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Oral History Interview

with

General Lyman L. Lemnitzer
Chairman, JCS, 1960-62
SACEUR, 1963-69

Conducted on

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by

Dr. Maurice Matloff

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This is an oral history interview held on January 19, 1984, with General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, in Gen. Lemnitzer's office in the Pentagon.

Matloff: General, if we may first concentrate on your position as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, from 1960 to 1962, I wonder if you can recall the circumstances of your appointment to that position--how it came about, what instructions or directives, written or oral, were given to you, and by whom?

Lemnitzer: I had been Chief of Staff of the Army, during '58-'59-'60, a two years' tenure, and we were coming to the end of Pres. Eisenhower's term of office, in the summer. Another factor that entered into it was that Gen. Twining, who was my predecessor as Chairman, was ill, and during the summer he decided that he could not undertake any additional period as Chairman. So, having been Chief of Staff of the Army, with Gen. Twining stepping out, an election coming up, a change of command, so to speak--all those things worked toward my notification by the Secretary of Defense Gates, and Secretary of the Army Brucker, that they were going to nominate me as the Commander in Chief of the European Command, and nominate me as Supreme Allied Commander. Now, most people believe that the President of the United States appoints the Supreme Allied Commander; he does not.

Matloff: Shall we speak about the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs first? Then we'll speak later about the SACEUR. Let's concentrate the first part of the interview on the first period, if we may.

Lemnitzer: But that's how this came about.

Matloff: Twining was your predecessor.

Lemnitzer: That's correct, and when he decided that he could not undertake an extension of the tour because of his illness, I was nominated by Secretaries Brucker and Gates, and approved by President Eisenhower, whom I knew very well as a result of our World War II service.

Matloff: Can you recall any instructions or directives, written or oral, that were given to you by the President or by the Secretary of Defense, about the new position that you were going to be filling?

Lemnitzer: I don't recall any written instructions, but I was very familiar with the issues of the day. Those largely involved weapon improvement, nuclear activities, and the size of American forces at the time. As Chief of Staff of the Army, I had been running into great difficulties with the Defense Department because it was generally felt that nuclear weapons were the panacea of all military issues and that resulted in the tendency to cut back the Army and put greater emphasis on strategic air, naval aviation, and so on.

Matloff: This brings up the question: in your view, was your position as Army Chief of Staff a help or a handicap when you were given this new position?

Lemnitzer: I had been dealing with these problems as Army Chief of Staff, and I recognized that I was in a different position, but there was one problem that hung over the whole activities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at that time. Most of the two years that I was Chief of Staff of the Army we were involved in it. And that was--there were great disagreements,

or practically no agreements, on what our strategic plans were. We didn't have a plan. I recall that Gen. Twining started keeping a list of the issues, where there were differences of opinion, in all aspects of strategic plans--for example, on strategic bombing, to pinpoint it. Strategic bombing plans were what we needed and didn't have. I think he boiled it down to about 20-some issues, on which there was great diversity of opinion among the Chiefs, and we were never able to come to agreement on many of them. So, one of the first things that I undertook when I became Chairman and took over from Gen. Twining, on 1 October 1960, was to see if we couldn't break through this impasse on strategic bombing.

Matloff: The initial problems were strategic basically?

Lemnitzer: Yes.

Matloff: Did you set any priorities for yourself, or were any set for you by the President or the Secretary of Defense, in handling your functions? Did they say that certain tasks were uppermost?

Lemnitzer: No, no one attempted to set any priorities within the Chiefs, but I set the strategic bombing problem right at the top. It was obvious that there were so many diverse views; that we didn't have a plan; and that that was the number one priority within the organization.

Matloff: Did that change in any way during the course of the two years that you served? Were there other functions or other problems that came to the fore of even greater importance, or of equal importance?

Lemnitzer. No, there were not any problems of equal importance, in my view, and I can tell you how I attacked this problem and how we resolved it. I set that as high priority, and also almost parallel with it, I felt that the question of the so-called missile gap was arising. The latter was a very controversial issue. There were no agreements between the various agencies involved. And that problem was one that took a very very bad turn, in my opinion, because the politics of it was that there was a great missile gap between our capabilities in the nuclear weapons and strategic bombing area and those of the Soviet Union.

Matloff: Did you feel that there was such a gap when the question first came up about this so-called "missile gap"?

Lemnitzer: No, matter of fact, I thought that there was a small gap, but that we were in the lead. The strange thing about it, was that in the campaign, it came out the other way around--that there was a great missile gap between our capability and the Soviet Union and that the Soviets were way ahead of us. That was the way it ended up in politics. I don't think it would be out of place here just to mention that during my first weeks, I spent a lot of time briefing President Kennedy on nuclear matters. I urged President Eisenhower in his contacts with President Kennedy, when he was coming in office, to assist, because the new President had no idea about these problems.

Matloff: In the change of administration from Pres. Eisenhower to President Kennedy, did that in any way change your position, your functions, or conceptions of your role?

Lemnitzer: No, it did not. There was another issue in the transition that came out loud and clear, and that was the problem or the likelihood of getting

into trouble with the Soviet Union on the contacts with Berlin. There was harassment by the Soviets on the Autobahn and in the air corridors, which worried President Kennedy greatly.

Matloff: So some issues began to come to the fore that had not been on the front burner?

Lemnitzer: They were not on the front burner because the nuclear issue overshadowed all the other things at that particular time.

Matloff: We'll touch on the Berlin crisis later. Let's talk a little about interservice rivalry. Certainly as Army Chief of Staff you had run into that. As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, how serious a problem was the interservice rivalry and competition for you? Did that have a great impact during your tenure on operations, programs, and policies?

Lemnitzer: In general, it did not. I think that one of the reasons for this is, that the interservice rivalry during my Chief of Staff tenure primarily involved use of aviation, air defense, and things of this character. Airlift was a major factor. Fortunately, a classmate of mine, Gen. Thomas White, was Chief of Staff of the Air Force when I was Chief of Staff of the Army, and on several occasions we worked out issues that had never been worked out successfully between us. I think we had a closer rapport when Gen. White was Chief of Staff of the Air Force. He was followed by Gen. LeMay, as you know. Now there's one other feature that came in here. Airlift turned out to be quite a controversial issue. I kept pointing out before congressional committees as Chairman, just as I had previously when I was Chief of Staff of the Army, that we didn't

have enough airlift. My problem was that everybody else thought that we did have enough airlift. This issue turned out to be a major issue between the Army and the rest of the services. Gen. Twining thought we had ample airlift. Even Gen. White thought we did. The Secretary of Defense thought we had enough airlift, and so did the President. On one occasion while I was still Chief of Staff of the Army, Mr. Vinson at one hearing said, "General, you claim that we're very deficient in airlift and everybody else thinks otherwise. I'm tired of these discussions and I'm going to appoint a chairman of a subcommittee to examine the whole airlift problem. I'm going to appoint as chairman Mr. Mendel Rivers, and we're going into all features of this particular issue, and we're going to get it settled." To make a long story short, the hearings lasted about two months. I attended every one of them, and when an issue came up, I was always called upon to say something. That committee unanimously agreed that we were very deficient in airlift and that we had to undertake a new program because we didn't even have a new airplane in our inventory that we were going to build. This resulted in the adoption of the C-141, the first jet airlift aircraft.

