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This is part II of an oral history interview held with Mr. Stephen Ailes in Washington, D.C., on July 2, 1986, at 10:00 a.m. Representing the OSD Historical Office is Dr. Maurice Matloff.

Matloff: Mr. Ailes, at our first session on June 6 we discussed your role as Under Secretary of the Army from 1961-64, and had begun to talk about your service as Secretary of the Army from January 1964 to July 1965.

What was your conception of the threat or threats facing the United States, and were there any differences in the Army from the notions of the threat in other departments of DoD or in OSD?

Ailes: It's always hard for me to put a time on anything. I remember being concerned about Southeast Asia and Vietnam fairly early, and of the lesson of Korea, and of being aware of the parallels between Korea and Vietnam, and wondering what we should be doing about that--whether there was something we could do about it, and, if so, when we were going to do it. I was interested in that to the point where ACSI set up a regular run of briefings for me. They would come and lay out the whole business and tell us what was happening. I guess that started way back when I was Under Secretary. I remember feeling frustration about that, that it was necessary for us to do something. I had been over there the first year and spent about four hours with Diem, listening to his monologue and being really concerned about the ability of this man to run the country. I had been associated with Louis B. Mayer in some litigation late in life when he was the same way. You asked him a question and you got four

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hours worth of answers. Then, of course, the Berlin crisis came along. I don't remember any major disagreements between the Army (certainly myself, or Cy Vance, or Elvis before him, and people like that) and Bob McNamara's office, or the Air Force, or the Navy. We had intelligence disagreements, which resulted in DIA's being created, resulting from McNamara's desire to get one estimate, right or wrong, but at least you'd have one that you could work from, instead of three that were totally inconsistent. In that sense, the system was that you would function from the agreed upon analysis of the threat, whether it was right or wrong.

Matloff: Did you view Communism as a monolithic bloc, that there was a connection between what was happening in Vietnam and the threat in Europe from the Soviet Union? Of course, there was the problem with China, too. Was it all lumped together?

Ailes: I have to say that I personally have never shared the view that Communism was a disease, or that it was some insidious illness that would take over countries, and therefore it had to be contained. It seemed to me that purely political moves were taking place and people were taking control by strong-arm methods, and they could align themselves with basically the Russian camp or the China camp; that there was a political process out there. I always thought that it was one thing for the President of the United States to go to bed at night thinking about his relationships with his allies, but you'd hate like hell to be the head of the Russian organization, thinking about its relationships

and the manner in which they were held together. We were working on the assumption that there was a fair amount of cooperation among all these groups. I personally just didn't share any of the views that you get in the hyper-conservative rhetoric that this has to be stamped out as some kind of a disease. McNamara used to get impatient. We didn't want to use a weapon, because if it were used on the battlefield and the Russians picked it up they could duplicate it in six months. He would say, "We've been working five years trying to make the G__ D__ thing, and you're telling me they can do it in six months? The Russians aren't supermen." So I do remember issues like that floating around.

Matloff: As Secretary of the Army, what role did you play in connection with strategic planning? For example, did your attitude toward nuclear weapons, strategic or tactical, change when you became Secretary? Did your views on conventional versus nuclear defense remain the same? Did you get involved in debates over the counter-force versus counter-city doctrine that McNamara came out with in Michigan in 1962? In other words, was the Army influential in strategic planning during the McNamara era?

Ailes: Yes and no. I never thought it my responsibility either as Under Secretary or Secretary to be a thinker on local strategy and that sort of thing. I enjoyed the closest kind of working relationship with the Army Chiefs of Staff--Generals Decker, Wheeler, and Johnson--and we talked about those things a great deal. I always felt that the Army's input into these analyses really ought to be through the JCS. We had

some extremely able spokesmen, certainly in Wheeler, there. I think I mentioned last time that when the Chief of Staff and the Vice Chief, when I first got there, discovered the extent to which McNamara wanted his civilian Secretaries and Under Secretaries to talk with him about things, to a much greater extent than had been the case in the past, our Chief of Staff and Vice Chief were determined that we would know everything that was going on before the JCS. So we were briefed once a week on that in detail and individually. There was a colonel from the team up there, who would sit down with us and go over these matters in real detail. In that sense, we were kept apprised of them. These matters were discussed at McNamara's staff meetings, so that we participated there. He was very anxious to keep the civilian secretariat informed on these things. There was one other way. For instance, on the subject that you were talking about, a very difficult policy question always existed with respect to the use of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. That study was run by Don Bennett, later superintendent at West Point. The studies for McNamara were run on the basis of the initial terms of reference and then regular reports. These reports were an occasion for him to change the terms of reference, if he didn't think the study was covering everything it should. It was a masterful management device. Because of his close interest, and our own, we would spend time going over the progress of these studies, even before the report was given to McNamara, and certainly were present when those reports were made. So when there was a specific issue of nuclear policy that was very important

