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Matloff: This is part two of the oral history interview held with Mr. Paul H. Nitze on October 9, 1984, at 2:00 P.M. in Rosslyn, Virginia. Participating once again for the OSD Historical Office are Dr. Roger Trask and Dr. Maurice Matloff.

At our last meeting we were discussing area problems and crises that arose during your tenure as ISA head from 1961-63. We already talked about the Bay of Pigs operation and the Cuban missile crisis. We were just about to start on the problems of Laos and Vietnam, and I was going to ask about your attitude toward our involvement in Indochina back in that period. What did you think was at stake for American security or national interests?

Nitze: I had been much involved with the problems of the division of Germany and of Korea. They had been two of the central problems that had faced us in the post-war world, and here we had a third one, the division of Indochina. It seemed to me what was involved was the same issue that was involved in the other two instances, and that was whether Moscow would be able to upset the postwar settlement in those three areas in its favor. We had gone to great lengths in Germany and in Korea to see that they would not unilaterally upset those tail-ends of the war results.

Matloff: Did you believe in the domino theory in those days?

Nitze: I thought that there were two opposing sets of considerations. One was the consideration that I just mentioned--if one conceded to the Russians this instance of being able to unify on their terms a part of the world which had not been settled by World War II, that would have bad and continuing repercussions. On the other hand, there was the

question at issue as to whether or not it was practical for the United States to resist on the ground the advantages which, it seemed to me, the Communists, and those that they had affected and that were for them, had there. This was true both in Laos and in Vietnam. Prior to the election of 1960, one of my close friends, who had been in the State Department and left it to join the Standard Vacuum Oil Company, came back to Washington and gave me his impressions of what was going on in Southeast Asia. He led me to believe that the real danger was not in Laos but in Vietnam, that that would be a much more serious problem than the problems in either Thailand or Laos that the preceding administration had been most concerned with.

Matloff: Was there any reason for the difference in views, particularly in that first year of the Kennedy administration, when he was resorting to what looks more like negotiations in connection with Laos but beginning to think about force of one kind or another (or his military advisers at least) in connection with Vietnam? Did ISA get in on that kind of problem?

Nitze: We were very much in on all those problems, but I wouldn't have characterized it as you did. The very first area crisis group that Mr. Kennedy asked me to address myself to was the Laotian group. I was head of it during the period of the transition, prior to January 20th. I worked with Jack Irwin, who was then head of ISA, Tom Gates and his people, and Chris Herter, with respect to the Laotian question during those few days from January 1st to January 20th. It seemed to me that our ambassador on the spot, Amb. Winthrop Brown, made more sense than

anybody in Washington on the issue as to what to do in Laos. So I backed his recommendations, much to the anger of the people in the last administration, because they took a very unfavorable view of Amb. Brown's recommendations; they didn't agree with him. Later on the issue switched to Vietnam but all the arguments concerning Vietnam during the early years of the Kennedy administration were with respect to advisers--how many and what roles they should have--they weren't with respect to intervention. At the Vienna conference in the spring of 1961, when Mr. Kennedy met with Khrushchev, one of the principal issues had been the Laotian question. Mr. Kennedy thought that he had gotten an agreement with respect to Laos from Mr. Khrushchev. It subsequently turned out that Mr. Khrushchev either had a different view of that agreement or was clearly violating it, much to President Kennedy's anger. At that point Mr. Kennedy was the one who was most strongly in favor of military intervention in connection with Laos. I remember a meeting over in the White House at which Dean Rusk was present. As I recall it, at that meeting General Decker, Chief of Staff of the Army, was strongly opposed to military intervention. He said that it would take six divisions to be effective; you couldn't get them there; and if you did they would all die of yellow fever. I can remember Dean Rusk protesting and saying, "That I know isn't true, because I used to be head of the Rockefeller Foundation and our people were in charge of the program which eliminated yellow fever from that part of the world." It was only later that the proposition of military intervention in South Vietnam arose. My recollection was that there was a report by Gen. Maxwell Taylor and Walt

Rostow. They went over to look into the situation in Vietnam and came back with the recommendation that we introduce at least a division of troops into Vietnam at that time; my view was adamantly opposed to that. We had a meeting at the State Department at which I took a strong view against introducing troops. The reason advanced for doing so was that this would improve the morale of the South Vietnamese. It seemed to me that to put in an actual division or more would lead to further involvement and that this was not the place where we wanted to be involved. For the time being, I won that argument, with Mr. Kennedy finally siding with my view of it and against Maxwell Taylor and Walt Rostow. It was only later that we lost that argument.

