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Oral History Interview

with

Mr. Roswell L. Gilpatric  
Deputy Secretary of Defense, 1961-64

Conducted on

November 14, 1983

by

Dr. Maurice Matloff

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This is an oral history interview with Mr. Roswell L. Gilpatric, held in Mr. Gilpatric's office in New York City on November 14, 1983.

Matloff: It's very kind of you, sir, to let us come and seek out your recollections and observations of the years that you spent in Washington, particularly in the office of Deputy Secretary of Defense, between January 1961 and January 1964. May I begin by asking about the background of your appointment? What do you recall were the circumstances and what instructions, written or oral, were given to you and by whom?

Gilpatric: My association with President Kennedy had begun while I was the Under Secretary of the Air Force in 1952. At that time Kennedy was a congressman from Massachusetts, and he was running for the Senate. At one point, he asked my support, because my superior, Mr. Finletter, was supporting his opponent, Senator Lodge. During the intervening years, that is to say, from 1953 to 1960, I saw Kennedy off and on in Connecticut, where I helped manage the Stevenson/Kefauver campaign in 1956. In 1960 he asked me to serve on two different study groups--one involving the organization of the Defense Department, and the other regarding international security affairs. So he knew about me. I had come to his attention. We were acquainted. I think that I was recommended for the office to which he appointed me later by Senator Symington, who was the head of the group studying the organization of the Defense Department, and also by Robert Lovett, who had been Secretary of Defense during the Truman administration.

Matloff: Do you recall whether the President and/or the Secretary of

Defense gave you any specific instructions? Did they play any role in orienting or guiding you in the new post that you were to occupy?

Gilpatric: No. That was left entirely to Secretary McNamara and to me as his deputy, without any particular guidance or instructions. We did keep in close touch with people like Mac Bundy at the White House, Ted Sorensen, and others, but we received no instruction or guidance specifically from the President.

Matloff: Was your participation in the Symington Committee--the committee that was to come up with a plan for reorganizing the Defense Department--a handicap when you came up for confirmation?

Gilpatric: No. I was questioned about it. But I was able to say that neither President Kennedy nor Secretary McNamara agreed with the report, that I had accepted their judgment, and that, therefore, we were not going to try to change the organizational structure of the Defense Department by legislation.

Matloff: How important did you feel that your experience in the Air Force as Assistant and Deputy Secretary proved to be to your new position?

Gilpatric: It was extremely helpful, because it had been seven years earlier, and many of the personalities in the Defense Department were men in uniform, particularly in the Air Force; for example, General LeMay, and others whom I had known well during my Air Force days. I think that my appointment caused some concern to the Navy, whose leaders thought that I would bring an Air Force bias. I remember very well that ADM Burke called me up when I first got my quarters in the Pentagon and

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said that he would like to appoint a naval aide for me. I said, "That's fine, Admiral," and he replied, "I want to put in a Rear Admiral." I said, "I don't need that kind of rank," but he responded, "I'd feel better." I said, "Whomever you pick, I'll accept."

Matloff: Did anything else in your background prove useful? You touched on the Rockefeller studies project that you were on in '56 and '57 as well.

Gilpatric: Yes. I had been very active in the segment of that study that related to international security affairs. That was where I first got to know Henry Kissinger, who was directing the study. And I had had various experiences during World War II when I was temporarily called to Washington to work with Secretary Forrestal's office on naval procurement matters. So I had followed fairly closely, not only during the Korean War but also earlier, developments in national security affairs.

Matloff: What was your initial conception of your role as Deputy Secretary of Defense?

Gilpatric: McNamara made it clear to me that he wanted me to be his alter ego, that is to say, to be a deputy in the true sense of the word. Most things we did together, except for cabinet meetings, which obviously he attended alone, and certain subjects which he handled himself, particularly calling on the chairmen of congressional committees and, of course, some of the speeches he made expressing policy as he saw it. But, by and large, he and I worked as a team. I was the junior partner. But, except for trips to Vietnam in the latter part of 1961, and in '62, and '63,

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on which I did not accompany him, I was involved in most things that he was.

Matloff: Do you recall when you came back to Defense in 1961, after having been away about seven or eight years, had the problems changed? And if so, how did they change? Had the concerns become different in any way?

Gilpatric: Of course, in my earlier incarnation, I had been on the Air Force Department level, and except for budgetary matters and major policy issues that came up to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, I did not have day to day running contact with Secretary Lovett or, before that, with General Marshall. But the system had also changed in that under my predecessors, particularly Secretary Gates, there had been a closer working relationship between the civilian leaders of the Defense Department and the military, primarily over SIOP (the strategic integrated operating plan), and, in general, the office of the Secretary of Defense had strengthened its position as the dominant center of authority in the Defense Department, with the service secretaries serving in a somewhat diminished role.

Matloff: The 1958 reorganization act probably had something to do with that.

Gilpatric: That's right.

Matloff: What problems did you face when you took over? What were the hot issues of the day?

Gilpatric: Both McNamara and I decided that our first order of business should be to lay out a listing of what we felt to be the major issues and problems that we would face during the ensuing years of the Kennedy administration. I thought that I had an advantage in that regard because of my relatively recent tenure there. But when we came to compare our lists,

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I remember that I came up with something like 43 or 44 different issues, projects, plans, and the like, and McNamara's list, although he was new to the Defense Department after World War II, had about 65 projects, including most of mine. We used those like agendas for our work. They started out with such matters as the size of the forces and whether we needed to restructure some of the defense agencies. We had inherited the planning for the Defense Intelligence Agency, which we carried out, and we put into effect the Defense Supply Agency, which was also being prepared by our predecessors.

Matloff: Did any matters take priority over others, as you recall?

Gilpatrick: Yes, because when we came into office, on the top of the list of international security matters, which President Eisenhower took up with President Kennedy, was the situation in Laos. We were involved right away in a number of discussions at the White House level and within the Pentagon over what steps should be taken in Laos. That was followed by the Bay of Pigs crisis, for which the Kennedy administration was very poorly prepared. We knew very little about it, and, before we took office, McNamara and I learned very little from talking with Allen Dulles, the head of the CIA. The next problem was Vietnam. I was named as the head of a task force, early in March 1961, to examine all the facets of the situation in Vietnam and come up with recommendations to the President on what we should do, in addition to what had already been done by our predecessors.

Matloff: Almost from the very beginning, then, you were getting into international security problems.

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Gilpatric: Yes, those, coupled with the heating up of tensions in Berlin, were the range of problems that occupied most of our time.

Matloff: How did you select and organize your staff? Did you have any problems there? Was there any guidance that you had in going about that?

Gilpatric: In his talks with President-elect Kennedy before he agreed to become Secretary of Defense, McNamara made it clear that he wanted to have the authority or the power to designate his principal aides. Kennedy agreed. Indeed, with only one exception that I'm familiar with, namely Paul Fay, for whom we were asked by Robert Kennedy to find a place in the Defense Department, McNamara and I were given a completely free hand by the White House in picking everybody, including John Connally, who was supposedly imposed on us by Vice President Johnson, but actually was picked by McNamara himself.

Matloff: May we concentrate for a moment on the working relationships in OSD--first, the relations between the Secretary of Defense and yourself. Let me ask you, did you enjoy working with and for Mr. McNamara?

Gilpatric: Yes. We developed very early on, from the first time we met in Baltimore in December 1960, a very good rapport, even though he was ten years younger than I am. I am used to working as a professional in a collegial relationship, as a partner, and I had no difficulty accepting his superior authority, even though he was younger than I was. We were extremely close. We had breakfast several mornings a week very early, because Mr. McNamara liked to get in around 6:30 A.M. We had lunch practically every day when one or the other of us wasn't otherwise engaged.

We saw a good deal of each other socially in the albeit very short weekends that we had together. So we became very close friends.

Matloff: I take it there were no major differences on matters of policy or administration between you?

