic arms limitations talks?

McNamara: The start of the talks grew out of the November 1966 discussions in Austin, when I proposed to the President, and he agreed, that we should initiate discussions with the Soviets. Initially, the talks were to be restricted to ABM systems. But associated with that, there was to be an effort to negotiate limits on offensive deployments. Out of that Austin meeting came the authorization to the State Department to contact the Soviets. From November 1966 until the time I left, I was continually involved in efforts to get the negotiations started. Those efforts involved the Glassboro meetings, but were not limited to them.

Matloff: What was your attitude toward summit meetings with the Russians? At what point did you feel they might be beneficial?

McNamara: We didn't have much experience with summit meetings, but I was very anxious to get President Johnson and Mr. Kosygin together to discuss the start of negotiations on arms control. We had a hell of a time doing it. You are probably familiar with the story. When we learned that Kosygin was coming to the UN in June of 1967, I urged the President to meet with him. Johnson said he was willing if Kosygin would come to

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Washington. That message was passed to the Soviets. Kosygin said he would be happy to see Johnson but he wasn't coming to the U.S., he was coming to the UN. Therefore if Johnson wanted to see him, Johnson would have to come to the UN. Johnson said, "The hell with that; he's coming to my country; let him come to Washington." So it looked as if they weren't going to meet. One night Johnson called me at my office in the Pentagon and asked, "What are you doing about Glassboro?" The only Glassboro I knew about was in Scotland, and I asked, "Why are we going to Scotland?" He said, "We're going to Glassboro, New Jersey, and you need to get the place ready." I asked, "What do you mean we're going to New Jersey?" He said, "You've been wanting me to meet Kosygin. We're going to meet in Glassboro." If you take a compass and put one point on New York and draw an arc, and swing it around and put the point on Washington and draw an arc, the arcs literally intersect at Glassboro. There's nothing at Glassboro except the State Teacher's Collage, and, of course, that's where the meeting was held. It had been very difficult to get the two leaders together because they were both skeptical of the potential results. Indeed, many months were to pass before they agreed to formal negotiations. However, observing how each of them behaved that Friday when we met in Glassboro and on the subsequent Sunday when they met a second time, I believe that those discussions really laid the foundation for the arms control discussions which began one year later. In the intervening period other events, particularly the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, stood in the way of proceeding with negotiations.

Matloff: Were there any other summit meetings that you got involved in?

McNamara: No. I don't think there were any other summit meetings at that time.

Goldberg: No Secretary of Defense or Soviet Minister of Defense had met yet. Weinberger is trying to set one up now.

McNamara: I had thought in 1964 that we might be able to limit the expansion of U.S. and Soviet forces—or Warsaw Pact and NATO—by unilateral action. We thought that this could be done by stating what our plans would be for defense budgets for the next two or three years if their budgets did not exceed X, Y, and Z. We recognized it was difficult to determine Soviet defense expenditures—for example, they categorized some military expenditures as non-military. Nonetheless, through intelligence sources, I thought we could obtain enough information on their actions to warrant some unilateral decisions regarding our force levels based on the Soviets' stated budget plans. We could make our budgetary plans available to them and hope thereby to influence their force positions. The objective would be to achieve a relatively stable balance of force at lower levels. This was something that Johnson was willing to support. My recollection is that the initial discussions with the Soviets supported my conclusion. However, I thought we could make more progress toward that objective, if we knew more about their budgets. To facilitate that I believed Charlie Hitch and I should go to Moscow. This was proposed to the Russians, but there was no way they would have McNamara in Moscow.

Matloff: So it was never formally presented to the Russians?

McNamara: Right.

Goldberg: I think that Jim Schlesinger tried the same thing later on.

McNamara: We got nowhere with our visit. We did obtain what I will call general acceptance of the principle that unilateral action based on each party's statement of what its budget was going to be was desirable and could move us toward achieving balance at lower levels. We went ahead with such an approach. Then the Soviets claimed that we violated the agreement. Our problem was that our force levels and budgets were distorted by the Vietnam build-up. What we considered expansion relating to Vietnam, the Soviets considered an expansion that endangered them. The Vietnamese buildup terminated what otherwise would have been a very interesting experiment.