to the Army, and the answer to it primarily controlled what we were going to do, Cy before me, and I had inputs and we were fully apprised of what was going on and had the opportunity to influence what was done there. Nevertheless, I still say that I never thought of that kind of activity as really my role.

Matloff: Did you get any reflection of heartburn on the question of the cost analysis approach of the Whiz Kids, Dr. Enthoven and his shop, versus the strategic analysis approach of the Joint Staff? Did any of that come up to your level?

Ailes: The Army had a different attitude about that from that of the other services. I remember Barksdale Hamlett, who was Vice Chief and with whom I was very closely associated, and I would say that if Vance and Wheeler would just get out of town we would get everything in shape. Ham and I worked together a great deal. He would tell me, in all seriousness, that the JCS was performing a much more useful function and performing it better under McNamara than had ever been the case before; that the kind of hard analysis on JCS conclusions that was being made by Enthoven, et al, was long overdue; and that we were going to be a lot better off as a result of it. He said that the Army had, and was going to have, a lot more to say about what happened here simply because this sort of analysis was more acceptable to us than to others, that we understood it better. He and Wheeler shared that view. Whether George Decker and Clyde Eddelman had the same view, at the beginning, is another question. Those men were of an older school.

Matloff: So you saw systems analysis as a positive contribution?

Ailes: Absolutely.

Matloff: Did it have any weaknesses, as far as the Army was concerned?

Ailes: Yes, they could come up with some really stupid conclusions. A lot depends on who is doing it and how it is being done--but the old way was for the JCS to come to the Secretary of Defense and say, "Here is our recommendation based on our military judgment. No cross-examination will be permitted." It's quite a different ball game when you come up there and the Secretary of Defense says, "I want to see the components here. I want to see everything that entered into this decision laid out and the subdecisions that were made, so that my people who study the decision-making process here can take a look at it and be satisfied that the proper analysis underlies this, as well as just an exercise in judgment."

Matloff: One of the writers in the field, William Kaufmann of MIT, who did a lot of speech writing and consulting for McNamara, has termed this period the "McNamara revolution." He used the term with reference both to organization in Defense and strategy. It bears out what you've been saying.

Ailes: As an aside, if, at the end of the four years, Bob could have been made Secretary of State, or something like that--it has been generally recognized that he made the greatest contribution anybody had ever made in this country to defense. If you go on through the Vietnam War, the business of getting the boys home by Christmas and a lot of those hard

issues obscure the really tremendous contribution he made in getting that place organized and functioning. I have Navy friends who would just howl to hear that, and indeed Air Force friends, but the Army basically felt different. I think Zuckert understood McNamara very well; he's a Harvard Business School man himself. The Air Force had some highly competent analysts, but the Navy men just didn't like what was going on, and would not agree with that assessment at all.

Matloff: On the question of the impact of interservice competition during the period of your tenure as Secretary, how serious a problem was it for you and the Army? Certainly the Navy and the Air Force were getting into squabbles over such things as the TFX fighter-bomber.

Ailes: Sure, commonality and all that business. I suppose the only real problem we had with the Navy was the competition for dollars. That's one thing that the McNamara reorganization did; it worked out some way to make a better judgment about how a particular project should be done in terms of service participation. We had a continuing squabble with the Air Force which was, in my judgment, absurd, and LeMay was basically responsible for it. That ensued, as we developed the air assault division and organic Army aviation, and as new items, particularly the helicopter, came on. The Air Force did not have a thing to do with the development of the helicopter, so far as I know. The helicopter revolutionized ground combat, starting with medivac in the Korean War, and going all the way up through the air assault division. You had at LeMay's level the notion that if it flies, it ought to be

flown by a man in a blue suit. In fact, I went over once to have lunch with Gene [Zuckert], who was really a good friend of mine, and a fine fellow. We sat at lunch and here were all these men in blue suits around, and we had a martini and I wondered what the show would be today. At the conclusion of lunch Gene said to me, "We're all very much interested in the growth of organic Army aviation and would appreciate your views on that subject." It turned out that this was a debate between LeMay and myself. If this had happened to me the first year I was at the Pentagon, or the second, or third, it would have been difficult, but in the fourth it was no contest. LeMay didn't know a G__D__ thing about what the Army's program was. I could spell out that the reason why there had to be Army men flying those airplanes was that they had to be familiar with infantry tactics and what was going on on the ground. You could have unit training and with men almost interchangeable in these slots. The Air Force guys were sitting around the table saying, "I get that, I understand exactly what you're talking about." But not LeMay.