Gilpatric: No. We managed to come out pretty much the same way. As I said earlier, I accepted the fact that neither Mr. McNamara nor President Kennedy wanted to go to Congress with any legislation to change the structure of the Defense establishment. Indeed, by the end of my tour there in January '64, I had come to the conclusion that the present system, with separate service departments and their own secretaries, probably works as well as any system could, as long as the authority of the Secretary of Defense is clear and as long as the service secretaries are clearly subordinate to the Secretary of Defense.

Matloff: As an alter ego, was there any division of labor between you and the Secretary of Defense?

Gilpatric: In certain areas, I was given the primary responsibility. For example, in the relations with the CIA, I handled the day-to-day contacts with John McCone, whose place I had taken as Under Secretary of the Air Force in 1952, and whom I knew very well. I also handled the day-to-day relations with NASA, because Jim Webb and I were old friends and Mr. McNamara thought I was the one to handle that aspect. I also handled pretty much on my own the whole civil defense program, toward which Mr. McNamara was not very sympathetic but which was a White House initiative, largely run from there by Ted Sorensen. I was the one who arranged



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for Stuart Pittman to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civil Defense and who watched over that area. So those were three areas that were assigned to me.

Matloff: How often did you meet with the Assistant Secretaries?

Gilpatric: Mr. McNamara and I had a series of regular staff meetings. First of all, we would meet with each of the service secretaries once a week. Then we would have meetings with people like Charlie Hitch, the Comptroller, Tom Morris, who was Assistant Secretary for Logistics, and Harold Brown, who was Director of Defense Research and Engineering. Each of those individuals with whatever staff he chose to bring with him would meet with Mr. McNamara and me on the average of one day a week.

Matloff: Touching on the service secretaries, did their role change at all during the period when you were in the OSD?

Gilpatric: Their role continued to diminish in the sense that they were primarily supply officers. They were providing the forces to support the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the various commands. They did not get brought into major policy issues. Mr. McNamara decided early on not to use the Armed Forces Policy Council, which I think convened only a few times during the three years that I was in office.

Matloff: I recall one incident, during the Berlin crisis, where Mr. McNamara used Secretary Connally to handle both the sea and the air transportation. That's why I raised that question. It's rather unusual to call upon one service secretary for planning for the use of the resources of another service.

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Gilpatric: Both Secretary Connally and Secretary Zuckert were close to McNamara and he used them in a variety of ways. He was not as close to Elvis Stahr, the Secretary of the Army, who was replaced early on by Cyrus Vance who later succeeded me, when I left.

Matloff: How about the relations with the Joint Chiefs of Staff? Did you meet regularly with them?

Gilpatric: We had a meeting, I believe, Monday afternoon regularly, after lunch, with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at which both McNamara and I were in attendance. In addition to that, we had meetings several times a week, often at lunch, with General Taylor, after he became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. In effect, we looked to the Joint Staff for many of the studies and much of the work which we would have had our own staff do, if we had had one, but McNamara early on decided that he didn't want a Secretary of Defense staff. Except for his assistant secretaries and for one assistant by the name of Adam Yarmolinsky, Mr. McNamara and I had no staff. We relied on the services, the Joint Chiefs, and the Joint Staff.

Matloff: In that connection, did you ever have any trouble getting information from the Joint Chiefs?

Gilpatric: The only instance I can recall where the Chiefs or their staff dragged their feet was on contingency plans. We wanted to see the war plans, and we had a hell of a time getting access to those.

Matloff: Did you get them?

Gilpatric: We finally got them, but when we did, we found that they were so far out of date that they did not do us any good. We really didn't feel very comfortable about the planning function and the Joint Chiefs.

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Matloff: How were you able to get them? This is a perennial question.

Gilpatric: We originally asked our military aides to go downstairs to the Office of the Joint Chiefs. When that did not produce any results, we brought it up with the Joint Chiefs themselves. General Lemnitzer, consciously or unconsciously, put us off. But when General Taylor took over as the Chairman, he and General Brown, who was Director of the Joint Staff, saw to it that we got the plans.

Matloff: Was there less of a problem getting information from the services, if you had to get it?

Gilpatric: We had no problem with the services.

Matloff: How close would you say that you and the SecDef were to the JCS? You said that there were regular meetings.

Gilpatric: Yes. It varied with the personalities. We never were particularly close to Gen Decker, the Chief of Staff of the Army for a while. That was no fault of his. We were much closer to "Bus" Wheeler when he became Chief of Staff of the Army.

Matloff: How about Lemnitzer?

Gilpatric: Lemnitzer and I developed a very close relationship. I don't think that McNamara was quite as close. In the case of ADM Burke, both McNamara and I had tremendous respect for his abilities. He was the hardest working of the Chiefs. We had our problems, as you know, with ADM Anderson, his successor. We got along very well with the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and, of course, Gen Taylor was particularly close to both McNamara and myself.

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Matloff: Was there any problem when the JCS came in with split views?

Did this present any great problem for the Secretary of Defense or yourself?

Gilpatric: Not on the whole, because, particularly under Gen Taylor, the Chiefs came to accept the fact that if they split, they were just inviting a takeover by the Secretary of Defense of some of their prerogatives. In the case of the man who differed most with the Secretary of Defense, Gen LeMay, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, he usually spoke his piece and made his position clear, whether it was to the President, or to McNamara or myself, but then he went along. Of course, in some issues, such as whether or not the Chiefs would endorse the partial test ban treaty, it took a lot of persuasion, a lot of arm twisting, to get the Chiefs to go along. But in the end, in exchange for some safeguards which the Secretary of Defense and I agreed to uphold, we got unanimous support. So, once Gen Taylor came in, the splits were not as significant. It is true that in the early days, during the crisis in Laos, the Chiefs were split four or five ways. That was one of the reasons why President Kennedy became so exasperated with having all the Chiefs come over and present their own views without any coordination or caucusing ahead of time. That stopped when Taylor came in as chairman.

Matloff: How about relations with the State Department, with Secretary of State Rusk or anybody else with whom you dealt over there?

Gilpatric: On the whole we had a very good working relationship with our opposite numbers in State. It is true that before Chester Bowles became ambassador to India we had a few problems. We seemed to be able in Defense

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to reach decisions and take positions faster than our opposite numbers at State did. We made that clear, and at times Secretary Bowles, who was my opposite number, showed some irritation at that. But once George Ball took over as my opposite number, he, Dean Rusk, Alexis Johnson, and Averell Harriman, and all the other Presidential appointees in State and their opposite numbers in Defense had a very good working relationship.

Matloff: How about with the White House? Did you have direct access, or did you have to go through the NSC Advisor?

Gilpatrick: The question of access was one of the most unusual and, I think, successful features of John F. Kennedy's presidency. He was a great believer in one-to-one personal access, not only with the members of his cabinet, including, of course, the Secretary of Defense, but with a number of others of us in junior positions. President Kennedy would call me oftentimes at home, at my office, or elsewhere. I saw him a great deal. He used the same direct approach with others. The net result was that all of us in relatively high positions, and particularly in the international security area, felt that we knew the President, what he was thinking, and what he wanted. We certainly had complete access to take up with him any questions we had. We never were interfered with by layers of staff assistants around him. That did not mean that we did not work with them--as I said, with Ted Sorensen, Kenny O'Donnell, Larry O'Brien, Mac Bundy, Walt Rostow, or Carl Kaysen. But we had unimpeded access to the President any time and he reciprocated.

Matloff: What about relations with Congress and appearances on the Hill? Did you find any particular problems dealing with Congress or sensitivity

about any particular issues?