Matloff: What was a typical work day in your life as Secretary of Defense? How many hours were spent in an average day?

McNamara: I arrived in my office every morning at 7:00, and I didn't leave until the work was done. I never left before 7:00 in the evening, and frequently later. For example, I remember very well the day of the march on Selma. I arrived home at about 9:30 that Friday evening. One of my children had ^{had} come home from school, and it turned out she had marched on Selma that day with Martin Luther King. I called the President and I thought he was going to tear the telephone off the wall. Johnson had had great misgivings about federalizing the Alabama National Guard. I had finally persuaded him to do it. I told him I knew that he loved Margy (my daughter) and he was surely right in calling out the Guard,

because it protected her in the march. On Saturdays I arrived at the office at the usual hour and left generally at about 5:30.

Matloff: How much time on the Hill and at the White House?

McNamara: I calculated that an hour of testimony on the Hill required four hours in preparation time. I believe that the hours spent on the Hill, plus the preparation time, took about 20-25 percent of my total time.

Goldberg: Per year?

McNamara: Per year, yes.

Goldberg: We had a figure for Forrestal, you know. It was 14 percent. It was fairly accurate.

McNamara: I might be wrong.

Goldberg: No, it could well be, because over a period of time it was quite clear that the amount went up for the whole building, not just for the Secretary.

McNamara: When I had important appearances before the committees on the Hill, say at 10:00 A.M., I frequently would get to the office at 5:30 or so.

Matloff: How about at the White House?

McNamara: That was variable; the middle of the night, or whatever, depending on the occasion.

Matloff: Do you feel the roles of public manager and private manager are similar or different?

McNamara: I think that they are very similar, except that the forces are quite different. The responsibility of a manager, be he public or

private, is to formulate objectives, consider alternative ways of achieving those objectives, motivate people to accomplish the approved plans, measure progress, and periodically revise the plans. The difference between public and private life is one must take account of totally different forces. In public life one confronts not market forces but the press, the Congress, and the American people.

Matloff: Do you see the role of Secretary of Defense primarily as a manager of resources, a strategist, or what?

McNamara: I think the most important function by far is to advise the President and Secretary of State on the application of military power. That is the primary function. The second most important is the formulation of the strategy which underlies the application of military power. If you assume that you are responsible under certain circumstances for recommending application of power, you should in advance of that time have formulated a strategy—based on foreign policy commitments—that will underlie that application. Then the third function is to translate that strategy into force structure. And the fourth is the management of the acquisition and training of the force.

Goldberg: How much of a role did you play in formulating strategy?

McNamara: A considerable role, depending on what you mean by strategy.

Matloff: In retrospect, since you served the longest, up to this point, of any Secretary of Defense, do you feel that 7 years was too long a period, long enough, or not long enough?

McNamara: That's a good question. I'm inclined to think that the danger is that the Secretaries of Defense and State will serve too short a period rather than too long a term. I don't think that 7 years is too long, if the relationship with the President remains strong and if the Secretary is physically and mentally unimpaired.

Goldberg: There is a possibility of burnout, at least for some.

McNamara: Yes, and also there's a possibility of having a negative power position. I may have told you that President Kennedy and I used to talk about politics and the role of the President. I had a theory that I expressed to him one day, and which is illustrated by the diagram below.

Power

_____ 8
0 Years in office

The President (or Secretary of Defense) enters office with a large "balance" of power and should plan to leave at the end of his term (presumably 8 years) with zero, having expended the power on the achievement of worthwhile objectives. The danger is you might run out of power before the "end" of your term. In that event, you ought to get out.

Matloff: What led you to decide to retire from the office when you did?

McNamara: Johnson and I had obvious differences of opinion and the friction was getting very great. I had tremendous respect and affection

for him, and I think he had the same for me, but we were just in the deepest of conflict at the time.

Matloff: Over Vietnam, specifically?