Matloff: Did McNamara get drawn in on this squabble?

Ailes: Yes.

Matloff: What position did he take?

Ailes: There wasn't any question that any such rule--that if it flies, it has to be flown by a man in a blue suit--was going to enter into the determination as to how this thing should function. Gene Zuckert never was interested in making that fight, and I think that what we were getting was that LeMay was a real hard-headed guy.

Matloff: We interviewed Zuckert for this program about some of the uncomfortable situations in which he was vis-a-vis his own general.

Ailes: McNamara frequently said that of all the people that he came across in the service in WWII, the one with the best understanding of what he was doing was LeMay. But this was when LeMay was running SAC. A fellow here is an old SAC pilot from those days--he flew the lead crew in the first mission over Tokyo. He says that you'd go out and run into some flak, and if you didn't hit the target, LeMay would say, "Gas up and go back out. These G__D__ missions are going to be completed, and its the only way you're going to learn that." This kind of stuff is very effective, but

Matloff: You mentioned the problem of dividing up the dollars in Defense, and McNamara's approach to this. Did you or your office play any role in the defense budget formulation and how did that service role change under McNamara?

Ailes: I remember having one go-around with Bob over this. What they did was to say, "We want you to come in with a budget of what you need to do the job right." Then they would cut it, and go up on the Hill, and brag about how much they took out of our request. I vigorously protested that, because I thought loyalty went two ways. If they wanted us to come in with a tight budget, fine, but don't tell us to come in for everything we could possibly want for the purpose of your making a record about how big a cut was made. They didn't do that to us any more, if I remember correctly. That really is part of the Secretary's responsibility, trying to be sure that we ask for what the Army really

needs, and then doing the best possible job of getting it by the various reviews, which included McNamara, the BoB, and Congress. Then you're up on the Hill defending it, and you defend it before four committees. You defend it before the Legislative Authorization Committees, House and Senate, and then before the Appropriations Committees.

Matloff: Did that put you in an uncomfortable position once the budget had gone through under McNamara and you had to defend the Army part of it?

Ailes: You never had to worry about it being too much. I never had a great problem defending the ultimate decisions that were made. We did one thing that helped us on this score. That was, we developed something called "the C system," which said that every unit in the Army had a rating; for example, C-1, 2, 3, 4. This was a function of whether it was staffed up to the size with the right MOS's, whether it was fully equipped, and whether the equipment was in usable shape. These ratings were then related to the war plans. If this was a high readiness unit, it ought to be in C-1. Later on, it could be further down. The old system was that you made the commander say that he was ready to do the job whether he was or not, but this was a measurement device and you could not say, "We can fulfill these war plans," unless your units were in the condition prescribed, with all the standards met. McNamara, who loved that system when we came up with it, realized that we also had his feet to the fire by it. I must say that, as long as I was there, a major contribution I made was my own interest in that and fighting for

it. That ended the situation where you beat on the man in the green suit and made him take a position that his forces were in adequate condition when they clearly were not.

Matloff: You didn't find yourself in an uncomfortable position with the generals anyway, because of the McNamara approach to the budget formulation--the Whiz Kids' approach--did you?

Ailes: Not at all. It's perfectly possible. I've seen this in other fields of activity. I am on the board of the Washington Health Care Corporation, and I am also the chairman of the board of a subsidiary called the National Rehabilitation Hospital. I always use the Pentagon analogy--if you sit on one board, you're worried about the overall situation; if you sit on the other board, you're worried about your own. It is very valuable for the Rehabilitation Hospital to have me functioning on the parent board, and have some influence on what is done. By the same token, it's important to the parent board to have me down here lining this one up. What you have to do is fight for the things that really make sense. I think that the position is such that, unless the OSD is just going crazy, the generals are happy to have a man in those councils up there who has a chance to be listened to and who has some influence. When I got there, everybody said that Secretary Brucker didn't even talk with the Secretary of Defense, and that nobody wanted that kind of a situation. You could hold out bull-headedly for what you think the Army needs, and the whole thing goes to hell. You are a lot better off trying to make the situation work.