Gilpatric: First of all, Mr. McNamara and I developed a division of labor. He would go to visit the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator Russell, or Congressman Vinson, the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, or their opposite numbers in the appropriations cycle, and I would handle the day-to-day relations with the congressional staffs, which I found was very important. By working both sides of the street in that way, we avoided any very severe clashes with the Hill. There were differences, and there were issues where we did not get what we wanted. I remember a particular case. We wanted some legislation that in a small way would assist the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in being more effective. We wanted to permit him to have a deputy who, if the Chairman was out in the field traveling around the world, could appear for him. When we brought that proposal up with the Armed Services Committees, they were not amenable to it. In the same way we opposed the limitation they wanted to put on the President's appointment of members of the Joint Chiefs. We didn't want that appointment to be a fixed term. We felt that members of the Joint Chiefs should serve at the pleasure of the President, like the members of the Cabinet and other presidential appointments. But Congress didn't go along with that desire and we just dropped it.

Matloff: Let me turn to the question of perceptions of the threat facing the United States. Do you recall your conception of the threat or threats to the United States, when you took office as Deputy Secretary of Defense?

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Gilpatric: First of all, we were keenly aware of the gathering storm over Berlin, because that issue had been well publicized and we had been thoroughly briefed on it by representatives of President Eisenhower. In the same way, we were prepared to deal with the problems that were arising in Laos, and, to a lesser degree, in the situation in Cuba. What came as a surprise to us initially was the worsening political situation in Vietnam. Those four areas of the globe were the trouble spots with which we were preoccupied in the early days of the administration.

Matloff: Were there any differences of views with the JCS on the question of the threat, or between Defense and State, that you encountered?

Gilpatric: Not of a major nature. In the case of the Bay of Pigs, in which I was not as much involved as McNamara, the Chiefs had major reservations, which went back to the Eisenhower administration days. By the time we came along the Chiefs accepted the fact that paramilitary planning was going to be done by Dick Bissell and people at the agency [CIA] and they just sat on the sidelines. Of course, later on, there was controversy on whether the Chiefs should have been brought in more, or whether the results would have been different if the planning had been handled differently. But that was the only case where, as I recall, there was a difference between agencies of the government in the national security area.

Matloff: Let me turn to the question of strategy and strategic planning. I know that you have long had an interest in this area. Do you recall your attitude toward nuclear weapons, strategic and/or tactical, in terms of buildup and use, when you came into office? The whole question

of what the strategy should be was apparently one of the questions which arose almost immediately.

Gilpatric: Early on both McNamara and I arrived independently at a conclusion which I had, and he may have had before he came to the Pentagon. Our initial reaction to strategic doctrine was to shift from mutual assured destruction to flexible response. The latter doctrine had been written about and discussed by General Taylor before he rejoined the administration. Senator, and later President, Kennedy was familiar with it. There was not much argument about that. There was a feeling on the part of many of us, including myself, that so-called tactical nuclear weapons would really have the same effect, if used, as strategic weapons. As I often said in public, and in congressional hearings, I believe that once a nuclear weapon, whether it be a so-called tactical weapon, a theater weapon, intermediate range weapon, or even atomic demolition weapon, were detonated, we'd be in a nuclear exchange, and therefore I didn't draw any strategic difference between the two classes of weapons.

Matloff: How about on the counter-force vs counter-city doctrine?

Gilpatric: In my own thinking, the idea of fighting a nuclear war never took any root in my mind. I should say that most of the positions on strategic doctrine which were enunciated during the Kennedy administration came from Secretary McNamara in his speeches, for example, in Michigan, Canada, and elsewhere. I saw the drafts of those speeches and we discussed points in them. But McNamara took the lead in formulating the doctrines involving strategic weapons that evolved during the Kennedy administration.



Matloff: How about on such matters as a limited war option for the President and counterinsurgency planning? Did you get involved with those?

Gilpatric: I was particularly involved in the counterinsurgency planning, because at Robert Kennedy's suggestion the President set up the counterinsurgency group, of which I was the representative from the Secretary of Defense's office, Gen Taylor for the Joint Chiefs, and Averell Harriman or Alexis Johnson from State, as well as Kennedy himself, the head of the CIA, and Mac Bundy. So I was deeply involved in counterinsurgency planning and the various initiatives which were undertaken. When it came to so-called limited war efforts, we did, of course, proceed on the assumption that the United States might have to engage in two and one-half wars at the same time: a major war on the European continent, a major war in the Far East, and then some lesser scale engagement in the Middle East or elsewhere. So in our planning we were attempting to provide the services with the capabilities to take on that range of contingencies.

Matloff: Broadening the range of options?

Gilpatric: Right.

Matloff: How about the relationship between the cost analysis techniques of the analysts--Enthoven's analysts and so-called "whiz kids"--and the strategic analysis approach of the Joint Staff? Did you see any role for systems analysis and cost effective techniques in relation to strategy? Any strengths or weaknesses of systems analysis in this connection?

Gilpatric: My connection with that activity and that approach started when I recommended to Mr. McNamara that Charlie Hitch be chosen as the

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Assistant Secretary of Defense, Comptroller. Once Hitch and McNamara came to know each other and McNamara urged Hitch to bring on board the Rowens and the Enthovens and the other "whiz kids", that area became a major preoccupation of McNamara himself. I was not as directly involved in that as I was in some other matters. The whole evolution of the planning, budgeting, and programming that evolved in the course of the next two years was largely the brainchild of McNamara and Hitch and their respective associates. I was completely amenable and supported it, but I cannot claim any part in creating it.

Matloff: In your view, what were the major changes that the Kennedy administration brought into the field of strategy?

Gilpatrick: First of all, there was a major issue between the White House and the civilian leadership of the Pentagon, on the one hand, and the services and the Joint Chiefs, on the other, of the buildup in strategic weapons. We found, shortly after we came into office, that the position which Senator Kennedy had taken during the campaign, that there was a missile gap in favor of the Soviet Union, turned out to be the opposite. Nevertheless, there was great pressure, both by the Navy with the Poseidon program and the Air Force with the Minuteman program, to build up our arsenal of strategic weapons. One of the major issues that went to the President was how many of each of these weapons, submarine-based missiles and air-delivered missiles, were to be procured. I am sorry to say that we went along with the thousand unit Minuteman program, which, in the light of hindsight, I think was far more than was needed.

Matloff: Since we've touched on the "missile gap", can you account for how this came about in the first place? for its rise and demise?

Gilpatric: The way I accounted for it then--and now--is that, in analyzing the testimony of Secretary Gates and others of his colleagues before congressional committees in the years 1960 and prior, there was a lot of talk about what Soviet intentions and potential might be. The impression which those of us on the outside working with Senator Kennedy and preparing his campaign materials came to was that the actuality on the part of the Soviet Union was equal to its intentions and potential, whereas it turned out that it had a handful--I think it was seven--operational ICBMs. We had 40, whereas we had assumed that they had at least as many, if not more. It was not an issue that was fabricated. It was a case of no one on the U.S. side knowing specifically. But we were planning for greater strength in that area than the Soviet Union had actually attained. Once we were satisfied by satellite reconnaissance and other intelligence that that was wrong, McNamara in effect blurted it out, much to the discomfiture initially of the President's assistants.

Matloff: Where were the intelligence figures coming from, Air Force? CIA? or both? Do you recall?

Gilpatric: That was one area that we found unsatisfactory when we came into office. The Defense Department was not getting the kind of intelligence estimates that it needed from the CIA. As I recall it, Sherman Kent had left the agency, and the caliber of the national intelligence estimates initially was certainly not what McNamara and others of us wanted. It

was not until McCone took over from Allen Dulles that we began to upgrade that form of intelligence. In the meantime, the service intelligence views more or less reflected the desires of the particular services. Until the Defense Intelligence Agency was formed and the service intelligence estimates were subordinated to that kind of discipline, we got a very mixed bag in the way of military intelligence.

Matloff: On the question of interservice rivalry--a perennial occupation or preoccupation in the Pentagon--do you recall the impact during your tenure of that competition on policies, programs, operations? Was this rivalry a serious problem for you?