McNamara: Yes.

Matloff: Did you get a chance to brief your successor, Clark Clifford?

McNamara: Clark and I had known each other well. As an outsider, he had been brought in to discussions on many of the decisions relating to Vietnam. There was a very important meeting in November of 1967—I think it was held in the State Department—on questions of policy with respect to Vietnam. I believe that Jack McCloy, Clark, and several other outsiders were present. I mention this to say that he was, in a sense, up to date when he came in.

Goldberg: Did you make any suggestions concerning a successor?

McNamara: I think that I suggested Clark.

Goldberg: You thought it was the proper choice.

McNamara: Yes. By an odd coincidence, Clark had been a person that President Kennedy recommended I talk to about certain matters before I was sworn in in January '61.

Matloff: As you look back on OSD organization and management, do you see the need for further changes in structure, working relations, and functions in DoD?

McNamara: When I became Secretary, there was on the table—published a short time before I was sworn in—the Symington report. It recommended major changes in organization. But there was a tremendous amount of opposition then, and there still is, to any significant change in the

organizational structure of DoD. To the extent that the changes in structure require a legal foundation—a new law—they are very difficult to achieve. Therefore, my approach was to decide what changes in structure I needed and to the extent that they didn't require law, to go ahead and put them into effect. To the extent that they did require a new law, because it was so time consuming and so costly to obtain the law, I was disinclined to proceed. I still feel that way. I think that there are important organizational concepts to bear in mind. But in most cases one should try to achieve them without changes in the law, and, in many cases, the management objective can be accomplished without changes in organizational structure. For example, the offices of the service secretaries are anachronisms. But one can deal with that problem without a change in law and to some degree without a change in organizational structure. You can build up other organizations to carry out the functions that ought to be carried out on an integrated basis. For example, we talked about force structure. But you cannot develop the force structure for the Air Force in the Air Force. You can only develop the structure for the Air Force in relationship to the total national force structure. To the degree you have an Office of Secretary of the Air Force, responsible for recommending a force structure, it is an impediment, rather than a help. The Secretary of the Air Force can't know what the Navy or the Army is going to do, and he isn't likely to know or be an authority on the total strategic plan. So to the degree you strengthen offices that are by their nature incapable of achieving your purpose, you make it less likely you will achieve that purpose. Therefore, in a sense, I

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weakened the Offices of the Service Secretaries vis-a-vis the Office of the Secretary of Defense. I did so not because I wanted power, but because I cared about developing the proper strategy and I was determined to translate that strategy into the proper force structure.

Matloff: This brings to mind Secretary of Air Zuckert's expression that he regarded himself as "a group vice president." Did you think the services had gone about as far as they could or should toward unification?

McNamara: No. Therefore I thought it was important to strengthen the position of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs vis-a-vis the position of the Chiefs of Services. The Chiefs of the Services could have only a limited view of where the national interest lay with respect to their service.

Matloff: The Symington committee called for the single chief in place of the Joint Chiefs, and the military departments would have been eliminated, too.

McNamara: I think that it is important to think about the security of the nation and develop a strategy to achieve that security at minimum cost. That means one must not be bound by service lines; one must think of the services as contributors to a total national plan and the proper balance certainly cannot be assumed to be 1/3, 1/3, 1/3.

Goldberg: The services and the service chiefs remain the key element in the whole military picture, don't they?

McNamara: No. They were not in the 1960s and they are not today. It was not a service-based recommendation that determined whether we were going to have an ABM defense, or the number of Minuteman, or a strategy of flexible response, or else we would go to war. It was a consideration of the total impact on our security. In that sense, the recommended action could not be service-based. To better achieve that, I wanted to, and did, strengthen the position of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. One could do that by appointing the person that you considered the best qualified and then treating them as first among equals. That's why I happened to have three Army officers in a row as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. It wasn't that I favored the Army, per se. It just happened that to get the strongest military mind and the ablest individual—the individual with the greatest experience and the greatest intellectual power—I believed I had to choose an Army officer.

Goldberg: You chose two of the three, I think.