Matloff: Did you find that, as a result of these differences of views of some of the services at least on the questions of airlift and other issues, possibly, you as Chairman and the Joint Chiefs as a corporate body were drawn into the discussions and decisions over budget formulation?

Lemnitzer: Indeed, as Chief of Staff of the Army, I thought that we were getting shortchanged.

Matloff: How about in the other role, as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, where you had to sit in on the whole show?

Lemnitzer: By the time I became Chairman some of the issues had been resolved. I remember that the issue of nuclear weapons and some of our nuclear weapon and missile problems occurred during the period when Admiral Radford was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and even when I was Vice Chief of staff of the Army. Adm. Radford thought that the nuclear weapon was the panacea of all the military ills, and that we just didn't need any large forces--that military issues could be settled by nuclear weapons.

Matloff: Is there anything that you and the Secretaries of Defense with whom you served--Gates, McNamara--did or tried to do to mitigate the competition among the services, do you recall? Each one was trying to get a piece of the budget, obviously.

Lemnitzer: That was true then, and it's true today. In discussions that we had, within the Chiefs, we were able to resolve some of these issues, and in some cases they had to go up to the Secretary of Defense and even to the president. To go back now considerably further, I took over from Gen. Taylor as Chief of Staff of the Army, He had taken several issues of splits, budgetary problems, past the Secretary of Defense to the President. As a matter of fact he didn't come out very successfully, because in most cases the decisions of the Secretary of Defense and the recommendations of the then Chairman, Adm. Radford, were pretty much adopted.

Matloff: Let me ask you about your relationship as Chairman with the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and other top officials in OSD. How often did you meet with the Secretary of Defense, and Deputy Secretary of Defense?

Lemnitzer: We undertook a regular weekly meeting with the Secretary of Defense.

Matloff: Are you speaking now about all the Joint Chiefs?

Lemnitzer: All the Joint Chiefs meeting on Monday afternoon, at 2:00. We suggested, and Secretary Gates agreed wholeheartedly, that we have a meeting with the Secretary of Defense each week, and we maintained that all during my tenure.

Matloff: This was also when Secretary McNamara took over?

Lemnitzer: Yes, clear down with Secretary McNamara.

Matloff: Was the Deputy Secretary in on these discussions too?

Lemnitzer: Occasionally. Deputy Secretary Quarles, I remember, once or twice conducted these, because the Secretary was out of the city. We tried to maintain this regularity of a meeting every week. But it didn't exclude the possibility of a special meeting on a certain issue occasionally. I must say that many of those issues were budgetary.

Matloff: As Chairman, how did you handle the problem of split views in the Joint Chiefs, particularly with reference to the Secretary of Defense and the President?

Lemnitzer: All during my time as Vice Chief of Staff and Chief of Staff of the Army I was rather dismayed and frustrated that in the committees that were preparing papers and so on, there was insufficient promptness

in resolving those issues. When I became Chairman, one of the first things that I did was to indicate to the Joint Staff that a problem that caused an impasse would not remain at an impasse longer than one week. That, in my opinion, went a long way to speeding up some of the activities we had in the Joint Staff. In my appearance before Congress last year on the reorganization of the Joint Chiefs, I pointed this out as one of the first things that I did to speed up the activities. So, if there was a difference of opinion within the committees, the problem came up to the Joint Chiefs, and if we split in that area, it went to the Secretary of Defense right away.

Matloff: Did you also superimpose your own views, if they were different?

Lemnitzer: Yes, I had my paper prepared as Chairman. I want to concentrate somewhere along here, whenever you think it's appropriate, on how we resolved the SIOP, Single Integrated Operational Plan.

Matloff: If this was one of the questions of the splits, if you'd like to use that as an example.

Lemnitzer: This was the pre-eminent split. This is the course I adopted. I told Secretary Gates that this was an impossible situation, that the Chiefs were earnestly calling the situation as they saw it, but that we weren't getting anywhere. I recommended to Secretary Gates that I call in all the unified and specified commanders, and the Chiefs, and we'd go out to Omaha. I think that we went out on a Wednesday. We argued these twenty-some principles--where there was differences of opinion--for about three days. We resolved all but about five or six issues. I called Secretary

Gates on Friday and told him that we had resolved quite a number of these but that we had five or six issues still unresolved, and I suggested that he come out on Saturday and we would present the splits to him, to see what his decisions were, and see if we couldn't resolve this problem. He came out on a Friday, actually. I know that I presented my attitude, which was different from any of the Chiefs on one or two of them, and each one had his say on these splits. Secretary Gates made the decision on all of them. On Saturday morning we had a meeting--Secretary Gates was there-and I announced the decisions on these issues. Then I asked the group present, the unified and specified commanders and the Chiefs of Staff, "Is there any of you that can't live with these decisions?" They said no. So we wrote out a short communiqué on Saturday morning at Offutt Base in Omaha. There were hundreds of press people because they saw this gathering of the brass in Omaha and thought that something big was going on. Secretary Gates and I went into the commander's office and we called the President. I should have said all along that I had acquainted the President with what I proposed to do, the basis for going out to Offutt.

Matloff: This was President Eisenhower?

Lemnitzer: Eisenhower. I pointed out to the President that we had resolved many of the issues, except five or six. Secretary Gates had come out and had made the decision on the five, and we wanted to issue a communiqué to the press, indicating that complete agreement had now been reached. I remember as though it happened yesterday. He said, "Put my name to that list." So when the communiqué was issued, it indicated that there was

agreement in the Chiefs, that the President and the Secretary of defense were agreed, and that the Single Integrated Operational Plan, SIOP, would be built immediately.

Matloff: Were there any other cases of splits being taken to the President himself?

Lemnitzer: No, I don't remember offhand. I may think of some.

Matloff: How did you handle the problem when Congress showed an interest in views of the Joint Chiefs? Were there ever any cases where you had the problem of handling splits in dealing with Congress?

Lemnitzer: It happened frequently. The kind of problem we ran into frequently occurred, in my opinion, between the military and the civilian leadership. I recall appearing with Secretary Brucker of the Army. I made my presentation and he made his presentation. Then they had given us a question period. Every once in a while, this was in the Senate particularly, but not always in the Senate, sometimes in both houses, when they didn't agree with something the Secretary said, they would put the question, "General, you were Chief of Staff of the Army, what did you recommend?" In several cases, we recommended differently from the Secretary. And that's the way we had to leave it. Then it was up to the Congress to resolve that particular issue, if it involved money and authority.

Matloff: Let me ask you about working relationships with the State Department and its Secretary when you were Chairman. Did you have many dealings with the State Department and with its Secretary?

Lemnitzer: Continuously. This was not much of a problem for me, because I had been working with the State Department on the development of the military aid program and the drafting of the NATO treaty. You see, I had been called from my assignment as Deputy Chief of Staff of the National War College by Secretary Forrestal to represent him, and I went to Europe to meet with a military committee of the five powers, which was the military side of the Brussels Pact. I was involved in the drafting of the NATO treaty, working with State--with Jack Ohly, Ted Achilles, and many others. I had very little problems, almost none, in dealing with members of the Department of State.