Gilpatric: It certainly was, in the case of McNamara and me, over the TFX. In fact, I was very badly wounded because of my prior connection with General Dynamics, which was later claimed was not sufficiently disclosed at the time of my confirmation, even though I stood out of the decision by Secretary McNamara to go ahead with the TFX. But the Navy was bitterly opposed to the whole concept of commonality. It arose not only over the TFX but also in the case where I overruled the naval staff position on the VTOL, the vertical riser aircraft. The Secretary of the Navy disqualified himself because he had been involved with Bell, one of the contenders for that program. I took over and made a decision in which I rejected the Navy's choice of Douglas and directed that the procurement be placed with Bell. That led to a congressional investigation in which I was severely criticized and all the Navy brass testified against me. Then, also, with the Air Force we had a series of issues over such things

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as canceling the B-70, canceling Skybolt, canceling the nuclear powered aircraft project, and, later on, the mobile Minuteman concept. So we had a series of issues with both those services--not so much with the Army, but with the Navy and the Air Force--over weapons procurement.

Matloff: What did you and the Secretary of Defense do, or could you do, to mitigate the competition? Was there anything that you tried to do to soften these rivalries?

Gilpatric: We tried, for example, in the case of the space program. We felt that the Navy and the Air Force should both be proceeding along parallel lines, so early on we issued an Executive Order giving the Air Force that particular mission. On the other hand, we went ahead with most naval programs when it came to shipbuilding or sea-based missiles. I must say that during the year that he was in office, before he resigned to run for Governor of Texas, Secretary Connally was very helpful in maintaining a good working relationship with the Navy brass. Of course, the first outright cleavage with the Navy brass occurred during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962.

Matloff: Do you recall any change in the fundamental roles and missions of the services before you left the post?

Gilpatric: No, other than the fact that we put more emphasis on the views of the commands--unified and specified commands. We tried to bring their heads into the planning process. We tried to reach, through General Taylor, an accommodation when issues came up. We did succeed, largely, I think, by reasoning, persuasion, and Presidential support, in avoiding

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any major breaks that surfaced. Early on, we did have some questions of generals speaking out without clearing their remarks with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Information. We actually forced the retirement of one officer—I think it was Gen. Trudeau—who just would not go along with the prevailing doctrine. But those were isolated instances that did not result in any major confrontations with the services.

Matloff: I gather from what you said earlier that you were not drawn in consistently on the budget formulation business, and that that was not your area. Am I correct in my understanding of that?

Gilpatric: In the planning section I was not brought in as much. When it came to actual budget decision-making, McNamara and I were each given by Hitch's office (the Comptroller's office) an issue paper. We would go over it independently and, then, where we differed, McNamara and I would get together. I did participate in the decision-making processes so far as the budgets for a particular year were concerned, but the long range, the five-year, planning process was dominated by McNamara and Hitch.

Matloff: Was there any change in the setting of the Defense budget ceilings in this period?

Gilpatric: We started out with a basic change in that there was no allocation of a certain amount of dollars to the Defense Department as a whole or to the individual services and other defense functions. It was up to the Secretary of Defense and his colleagues to come up with budget proposals. Then we would sit down with the Director of the Budget and try to come up with a position which was, to the greatest extent possible,

agreed upon between the President's budget office and the Defense Department, or at least to reduce the number of issues to the minimum, and then take those up with the President. We usually went up to Hyannis right after the Thanksgiving weekend to lay out these unresolved issues to the President himself.

Matloff: Did the roles of the services in connection with budget formulation change at all during this period?

Gilpatric: I don't think so. I think that we may have tightened somewhat the control over the formulation of services' positions simply because the service secretaries, particularly Vance, Zuckert, and Connally, and later Fred Korth and Paul Nitze, tended to sound out, in advance of taking a service position, what the attitude of the Secretary of Defense would be. We tried to anticipate issues before they became hardened positions, and in that way, by giving guidance to the services, they knew much in advance how far they could go in pushing for defense dollars.

Matloff: Let's turn, if we may, to the area of problems and crises, some of which you have already touched on. In the case of the Bay of Pigs, you've mentioned that the Secretary of Defense had more to do with it than yourself. Of course, there's been so much debate and argument about the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) role--over whether the JCS were adequately informed and their views sought. What are your thoughts now in retrospect? What went wrong in handling that operation?

Gilpatric: What went wrong fundamentally was a complete misconception of the situation inside Cuba. You can say that it was an intelligence failure.

There was a lack of understanding throughout our government--State, Defense, and the White House--of how much support Castro had among his people. But turning from that basic misunderstanding or misconception to the actual handling of the operation, it is clear in my mind that the CIA is not capable of dealing with paramilitary operations on as large a scale as was envisaged at any stage during the Bay of Pigs. Certain kinds of covert operations involving paramilitary personnel can be handled by the agency, or could be in that setting, but in my view the CIA people were way over their heads. They should have turned more to the services and to the Joint Chiefs for more than just a sort of a second look at a plan after it had been formulated and when it was pretty much set. The Chiefs were really not given much voice other than comment on Dick Bissell's operational plans.

Matloff: Was this by Presidential wish?

Gilpatric: I don't know to what extent President Eisenhower was directly involved in the Bay of Pigs planning.

Matloff: How about Kennedy?

Gilpatric: Kennedy came into it unprepared, rather late in the planning process. Since I was not directly involved to the extent of attending White House meetings, my impression was that it was not a well structured, well organized effort. In the final analysis, the planning was left to Allen Dulles and Dick Bissell. Only when the question of how much of an air strike should be mounted by the services in support of the CIA invasion efforts did the President and his people get into it directly. It was



just a debacle from the start.

Matloff: Let's turn to one that I know you were involved in, the Cuban missile crisis. How did you first learn, do you recall, that a crisis was brewing?

Gilpatric: Yes. I was having dinner on Monday night, 12th of October, in General Taylor's quarters, and Alexis Johnson was there. In the course of the evening, about 9:30, General Taylor got a call from the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, who asked if he could come over, since he had some very important intelligence. So he came over, and he showed us the first pictures that were taken during the break in the weather over Cuba. Then McNamara was phoned, Mac Bundy was phoned, and sometime during the night, or early in the morning, Mac Bundy informed the President. The next step was meeting in McNamara's office early Tuesday morning, followed by a meeting at the White House later that morning. That was the order of events, as I recall them, at the start of the crisis after we got the pictures.

Matloff: Do you recall what course of action you recommended when it was clear that the Soviets had placed offensive missiles in Cuba?

Gilpatric: McNamara and I both agreed from the beginning that the use of raw military power should be limited to the extent possible. We were, I suppose, in the jargon that was subsequently used, "doves", rather than "hawks". Whereas people, like Acheson, Mac Bundy, Paul Nitze, and the Chiefs themselves, were all in favor of using, to the extent required, military force to go in and seize the sites and overcome

whatever opposition there was, we took the other view: that we should use the minimum amount of force. Actually, at lunch one day—I guess it was Wednesday or Thursday of that first week—McNamara and I wargamed the whole question and came up in our minds with the idea of a naval quarantine. McNamara was the first to press that idea on the so-called EXCOMM group that was meeting in State every day.

Matloff: Do you recall why President Kennedy relied on the EXCOMM group, rather than the NSC itself, during this crisis?

Gilpatric: Apparently on the morning he was told by Mac Bundy, the morning of the 13th, of the presence of the missile installations, he gave Mac a list of the people that he wanted to work on this problem.

He named those with whom he had been working during the past year and a half or so. It was a purely arbitrary personal decision on his part. I mean that he brought in, for example, Secretary Dillon, Secretary of the Treasury. He initially brought me in. He did not bring in Paul Nitze until later. He limited his own staff. Schlesinger was not involved. Ted Sorenson and Mac Bundy were. The same applied to State. He relied very heavily on Bohlen and on Thompson as former Ambassadors to the Soviet Union. But it was an ad hoc personal decision; it was not based on any organizational concept.