McNamara: I had three, Lemnitzer, Bus, and Max.

Goldberg: You didn't choose Lemnitzer.

McNamara: No. But I kept him on. In any case, I had three in a row. It was alleged that I was favoring the Army, which was not the case at all. What I was trying to do was to get the strongest man, to whom I could give, to the extent one could do it within the law, additional power. This was possible. No one could say that you couldn't put greater confidence, power, and authority in the Chairman. That's a question of personal relationships.

Goldberg: It had been done before you, too, when Bradley was Chairman.

McNamara: I'm sure that was the case. That is my point on organization. I think that you can do a lot without changing the law, and even without changing the structure.

Matloff: How about special overseas assignments, did you find yourself leaning more on the Army?

McNamara: I didn't have as much to do with the appointment of unified command commanders as I did with the Chairman of the Chiefs and SACEUR. Certainly in the case of the SACEUR, we went to the Army for the reason that it was more Army oriented than others. But also the Army officers happened to be at that time, I thought, better qualified to carry out such commands.

Matloff: One of the interviewees that I spoke to suggested that you might have worked out an implicit division of labor with the Joint Chiefs of Staff—that you and OSD would control the force structure planning and you would leave to the JCS the problem of operations. Does that ring a bell?

McNamara: Not at all. The Chiefs were deeply involved and wanted to be deeply involved in force structure. The fact that I didn't always accept their recommendations didn't mean that they weren't deeply involved. In terms of operations, if by that you mean force application, certainly not. Look at the Cuban missile crisis. There was a perfect illustration of force application which we controlled to the most minute detail. To some degree, the same thing was true in the Berlin crisis, in August 1961. Also in the Middle East, in

June 1967. And a lot of people, including Admiral Felt, would say that we controlled operations in Vietnam.

Matloff: Did you ever have any problems getting information, either from the Joint Chiefs of Staff or from the services?

McNamara: I suppose so, in the sense that perhaps they didn't volunteer information that I might have been interested in, but I never felt that was a problem. Very early I let it be known that I expected to receive any information I needed or wanted. For example, I learned the Air Force had a contract with the Rand Corporation, and the Rand Corporation reports didn't come to the Office of the Secretary of Defense. I asked why, and they said, "The Air Force doesn't allow it. Their contract is with Rand; they get the Rand reports, and that's it." I said, "Just let them know there isn't going to be any contract between Rand and the Air Force, if I don't get those reports immediately." We got the reports. In the entire period I was in the Department, there was: a) no intent to deceive, with one single exception; b) no intent to withhold on a substantial basis in order to strengthen one's position with respect to a controversial issue. I suppose that in the Department, as in most organizations, there was a natural tendency to avoid sending up the chain information that would cause trouble.

Matloff: You never had to put out an order saying you wanted to see certain papers?

McNamara: No.

Goldberg: Do you think that you got everything you wanted from them?

McNamara: I think so. Where there were differences of opinion, let's say on the TFX as an illustration, I suppose that information that would have buttressed my opinion wasn't volunteered.

Goldberg: Were there refusals to provide information?

McNamara: No.

Goldberg: I think I ran across some correspondence on this once where Gilpatric was refused something by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

McNamara: It's conceivable; I can't imagine what.

Goldberg: He went to you and you wrote a note to Taylor in which you asked him to help.

McNamara: I might well have, but nobody after the first month or two refused me anything. You indicate that you're going to get what you want; everyone knows it; and you get it. That doesn't mean that they volunteer things that they think are prejudicial to their position, but it was my job to know what I needed and to ask for it, and make very clear that I was going to get it or heads would come off. That was well known. I had assistants, George Brown was one, who ensured that I not only got what I asked for, but that I was sensitive to what was available that I should ask for, that often might not have been proffered.

Goldberg: He was lucky that he wasn't ostracized.

McNamara: That's right. One of the reasons I had such tremendous admiration for him was that he did it, even though his promotion was dependent upon Le May, whose position at times he was undermining by

supplying me with information that I might not have known enough to ask for.