Matloff: Did you have frequent dealings as Chairman with the Secretary of State? Or were you dealing with other parts of the State Department?

Lemnitzer: No, I did not. I knew Dean Acheson and John Foster Dulles very well. I did not have problems with issues between State and Defense.

Matloff: How about access to the President as Chairman? Did you have direct access to the president or did you have to go through the staff secretary or later the national security assistant, as he was called? How were you able to get to the president if you wanted to? Let's take President Eisenhower, then President Kennedy.

Lemnitzer: No problems in either case. All I had to do was to express an opinion that I wanted to see them, and I never had anything turned down.

Matloff: Did you have to go through the Secretary of Defense?

Lemnitzer: Yes. For example, both the Secretary of Defense and the President made it clear when I became Chairman--and they knew that I had been in the circuit for awhile--that I always had access to them. I naver had any qualms about not having personal contact with the Secretary of Defense or the President.

Matloff: Did it change in any way when Kennedy became President?

Lemnitzer: No, it did not. As a matter of fact, one of the things which I appreciated very much was that there was no change, because here was a president who was taking over from a president that had been in the military all of his life and the problems were entirely different. He needed lots of briefings for example, on the SIOP, the use of nuclear weapons, alert plans, and things of this kind.

Matloff: Let's talk a little about the perception of the Soviet threat when you were Chairman. Do you recall your view of the Soviet threat when you assumed that office?

Lemnitzer: I had made up my mind on that long before I became Chairman. I was in general agreement that the Soviets were a threat, that they had outbuilt us in military forces, and so on. I was a firm believer in the drafting of the NATO treaty. I'm such a believer in NATO that I'm still spending my time in the lecture and public speaking program today. So I just maintained that particular view all the way through--and it was confirmed by intelligence.

Matloff: Did your views change in any way as a result of your experience as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs?

Lemnitzer: No.

Matloff: Were there any differences among the Joint Chiefs of Staff on perceptions of the threat, or were you pretty unanimous as to what the threat was and how it appeared?

Lemnitzer: I don't recall that we had any great differences within the Chiefs. Occasionally we got some difference of opinion between the civilian side of Defense, the various assistant secretaries and so on, regarding the intensity or the character of the threat. But within the Chiefs, during my time, I just don't recall any major split that we had, insofar as the magnitude of the threat was concerned.

Matloff: Did you find any differences between Defense and State over the threat?

Lemnitzer: Occasionally, yes. But the one case that I remember was in drawing up the first military aid program--and now I'm going back before my tenure as Chairman--we came up with the first budget on that program. As I recall it, the committee on which I was the Defense representative for Mr. Forrestal came up with a $1.1 billion recommendation for military aid in the '49 or '50 budget--I don't recall which, but the first one. I was a member of the FMACC, the Foreign Military Assistance Coordinating Committee, and we were representatives of our respective secretaries. When that request went to the Office of Management and Budget, which was the Budget Bureau in those days, it recommended a reduction form the $1.1 billion to $900 and some million. We in the FMACC protested vigorously. I don't know how our protests got to President Truman, but we pointed out

to the president--it was in the paper, and I don't recall any personal contact with the president--that if this program wasn't at least $1 billion, it would not impress anybody. Between the secretaries, who were with us on this, and the FMACC, with their military and foreign policy people, the president moved it back up over $1 billion.

Matloff: This was before your period as Chairman?

Lemnitzer. Right.

Matloff: Let me ask you on strategy and strategic planning during your tenure as Chairman--who was primarily responsible and influential? the Joint Chiefs? the Secretary of Defense's shop? the services? Who was making the strategy in the Defense Department?

Lemnitzer: I would say that it was a combination of them all. There wasn't any sharp difference in issues. Where the disagreements came was in dealing with the roles and missions of each of the services to get the wherewithal, the material and the personnel to carry out its particular responsibilities.

Matloff: Do you recall what the squabbles were in those days, the differences in the service outlooks?

Lemnitzer: The first one was due to the general tendency to believe that nuclear weapons took care of a lot of the military problems. To a lot of people ground forces were not required in the future. That started under Gen. Taylor, when he was chief, and then I came along. Therein lay the problem. We had also a problem of air defense. We had a hell of a time with the differences within the services--the Air Force was developing a

weapon known as the BOMARC; the Army was developing the NIKE. I recall something now that I should have covered before where we had differences of opinion, and that was in space. That occurred when I was Chairman. As a result of that controversy, as I mentioned in my dedication speech for the Eisenhower monument [at West Point], great antagonism arose within the services in trying to get a hold on space. As it happened, the Army had the greatest wherewithal and program in the space area. We had Wernher von Braun and his people that we had brought over from Peenemunde. The Air Force and the Navy also wanted a big chunk of space. As I pointed out to the public, General Eisenhower saw the problems of interservice rivalry on the space issue, and he decided that this was not the role of the armed services. In his opinion--and he had lots of advisers on this--the requirements for space were going to be far in excess of what any of the services could expect in money or personnel. He decided that we were going to have another agency, NASA, to handle the space problem, and then the services could get back to their original basic missions.

Matloff: I take it you went along with this as Chairman?

Lemnitzer: Absolutely. This was a difficult one for me as former Chief of Staff of the Army.

Matloff: That's why I asked before, did you find your position as former Army Chief of Staff a help or a handicap at times?

Lemnitzer: But when the President made his decision and said there was not going to be anything in the services on space, I accepted it wholeheartedly and continued to support it.

Matloff: How closely did the Presidents and Secretaries of Defense that you served with as Chairman follow the developments in military strategy? I am thinking now about Eisenhower and Kennedy, and speaking about Gates and McNamara.

Lemnitzer: It's hard to compare them, because President Eisenhower was so familiar with the background of some of the things that were coming along in weapons, missiles, communications, helicopters, and things of this kind, by virtue of his being a former Chief of Staff and his close association with the military. He had a quite different attitude than President Kennedy, for example, who had no background and experience in it.

Matloff: How about among the Secretaries of Defense? Did you find any difference among them?

Lemnitzer: Greatly. You didn't have to spell things out in too much detail for Secretary Gates, but when Secretary McNamara came in, it was quite a drastic change. He wanted to get into all the details. And therein lay some of the problems that we had. As you probably know, shortly after President Kennedy was elected president, he made his first appointment--McNamara as Secretary of Defense. McNamara set up an office alongside Secretary Gates and started to get right into the business, but Secretary Gates made it clear that he was still Secretary. I remember some of the comments that Secretary McNamara made, that he was going to cut down the size of the Defense Department, that it had much too much people, only to find, as years went on, that he took unto the Defense Department many of the things

that were the responsibilities of the services, particularly in procurement, and things of this kind. It expanded rather than declined.

Matloff: This raises a question in connection with strategic planning. The McNamara period is usually associated with utilizing cost analysis techniques, or systems analysis. What were the strengths or weaknesses of the systems analysis approach in connection with the work of the Joint Chiefs and Joint Staff? I'm speaking specifically in the strategy field. How did you react to that?

Lemnitzer: Very controversial. When we would work long and hard to resolve some of the issues between the services and produce a final document to get to the Secretary of Defense, and in following it up find out that it was sent down to a systems analysis group with no military experience at all, and depending on them primarily, whether to approve or modify it, it didn't go well with the Chiefs, as you can imagine, because here were a lot of young, brilliant people, but without any experience.