Matloff: Were you satisfied, on the whole, with the Army's share of the Defense budget during the McNamara era?

Ailes: The answer to that, of course, is no. There are other words than "satisfied" that could be used--reconciled, for example. Basically, I think that the right men were making the decisions on the right principles and that they were making them on a fair and square basis, and there wasn't anybody getting next to anybody up there. You have to go along with the system, and I think the system functioned well.

Matloff: Were you drawn in on the controversy of the merging of the reserves and the National Guard, and if so, what position did you take?

Ailes: Did I tell you about the press conference he [McNamara] took me to? He said that he wanted me to go to his press conference, and I said, "Why? This is the first time for this." He said, "If somebody says to me 'Where does this idea of merging the guard and reserve come from?' I'm going to point at you and say, "There's the SOB right there." This was precisely what Bob said. Hamlett, again, my pal, who was the Vice Chief of Staff, really was the man who was convinced that those two organizations should be put together. There was a fair amount of duplication, certainly, in the higher ranks, by at least two parallel organizations. You didn't want to give up the state support. It wasn't so much financial support as it was recruiting and a whole lot of other things. If you could say to people, "You know, you perform a role here in a disaster situation," and so on. I honestly believe that if it had been made clear all along that that came from the men

in uniform, and not from some genius over in the Army Secretariat, we probably could have put it across. I found about a month ago, in my apartment, a speech that Jake Carlton, who was the head of the reserve association, had made, and it was bitter against me personally, the worst thing you ever heard. And Jake was a man I knew real well. But they were fighting for their lives, and he was fighting for his job. Nevertheless, I think that we could have put it across. But the notion that it was being imposed on the Army, either by the civilians in the Army or certainly by McNamara, made it awfully tough.

Matloff: In the area of international crises, what role as Secretary of the Army did you play in connection with Vietnam (this was during the Johnson administration)?

Ailes: By the time I left on July 2, 1965, some 21 years ago today, the total number of U.S. Army killed in Vietnam was 2. We had advisers at the battalion level, and that sort of thing. Nevertheless, the decision had been made that we were really going to attempt to do something about it. Earlier I used to worry about why we were not doing anything, and now the decision was made. Paul Ignatius was Under Secretary for about 6 months and then was made Assistant Secretary of Defense for Logistics, and Stan Resor came in as Under Secretary. I said, "Stan, I will run the Army, and you spend full time until my departure date working on organizing the Army to meet its role in the plans that are being developed." This was a big move, and it did seem

to me to be the perfect way for Stan really to understand how the Army functioned, because the whole thing had to be worked out--even unit modifications to meet the situation, a troop structure put together, basic strategy and tactics worked out, and so on. The staff was delighted to have a man from the Secretary's office heading up that whole exercise. Stan did that, and needless to say, he would talk to me regularly about what was happening. That was the way we handled it internally. I don't remember the number of troops we had in Vietnam on July 2, 21 years ago, but I would bet that by year end we had a couple of hundred thousand. It was just a tremendous change.

Matloff: That's the key year. That was the time when Johnson made the commitment to put in American ground combat troops. I take it that you weren't drawn in on the discussions of the overall conduct of the war, or were you?

Ailes: We weren't doing anything all the time I was there. Really, 21 years ago today, if our casualties were a total of 2--these were land mines casualties, things like that--I don't remember if we had sent in any armed helicopters yet or not--our involvement was really minimal.

Matloff: Did you get drawn in on such things as the Tonkin Gulf Congressional Resolution, in August of 1964?

Ailes: Yes, it was the Tonkin Gulf incident that put me in a hell of a spot. Bob called me up at 11:30 and said, "Could you make a speech for me in Chicago at noon today?" I looked down to see if I had a dark suit on. I said, "I suppose I can do anything, Bob," and he replied, "Come on

up here." So I went up and he started to hand me the speech about three times, and he finally did, and said, "G__D__it, this is the best speech you'll ever give!" He really labored over it, but he was going to talk to the Economic Club in Chicago, to 1500 business leaders out there. This was the Tonkin Gulf situation. So Arthur Sylvester and I went out and I found to my horror that there was no lunch; we damn near scuttled the airplane coming in in a thunderstorm; they had not been told that McNamara wasn't coming; and we were late. But the speech was excellent, and I gave it as if I were McNamara. I discovered just as I got ready to get up that there was going to be a question and answer session after it, and some man asked, "What is your view of the future of the Navy Bull Pup Missile?" I said, "I don't know what the hell it is." I told Arthur, "You shuffle the questions and only let them come through if they have something to do with the Army." So he did.