Matloff: On the establishment of some of those functional defense agencies, for example the DIA, the Defense Supply Agency, the Defense Contract Audit Agency—what lay behind that?

McNamara: It became very clear because of the missile gap controversy that the individual service intelligence offices—again, I want to stress I don't think they were consciously deceiving or trying to deceive—were influenced by the environment that they were part of. There were unconscious biases that were reflecting in their intelligence estimates, and I thought we could reduce those by putting the offices together. I think we did. DIA was, I believe, a much more reliable source of intelligence than had been the three services. However, it was still an element of the agency (DoD) that was responsible for operations. To some extent, DoD, the agency responsible for operations, was reporting on itself, either rejecting requirements for action and/or reporting on the success of the operations that it carried out. I thought that was a weakness. For that reason I asked President Johnson to allow me to talk to CIA about setting up a special unit evaluating developments in Vietnam. Dick Helms did so. It was for similar reasons that I set up the other central agencies.

Matloff: Did you see the need for further work along that line, setting up more agencies?

McNamara: I don't recall exactly what my thoughts were at the time. I did see the need for reducing the influence of the parochialism in the services on force requirements and force application and organization.

Matloff: How would you characterize the styles, effectiveness, and personalities of some of those top officials in OSD and JCS with whom you served? Thumbnail reactions, if you will, of people like Gilpatric, Vance, and Nitze—what were your impressions?

McNamara: I had an immense respect and affection for them then, and do now. They were three of the ablest people I have ever worked with in any organization.

Matloff: How about the JCS, Lemnitzer, Taylor, and Wheeler?

McNamara: I felt the same way about them. I had a deep affection for them.

Matloff: How about their styles of operating?

McNamara: They were different; I don't want to really comment on them, because I was very fond of all three of them. They were really great patriots. I think that one of the saddest things in our society today is the degree to which some people don't really respect or understand the senior military officers.

Goldberg: That's something of which they accused you at the time, wasn't it?

McNamara: I know it, but those who accused me never understood my feelings. I don't think the senior military officers accused me—Bus, or Max, or Lem—but others would. One of the reasons the others did was that they saw me developing a capability and power to overwhelm their recommendations. When a service would come up with a proposal—LeMay with the B-70, for example—I had an organization that would be capable of examining whether we needed it or not and could do it

better, and allow me to support my position and conclusions better than Le May, for example, could with his. People were mad as hell in the Air Force—angry at me and at the people I was using, in that case Hitch and Enthoven. But I don't think Max ever felt that way, and I don't think Bus or Lem did. They were extremely able people. I remember driving over to testify one day with Bus. It was toward the end of my service, and by this time the volunteer Army was being discussed. I asked Bus, "What do you think about a volunteer Army?" He said, "I think our society is well served by avoiding the development of a professional military. I think we are a better force because we have civilians flowing through us."

Matloff: Did your relations with Taylor and Wheeler on the one hand and Lemnitzer on the other differ in any way in the roles that they were playing?

McNamara: I don't think so. Lem was a different kind of a personality, but I got along well with him.

Goldberg: You didn't renew him as Chairman.

McNamara: Taylor came back to help on a review of the postmortem of the Bay of Pigs, and then he was in the White House. There was a problem with respect to SACEUR, because Larry Norstad was retiring and he had been renewed several times. I thought that it was inappropriate to renew him again, and I believe that I'm correct in saying that SACEUR was an open position. So in a sense I had to fill that. Also, Max was just an extraordinary man and here was an opportunity both to fill SACEUR with an able person and put an extraordinary man in as

Chairman. It wasn't that I didn't renew Lem because we weren't getting along or that I didn't think well of him. It was just that the balance of him as SACEUR and Max as Chairman seemed to me to be about the best we could have.

Matloff: Were there any of the Chairmen or the CNOs who particularly impressed you? or any of the Assistant Secretaries?

McNamara: Certainly Max did. I don't want to get into personalities.

Goldberg: Le May never served two full terms. He was cut short. Why was that?

