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

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

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

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

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Office of the Secretary of Defense 5 USC 552  
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS  
Date: 08 MAR 2013 Authority: EO 13526  
Declassify:  Deny in Full: \_\_\_\_\_  
Declassify in Part: \_\_\_\_\_  
Reason: \_\_\_\_\_  
MDR: 13-M-1062

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Goldberg: Who was your chief assistant in integration matters?

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

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

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

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

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

Matloff: You felt both were correct?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Goldberg: From the White House?

McNamara: Yes.

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

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

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

McNamara: I surely do.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

McNamara: Right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Goldberg: Per year?

McNamara: Per year, yes.

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

McNamara: I might be wrong.

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

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

Matloff: How about at the White House?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Power

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0 Years in office 8

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

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

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

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

Matloff: Over Vietnam, specifically?

McNamara: Yes.

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

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

Goldberg: Did you make any suggestions concerning a successor?

McNamara: I think that I suggested Clark.

Goldberg: You thought it was the proper choice.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Goldberg: You didn't choose Lemnitzer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

McNamara: No.

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

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

Goldberg: Were there refusals to provide information?

McNamara: No.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Matloff: How about their styles of operating?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Goldberg: You didn't renew him as Chairman.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

McNamara: He wasn't appointed.

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

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

Kaplan: What was the source of the problem?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Page determined to be Unclassified  
Reviewed by Chief, RDD, WHS  
DMM EO 13526, Section 3.5  
Date MAR 08 2013

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

McNamara: That's for you all to decide.