Matloff: Did you have to give this as if it was your speech rather than McNamara's?

Ailes: No, I said, "This is the speech as Bob would have given it, had he come. No disaster has occurred, everything's all right. We can't say anything about it, but it will probably be on the evening news." So they were fine, and gave me a big hand.

Matloff: 1965 is that key year with President Johnson's decisions both to bomb north of the seventeenth parallel, and also to commit the American ground troops. Were you consulted on either of these decisions, particularly on the one to commit ground combat troops?

Ailes: The way the system worked, nobody would have come to me, certainly not Bob, nor Bus Wheeler, and say, "Do you agree that this is what we should do?" By then Bus was Chairman, and Johnny Johnson would have been Chief of Staff of the Army. On July 4, 1964, when Max Taylor went to Vietnam as ambassador, Bus moved up. If Johnny would have talked to me about these things, presumably I could have had some impact on his views and the Joint Chiefs'. Again, these matters would always be discussed at McNamara's staff meeting, but more in the nature of a report as to what was happening and what was coming. Of course, we were free to say, "Can I ask a couple of questions about that, because, frankly, it seems wild to me." Bob would have said, "Certainly." The opportunity was there; nevertheless, the service secretaries were really not in the loop. Cy might have been more, simply because those were the problems that really interested him, and he really wanted to be part of that and was so close to Bob that he very well could have sat down with him and said, "I'd like to talk this one or that one out," but I never did that.

Matloff: We know that President Johnson was reluctant to call up the reserves. Did he or McNamara ever discuss this question of using the reserves in the Vietnam War? The records are very bare on this point, and I've asked McNamara the very same question. Do you recall anything from your standpoint?

Ailes: I don't recall ever sitting down and trying to say, "Do we, or do we not?" because nobody ever really proposed that, so far as I know.

I suspect the reason for that is, literally, that the very recent experience of calling up the reserves in connection with the Berlin crisis was not a happy one. What you do is call people away from their jobs, and then they sit in the can and go through some micky mouse drills and are terribly unhappy. It is very unfair that Jones is sitting in the can while Smith is back home getting ahead of him. I think the lesson of the Berlin crisis was that we're going to call up reserves only when we clearly have a real fight on our hands. We're just not going to call them up any time the numbers indicate that would be the convenient thing to do or out of an abundance of caution, because you make about two or three calls on this and this system is gone. It just won't stand up under it. That being true, a lot of people talked about why didn't we use the reserves, but I didn't hear anybody in the Pentagon saying that.

Matloff: It has been suggested that the President was reluctant, for possibly that reason and possibly another: that he didn't want the Great Society programs upset too much; that there would be more dissatisfaction in the country at large and it might jeopardize them.

Ailes: Put another way, as the leading politician in the country, he didn't want to do something that would be desperately unpopular, and that would have been the case with the people called up, I can assure you.

Matloff: By the time you ended your tour as Secretary of the Army in July, 21 years ago, how did you feel about the state of the war? Were you encouraged or discouraged about the American involvement in Vietnam?

Ailes: I felt quite strongly that we were doing the right thing; that the parallel with Korea was complete; that they came over the top on one day there, and they came underground in Vietnam, and that was the major difference; that our military forces were performing extremely well; and that this buildup was going to produce some real results.

Matloff: So you were not discouraged by the time you left?

Ailes: No, and for a year afterward I accepted requests to talk about this, before some very hostile audiences a few times. I had long thought we weren't doing enough there. It seemed to me that what we were doing matched what we did in Korea, which everybody generally concedes was a good thing. Later I reached the conclusion that this was not a good thing. That was when we began to realize that we were supporting somebody who never was going to be a nation on their own. When Cy got to the peace table, he found that the last people on earth interested in solving this situation were the Vietnamese. They were going to be kept in power only as long as there was a war going on there and we were involved. That began to raise moral issues, sure enough.

Matloff: You mean the South Vietnamese?

Ailes: Yes, you remember, they couldn't even agree on the shape of the conference table.