McNamara: Let me just say one sentence on Le May. I think that he was the ablest combat commander I ever met, and I met a lot of them during my three years service in World War II. Without any question he was the ablest, and I mean the bravest and the wisest as a combat commander, tactician, and leader of men in combat. He was a very unsatisfactory contributor to the formulation of national security policy in Washington.

Matloff: Do you want to add anything to your comments about Secretary of State Dean Rusk?

McNamara: Only that he and I had an extraordinarily strong, affectionate relationship, and still do.

Matloff: Would you comment on the styles, personalities, and effectiveness of the Presidents you served, particularly Kennedy and Johnson? Any comparisons in styles of decision-making, from where you were sitting?

McNamara: I admired, respected, and loved both of the Presidents under whom I served.

Kaplan: A question about an early appointment that got a great deal of attention in the press—Joseph Keenan, whom George Meany wanted to have as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Personnel, and Reserves.

McNamara: He wasn't appointed.

Kaplan: But the issue surfaced early in the term and the spin-off of that was that prejudice might have arisen from your previous experience in management as opposed to this distinguished labor leader. I'm following the newspaper.

McNamara: He wasn't a distinguished labor leader. You don't want to believe what you read in the newspapers.

Kaplan: What was the source of the problem?

McNamara: When I came to the DoD, it wasn't customary to bring labor leaders into the Department, but I thought that it would be wise, if I could find a well-qualified labor leader, to bring one in. I thought particularly Assistant Secretary of Manpower would be appropriate. I felt I knew the man. He was Walter Reuther's assistant. So I proposed that he be appointed, and the President agreed. Meany said, "No way." He said that he would picket the Pentagon, if this man were appointed. At that time, of course, the UAW and the AFL/CIO were frequently in conflict and Walter Reuther and Meany disliked each other. Meany said he'd picket the Pentagon unless I took his man. I guess it was Keenan. I looked into it, and Meany's man was unqualified. Reuther's assistant was superbly qualified. The President knew that he had made an agreement with me that I would appoint the people in the

Pentagon, so therefore whether Meany liked it or didn't like it, whether or not we had a strike in the Pentagon, whether or not they threw a picket line around it, I wasn't going to take Meany's man. I think that he was the plumber's union chief.

Kaplan: He was an AFL-CIO vice president at the time and Secretary of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

McNamara: I said that I wasn't going to take him, and the President said, "Bob, the decision is yours. But why don't you call Arthur Goldberg and see if he can help you." So I called Arthur and we went over to see Meany in his office and told him we weren't going to take his man, and I didn't. But neither did I get my man. I did get a person who was superb; it was Tom Morris. He was, at one point, Assistant Secretary for Manpower. Then later he was also Assistant Secretary for Logistics.

Kaplan: Was the position ever to be called Assistant Secretary for Labor Relations?

McNamara: No, there was never any intention of that. It was to be called Assistant Secretary for Manpower. It just seemed to me that a man who had a background in labor would be sensitive to many of the manpower issues. I knew who Reuther's assistant was because I'd worked with him when Reuther and I were on opposite sides of the table in Detroit.

Matloff: The question always comes up about the so-called military-industrial complex. Did you share President Eisenhower's concern about that?

McNamara: Absolutely not. A) I don't know that Eisenhower had a concern. I have been told that the sentence was written by the speech writer. B) Somebody was querying me about this yesterday or the day before, and the point I made was that there is no military-industrial complex that can determine or influence national security policy, except to the extent that the President and/or the Secretary of Defense want to be influenced by that. Now you say, "You don't understand politics." But I do understand politics. And I understand that on these decisions where the President and the Secretary feel that the national interest requires one decision and the complex—it should be called the military-industrial-congressional complex—prefers another, a strong President and a strong Secretary, having recognized the politics of the situation, can act to overcome it. I begin with the point that the decision to which the military-industrial-congressional complex is reacting is in the national interest. Two people, one of whom was elected by all the people, and the other of whom was appointed by the person who was elected by all the people, are presumably sensitive to and are trying to react to the total national interest and believe in this instance they have. Under those circumstances they then should take account of politics and seek to persuade the political forces that are opposing them where the national interest lies. They can and should do it so powerfully, particularly by appealing to the counter forces, that they can overcome the initial pressure of the military-industrial-congressional complex. I guarantee you that that can be done.