Matloff: Did you have any impression of Diem? Had you met up with him at all? Were you surprised when the coup against him occurred?

Nitze: It did come as a surprise. My recollection is that Ros Gilpatric approved the telegram which more or less supported the coup taking place, but he did not consult with me about it.

Matloff: As you look back on it, do you regard that, along with the consequences of his death, as an important step in respect to American involvement? Did it have an impact, in your view?

Nitze: In my view it did. I deeply regretted that action. Not that I had any axe to grind for Diem, but it seemed to me to have been the wrong course of action to have taken.

Matloff: Did you have any sense, in terms of Kennedy's objectives in Vietnam, of whether he would have stayed in with forces had he remained in power, or whether he would have tried to withdraw?

Nitze: That's a very hard question to answer with confidence.

Matloff: Ros Gilpatric answered that one by saying that he thought Kennedy would have reduced the commitment and cut the losses. I don't know what he based that on, but I wondered if you had any inkling of that?

Nitze: The only inkling was this experience where the recommendation was strong from the State Department and the military to put in whatever forces Maxwell Taylor had recommended go in, and we in ISA fought it hard and Kennedy agreed with us.

Matloff: Do you recall whether you were encouraged or discouraged about the American involvement in Vietnam by the end of your tour in ISA?

Nitze: After all, we weren't all that much involved when I left and began working full time on Navy problems. It was two months prior to the time of Kennedy's assassination that he had nominated me to be Secretary of the Navy and I began being briefed by the Navy. By September of '63 I was no longer working hard on those other problems.

Matloff: One other crisis--the Berlin crisis of 1961-62, with the coming of the Berlin Wall and the like--were you drawn in on that one?

Nitze: Very much so. A committee was created called the Ambassadorial Group, of which Foy Kohler, the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, was chairman. The British, French, and Germans were represented. Underneath that Ambassadorial Group were two subordinate groups. One was called the Contingency Planning Group, and the other the Military Group. The Contingency Planning Group dealt with the question of what should be done immediately in response to various things that the Russians might do with respect to the access routes to

Berlin. The military committee, of which I was the chairman, dealt with the question of how you would follow it up, and what would be the military reaction to any situation which went beyond the immediate action and reaction. The members of that committee were in part civilians, representatives from the three embassies, ISA, and State, and in part military representatives from our Chiefs of Staff organization and from the NATO Joint Military Committee (a Britisher, a Frenchman, and a German). That was a very good committee. Originally there was a good deal of difference of opinion on how these various contingencies should be handled if they got beyond the initial stage, but eventually they understood what we were trying to do. We were trying to address the problem seriously and think it through right to the very end. The most difficult participant was with the French. This was in the days of General De Gaulle, who was not an enthusiastic supporter of U.S. policy nor interested in playing second fiddle to the United States. The French member of this committee was Admiral Duguet, a very wise and sensitive military man. He came to the conclusion that the work that we were doing in this committee was sound and solid and that the French should support it. So he went back to Paris and persuaded the French government to support the work we'd done. The upshot was that there was agreement, not necessarily in every detail, but there was substantial agreement on the entire body of work we had done in that committee. I think that it remains the most successful work of coordination with our allies that we've had at any time. You really ought to follow up in

your history on this Berlin contingency planning. It was an extremely important and interesting development.

Matloff: We hope the historians will do that. As regards the effect of arms control and disarmament, with which your career has obviously been very much involved, what role were you playing in ISA at this period on the limited test ban treaty and the proposed comprehensive test ban treaty?