Matloff: Looking back on the whole experience in Vietnam, in your view, did the United States fail in Vietnam, and if so, why? Was it a failure of national policy, or of military policy?

Ailes: Now we have an issue of what do we do about the contras in Central America today, and it is not totally unrelated. Have you read Bruce Palmer's book? For many years I have asked people like Andy Goodpaster, "What is the real lesson of Vietnam?" I think it is a damn hard question. The answer to it is not that military force never can be used, or that we don't have any responsibilities around the world to protect people under attack. The answer to it is really more that we just have to be very careful about when we jump in, to be sure that there is somebody there who really is trying to build a nation of the kind that we are prepared to support, and, indeed, that if we give them the support, they can succeed. I think, in retrospect, that there wasn't any such thing in Vietnam, and that we should have been able to see that, probably, and that we sacrificed a lot of money and people in a hopeless endeavor, giving somebody the chance to make a nation who really wasn't about to do it. Once you get down that road, you don't know where to go. I thought Bruce's book was good.

Matloff: How about the role of the press in Vietnam? There is a great controversy raging about this whole question, particularly in connection with Army operations. Did you have any feeling about that when you were Secretary of the Army? How objective did you find the press in its reporting?

Ailes: You have to remember there was not a lot going on when I was the Secretary, as far as any activity in Vietnam. I had very strong feelings later that we were being shot down by the press and that when there isn't a battle line and you can't see progress, you're sitting

ducks for casualty lists and bad press accounts. I thought that their performance was terrible.

Matloff: As Secretary of the Army, were you involved in any way with NATO policies, strategy, and buildup, and how did you see NATO's major problems?

Ailes: I am trying to think who was in command of NATO when I was there. I remember Nick Ruffner was on the NATO Standing Group. He asked me if I could play golf with him, and I said, "Sure." He responded, "Any day but Wednesday noon," so I figured that he couldn't really be busy in his project. We were concerned about our force in Europe--whether it was the right size, what the NATO battle plan was, and the command structure. I went over there several times; I met with the Germans; I spent some time in Heidelberg, with the top commander over there. We were really very concerned. That was almost, in my day, our primary operation. I don't remember dealing a lot with the top command at NATO.

Matloff: Did you see the American military role in NATO as a permanent affair?

Ailes: McNamara used to kid me about that, saying, "What is your plan to withdraw the troops from Europe? from Korea?"

Matloff: Was he serious?

Ailes: Sure! He would say, "G__D__it, every time you get all excited and want to send troops someplace, ask yourself, "how do you get them out?" We sent them to Korea in 1950, and here it is 1965. I'll bet you they'll be there ten years from now." Twenty years later, they're still there.

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Matloff: Another crisis that took place while you were still Secretary, the Dominican operation in 1965 which spilled over into 1966--the Americans intervened with troops in April, with Marines, largely. Were you drawn in on this intervention in any way? Were you consulted, and if so, what did you recommend?

Ailes: We put the Army down there too. I would say that that again is an operation, and earlier answers would still apply. I would know about things like that from the JCS briefings and discussions and McNamara's staff meeting and certainly from daily evening bull sessions with the Chief of Staff for about a half hour about what was going on. But again, my role never was to sit around and call the shots on something like that. If they decided to do that, the Army would pretty much have the say on who went--which units went, and what type of units went.

Matloff: Did you get drawn in on questions of disarmament and arms control as Secretary?

Ailes: I remember being amazed and fascinated to learn that the strongest advocates of arms control and disarmament were in uniform. It's a perfectly reasonable position, when you think about it, but they were the ones that were really excited about it.

Matloff: About the evolution of the role of the Secretary of the Army, vis-a-vis the Secretary of Defense, I think I mentioned that Zuckert has written that he viewed his role as "a group vice president." Do you feel that there is still need for the position, and how do you view the service secretary's role ideally?

Ailes: I think that if you attempt to run the Pentagon by having an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Army as the top civilian, and then you had the military structure there, that would be a mistake. This dual role which can be played cannot be played anywhere nearly as well from that kind of a base. The Army, throughout its entire history, supports that Secretary. He is the commander, so to speak, the top man as far as the Army is concerned. Believe me, he has a role to play in rallying the troops. In my judgment, the Secretary of Defense is going to get a lot more effective support from an Army Secretary than he is from an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Army. I think that the fellow who has the traditional title and the traditional role there as the top dog has a lot more influence and impact on the Army. There are a lot of times when the Army has to be rallied behind what the Secretary of Defense wants to do, and that really is the role of the Secretary. By the same token, the Army will feel that it is being represented more effectively if you have a Secretary who ranks as the third man in the Pentagon, and he can go to the Secretary of Defense and say, "Here's what the Army needs in this situation." He can do that a lot more effectively if he has this independent standing than if he's just another one of a bunch of assistants under McNamara's office. I think that there is a lot to be said for the system the way it is organized.