Matloff: Am I correct in understanding that there was not a strict division between civilians and military on this committee as to what to do? that the division was not along military/civilian lines?

Gilpatric: That is right, although the only military man who was involved on a day-to-day basis was General Taylor. Toward the end the Chiefs

insisted on access to the President, which he rightfully gave them. But, of course, he overruled them. General LeMay was all for a major bombing attack on Cuba, as he had been in Vietnam. The President did not go along, but he heard him out.

Matloff: Were you and Secretary McNamara informed of the Joint Chiefs of Staff views before the EXCOMM meetings? Did Gen Taylor keep you abreast of the opinions of the JCS?

Gilpatric: Yes. We had early on established a practice in the Defense Department of caucusing in McNamara's office before every White House appearance that any of us undertook. If, say for example, Nitze and I or Bill Bundy and I were going along with McNamara and General Taylor, we would get together in McNamara's office. Taylor would report the state of opinions in the Joint Chiefs, and we would come up with what we hoped was a consensus to be expressed by McNamara. That did not mean that the President wasn't free, as he often did, to say to one of us, "Ros, what do you think?" "Paul, what do you think?" "Max, what do you think?" But unlike the practice in State, where nobody rehearsed positions beforehand and all came in and spoke up along different lines, the Defense Department had a departmental position before we came across the river.

Matloff: Was it ever an embarrassment that you had a slightly different point of view from the Secretary?

Gilpatric: We just accepted the position that, to be helpful to the President, we should try to develop a unified position. I do not recall any case where any one of us felt so strongly in our differences from McNamara that we ought to speak up. When it came to the interchange

of thoughts at the NSC meetings, or EXCOMM meetings, it would often develop that Paul Nitze, for example, was much more of a hardliner than I was, or McNamara was. But I don't recall any case where the President was faced with having to choose between two conflicting Defense points of view. We resolved those before we went over.

Matloff: Let me ask about lessons learned from this operation. First of all, did you come away with any impressions of what it was like to deal with the Soviets and of how to deal with the Soviets?

Gilpatrick: Let me interject here that my only direct contact with representatives of the Soviet Union, other than seeing Ambassador Dobrynin around Washington, was when I was sent, along with George Ball and Jack McCloy, to sit down with Kuznetsov and try to get the Soviet Union to agree to take the IL 28s out of Cuba. This was after the missiles were shipped out, when these tactical bombers were still down there. I sat for three days across the table from the Russian representatives, and I learned at first hand how difficult it is to deal with the Soviet Union face-to-face. So my conclusion was that, first of all, get all the Kremlinologists you can to counsel you, whether it's a Bohlen, a Thompson, a Tyler, or whoever; secondly, to use as much time as circumstances would allow. One of the reasons I think the missile crisis came off as well as it did was that we did not have to make split second decisions. We had time to argue out the issues amongst ourselves and to come up with a reasoned, considered, well thought out, well debated conclusion.

Matloff: Do you feel that the national security apparatus worked effectively during this crisis?

Gilpatric: Yes, I do, both from the standpoint of the structure of the system and of the personalities. I think that you can have a case where you have more personnel problems than we had, where either on the civilian or the military side people don't work together as well as we did. That is always an issue. You can have it in a law firm. You can have it in a university, as you well know, as well as in government.

Matloff: Why did it work better in the case of this operation than in the case of the Bay of Pigs?

Gilpatric: The reason the Cuban missile crisis was handled better, certainly in the light of hindsight, than the Bay of Pigs, was first of all, those of us who had responsibilities in dealing with those two situations had gotten to know each other. We had been in office for nearly two years. We had been through our shakedown cruises and we came to trust and have confidence and understanding of each other. I would say that was the number one reason.

Matloff: In terms of the Russian retreat, would you hazard a guess or a reflection as to what you think made Khrushchev yield in that crisis-- conventional weapons, possible use of air strike, nuclear weapons, or what? There has been a lot of discussion about this, as you know, after the event.

Gilpatric: My hypothesis is that, first of all, Khrushchev realized that dealing with an island ninety miles off the coast of the territorial

United States, the Russians were at a very severe handicap logistically, if it came to open confrontation. Secondly, I think he realized that at that juncture the Soviet Union's strategic capabilities were inferior to those of the United States. So he had two handicaps with which to contend, and by that time he had learned, since his meeting with Kennedy in Vienna in June of 1961, that Kennedy was a more seasoned national leader. Kennedy had assembled a good team of colleagues around him, and there weren't any targets of opportunity for the Russians to seek out in our internal defense structure.

Matloff: To return to Laos and Vietnam, what was your attitude toward our involvement in Indochina? Did you feel that our security interests, our national interests, were involved? Did you believe in the domino theory?

Gilpatric: First of all, I accepted the fact that, going back, I guess, to the days of Franklin Roosevelt, certainly to the Eisenhower days, we were involved, for better or for worse, in Indochina and Southeast Asia. In the case of Laos, it was very unclear to me just what our strategic interests were, other than the impact of a takeover of Laos by the communists on Thailand, South Vietnam, and Cambodia. So I started out with a feeling that we could not overlook the problem. We could not just pull out; we had to fashion some course of action. In the case of Laos, there was a major division among the Chiefs as to what we should do. Some of them were very much opposed to putting in more of a U.S. presence, more U.S. forces. Others felt that we should, and different kinds of forces. After that famous meeting at the White House, during which the President

got five different points of view from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he decided that in the future he would just have the Chairman in, and not all the Chiefs. In the case of Vietnam, as I have said, we were somewhat taken by surprise by the rise in tensions, the riots, and all the internal problems that came upon us so quickly there in the early part of '61, because President Eisenhower and his advisers had not stressed that area as being as problem-prone as it turned out to be. The major issue that developed in the task force that I headed was to what extent we would augment the some 1600-man presence that we had in South Vietnam. After many arguments amongst ourselves, when we reported to the President in May--I think it was late April or May of that year--we made certain recommendations: not of combat forces, not of uniformed military people from the combat ranks, but enlarging our military assistance personnel, sending out training groups to help the Vietnamese organize their provincial units, the home guards, and the like. Even there we ran into presidential reluctance. President Kennedy had an instinct, which he manifested from the beginning of the whole Vietnam problem, against committing more U.S. presence there. He resisted that right up to the end, although by the time of his death we had, I guess, some 16,000 U.S. personnel there.

Matloff: Why did the government rely on negotiation in the case of Laos, and some kind of military presence in the case of Vietnam? The handling of those two seems to have been different.

Gilpatrick: In the case of Laos, you did not have Ho Chi Minh and General Giap, who were determined to take over South Vietnam. In the

case of Laos, you had the Pathet Lao, Prince Souvanna Phouma, and then General Phoumi. It was more of a localized conflict. Sure, it was aided, abetted, and supported by both the Chinese communists and the Soviet Union, but it never was as much of a major cockpit of forces as Vietnam turned out to be, with infiltration from the north. Even during my time there, and I left in January '64, before it became an all out war situation, but even in the earlier years, it was evident that we were not going to get away with some Geneva negotiation in which we could parcel out elements of power among different factions within a country. It was a question really of a takeover by the North Vietnamese of the South Vietnamese with which we had to contend.

Matloff: I take it, then, that OSD was involved in both of these crisis situations, both Laos and Vietnam, from the moment you got into office.

Gilpatric: I should say that McNamara took an increasingly dominant role, more so than would normally be expected of a Secretary of Defense, particularly during the period when it was as much a political as a military issue, but McNamara was sent out to Vietnam a number of times during '62 and '63, and he became the President's principal adviser, rather than Dean Rusk--not that there was a great division between them, although over such matters as the coup that overthrew Diem there were differences between Defense and State.

Matloff: I was going to ask you about that overthrow. Were you surprised when the coup against Diem occurred?