Nitze: When I first saw Mr. Kennedy, after I had agreed to take the job in ISA, he made it clear that one of the things that he wanted me to pay particular attention to was arms control. He wanted me to devote myself to thinking through the arms control problem, which I tried to do. I had had some experience with arms control before, when I was the head of the Policy Planning Staff, particularly in 1952. Beyond that, I had been an adviser to the U.S. delegation of the eight-nation Disarmament Conference in Geneva in the summer of 1960. That delegation was headed by Frederick Eaton, who was one of my close friends. I was in Geneva with him for a period of time and saw what that was all about. It was purely a propaganda exercise. There was no possibility that any of that would ever result in anybody's doing anything useful or concrete. So to address this problem in something more than a propaganda way was really breaking new ground; it hadn't been done. We did a great deal of work in that field. There was a man named Lanier, who was head of the disarmament section in ISA at the time, and due to some family problem he had to go back to Cincinnati and run his family business. He left me and the problem was to find somebody else to take his place. I

finally asked Captain Elmo Zumwalt, who was on my staff but working on other matters, to head up that section; he did a first-class job, and developed a good staff under him. So we had a unit there that was as good as any in the government on the question of arms control. For a while the issue was one of masterminding what remained of the eight-nation disarmament approach, but one also had to do some thinking beyond that, and particularly when the test ban issue came up, we headed up the staff work for the Pentagon. As a matter of fact, we coordinated the staff work in the government as a whole with respect to the limited test ban.

Matloff: How about the proposed comprehensive test ban? Did ISA get drawn in on that one?

Nitze: I think so, but that was after my time. That was a very interesting project--the project of coordinating the staff work in preparation for the test ban--because each one of the agencies had a different view as to what the problem was and how to deal with it. Each one had a different set of technical experts. So we had conflicting claims as to the facts involved. I went in to see Mr. McNamara and asked him what we should do next. He made a very constructive suggestion. He said, "This is a complex problem. Why don't you reduce it to some 50 subproblems, get out 50 5x7 cards, write down the principal issues that are involved in each one of these 50 problems, then call in all the experts who purport to know something about those issues from all the agencies, listen to their arguments, and decide, on the basis of the evidence they present, the best answers that you can provide for

each one of those problems. Write those down and circulate them. People can reclama, if they want to, on the basis of additional information. Deal with those reclamation, after they have had an opportunity to reply. Then you make the final decisions and establish the rule that from that point on nobody can quarrel with the facts. The facts may be wrong, but at least this is the best chance we've got at arriving at a consensus on the facts. We don't talk at all about what we should do at that stage. Then, after you have a consensus on the facts, address the problem of what to do about them." After we got a consensus on the facts, there wasn't any problem at all in arriving at a consensus on policy. Everybody agreed on the policy once we could get agreement on the facts as best we could understand them. I had all those 50 cards looked at again five years later and on many of them we were way off, based on what we knew later, but at least we were off in detail, not on the general direction.

Matloff: Do I understand correctly that there were no real differences of views in substance between you and Mr. McNamara on the test ban treaty?

Nitze: No. Later I suddenly developed a hernia and was sent off to the Andrews Air Force Base hospital. My recovery from this operation offered the first chance I'd had really to think alone for an extended number of hours. I addressed myself to the question of the possibility of bilateral negotiations with the Russians on a separable first stage disarmament agreement--a concrete deal between the Russians and us. I got most of it written during three days in the hospital. I turned it over to Bud Zumwalt to finish. It was a big report, and a good one,

the first to be written on the subject of bilateral negotiations with the Soviet Union in this field. First, I sent a copy to McNamara and various other people in the State Department and the JCS interested in it, but got no comments from them. Eventually, after I was Secretary of the Navy, I got a copy of it all marked up from McNamara. He had read it on the plane coming back from Austin, Texas, after seeing the President at his ranch. He thoroughly approved of it, with some comments. It was hard to get people to address themselves to those issues in those days.

Matloff: In connection with arms control and disarmament, did you play any part in the establishment of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency?