Matloff: Are you speaking particularly of Dr. Enthoven's analysts?

Lemnitzer: That's right.

Matloff: Let me ask you this question about the strategy of flexible response which began to come into the news more and more, particularly with the coming of the Kennedy administration. How important did you regard the adoption of the military strategy of flexible response? Did this sit well with you, in light of your previous line of thinking?

Lemnitzer: I considered it one of the most important adoptions of overall strategy. It was obvious that with the progress that the Soviet Union was

making in nuclear weapons, it was stupid to consider the massive retaliation concept, which was before it. I had a lot of difficulty on this with General De Gaulle later on.

Matloff: In your SACEUR hat?

Lemnitzer: When I was Vice Chief and Chief of Staff, and so on, it was so obvious that we were not going to nuclear war because there was a small attack on the western front.

Matloff: Did you have any problems with Dulles or any of the other exponents of massive retaliation, particularly in the Eisenhower administration, since this is identified with the massive retaliation policy.

Lemnitzer: No, I think that within the Defense Department and within the Joint Chiefs the problem was primarily with the Air Force on this one.

Matloff: Rather than with State, and with the Secretary of State, who had enunciated the doctrine?

Lemnitzer: I don't recall that we had any great difficulty in the acceptance of flexible response in lieu of massive retaliation.

Matloff: One aspect of flexible response is, of course, the limited war option. Did you view that as an important option for the President to have? Under massive retaliation there was some question about the role of limited war.

Lemnitzer: It is all wrapped up in the same ball of wax. It was obvious that we were dealing with a power that didn't have any nuclear weapons at one time, and now it had a considerable capability, almost coming on to match our own, and that we were going to nuclear war for minor issues

issues. And the principle difficulty in changing that over in our dealing with NATO and so on was primarily with the French.

Matloff: You met up with this problem in both your capacities. When we come to the NATO area, we'll talk about that part of it later, if we may. Let me direct your attention to the crisis areas that arose when you were in the Chairman's role, for example, the Bay of Pigs. What was the role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and of its Chairman in that invasion and crisis?

Lemnitzer: The role of the Chiefs was merely to keep in contact with the planning that was going on in State and CIA, and to offer advice on specific questions, or occasionally, when our contact officer saw that something was coming up, to give advice. But the advice was seldom requested and seldom adopted.

Matloff: Who set the instruction on giving advice to the CIA?

Lemnitzer: Occasionally Mr. Bissell was head of the planning in CIA.

Matloff: I meant who set the parameters of the role of the Joint Chiefs in in this connection? Was it the President? The Secretary of Defense?

Lemnitzer: Just as it had been accepted, the normal military advisers to things that were going on in the political and foreign policy field.

Matloff: There was no special instruction in this case?

Lemnitzer: No, none.

Matloff: Were the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff sought? Did anybody seek the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in planning this operation?

Lemnitzer: No, I want to get this one very clear. Certain aspects were mentioned to the Chiefs. This was a CIA project. I've had hundreds of

interviews on this, and I try to emphasize these features, because I was right in the middle of this one. The idea started in the last months of Eisenhower's presidency. The idea was that trouble was brewing in Cuba; that Castro had turned out to be a communist; and that there were lots of Cubans around and through Central America who were violently opposed to Castro. The project was conceived within CIA to build up, train, and equip a force of Cubans to make a night landing on a remote part of Cuba to get up into a redoubt where they could not be successfully dealt with, and that would provide a rallying point for the Cuban people. That was the concept. As time went on, planning began to change, and we never had a hand in deciding that you should do this or that. We did give an indication that there was a reasonable chance of success of a Cuban force making a clandestine landing under cover of darkness in a remote part of Cuba to get into a redoubt. Yes, we said that there was a reasonable chance of success. We never had a chance to look at the whole plan because it kept changing. It changed to a Normandy type of landing at the most vulnerable part right near where Castro's military capabilities were.

Matloff: Would you say that the JCS were adequately informed in the course of this planning?

Lemnitzer: I don't know how you would measure the word "adequately."

Matloff: Were they kept abreast of the changes in the plan, for example?

Lemnitzer: As the changes were going on, they were never put up to the Joint Chiefs of Staff to approve or disapprove. We were on the outside

of the planning. Mr. Bissell and his staff held it very closely, as they should have. Of course, one of the critical factors, as I pointed out before the Senate committee, was the president's decision to cancel the air attack on Cuban forces the morning of the day of the landing.

Matloff: Were the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed of that before he did it?

Lemnitzer: No, never.

Matloff: What else went wrong in handling the operation, would you say, in looking back, aside from the problems of planning, logistics, and airlift?

Lemnitzer: The constant changing, bit by bit, in the concept. They were small individual changes which resulted in a drastic change of the concept of the whole thing.

Matloff: What lessons would you say were learned from the handling of that operation?

Lemnitzer: That there was not close enough contact. It was in the wrong place. The original concept we agreed with. There were lots of clandestine operations like this going on all around the world. But this one changed. It involved small changes, but it ultimately came to a drastic change in the concept. It went so far as to cancel the most critical part of the whole attack, without notifying or asking the Chiefs about it. There was not close enough contact, also, during the planning of this.

Matloff: Between whom?

Lemnitzer: Between the Chiefs, or the Defense Department, and the CIA.

Matloff: You recall that there was a study group set up afterwards, the Cuban Study Group so-called?

Lemnitzer: Yes, I do. General Taylor ran it.

Matloff: They came out with some recommendations about the role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Cold War operations. Did you agree with those recommendations?

Lemnitzer: I don't recall what they were.

Matloff: There was some discussion that the Joint Chiefs would have to be drawn in more on questions of economic and political matters. They couldn't be left out; they would have to be consulted. Their opinion and advice would have to be drawn upon, too, among other things.

Lemnitzer: This is sort of an idealistic statemment--that there should be closer contact. Implied was that if the Joint Chiefs had made a recommendation it would be adopted. Those are things that didn't occur.

Matloff: Were you consulted by that study group, do you recall?

Lemnitzer: Not consulted, no.

Matloff: It was an independent group?

Lemnitzer: That was an independent group, with Gen. Taylor and Bobby Kennedy.

Matloff: ADM Burke was on it.

Lemnitzer: Right.

Matloff: Another development which you may also remember was that Kennedy gave instructions, following the Bay of Pigs operation, that the Joint Chiefs of Staff should henceforth look at questions transcending purely military considerations. Does that ring a bell?

Lemnitzer: I remember it very well.

Matloff: Were you and the Joint Chiefs comfortable with these instructions?