Gilpatric: I was surprised over the assassination, of the execution of Diem and his brother-in-law. By the time the actual coup took place it



was pretty evident to us that Diem could not survive. I had been very reluctant to undercut Diem. Back in August, during that famous weekend when with the President, McNamara and Rusk away, Mike Forrestal, Avarrell Harriman, and, I guess, Hilsman and some others in State came up with this message to Lodge. When I was called, late Sunday night at home, by Mike Forrestal, I was told that the President had approved this. George Ball was told the same thing. When I finally reached General Taylor, who was having dinner at a restaurant in Washington, he also had been told by his aides that this message had been approved. It turned out that the President was relying on those of us who were occupying the acting Chief jobs to approve. The whole incident that Monday morning turned out to be, I think, at the very least a misunderstanding. But the message had gone forward. Lodge himself apparently had lost confidence in Diem. So I was not greatly surprised when Diem was forced out.

Matloff: Had you met up with Diem?

Gilpatric: No. I never went to Vietnam. Mr. McNamara made all the trips out there during my time.

Matloff: Would you venture an opinion as to what the consequences of Diem's death were in the terms of subsequent American involvement?

Gilpatric: I think it made more inevitable the growth of that involvement, although one of the last things that President Kennedy said to McNamara and me was that he wanted to plan to withdraw some of those 16,000 U.S. personnel that were in Vietnam in the fall of '63. His instinct all along was to resist expanding and, if possible, to reduce our involvement

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in that area. People can argue, of course, what he really would have done or intended to do if he had lived, but certainly his instructions to McNamara and to me were very clear: that he wanted us to pull back rather than to go forward at that juncture.

Matloff: Do you recall the basis for the feeling of American officials in 1963 that the Americans would be able to end the military role by 1965. This comes out in General Taylor's writings.

Gilpatric: Yes. Up to the time that I left office on the 20th of January 1964, there certainly was a sense in the Pentagon that the generals who had taken over from Diem could somehow establish authority, maintain control over South Vietnam, and resist the encroachments from the North. From that point on, the situation got worse, but I did not have first hand access because I was not there.

Matloff: Did you get involved, along with Secretary McNamara, in the problem of the press in Vietnam? Was the reporting coming out of Vietnam objective, fair, and the like, and what, if anything, could the Defense Department do about it?

Gilpatric: That had not become as much of a burning issue when I left as it did later. I happen to know many of the correspondents who were out in that area, particularly Dave Halberstam, who was a personal friend of mine. I never felt that the press coverage was badly distorted or overdone. It is one of those questions that is going to be debated and written about for years. Particularly in the light of Grenada, many invidious comparisons will be drawn.

Matloff: Let me ask you to take a long look at the whole Vietnam experience and seek your opinion as to why we failed, if you think we failed, in the long run.

Gilpatric: I definitely think that we failed. My basic conclusion is that we did not understand Vietnam's history, culture, and psychology. We just did not know with what we were dealing. We could not communicate. We sent out the best we had. Henry Kissinger was there for weeks on end, and we revolved commanders and personnel. With all of that, I don't think that we had a comprehension of how the Vietnamese minds worked, of how they would react. Also, we are not very good, in my opinion, at counterinsurgency. I think that all our military planning has been based on a concept that we would have another World War II-type situation and that we would have all kinds of organized brigades, battalions, and divisions and fight a conventional war, rather than combating the kind of infiltration, revolutionary movements, and wars of liberation that Khrushchev talked about in his January '61 speech. We just were not up to coping with that kind of situation in my opinion.

Matloff: How about the factor of American public opinion and the protracted limited war?

Gilpatric: That is another factor that the American people do not understand-- why the US military superiority, or military power, whether it's superior or not, cannot conclude things and tidy things up more quickly. I don't think that there is great sympathy for the problem, as we see it today in Lebanon. I think that holding popular support in any kind of protracted operation that does not reach the level of outright war is going to be a

recurring problem.

Matloff: Before I leave the crisis areas, I should at least touch on Berlin. Were you drawn in at all on the Berlin crisis at the end of 1961?

Gilpatric: That was handled primarily by Paul Nitze. He was on the working group that met regularly and came up with the plans. While I was kept posted, I did not participate directly in that process.

Matloff: How about arms control and disarmament? You have mentioned the limited test ban treaty. What role did you play in connection with that and in connection also with the attempt at the comprehensive test ban treaty?

Gilpatric: My first connection with the whole matter of arms control and arms limitation started at the very beginning of the Kennedy administration, when I was chosen to be the Defense witness on the passage of the arms control and disarmament act and setting up ACDA [Arms Control and Disarmament Agency]. I also spent a lot of time with the Joint Chiefs to get them to send over to ACDA some really top level types of military personnel, not somebody who was about to retire or who did not have much influence or clout in the military establishment. In other words, I was very much in favor of our increasing our efforts at reaching some sort of an accommodation with the Soviet Union. I did not go to Moscow. John McNaughton was the representative of the Defense Department who accompanied Averell Harriman. But I did participate in the discussions with the Joint Chiefs that I mentioned earlier, when we tried to get them to come out, vis-a-vis the Congress, with a unified support of the Presidential

position. I was also chosen to be a spokesman for President Kennedy's point of view that weapons of mass destruction should not be utilized in space. I gave a speech at the Air Force Academy in the summer of '63, I guess it was, in which I made that position clear, and I had previously had the White House go over the language that I used.

Matloff: In talking to Mr. McCloy, I had the impression, rightly or wrongly, that he felt that after the Kennedy administration got into office, it moved rather slowly in pushing for the disarmament agency, that he had to orchestrate the whole movement of people who, like himself, felt that it was very important. Does that jibe with your impression?

Gilpatric: I should say that Mr. McCloy and I are old friends. His office is right downstairs. I used to work for him. He was a partner in this firm for many years. He and I testified together on ACDA. I think that he felt, as chairman of the General Advisory Committee, that things were not moving as fast as he would have wished. But the Kennedy administration had some hard knocks ahead of it, first the Bay of Pigs, then the mounting Vietnam problem, and then the Berlin crisis. So things did not move as fast as McCloy would have liked, but I am not aware of the fact that in the end he disagreed with or disapproved of the Kennedy administration's attitude toward arms control.

Matloff: On military/industrial relations--I know that you have had quite a role in this area--you recall President Eisenhower's warning toward the very end about the military/industrial complex. Did you share that concern of his?

Gilpatric: Very much so. I would expand his term to say military/industrial and congressional complex. I think that it is a three-headed affair. I learned early on, when I was dealing with congressional staffs, the fact that, I would say, 90 percent of the staffs of the armed services committee and the military appropriations committees are reserve officers in one of the services. So they have a built-in bias, since they are on the payroll of the services. Then, you have the close relations between the defense industry and the procurement officials in the services. McNamara and I did form, and were very active in establishing, the kind of relationship with the defense industry where we had all the cards on the table. We established the Defense Logistics Agency, and then we also established the Defense Industry Association, over which I presided. We were constantly dealing with representatives of defense industry and trying, particularly when it came to cost effectiveness, to deal with the problems that still plague us today on spares, specifications, and the like.

Matloff: Was there any fundamental change in procurement policy made while you were there?

Gilpatric: The Defense Supply Agency was established and did take over. I think that Tom Morris, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Logistics, maintained a closer watch over production procurement than existed heretofore. Harold Brown as Director of Defense Research and Engineering certainly strengthened the role of his office in that area. I would say that, generally speaking, the office of the Secretary of Defense injected itself more into day-to-day planning, decision making, and weapons procurement, as well as development, than heretofore had been the case.

Matloff: I gather that very early you developed an interest in the aerospace industry and technology, and in their importance to defense. Am I correct in that?