Nitze: I did, indeed. The problem was that up to that time the arms control work was done by a section of the State Department and that section reported to nobody else in the State Department other than the Secretary of State. Therefore, none of the people in the political part of the State Department could have any influence on the arms controllers unless they went up through the Secretary. On many of these issues they couldn't get the time with the Secretary to ride herd on the people in the arms control part of it. It seemed to me that it would be better if you had an independent arms control agency that coordinated at all levels with the Pentagon, the State Department, and so forth, and everybody could have knowledge, access, and influence upon it at all levels of the development of policy. So I thought it would be better if it were out from the State Department. I guess people in the agency, Bill Foster in particular, also thought it would be better

if it were out. In order to get an arms control agency established with the approval of the Senate, you had to have the positive testimony from the Pentagon. So I testified at length on its behalf and was instrumental in getting ACDA established as an independent agency.

Matloff: Looking back on your tenure in ISA, what do you regard as your major achievements in that post?

Nitze: I think probably my role in the Berlin crisis and the Cuban missile crisis.

Matloff: Anything that you felt frustrated about when you left the position, things that perhaps had not been finished that you would have liked to have done?

Nitze: I guess Vietnam in particular. You didn't ask me anything about the Berlin Wall. No record exists about this that I know of in the Pentagon or any place else. I think the usual impression is that there was no recommendation from Berlin that we do anything about the wall. There was also no recommendation from Bonn that we do anything about the wall. There was also no recommendation from the Pentagon to the White House that we do anything about the wall. There was no recommendation from the State Department to the President that we do anything about the wall. And there was no recommendation from Adenauer that we do anything about the wall. I think that's what the written material on the wall indicates, which is technically correct. But we in ISA thought that this was exactly the sort of question on which we in ISA had a responsibility; i.e., to consider whether or not we ought to recommend to Mr. McNamara to do something about it or not. We did spend three or

four continuous days examining the question as to whether there was anything that we could do, even though nothing had been recommended from the field and no one in higher authority had asked us to do so. We considered all the various alternatives that we could conceive of, and there were lots of them, but we also had to face the problem that the Russians had the superior force in the area. They could back up the East Germans much faster and more decisively than we could. The real question at issue was what risk we were running that the Russians would intervene. If they would intervene, then we were running the risk of facing either humiliation or an escalation of a kind that we certainly didn't want to face. On the third day of our deliberations, the intelligence people came up with a report that they had just found elements of three Soviet divisions on the outskirts of the perimeter of the Russian sections of Berlin, and that the elements of these three divisions had been moved up in a most secret and well camouflaged manner. That's why it had taken them three days to discover this development. It seemed to us meeting with the ISA Policy Planning Staff that if they had really been bluffing, they wouldn't have done it that secretively. The divisions weren't far away in any case; if they were just trying to make an impression on us, why not move them up with a good deal of fanfare? For better or for worse, we came to the conclusion they were fully prepared for our interfering with their erection and strengthening of wall, in the first instance using the East Germans to keep us from interfering, and if we had more force than the East Germans could take care of, they would bring in these elements of the three divisions and

humiliate us. So we came to the conclusion that this was not the thing to do. Therefore we did not recommend to McNamara that he do anything about it. Steve Rearden [Mr. Nitze's research assistant] found in my files a memorandum written a week or so later to McNamara in which I went through all this reasoning and described the conclusion we came to and why, and to which I appended the verbatim transcript of the intelligence reports to us, on which we were basing these judgments. This is the only bit of historical evidence that I have found any place on what really motivated us. We were in the central position, I think, to recommend or not to recommend that we do anything. Eleanor Dulles has written a history of the wall, which, I think, is the best history available based on the information which she had available, but she didn't have this information.

Matloff: Has this been declassified?

Nitze: I could declassify it. I wrote it.

Matloff: I can see why you look back on this episode as one of the noteworthy events of your career in the ISA period.

Nitze: It was a negative one.

Matloff: Someone has said that the clearest lessons of history are the negative ones.

Trask: Did you have any advance indications that that wall was going to go up, or was that a surprise?

Nitze: It was a surprise. We discussed at length at a tripartite meeting in Paris three weeks or less beforehand with the British,

French, German (?), and our intelligence people the question as to whether there was any possibility that the Soviets would erect a wall between the Western and the Soviet sectors. Nobody there thought it at all probable that that would happen. It was considered and rejected as a likely alternative for the Russians.

Matloff: Are there any other points about the ISA period of your Pentagon career that I should have raised and didn't?

