

About the Author



Walter S. Poole

A key member of the Defense Acquisition History Project team, Walter S. Poole brought to the project both special expertise on the 1960s and decades of experience researching and writing military history. After receiving a BA from Princeton in 1964 and Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1968, Dr. Poole briefly worked for the Historical Division of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) before serving in the Army during 1968–1970. He then returned to the JCS Historical Division, which became the Joint History Office in 1993, remaining there until his retirement as chief of the Histories Branch in December 2000. During his 30 years as a JCS historian, Dr. Poole wrote five volumes in the History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff series, including *The Joint Chiefs and National Policy, 1961–1964*, and *The Joint Chiefs and National Policy, 1965–1968*, and co-authored two other volumes in that series. He also co-authored *The Chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* and *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1971–1973*. He is currently writing a contract history for the OSD Historical Office on the Office of the Secretary of Defense during the Nixon and Ford administrations.



HISTORY OF
ACQUISITION IN THE
DEPARTMENT
OF DEFENSE

VOL. II

ADAPTING TO
FLEXIBLE RESPONSE
1960–1968

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HISTORICAL OFFICE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
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Adapting to Flexible Response is the second volume in a planned five-volume series on the history of acquisition in the Department of Defense. Encompassing the years 1960–1968, the book covers the acquisition of major weapon systems during the final year of Dwight D. Eisenhower’s second term through the presidencies of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. This period witnessed a major change in national security strategy from almost-total reliance on nuclear weapons, a strategy known as massive retaliation, to a new strategy, flexible response, that called for increasing conventional military capabilities. Defense acquisition underwent a parallel transformation, not only regarding the weapon systems acquired but also with respect to acquisition oversight and management. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and the civilians under him in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) subjected acquisition—until then the province of the military—to intense scrutiny, employing quantitative methods to evaluate the costs and benefits of weapons programs.

In describing the evolution of acquisition during the 1960s, Dr. Poole focuses on several key themes, including the interplay of acquisition and military strategy; the centralization of defense budgeting; dramatic changes in the acquisition process, particularly concerning contracting; and the intense friction that developed between OSD and service leaders over these changes. Other key elements of the story are the responses of both the service acquisition organizations and industry to these developments, as well as the influence of Congress and the scientific community on acquisition policy. The author also considers the growing cost and complexity of military technology; the impact of outside factors, such as the Vietnam War and advances in Soviet military capabilities, on U.S. weapons programs; and the development of the Defense Department’s acquisition workforce. Rather than encyclopedic coverage of weapon systems, Poole concentrates on a few major programs to illustrate the trends and themes that shaped acquisition in the 1960s.