I'll give you four illustrations. First, the B-70—we canceled it after the Congress had authorized and appropriated funds. When we terminated production, I think there were about 40,000 people working on the project in 24 states. The 24 states had 48 senators, and God knows how many representatives, suppliers, contracting firms, and so on. We got by with it, but it almost caused a constitutional crisis. Secondly, I consolidated or eliminated 20 or 30 National Guard divisions. Johnson said that we would have a lot of opposition, but I said that it was the right thing to do. The President said, "Go up to Hershey, Pennsylvania, and talk to the 50 governors who are meeting there." I did so and there wasn't one, including Nelson Rockefeller, who didn't oppose it. But we put it through. Thirdly, the base closings aroused tremendous congressional resistance. Each time we closed a base you would have thought we were burning down the White House. There was a fascinating story in the Style section of The Washington Post a couple of weeks ago on Margaret Chase Smith that is related to this. The author of it sent me a note in which he said that he was writing a story in which my name was mentioned. I was then out of the country. When I got back, I read the story. It said something to this effect. Margaret Chase Smith said to the author, a man by the name of (Paul) Henrickson, "You know, I've always believed that small lies lead to big lies, and that's what I always held against McNamara." Her remark, which I consider wholly unjustified, grew out of my decision to close a shipyard in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. I will relate the circumstances of the

closure as I recall them. But, let me preface my remarks by repeating what I said earlier: I had learned that the President and the Secretary of Defense could overcome the power of the military-industrial-congressional complex, which was of such concern to President Eisenhower, if they studied carefully what needed to be done, discussed the issues with the parties of interest, and then announced their decision without a long period of debate during which opposition could mobilize. We did, of course, owe the courtesy of advanced notice of the decision to the politicians affected so they didn't receive the first notice of it from their local newspaper.

As I said, after careful study we had decided the submarine base at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, was no longer needed and should be closed. The Portsmouth Naval Base drew many workers from New Hampshire as well as from Maine. New Hampshire had a Democratic Senator, and I felt obligated to tell both him and Margaret Chase Smith. They both knew this action was under consideration and I knew both were strongly opposed to it. I called the Democrat and said I was going to put out the announcement. He asked me please to state that he and the Republican Senator from Maine were strongly opposed to my decision but that I had overridden their objections. I said I would. So then I called Margaret Chase Smith. I was sure that she wished to say the same thing, particularly with the Democrat taking that position. She wasn't in her office. They said that she was in Maine. I called her in Maine. She wasn't there. She was driving to Washington. I held the news release up for a couple of days trying to find her. By that

time the storm was beginning to break, so I put my statement out and said in it that Senator Smith was opposed to my decision. To this day, she says that I lied, that I didn't talk to her about it. The last illustration of the point is the aircraft carrier the Kennedy. To this day it is powered by diesel fuel, because I refused to go along with Rickover's recommendation that it be nuclear powered. I'll tell you, that ship is bathed in blood—mine. Rickover was supported by the Joint Atomic Energy Committee, probably one of the strongest committees in Congress. They were both determined that the Kennedy was going to be nuclear-fueled and I was determined that it wasn't. Studies showed that it shouldn't have been. That was, on a small issue, the toughest fight we had. We won.

Goldberg: Below your level and that of the President, a lot of decisions were being made which fueled this so-called complex; it kept them going.

McNamara: Yes, and I don't want to say there isn't an influence. All I want to say is that on major issues I am absolutely convinced that conventional wisdom is wrong; the complex need not be a controlling factor affecting the forces and the defense budget.

Kaplan: One small word about Margaret, it's 700 miles to Washington from her home town.

McNamara: It doesn't take three days to travel that distance.

Matloff: The last question—what do you regard as your major achievements during your tenure as Secretary?

McNamara: That's for you all to decide.