Matloff: What impressions did you have of the top officials with whom you worked in Defense--starting with McNamara as administrator of the Defense Department? What did you feel were his strengths, and possibly

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weaknesses, his accomplishments or failures? Was he an effective administrator, in your opinion?

Ailes: I think that he is a management genius. He is, if not the ablest man I've ever been around, certainly one of them. He is so objective that he tends to make other people be objective around him. I really feel that I personally have been changed just from working with him. He is an immensely able man. Again, I think that he really did something for the Defense Department that had never been done before. When it comes to difficulties--Bob is not the world's best at dealing with people sometimes, and at other times he is very effective.

Matloff: Charges along this line have been made in some quarters that he sacrificed morale and personal relations for efficiency and swift decision-making, and that he brusquely shrugged off military tradition and advice. Does that seem like a fair judgment?

Ailes: No, that overstates the situation. Bob is an austere man, and most everybody is a little uncomfortable with him. I'm sure Cy never was; they got along very well. Elvis Stahr, the first Secretary I worked with, had a terrible time with McNamara's office. Ignatius got along with him extremely well. I got along with him reasonably well, although I must say that was different from a lot of the other relationships I've enjoyed.

Matloff: About some of the other Secretaries of Defense--Louis Johnson for example--could you tell us something about his personality and background?

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Ailes: He was extremely able. He had a gift for working out excellent relationships with a lot of very fine people; he was interested in politics in the old sense. He was with a law firm at a time when lawyers thought of their own practice, and it was very rare for a man to have as his goal the development of an institution--a law firm--and he did it. Starting with a small office out in Clarksburg, West Virginia, he developed a fine law firm here. That was an insight that was very rare and he was unselfish in reducing his own take for purpose of doing it. By the same token, I can't conceive of his playing McNamara's role. The Colonel, as we called him here, was intuitive; he had a system of dealing with people, but he had no notion of staff organization such as McNamara had--how to use staff. He just was a man of an earlier era.

Matloff: Any impressions of the Deputy Secretary of Defense Gilpatric? and Vance?

Ailes: Vance is the salt of the earth; an extremely fine and able man; almost over-loyal, extremely loyal to McNamara. I felt that there were times--for instance, Bob wanted to write things a certain way, and when you spend your life trying to learn how to write lucid English and you are told to write this crazy stuff--I didn't want to do that. Cy said, "You've got to. That's what he wants." That is a narrow example of Cy's being hyper-loyal.

Matloff: How about Gilpatric?

Ailes: An immensely able man, very able lawyer, hell of a nice man. I think that he performed an extremely useful service for McNamara in the early days.

Matloff: Any of the Assistant Secretaries that particularly impressed you--Nitze, William Bundy, McNaughton, Runge, Paul?

Ailes: I didn't know McNaughton very well; he came along after me. I know Nitze very well and Bill Bundy (whom I just saw up at Princeton)--both absolutely outstanding people. Carl Runge was not as strong as these men.

Matloff: Morris? Ignatius?

Ailes: Morris is a hell of a fellow. Ignatius is one of my best friends. I recruited him at Tom Morris's suggestion, and I think he is absolutely outstanding.

Matloff: Did you know Solis Horwitz? I served in the Army with him. He passed away a couple of years ago.

Ailes: Sure, he was a very nice fellow.

Matloff: How about Enthoven, one of the chief whiz kids?

Ailes: I never knew Alain all that well. I knew a lot about what he was up to, and had a lot of respect for what he was able to accomplish.

Matloff: Hitch?

Ailes: I put Charlie Hitch in the same category. I thought he was a fine fellow.

Matloff: Two people involved with Defense Research and Engineering, Herbert York and Harold Brown?

Ailes: Herb York I never really saw a lot of. I know Harold very well, and put him at the top of the list. He's a brilliant man and a very nice fellow.

Matloff: The Joint Chiefs you mentioned--Lemnitzer, Taylor, and Wheeler?