Lemnitzer: No, absolutely not. Let me tell you where it came to a head--at one of the first meetings of the National Security Council after Kennedy became President. I accompanied Secretary McNamara to that meeting. I think it was only about the third or fourth meeting. We went through the agenda. I was not a member of the Council, but I was in attendance, and after we went through the regular agenda that was circulated, the President said, "I understand you fellows want to talk about Korea." So, some guy in the back row got up and said, "Yes sir, we have studied and evaluated the Korean situation and we recommend that the American troops be withdrawn from Korea as it is very likely to get us involved in a war on the continent of Asia." And so I thought to myself, my God, I wonder where I was in all this, and I said to Secretary McNamara, "Mr. Secretary, what the hell is all this about, did you know that this study was going on?" He responded, "I heard that they were going to make a study of it. Don't you know anything?" I said, "Never heard of it. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had never heard of it." He said, "Mr. President, Gen. Lemnitzer earlier this year or last year had a division in Korea, and he's surprised at this recommendation. I suggest that he explain the situation to you." So I said, "This recommendation which involves withdrawal of military forces from the continent of Asia has never been referred to the Joint Chiefs of Staff." The President was kind of shaken by this, and then I said, "I had a division in Korea; I know the Korean situation very well; and I know I can speak on the views of

the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We would not recommend under any circumstances the withdrawal of American forces from Korea. We've got a great investment in Korea." I had the number of casualties and wounded, and even the money at my fingertips in those days, and I said, "It's just incredible that such a study could be made without the Joint Chiefs of Staff views and I can assure you that the Joint Chiefs of Staff are unanimously opposed." The President got kind of red in the face, and he said, "That's all for this meeting. The meeting's adjourned." We never heard another thing about it until the year that Mr. Carter was running for president, when the same thing was recommended again, by the same people, over in State.

Matloff: In this question of the area in which the Joint Chiefs should be operating after the Bay of Pigs operation--the recommendation that they look at questions transcending purely military considerations--your feeling was that this was not the proper role for the Joint Chiefs? Do I understand that correctly, or not?

Lemnitzer: Yes, it was. I'm glad that you mentioned this, because I had gotten off the track a little bit. On one study that they had, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were opposed to some action that was taken. Either CIA or State was getting more aggressive in an action. The President at the end of the National Security Council meeting directed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff study the economic and other aspects and not restrict their recommendations to the military. That's right.

Matloff: Did you feel that was good and proper guidance?

Lemnitzer: I thought that it was crazy.

Matloff: That this was not the proper area for the Joint Chiefs?

Lemnitzer: Because we could not have the basis for the study of the economic impacts of it. I thought that was about the most far out decision that President Kennedy made, to my knowledge, during his tenure.

Matloff: In looking at the records, I learned that later on President Johnson issued similar instructions.

Lemnitzer: He did? I didn't know that.

Matloff: Soon after he came into office. Let's focus on the crisis that arose in Berlin in 1961. Do you recall the role of the Joint Chiefs in that crisis? For example, on the call up of the reserves? Did you and the Joint Chiefs feel that this was a good recommendation? Do you remember the logic? Why you felt that way?

Lemnitzer: We recommended it. Let's see, how to get at this. President Kennedy had two deep concerns when he took over. I briefed him for three or four days at the residence he was occupying in Georgetown before the inauguration, and I asked President Eisenhower every time I had a chance, "Would you please pass this on to President Kennedy when he takes over, because he hasn't any background in this." One of Kennedy's concerns was that he would be awakened at two o'clock in the morning with the news that there was a flock of airplanes and missiles on the way and that he should launch our retaliatory weapons. He felt that this could happen. The other thing he worried about was that some sergeant or lieutenant would get angry at the Soviet harassment on the Autobahn in Europe and would shoot a gun. Those two things bothered him very very deeply.

So, on the occasion of the building of the Berlin wall, we didn't know what was going to happen. We had no intelligence of what Khrushchev's total plan was. But here they were building a wall about six inches away from the border line and putting a cage around Berlin. We considered in the Chiefs the question of "What the hell can we do?" I carried the ball. I was the representative at the big meeting at the White House, I was on the second story at the White House in a big room, in which everybody was shaken by this decision to build a wall. Everybody had a different idea as to what we should do. I recommended in behalf of the Chiefs that we do not sit idly by and have this go on without some positive reaction. Our reaction was that we should send a couple of divisions to Europe; we should call up reserves or the National Guard; and we should reinforce our forces in Berlin by one brigade. The Vice President was in Europe at the time visiting in Berlin and it was suggested that he stay there to receive the additional brigade coming into Berlin. That action was taken. And the President approved, in spite of the fact that every other agency at that meeting said that what we were proposing would be provocative.

Matloff: How about the State Department? Do you recall its position?

Lemnitzer: It was not in favor of it.

Matloff: Not in favor of the call up of reserves?

Lemnitzer: I don't recall that they opposed it; they certainly didn't support it. No one at this meeting supported calling up reserves and sending additional troops to Europe. Everyone thought it was provocative.

Matloff: This raises a question about the handling of this crisis, compared with that of the Bay of Pigs. What was the difference?

Lemnitzer: Admiral Burke and I were with President Kennedy on the afternoon of the 17th of April [1961]--I think that was the date of the Bay of Pigs--and we saw that the President was very, very troubled. Bobby Kennedy was in and out occasionally. It was obvious that President Kennedy recalled some of the decisions that had been made, particularly the cancelling of the air attack. You could just see the impact of the Berlin wall registering on the President, and his reaction in approving the Joint Chief recommendation.

I was at the Athens meeting of the NATO ministers, at which nuclear guidelines were adopted for the first time. It was in May of President Kennedy's first year. As Secretary McNamara and I were getting ready to leave, we got a directive from the president, to get to Bangkok. The Pathet Lao had broken the cease-fire moratorium, and had come down to the Mekong River. Our directive from the President was to determine whether the Mekong River was a sufficient obstacle to keep the Pathet Lao from going into Thailand and whether the Thais had the capability to stop the infiltration of Pathet Lao into Thailand.

Matloff: This issue came up during the Berlin crisis?

Lemnitzer: Shortly thereafter. It was in May of the first year.

Matloff: So you were getting crisis after crisis.

Lemnitzer: Secretary McNamara and I flew from Athens, and instead of going to Washington, went to Bangkok, and looked at the situation. The Mekong River in the dry season in May was not an obstacle at all. [redacted]

[redacted]

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Marshal Sarit [?] and Secretary McNamara clashed very sharply on who would pay for the equipment for the establishment of a border security force. And so nothing was acomplished. But when we returned from that trip--we went to Saigon and back to Washington-- we recomended, and Secretary McNamara agreed, that we send an infantry battalion and a tactical air force to each of two air bases in northern Thailand.

Matloff: We'll talk about the east Asia problem soon. You were speaking about the differences in the handling of the Bay of Pigs and the Berlin crisis. What did you take away as the lessons of the crisis over Berlin in dealing with the Soviet Union, and about American handling of the crisis?

Lemnitzer: There was no problem, because they were military activities. The military had control of it. We didn't have some agency like CIA operating out in left field. We were dealing with our own military capabilities in responding to these things.

Matloff: I think that is probably what led you to the Thailand issue, because there again there was a recommendation about some application of force.

Lemnitzer: We were to occupy two airbases in northern Thailand to let the Pathet Lao know that we weren't going to stand idly by and see them come down and infiltrate northern Thailand.

Matloff: Would it be fair then to say that this was one of the lessons that you drew from the Berlin experience, that there had to be a demonstration of force of some kind?

Lemnitzer: It was, yes.

Matloff: Since we're onto Southeast Asia, let's talk a little bit about Laos and Vietnam.