Gilpatric: Yes. I think that it derived from the fact that Gene Zuckert, the Secretary of the Air Force, had been a colleague of mine during the Truman administration, and the fact that Hal Brown had come to the Defense Department from Sandia, and Charlie Hitch from the Rand Corporation—people who were thoroughly conversant with the issues in this whole area of aerospace development and procurement. This area also interested McNamara a great deal, because he had seen, during his days in the automotive industry, a lot of the developments that later on took form.

Matloff: The charge has been made at least in some quarters, as you know, that Mr. McNamara sacrificed morale and personal relations for efficiency and swift decision-making, and shrugged off military tradition and even advice. Is that charge, in your opinion, fair?

Gilpatric: I do not think that it is fair. I think that it is overstated. There is no question that McNamara was a very incisive, no-nonsense kind of Defense Secretary. He made decisions very easily and very quickly. It discomfited the Chiefs or other service personnel, who came in with an elaborate visual presentation, to have him cut through and get to the questions that were important before they had gone through their whole set of motions. Also, at the end of a session over some matter of Navy procurement or of Air Force development, he would write out his decision in long hand on a yellow pad, and then have his secretary duplicate it

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and hand it to the men. The military were used to having a longer process, more deliberation, and usually having the matter referred by the Secretary of Defense to some subordinate; not so with McNamara. And, of course, he did clash with LeMay and Anderson. He was not a person to mince words or to try to gloss over the realities. He was a tough individual, and I think that rubbed the military the wrong way. But he did not consciously set out to hurt people or to expose raw nerves. He is really a very compassionate man by nature.

Matloff: On the question of your perspectives on OSD organization and management--as a result of your experience and subsequent reflection, what do you feel the role of the Deputy Secretary of Defense should be? Is he primarily a manager? an analyst? You have used the term "alter ego" in your own case. How do you see the major functions of the Deputy?

Gilpatric: I see them, colored perhaps by my own experience and by my own professional career, as, as I put it, being the junior partner to the senior partner. I believe that the deputy should be versed, across the board, in the problems and responsibilities that the Secretary of Defense has, so that he can always step in and not just be in the wings somewhere, waiting to be called. I think that to assign, as Secretary Weinberger has done with both Frank Carlucci and Paul Thayer, primarily the procurement job, is not the wisest use of manpower. McNamara would never have done it. He regarded that as a matter we jointly should do, and in the end he made the decisions, as he should as a matter of law and practice. I would keep the deputy's role as one of a generalist, of being available



in all areas, of being versed and experienced, and of dealing with whatever came up, as a junior partner and the alter ego for the Secretary.

Matloff: I take it from what you said earlier that you may have changed some of your views about DoD organization as a result of your experience in OSD, after your service on the Symington committee. Would you want to elaborate a little on that?

Gilpatric: My initial thought was that rather than having the secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force, you would have under secretaries in charge of the functions of the services. I never suggested doing away with the services, just with the departmental structure. But, in the light of my three years of experience, I came to see that, whatever you call them, whether you call them the Secretary of the Air Force or the Under Secretary of Defense for Air, you need the kind of expertise and assistance that those officials furnish. Since it is so important to the esprit de corps of the services that they do have their own department and that they do have their separate but equal existence for their traditions, I would not disturb that, as long as you have a strong Secretary of Defense who can control the service secretaries. That is not always easy to do. You read today about the problems between Secretary Lehman of the Navy and Paul Thayer, the Deputy Secretary of Defense. We did not happen to have that problem in my time. But there you get into personalities. I think that as long as the Secretary of Defense has under one name, one form or another, a team of people--it may be bigger or smaller, at a particular time--there must be a span of control. I

don't think that you can have an unlimited number of deputies and under secretaries and assistant secretaries and still be effective. McNamara maintained relations with probably ten or twelve key people in the Defense Department. Maybe today it takes more; maybe it does not; maybe it needs less. But I would not change the legislative structure.

Matloff: How about the notion of a single Chief of Staff, a single Chief of the services, do you see a need for that?

Gilpatric: I have testified at length before the House committee whose work resulted in legislation this fall on that subject. I do think that there is inherent conflict in the two-hatted character of the Joint Chiefs. I have written articles, testified, and spoken about it. I would rather see the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs be, in effect, the single instrument in the line of command from the President and the Secretary of Defense down to the commanders of the unified and specified commands. I think the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs needs advisers from the three services, whether incumbents or retired officers. I think it is important that the chairman have that, as he would have under this legislation. But whatever changes take place in the law, whether this legislation that has passed the House passes the Senate and is signed by the President, I think it is important to enhance the authority of the Chairman so as to have quicker and more effective control over the commands and the services than through a committee-type structure with two-hatted members.

Matloff: How about the relations between the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs--do you see need for changes in either working relations or structure at that level?

Gilpatric: No. I would prefer to go back from what I perceive to be the present practice of having quite a staff around the Secretary of Defense to the condition that existed in my time, which was, as I have said, that the Secretary of Defense and the Deputy Secretary had no staff other than military aides, and turned either to the services or to the Joint Staff for whatever staff assistance they needed. I think that there should be direct contact between the Secretary of Defense and his Deputy and the Joint Chiefs, and particularly with the Chairman, on a day-to-day basis without the intervention of staff.

Matloff: What was the basic philosophy, would you say, behind the drive to centralize decision-making in DoD during your tenure?

Gilpatric: I don't recall having articulated or seen articulated any particular philosophy. I think that McNamara, having arisen to be the President of a large industrial organization before he came to Defense, had evolved his own personal concept of how to run an organization. He believed in much greater direct participation by the Secretary of Defense in day-to-day decision-making than some of his predecessors did, for example, Secretary Wilson, Secretary McElroy, and, to some extent, Secretary Gates. McNamara wanted to be involved. I think that is a matter depending on the personality of the particular individual. I think that Secretary Lovett was an extremely effective Secretary of Defense, but he did not get himself involved to the extent that McNamara did. And yet, I think they both were effective—one delegated more than the others. It is just the nature of the individual's own working habits.

Matloff: Looking back at the whole period, at least the period when you were in the OSD, what would you say were the principal management reforms introduced? You mentioned the DIA.

Gilpatric: That was pretty much inherited, though. We just went ahead with that. The Defense Supply Agency was also something which had been in the works a long time and was not a new departure.

Matloff: How about the unified limited war command, the merging of the Army and the Air Force elements into a strike command?

Gilpatric: That was an evolutionary matter. I would not claim credit on the part of McNamara and myself. I do believe that McNamara's creation of this whole defense planning, programming, and budgeting cycle, and his cost effectiveness program were major innovations, and, so far as I can perceive, they are still to a greater or lesser degree present. I think that they were bound to happen. McNamara introduced them more quickly, perhaps, than others might have done.

Matloff: May we focus a bit on the personalities of the period with whom you came into contact? Looking back, how would you characterize the style, personality, and effectiveness of various Secretaries of Defense, as well as other top officials with whom you came in contact? If I may, I'll mention names. I'll start by going back to your earlier experience. How about Marshall, the Secretary of Defense?

Gilpatric: I was sworn in by Marshall and I served under him for six months. I have the greatest admiration for him. He is one of my heroes. However, he was brought up under a military command system, where you

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delegated authority to the greatest extent possible, and that is what he did. Fortunately, he had very capable people--General Bradley, Robert Lovett, and people like Finletter, Kimball, Pace, and others. So he was able to delegate and it worked effectively, as it did during the Korean War, after Lovett took over.

Matloff: Lovett was next on my list. Did you have much contact with him, or did you have any impression of his way of operating?

Gilpatric: Very much so, because I had known him in World War II, when I was on some missions, and I knew him during the Korean War. I have kept up with him. As I said to you earlier, he was probably as much responsible as anybody for my appointment as Deputy Secretary by Kennedy. He is another one of my heroes. He was an exceptional, capable, effective official, both in the State Department and in the Defense Department. Kennedy offered him the Secretaryship of the Treasury, which he turned down.

Matloff: How about Wilson?