Ailes: I know Max very well, and I still see a lot of Lem. Those are towering figures, really very able men.

Matloff: How about Rusk, did you have any dealings with him? Do you have any impressions of him?

Ailes: No, except he came over and had lunch with me once, when we renewed his Army commission. I have a lot of respect for him.

Matloff: I'll be talking to him later this month. How about the presidents you served? Could you shed any light possibly on Kennedy and Johnson as commanders in chief and directors of national security policy?

Ailes: Kennedy was just so far ahead of LBJ in terms of how to deal with the military people. I may have told you this story. We used to take the four-star generals over to the White House once a year, when they came to town, to meet with the President. When they met with Kennedy, he asked each one what he was doing, and what the problems were, and said to come to him through Elvis, Cy, or McNamara, or whoever it was, and that he was deeply interested in what they were doing. Those men went out of there just walking eight feet in the air. When we took them over when LBJ was there, he lectured them about the military mind, and walking around in puttees with a riding crop, and he was so far away from reality that it was a real disaster. I thought Jack Kennedy brought an awful lot to that office. I thought LBJ was fine, but he was more of a politician. Not that Jack wasn't a politician, but I just think that in terms of the whole defense situation Kennedy could handle it better.

Matloff: In connection with your Secretary of the Army role, what do you regard, as you look back, as your major achievements? What do you take most pride in?

Ailes: The thing that really made a difference, I mentioned to you, that we worked out the reorganization of basic training. In fact, they called me yesterday about the Ailes Award, which they give to the top drill sergeant. (Unfortunately I won't be there in September.) People usually remember that. The other thing was that C system stuff I was talking about. That got caught in the Vietnam War and we ran the units way down in Germany for the purpose of fixing them up in Vietnam, but still that's the way to do it. There's no doubt about that, and I hope that it will be revitalized at some point.

Matloff: What disappointed you the most, or was perhaps not completed? You may have touched on it already, in the C system.

Ailes: It just was a victim of the changing circumstances. We were heavily engaged in a war, and things were different. I don't really come away with any feeling of something that I really wanted to do. I did have a battle plan where I wanted to get West Point to bring in a few of the really top DMG's from across the country and give them graduate fellowships for a year, which is a good idea to do. Jim Lambert, who was the sup, came down to see me after he left and said, "One thing I regret is that I never got that damn plan of yours worked out."

Matloff: I spent a year as a civilian professor up there recently.

Ailes: I wanted to take 15 or 20 of the top guys coming into ROTC from across the country, bring them up there and let the faculty at West Point develop a curriculum for them that would give the essence of what West Point gives, somehow or other, in a year. But give them teaching responsibilities and just fold them into a whole lot of things. I thought, what a leavening influence on West Point to have 20 really fine young folks from across the country coming in here.

Matloff: I can't resist asking you a question about some of your latest service. Looking at your biography, I notice you popped up again in official service as a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board in 1976-77. Did that give you any further contacts with OSD and the Secretary of Defense, in that capacity?

Ailes: You work more in the intelligence area, of course, and I had to learn a lot about NSA that I didn't know about before and the whole intelligence collection apparatus.

Matloff: Did you draw any conclusions in that capacity, possibly of the effectiveness of DoD in the intelligence field, versus, say, CIA?

Ailes: I think that you would conclude that we have a tremendous apparatus for the collection of intelligence and that it is almost swamped by the input. The problem of evaluating it is really tough-- getting it in usable shape so that it can control what you do. The whole field of economic intelligence is fascinating. There is a whole open question of what we do with economic intelligence and the extent to which we use it to try to influence economic development around the world. There are a lot of problems like that that are fascinating.

Matloff: Do you recall whether the board recommended any changes at the OSD level in this field?

Ailes: No, we really weren't doing much of that, but you're really looking at the process as a whole. In President Carter's administration, he terminated it. But George Bush used to meet with us regularly at DCI. The first time I saw him after the election, he said the first thing that they were going to do was reconstitute that board, which I believe they did.

Matloff: He was head of the CIA, and as I recall it, he favored setting up some kind of board that would look into CIA operations. Was this about the same time?

Ailes: Yes. They called him DCI, the Director of Central Intelligence, which is the head of the CIA, but he has other roles, so he gets that name. But I think he was in that job all the time that I was on the board. He was in about two years, so it must be a direct overlap.

Matloff: Thank you for sharing your recollections and insights with us.

Ailes: It's a great pleasure.