Lemnitzer: Wait a minute, the Bay of Pigs was on the 17th of April. The Athens guidelines meeting and then the recommendation to go into Thailand, were in May, the next month.

Matloff: We also have the Berlin crisis slithering in.

Lemnitzer: Exactly. In these we had the authority of the President, who approved the actions, and it was up to us to carry them out.

Matloff; This was the big difference from the handling of the Bay of Pigs operation. On the Laos and Vietnam involvement, what do you think was at stake for American security in these areas during your tenure as Chairman? Do you feel that there was an important stake here for American security? Remember, there was the civil war in Laos, and it was the beginning of an involvement of sorts in Vietnam as well. Was there any agreement in the Joint Chiefs, or between the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense, that American security interests were involved in the developments in Laos and Vietnam?

Lemnitzer: The first decisions that were made dealt with how you carry out the provisions of the Geneva accord with regard to Southeast Asia. As you know, 12 nations attended that particular conference in Geneva. The United States did not sign the resolution that was made, but it divided Southeast Asia into four parts--Laos, Cambodia, North Vietnam, South Vietnam. The decision was made by the President and approved by the Congress, that we were going to assist South Vietnem in building up its security, its economy,

and so on. That was our objective. We were doing the same in various parts of the world. And so we first sent a military advisory group into Saigon.

Matloff: This is in the wake of the Geneva Conference of 1954?

Lemnitzer: Yes.

Matloff: Did you have any impressions of Diem? I don't know whether you ever met up with him?

Lemnitzer: A great many times. I visited Saigon with Secretary McNamara; it must have been 8 or 10 times. Each time we had long conferences with President Diem. I admired President Diem, who was a great leader. His weakness lay in the form of the action his brother was involved in. Up until the time I left to go to Paris to take over as SACEUR, I had great confidence in Diem. But I lost track of the developments in Diem's situation and I was greatly shocked when I heard of his assassination.

Matloff: There has been some thinking that had he remained on the scene actively, events might have gone somewhat differently.

Lemnitzer: I'm sure. But with his leadership.

Matloff: Did you believe in the domino theory about Southeast Asia?

Lemnitzer: I won't say that I believed in it. I believed that if the North Vietnamese succeeded in overruning South Vietnam, they would overrun Laos and Cambodia, yes. If that's an expression of the domino theory, one state falling after another, I believed in it.

Matloff: Do you recall in conection with the civil war going on in Laos in 1961, the same year in which all these crises were breaking, whether you and the Joint Chiefs recommended the use of force?

Lemnitzer: No, I don't think that we recommended the use of force. We recommended the military advisory group there.

Matloff: How did you evaluate the Kennedy role in handling the Laos civil war crisis?

Lemnitzer: I wasn't around here too long after that. I was over in SHAPE.

Matloff: Were you around when Kennedy decided to send advisors to Vietnam?

Lemnitzer: Yes.

Matloff: Was this issue put to the Joint Chiefs for consultation or advice? Were the Joint Chiefs brought in on this, and did they go along with this?

Lemnitzer: The Chiefs went along, just like with MAAGS in various countries all around the world. I don't know how many MAAGS. I had a hand in establishing the MAAGS for the handling of military equipment.

Matloff: You saw this as another step in the right direction.

Lemnitzer: That's right.

Matloff: Let me project ahead now. You may not want to go into this area, but in your view, did we fail in Vietnam, and if so, why and in what respects?

Lemnitzer: We failed in Vietnam, yes. Definitely it was a defeat, both a military and a political defeat. In my opinion, as a matter of fact I've lectured on this all over, it's the first major military defeat in American history.

Matloff: How would you evaluate Kennedy's role in handling the Vietnam crisis, as you look back on it?

Lemnitzer: I thought up until the time I left as Chairman that he was doing reasonably well and that he had the right objective. He wanted to

prevent these nations from going communist, and he didn't have any particular alternative. That was our solution in those days. That was standard operating procedure.

Matloff: Was the factor, in your view, as you look back now, of American public opinion taken sufficiently into account in waging a limited war that became protracted? The writers on limited war have had sober second thoughts on this subject.

Lemnitzer: I don't think that the public for a long time understood what restrictions and limitations were put on the military. I think the great failure in Vietnam was the way we handled our own forces. We did not take the wraps off. I recall sitting in my office at SHAPE just outside of Paris. I opened The Herald Tribune, and I learned that President Johnson at a press conference announced that we would never attack North Vietnam. I thought, for God's sake, what kind of a war is this? If we had turned our people loose, and made a proper attack on the North, up around Hanoi, and so forth, it would have been an entirely different war. But I was involved not by remote control and the only thing that worried me was the persistent restrictions upon the use of the United States military forces.

Matloff: Can you think of ways in which other Vietnams can be avoided?

Lemnitzer: Yes, I can conceive that if we're careful and decide that U.S. military action is necessary, we use the full power of the military to win.

Matloff: Let me turn your attention, if I may, to some Cold War policies in general. You remember that basically we were operating under the policy of containment. Did you believe that this was a realistic policy? that the assumptions which underlay containment were realistic or credible?

Lemnitzer: Yes, I did. I did have certain exceptions to the idea of containment because I was a member of the teams that were involved in a study known as Exercise Solarium. I was in London on the Kermit Roosevelt lectures, and I visited my son, who was a lieutenant assigned to Germany. After the lecturing part of my visit, my wife and I took a couple weeks leave to visit him.

Matloff: Do you remember about what year this was?

Lemnitzer: That was the first year of President Eisenhower's tenure as President. We went out to dinner the night I got into Germany, and damned if a motorcycle courier didn't arrive and deliver a message to me to return to Washington immediately. I was Deputy Commandant of the National War College. I was getting the military aid program underway, and I was working on the NATO treaty. I had to come back quickly. In the early months the President and Secretary Dulles held a conference--Dulles was visiting the President up on the top of the White House, in the solarium--and General Eisenhower decided to have an overall study on the strategy that we should undertake during his administration. When I came back, I found out that I was assigned to a team. There were three teams. One was headed by George Kennan, who advocated containment; another one was a little bit more aggressive type of policy; and the third one was a considerably more aggressive type. I was assigned to the third team.

Matloff: The most aggressive team?

Lemnitzer: Yes. I made the presentation for our team at the end of the six weeks period, during the summertime, at the National War College.

Kennan gave the conclusions of his team, and I forget who was the next one. ADM Connelly, who was the head of our team, was the president of the Naval War College at the time. Our team's recommendation was to be more aggressive--the President's question of Quemoy and Matsu was very much in the wind at that time--that we should be a lot more aggressive, help the Chinese, and be damned sure that the communists don't take Quemoy. That was the most popular recommendation, I forget the wording in the recommendation, but it called for a much more aggressive policy. It lasted until the budget was put together, and it cost too much.

Matloff: The recommendation of your team?

Lemnitzer: Yes. Our team's recommendation involved too much preparation and building up too many forces for it, and taking too much of a militaristic approach.

Matloff: Basically you felt that the assumptions of the containment policy were valid?

Lemnitzer: Valid with a bit of building up of our strength so as to assist in containment and to resist intruding in other parts of the world, if necessary.

Matloff: I want to ask you a question also on military aid. You've spoken on this and were involved in this for so many years. How effective do you view military aid, on the basis of your long experience with it, as a tool in the Cold War? Is there a general impression that you have? Do you see it as effective in some cases, not in others?