Nitze: Well, there's Skybolt and all the consequences that flowed from Skybolt. The deal with the British, to give them the technology for the Polaris-type submarines, flowed from that. That's a very interesting period. I negotiated the Polaris deal with the British.

Matloff: That's certainly an important element in the story, too. Let's now swing over now to the Secretary of the Navy period from November 1963 until June 1967. You had mentioned before that you had been informed before the November date that you would be in this position. Who had recommended you for this post and was there any special reason for your appointment to the Navy?

Nitze: The reason was that the President had to make an announcement of the person to be appointed within the hour. It was a question of time, because the press was about to break the story that Fred Korth, the previous Secretary of the Navy, had in writing offered to the senior officers of the bank that he had worked for in Texas the use of the SEQUOIA for any of their clients that they wished to do business with. This was, of course, a wholly improper thing for Korth to have done.

So the President had to fire Korth and fire him right away and he very much wanted to announce the appointment of a successor at the same time he announced the firing. McNamara told me that the President wanted me to do this, and I said that I didn't want to do it. I had been promised by the President the job of Deputy Secretary of Defense, as soon as Ros Gilpatric retired. Ros was retiring shortly, and there had been some opposition to my appointment in that position in the Senate from Symington and Goldwater, but McNamara and the President assured me that they were going to back me. So that this was rather a slap in the face now to be told that they didn't want to give me that job, that they wanted me right away to take the job of Secretary of the Navy. I went over and protested to the President and said that it was out of my field, which was general policy, not administration of a big organization. I thought that people would look at it as a demotion. Mr. Kennedy laughed at me and said, "Nobody is going to consider appointment to be Secretary of the Navy a demotion. You can forget about that." I thought about it and decided he was right about that.

Matloff: Were there any instructions given to you by the President or by McNamara about this new position?

Nitze: Not that I remember.

Matloff: What problems did you face when you took over?

Nitze: There were two or three immediate problems.

First, what to do about our antisubmarine warfare capabilities. During our work on the Berlin crisis McNamara and I had agreed that the last thing in the world that we wanted to do was to escalate a problem

arising from access routes to Berlin into a nuclear war, and none of the alternatives gave us great confidence that the Russians, if they were determined, would be forced to back down as long as they could humiliate us on anything we could do right there on the ground in Germany. Was there any alternative to escalating to the use of nuclear weapons? Here it seemed to both of us that an alternative that we would like to back, if we had the capability to execute it, would be a counter-blockade of the U.S.S.R. as a whole, a naval blockade. So the question at issue was: Did the Navy have the capability for a counter-blockade of the U.S.S.R., which could very well result in a generalized war at sea? Could we win a war at sea? When we went into that question in some detail, it became evident that very few of our torpedoes and sonars worked; it was highly unlikely that we could win a war at sea because of the deficiencies in the Navy and in our ASW capabilities. McNamara and I were unified on this aspect, that this deficiency had to be cured and as fast as one possibly could.

The second problem on my mind was that of settling the debate with respect to whether nuclear powered aircraft carriers or conventional carriers were more cost-effective.

The third problem was that of the TFX. McNamara had just decided to have a Navy version, the "B" version, the F-111B; would this version be a feasible kind of an aircraft to satisfy Navy needs? The Navy did not think so, and was very much against it. The decision had been made to award the contract to General Dynamics. The Navy didn't think General Dynamics knew how to build planes that would be carrier capable.

They very much wanted a plane specifically designed to be carrier capable. But McNamara ruled against that and said, "General Dynamics is going to make a plane that will be carrier capable and make it work." I started off thinking he was right about this. He was relying primarily on the Air Force analysis rather than the Navy's. But when I became Secretary, I had to deal with this issue. I listened to the arguments of both the civilians and the Navy types in the Bureau of Air. They seemed to make a lot of sense. But it took me some time to be persuaded that they were right. It was only some months later that all of the developments turned out to support the BuAir arguments. It turned out that their computations had been correct and all the Air Force computations were proven to be wrong. There were serious problems with the TFX or the F-111B. The center of gravity in the plane was in the wrong place; the weight was excessive; if you tried to cure the weight, you made the center of gravity problem worse; if you tried to cure that problem, you made the visibility worse; the matter was a shambles. You just couldn't make it work. By then the problem was what do you do with it, because McNamara wouldn't give us a new carrier plane and the old ones were not up to the job. It took four years to get that problem worked out.