Gilpatric: Wilson, McElroy, and Gates were not as well known to me. I will only give you as my impression as an outsider during those years that it was more of a hands-off rather than a hands-on operation. They were very fine people. The first two were great successes in business. Tom Gates was a professional like myself, albeit a banker. I think that he grew a lot. He started out as Under Secretary of the Navy and was there eight years. He became a very capable, fine man. He was not as hard driving or as incisive as McNamara, but he left the Department in a very good shape. I understand that Kennedy wanted him to stay on, but he did not do so.

Matloff: Is there anything you want to add to your depiction of McNamara?

Gilpatric: I regard him as one of the great men I have run into in the course of my life. While I know that he has his defects in dealing with people, as I have said earlier, he is a hard man, a hard taskmaster. He expects a lot and he does not suffer fools gladly. You have to be up early in the morning and stay up late at night to keep up with him.

Matloff: Let's take the Joint Chiefs--General Lemnitzer.

Gilpatric: Lemnitzer was a splendid officer. He just did not hit it off as well with either McNamara or President Kennedy as General Taylor did. I don't think that it is any reflection on Lemnitzer. The chemical reaction just was not as good. Taylor was ideal, and one of the great military men of our time, in my opinion.

Matloff: Among the service chiefs, Chief of Staff General Wheeler.

Gilpatric: General Wheeler was a good journeyman officer. He was neither brilliant nor inventive, but he was dependable, conscientious, and a very, very fine man with whom to work.

Matloff: General Decker before him?

Gilpatric: General Decker was more colorless. He was a product of the Army promotion system. He never made much of an impact as a chief.

Matloff: On the Air Force side, General White, and, of course, General LeMay.

Gilpatric: Both of whom I knew very well because of my Air Force days. General White was a man of great intellect, a great philosopher, a great analyst. General LeMay was a military commander who believed that unless you had on a uniform, you could not make decisions involving military

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matters. He was very strong-minded, very difficult to reason with, partly because of his hardness of hearing, but not, in my opinion, a modern day military leader.

Matloff: The Chiefs of Naval Operations Burke and Anderson.

Gilpatric: I have already commented on Burke. Burke was one of the most able members of the Joint Chiefs until Taylor came along. Admiral Anderson was a fine officer. I think that he had the misfortune to cross himself up with McNamara. I was responsible for the President's offering him the embassy at Lisbon, where he performed very creditably. A very fine man, he just got off on the wrong foot with McNamara.

Matloff: Did you have much contact with Admiral McDonald toward the end of your tenure?

Gilpatric: No, I did not.

Matloff: Secretaries of the Army Stahr and Vance?

Gilpatric: Stahr was a poor choice, as it turned out. Vance was an excellent choice. I say that, in spite of the fact that I was responsible for picking Vance. But whoever told McNamara that Stahr was qualified was mistaken in my opinion. He was not up to the job.

Matloff: While we are talking about Vance, your successor, did you get much chance to brief him about the job?

Gilpatric: Yes, because the original position for which I recommended him to McNamara was the General Counsel of the Department of Defense. McNamara early on developed a liking for him. He had confidence in him and used him on various special missions. When Stahr was retired--was

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really forced out--Vance became Secretary of the Army. Of course, I saw him on a day-to-day basis, and we had a chance to know each other very well. He carried on pretty much the way that I had. In the end he was succeeded by Paul Nitze, who was another personal friend of mine. We went to school together many many years ago. So both of my successors, Vance and Nitze, were people with whom I was close. While they were different personalities, I don't think that they operated in any essentially different way than I had under McNamara.

Matloff: Would you like to add anything to your impressions of Secretary of Navy Connally and Secretary of Air Zuckert?

Gilpatric: No. They both proved to be excellent choices. I was only sorry that Connally could not stay longer. He managed to work with the Navy brass and at the same time be responsive to McNamara and President Kennedy. He did an amazing job for one year. It usually takes longer than a year to get in traction. Gene Zuckert, who had been in the Air Force during the Korean War and then had been on the Atomic Energy Commission, was an experienced, skillful, balanced official who worked very well. He knew McNamara personally, and, of course, also knew me very well. We never had any problems.

Matloff: How about some of the Presidents that you served? I take it that your administration came during the Truman, the Kennedy, and a bit of the Johnson periods. How about their styles, personalities, and effectiveness as President, in your view?

Gilpatric: In the case of the two that I knew best, Truman and Kennedy, I found my service to be immensely satisfying and gratifying. I felt that



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because of their openness in dealing with people around them, I had a direct, continuing personal contact. I must say that I regard them as two very fine Presidents. I did not see as much of Truman as Kennedy. Truman had a very small staff, and, again, had a great affinity for number two people. He had been a number two junior senator from Missouri; he had been Vice President. So he was very partial to what he called the "little Cabinet." I saw a lot of Truman, as I did of Kennedy. Johnson, as I saw him, when he was majority leader and chairman of the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee during the Korean War, was a real Czar, and a very strong character. Of course, during his vice presidency, I saw a good deal of him. He was assigned by President Kennedy to keep an eye on space, and with my assignment we were in contact together. Frankly, I did not want to serve under him as President, and, with his own gracious consent, I left office two months after Kennedy's death.

Matloff: Let me direct your attention now to the last question. What do you regard as your major achievement during your tenure as Deputy Secretary of Defense? If you had to single out one or more specific achievements of which you were proudest, on what would you focus?

Gilpatric: I think that the greatest intellectual satisfaction I got out of my service was the fact that both the men I worked for, McNamara and Kennedy, agreed with me on the limitations on the use of military force as an effective instrument for maintaining the peace in this world. In other words, I never was faced with any great question of conscience or

principle in working for those men, because they tended, wherever they could, to diminish raw force, brute force, as an instrument of policy making. That was very satisfying to me not to have to operate against my own instincts and principles.

Matloff: Were there any great disappointments--something that was left unfinished or undone, or that might have been done differently?

Gilpatric: I feel that the experience I had in connection with the TFX program was not well handled on my part. First of all, I should have been much more explicit during my hearings and confirmation as to my relations to General Dynamics. I stated them in substance, but I did not spell them out. Secondly, I think that I was poorly advised, particularly by the Vice President, in how I handled the press during the period when the Senate investigation had begun and it was clear that we were going to have a major fight on our hands. I do not think that I handled that as well as I might have, in the light of hindsight.

Matloff: Is there any question that I should have asked you which I have not, or that you would like to direct my attention to, in connection with your service in OSD, or the national security apparatus or policy, beyond any of the matters that we have spoken about this morning?

Gilpatric: I do not think so. I think your questions are very good. I would just reiterate one thought, and that is, I think that the more fluid the organizational structure is, the more unstructured it is, the better it is. In other words, I think that McNamara's decision not to have a lot of meetings with the Armed Forces Policy Council and get everybody

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there, sit around, and take a lot of time was sound. I think that dealing on a one-on-one basis, tailored to meet a particular situation, is a much better way than a more rigid, stratified kind of structure. So I would hope that future Secretaries of Defense would maintain their choice of alternatives in how they run the Department.

Matloff: Thank you very much, Mr. Gilpatric, for sharing your impressions and recollections with us.

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Dear Dr. Goldberg:

The transcript of my interview with Dr. Matloff on November 14, 1983 has had my attention and I return it herewith. You will note a few corrections on pages 1, 2, 9, 13, 14, 19 and 25. As to access to my interview when in final form, ~~I would prefer category 2 as I would not want to see published my personal characterizations of living individuals without my consent.~~

I would appreciate receiving a copy of the final version of the interview when it is completed.

rely,

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

*Will L. Gilpatric*

Will L. Gilpatric

*May 24, 1993*

MEMO FOR

*Larry Smith*

oller),

*Please do not cite or  
quote this interview. Mr.  
Gilpatric placed this restriction  
on the interview. It requires  
his approval*

*Arfed Goldberg*