Lemnitzer: I think that military aid was extremely effective under the conditions that existed. When I was sent to London by Mr. Forrestal to

sit in on the military committee of the five powers--Britain, France, Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg--the one directive we got from Mr. Forrestal was to find out what they needed. It was the easiest assignment I ever had. I sat in on two days of the meeting and I found out that they needed everything. They were flat on their faces as a result of the war. There was no military power in Europe, which was wide open to the Soviet Union. I felt that the original military aid program was designed to assist our European friends. But what happened? Louis Johnson was the Secretary of Defense. He was opposed to military aid. We were just getting the military program underway when the Korean War broke out. So what was planned for Europe had to be spread around to Korea. I have a couple of yarns to tell about the appearance of General Bradley and myself before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House. We were presenting the military aid program, that first budget, to the Committee on the 25th of June, 1950. I got home from the presentation on a Saturday noon, and I found out that the war had started in Korea. The committee started raising hell with me. They were approving about a billion dollar budget, and asking whether we were getting the organization started. They were always battering me as to how much we were going to send to Korea. The committee was saying, "What can we send to Korea? Take all the wraps off and give them anything that is available. The South Koreans need help." So I sent messages over and I asked Gen. MacArthur's headquarters to let us know what they could get for Korea. Every day we used to catch hell because there were no answers from MacArthur's headquarters. They were trying to fight a war. I'll never forget, if I live to be a thousand years old. I

got a message from MacArthur's headquarters, and it told me what we were going to give under the military aid program to Korea. Do you know what it was? It was 200 miles of field wire. I was tangled up in that G---D--- field wire for the rest of my time on the military aid program. That was the only thing that we had there. The Eighth Army was disorganized. It was only an occupying force. It didn't have a lot of equipment that could be turned over to the Koreans. But the point I'm making is that of the limited resources of the military aid program, which was designed for Europe, a large amount had to go to Korea, and also we had to give some to the French fighting in Southeast Asia. So the first budgetary amounts were spread. I was here in Washington and living in the Pentagon the day that I went out with Secretary Johnson to Andrews Air Force Base for the first B-17s, under the program, to be delivered to the British.

Matloff: So the program got somewhat diluted?

Lemnitzer: Yes. Diluted badly.

Matloff: Did this have an impact on its effectiveness in certain areas of the world?

Lemnitzer: It did, because it was spread over so much.

Matloff: I won't belabor the question which is often raised by some historians about the origins of the Cold War. There's a revisionist thesis, that the Cold War is as much the responsibility of the United States as of the Soviet Union. Some historians, particularly leftist historians, have been maintaining that the Russians were reacting to aggressive American policies in the postwar period. Do you put any stock in that?

Lemnitzer: No, I don't, absolutely not, because the Russians did not demobilize. That was one of the main features that caused the military aid program to be adopted. Our European allies--they were not our allies in 1946, '47 and '48--were powerless. Their military forces did not exist; their economies were in bad repair. The military aid program was to provide the beginning of the rebuilding of their military forces. The reason that NATO was adopted was that the Russian threat, not having demobilized after WWII, was so great, that there was no way that they could handle it themselves. I think it was right. Now, here I had a problem in this building in the military aid program. I found out that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were starting to grumble and growl that I was working on a program that was going to take a lot of their equipment away from them. And we were. I remember a conversation I had with Gen. Collins, who was really my boss. He was Chief of Staff of the Army. I remember that I said to him, "But General, if we don't use our military equipment effectively, to build up the strength of our allies, you are going to have to use World War II equipment in the United States Army for 50 years. The only way you're going to get any new equipment is to get rid of this equipment and strengthen our allies." That's the argument that I used on the Hill. Surely, we had this equipment running out of our ears.

Matloff: That proved to be an effective argument?

Lemnitzer: Absolutely. We got some substantial budgets. NATO wouldn't have been anything during the time that I was SACEUR if we didn't have the strength that was largely provided by American military equipment.

Matloff: Let me ask you in the area of arms control and disarmament--this is still during the period of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. What was your view toward arms control and disarmament in that period? This is a period when the Joint Chiefs of Staff were coming up against this question of whether there should be a comprehensive test ban treaty. As I recall it, the Joint Chiefs had misgivings on that score. Do you recall any views by yourself or the Joint Chiefs on the comprehensive test ban treaty? In '63 we do get the limited test ban treaty, actually, but this one gets turned down.

Lemnitzer: I don't recall that we opposed a test ban treaty. We had our suspicions about verification.

Matloff: That's the issue that usually is mentioned.

[redacted]

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Matloff: Do you recall, was there any pressure by the administration, particularly the Kennedy administration, on the Joint Chiefs in connection

with arms control and disarmanent? in connection with the test ban treaties?

Lemnitzer: I don't recall any.

Matloff: That suggestion comes up later on, and you find it in the Taylor book.

Lemnitzer: In what?

Matloff: In Maxwell Taylor's book, Swords and Plowshares, the question was raised whether there was pressure put on or not put on, but that probably was beyond your period, I imagine.

Lemnitzer: That's right, but, in general, our concern was on the verification issue all along. We were out in front of the Soviet Union. We didn't know too much about what they were doing. We were kind of shaken by their getting a nuclear capability and the way they got it. That had a major impact upon the flexible response problem and the NATO strategy. Jumping way ahead, I had this problem with Gen. De Gaulle when I was SACEUR, and I'll talk about that when we get to that point.

Matloff: In other words, there was a relationship between strategic planning and arms control. And this comes, apparently, along with the NATO question.

Lemnitzer: That's correct.

Matloff: I'll try to wind up the area of relations with OSD in terms of perspectives. As you look back on OSD organization and management, as a result of your experience as Chairman, and any subsequent reflection that you may have done about this question, how do you see the roles of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Chairman in the OSD setup? and the relationships

between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense? I'm speaking now in terms of any need for changes in the structure or working relations at the top levels in OSD. I'm sure that you have reflected on this.

Lemnitzer: I've testified before Congress on about four occasions on the question of the reorganization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I do not agree with the establishment of something almost equivalent to a single Chief of Staff. I'm violently opposed to this. I think that the structure we've got can be expanded to meet requirements. It's the conduct of the business in the Joint Chiefs of Staff that needs looking at. As I pointed out to you, the impasses, and issues, are talked over and they're sort of mollified, in order to get agreement. I think that's entirely the wrong idea. I think that under the past chairman, Gen. Jones, the Chiefs were allowed to be at an impasse for weeks and weeks on important issues.

Matloff: You would insist that they resolve them?

Lemnitzer: In my time, they had to resolve them within a week or send it to the next level. The Cabinet couldn't be at an impasse more than a week, until he issue got up to the next level.

Matloff: Would that be your recommendation on this?

Lemnitzer: That is correct. I think a single chief of staff is dangerous, for the reason that he is affected by his military specialty where his service is. I think that you have to have all of your services, because total war today involves all of the forces, land, sea and air.

Matloff: So you would keep the services and the departments as they are now?

Lemnitzer: That's correct.

Matloff: How about the Secretary of Defense? Any changes in his functions or his relationships?