Then, about the problem of nuclear propulsion for carriers--I came to the conclusion after 2-3 months of study that the nuclear propelled carriers were cost-effective and that's what we should do, but the issue had arisen with respect to the KENNEDY and the Navy already had authorization and appropriation for it as a conventionally propelled

carrier. The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral McDonald, was persuaded in his mind that the Navy needed an additional carrier fast, and we could get the KENNEDY fast, because we had the money and there was no problem about how to build it. He preferred to have it conventionally propelled even though the nuclear version would be more cost effective. I finally decided to back McDonald. We took it up with McNamara, who was prepared to back us either way. McDonald persuaded me that the conventional version was the better way to go and so McNamara approved it. Those built after that have all been nuclear propelled.

The submarine warfare problem continued during my entire tour of duty as Secretary of the Navy. The principal thing that I addressed myself to during my tour was to cure the problem of the deficiencies of the Navy's ASW capability. I think that all those torpedoes that we were working on then do now finally work. The F-14, which was the substitute for the F-111B, works; the A-7, which we bought, works; the ASW plane, the S-4, works. The essential components of the Aegis radar system were developed during our day. But the Navy doesn't have anything much coming along except the things that we got going during that period.

Matloff: Did your positions on these issues lead to serious differences with Mr. McNamara?

Nitze: Yes. I had a different view of my role. He thought the service secretaries ought to be his deputies for the purpose of bringing discipline and order into the relations between the services. My view of the Secretary of the Navy was that his principal task was to lead the

Navy, and that he couldn't maintain the loyalty of his own people unless they were sure that he was working toward solving the Navy part of the problem. I could be much more effective by virtue of working for the Navy, not just trying to execute McNamara's ideas. That, of course, led to some friction between OSD and me, but I think it all worked out perfectly well.

Matloff: Did you find yourself in an uncomfortable position vis-a-vis the admirals, when the issues differed with OSD?

Nitze: No, because they knew that I was doing my best. At first some of the admirals were very much against me, but over time most of them came around. They had differences with me, but they thought that I was really doing my best to get a good Navy defense for the country. They never had any doubt about that.

Matloff: How closely were you working with Mr. McNamara in this position? and also with the Deputy Secretary of Defense?

Nitze: We had one weekly meeting which was devoted just to Navy problems and a general staff meeting once a week in which he had all his principal people together. On special issues, such as with respect to the F-111 problem, there we had an executive management committee that met every so often with the contractors, and so forth. I'd probably meet with Mr. McNamara 20 times a week.

Matloff: Any dealings with assistant secretaries of defense?

Nitze: Lots of them. I had more problems with Enthoven than with anybody else, and I think probably more support from the office of DDR&E-- Johnny Foster, when he took over from Harold Brown. I used to have a weekly luncheon with the three service secretaries once a week.

Matloff: In connection with the apparent change of roles of the Secretaries of the Services vis-a-vis the Secretary of Defense, as McNamara saw those roles, were there any discussions among the Service heads about the nature of the changes in their relationships?

Nitze: We used to have lunch once a week and talk about our common problems, largely those with the Office of the Secretary of Defense. I guess our main problems were with Enthoven and his boys. We had serious problems with them.

Matloff: Did you find as a result of the changes in relationships between the Secretary of the Service and the Secretary of Defense, that there was also a change in the Navy CNO's command of the fleet, in the McNamara period?