Lemnitzer: No, I think that he responds directly to the President; the Chiefs respond to the Secretary of Defense. Frankly, I've tried to explain it in many ways. It is not a question of the organization and the structure, as it is in personal relationships. When Louis Johnson was the Secretary of Defense, he didn't ask the Chiefs for any recommendations. He had his own ideas; he ignored them. He was violently opposed to NATO; and was twice violently opposed to the military aid program. No structure could deal effectively with what was going on in those days. I personally feel that the relationship between the President and the Secretary of Defense depends on personalities. There isn't any structure there; it's personal relationships. I believe also that the relationships between the Secretary and the Chiefs of Staff are proper. There's a tendency among many of my friends now that the Chairman ought to be in the chain of command. I don't see that that's going to do any good, if you've got the wrong personalities in the Chairmen, and so forth. The Chairman can have his views. But I remember a statement that Admiral King made at one time. I wasn't a very enthusiatic supporter of ADM King. But after the war I was Gen. Marshall's representative on the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, and I read a statement that the CNO brought. ADM King said that he was frustrated and impatient during the war with the Joint Chiefs of Staff operation. But he said, "In retrospect, after we discussed and argued a major decision within the Joint Chiefs of Staff, we invariably got a better decision than we would

have gotten if they had adopted my decision initially." He said that after the discussions, which caused him a lot of pain, because of delay and so forth, came a better decision than when he first arrived at a recommendation.

Matloff: Let me turn to the personalities, styles, the effectiveness of the Secretaries of Defense and other top officials in OSD and the Joint Chiefs of Staff with whom you worked over the years. Let me start with McElroy, one of the Secretaries with whom you had some dealings. Do you have any impressions of him as a Secretary of Defense--how he worked and how he appeared to you in terms of style and effectiveness?

Lemnitzer: Yes. My impression of Secretary McElroy was, first, that he had a short fuze. He was inclined to make decisions before they were carefully thought out. We had no difficulty with support that he gave to the military, but he was inclined to be too quick on the trigger.

Matloff: How about Gates?

Lemnitzer: One of the best. And I attribute it partly to his service as Navy Secretary and partly to his general personality. He was careful, thorough, decisive.

Matloff: McNamara?

Lemnitzer: A tendency to try to dilute or oversee important military decisions as a result of his setting up the systems analysis staff. I thought that he was inclined to deal too much in the details of the services, with their procurement and things of that kind. I was strongly opposed to the restrictions that he imposed on the military during the events in the war in Southeast Asia. The restrictions came from him and his administration.

They didn't always come from Congress. There was blame enough to go all the way around.

Matloff: Gen. Twining, the predecessor with whom you worked?

Lemnitzer: As Chairman I felt that the operations were slowed down because of his indecisiveness or his attempting to resolve things more quickly or send them up to the proper level.

Matloff: ADM Burke, a member of the Joint Chiefs?

Lemnitzer: I thought that he was a great CNO. He was forthright, very fair, but strongly Navy.

Matloff: Gen. Thomas White, on the Air Force side.

Lemnitzer: That's my classmate. I considered him one of the most rounded, intellectual, fair, thorough, dependable members of the Chiefs of Staff I have known.

Matloff: One more Air Force man, Gen. Curtis LeMay.

Lemnitzer: I think LeMay was very positive. He was inclined not to consider properly the views or requirements of the other services.

Matloff: In terms of the most effective Secretary of Defense with whom you served, if you had to rate one, whom would you pick?

Lemnitzer: Secretary Gates. I was with General Marshall for a very short time, but on the overall, Secretary Gates.

Matloff: I'll raise the same question about two presidents, Eisenhower and Kennedy. Would you comment on their styles, personalities and effectiveness? You served under many presidents, but I'll pick on those two. If you want

to comment on any others, that will be fine. I know that you had worked with Eisenhower in many capacities.

Lemnitzer: Yes, I came to the conclusion, as I pointed out in my remarks at West Point, that Eisenhower was one of the most unifying presidents that we had--unifying by pulling issues together. That came up very much in my going around and talking to people about the Eisenhower monument. They said, "Nothing happened during the period of Eisenhower. There was peace." I responded, "But what brought the quiet and peaceful period of eight years about? Because he dealt with the issues as they came up and got them resolved in the early stages, they didn't become major issues."

Matloff: This raises a very interesting point. There is a big debate going on among the scholars about Eisenhower. Recently there's been a lot of literature to the effect that he was an active president, unlike the earlier view that he was rather passive. There has been talk of a hidden hand leadership, that behind the scenes he was really manipulating and controlling things. Would you go along with that?

Lemnitzer: Yes, I would. He settled things behind the scenes and without a great deal of play.

Matloff: Could you shed some light on how and where he was getting his information and advice as president? Would he pull you in, for example, on issues other than Army, if he wanted to use you as a sounding board? Did he rely on trusted old friends and colleagues with whom he had worked, or was he relying on the formal apparatus?

Lemnitzer: I believe that his experience as Supreme Commander, in dealing with the other nations of the world, his allies, and so forth, and the periods of his military service were a factor in his conduct as president. He had a tremendous background. Kennedy didn't have that.

Matloff: Let's switch now to Kennedy. What impressions do you have of his style and his effectiveness as president?

Lemnitzer: In my opinion, what stands out about President Kennedy, is a great human being and individual. He was a fast learner. The things that he learned from the Bay of Pigs stand out, in my opinion, in his quick decision and resolution of military problems later.

Matloff: Then he improved as time went on?

Lemnitzer: That's correct. I have an opinion of President Johnson. He was inclined to do a deal in the politics even of the military affairs, but he was not a great leader, in my opinion. I came to that conclusion when as Supreme Commander in Europe I was confronted with the Czech invasion in 1968. I was pressing the Secretary General of NATO--we can discuss this in further detail when you get on SACEUR--but what I wanted was political guidance. We put in effect all the clandestine military arrangements and plans that we had, but we couldn't get any political guidance from the Secretary General. I was also on the phone with this building, about what the president was going to do. I got the word that came right out of the White House, I'm sure it came out of the White House. He said, "We just stand back now and see what position our allies take." That to me indicated complete failure of leadership.

Matloff: Let me ask you one last question about your role as Chairman. Looking back, what do you regard as your major achievements or successes during your tenure as Chairman?

Lemnitzer: I must put right up at number one obtaining a single integrated operational plan for the employment of strategic weapons--getting that particular one resolved. Another one was the formation of the Green Berets support. It was primarily an Army function, and there was the obvious need for a force of that particular kind. Of my achievements of which I am proud, not necessarily as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I would note particularly the military aid program. It produced a strength that was badly needed after World War II. I'll tell you another one--not as Chairman, though--the adoption of flexible response. That occurred ultimately in NATO when I was SAACEUR. But the beginning of it was when I was Chairman.

Matloff: On the other side of the coin, any disappointments, any uncompleted tasks of that period, that you wish you could have done more with had there been time or had the circumstances been different?

Lemnitzer: The disappointment was in our failure in Southeast Asia, but I was not in there when the final collapse occurred. We were on a pretty good start, but we failed. Although I was in Europe, it was a disappointment.

Matloff: Is there any question I should have asked you about your chairmanship that I did not?

Lemnitzer: That one I don't know.