Nitze: I initiated a substantial change in the role of the CNO, at the time that I became Secretary. The CNO was not in the chain of command with respect to the Bureaus (the Bureaus were Bu-air, Bu-ships, etc.). Those people reported directly to me and did not report to Admiral McDonald. The admiral in charge of the Material Command which included all those bureaus, Admiral Shea, reported directly to me. I used to have a weekly meeting with Admiral Shea, who would describe to me all the problems coming up through the Bureaus and I would give to him my views on these problems. I found that he was not paying any attention to my recommendations. I got fed up. Finally, I received word that, when he had gone back to his staff, he had made the comment that the Secretaries of the Navy come and go but the admirals go on forever--at

which point I fired him. He was a thoroughly able fellow but he G-D-well wasn't going to pay any heed at all to what I said and he was supposed to be reporting to me. He wasn't reporting to me at all; he was reporting to the CNO. So I decided to change the relationship because I could well see why a uniformed man would look to the senior uniformed person as his real boss. He wouldn't look to any civilian as his real boss. So why wasn't it better to do what the other services had done and have the top uniformed fellow have the responsibilities as well? Then I could talk to Admiral McDonald and complain to him if what I wanted done didn't get done, and there wouldn't be confusion as to the lines of authority. So I got McNamara's approval and we reorganized the Navy so that all those functions reported to the CNO.

Matloff: In connection with dealings with the White House, did you have many occasions to go to the President, either directly or indirectly? Did you deal directly with the President, did you go through the National Security Adviser or the Secretary of Defense?

Nitze: I really had very few occasions to do that. People in the White House would send me messages or come and tell me that the President wanted this or that done, particularly with respect to the awarding of contracts, because this or that senator wanted the contracts thus awarded. I refused to do any of those things. My position was: If the President wants to tell McNamara to order me to do it, and he orders me to, I will do it, but I will not do it pursuant to some under-the-table suggestion that that's what the President wants, with no evidence thereof. That just wasn't done.

Matloff: Did either President Kennedy or Johnson ever express his views, to your knowledge, about the role of the Service Secretary?

Nitze: Not to my knowledge. One of the other things I was trying to get done when I was Secretary was to straighten out the relationship with Admiral Rickover. I was convinced that he should have been training a replacement for himself, but he was so adamant about not having anybody to threaten his authority, that he wouldn't do that. So Rickover and I had a very difficult three years. In connection with that, I finally got permission from McNamara to request authority from the Senate to relieve Rickover. McNamara said, "Fine, but you'd better go see the President before you do that." I went over to see President Johnson, who said that he was all in favor of it but didn't want it done in a way which was going to cause a big flap that would hurt him in other fields. He wanted me to go over and see the senators and members of the Joint Atomic Energy Committee and get their concurrence before I did anything like that. Initially I got their concurrence, but then they consulted among themselves and called me back. Who should be there with them but Rickover. He began his examination of me and of what was I trying to do, get him fired? The whole thing turned out to be a disaster.

Matloff: In connection with dealings with Congress, particularly on those issues where you had some differences of view with the Secretary of Defense, how did you handle those situations? Did you have any leeway? Did you have to clear your positions first with the Secretary of Defense if there were some differences? TFX, for example?

Nitze: The general rule was clear, and that was that one supported the Executive Branch position. Most of the arguments were on budgetary items--the Executive Branch position had been approved by the Secretary of Defense and the head of the Bureau of the Budget. It was presumed that you would defend the Executive Branch position. If the Congress asked you whether your personal view was in agreement with that, and if it wasn't, then you were duty bound to state your personal view and the reasons therefore. But you were also duty bound to explain the reasons for the Executive Branch position, as you understood them. You were supposed to tell what you thought if they asked you, but you were not supposed to volunteer your objection to the Executive Branch position.

Matloff: This didn't raise any great problems for you?

Nitze: I don't remember so. I had great problems with Rickover on this.

Matloff: Did you also play a role in strategic planning at this time?

Nitze: Strategic planning isn't part of the Service Secretary's responsibilities.

Matloff: To put it another way, how influential was the Navy in strategic planning during the McNamara era?

Nitze: I was very involved in the problems, because of the fact that the Executive Branch had to make up its mind whether or not to go forward with the Polaris conversion, the Poseidon missile, which is a very expensive program, and if not, what other kind of modernization of our strategic forces should take place. The analyses had indicated that this was the intelligent next step to take in the modernization of our strategic forces. The admirals in the Navy didn't want to do this

because it was an expensive program and they thought that the money would come out of the other portions of the Navy program--the carrier, air, submarines, etc., programs--so they would have inadequate resources to prosecute them correctly. I talked to McNamara about this, and he said that he didn't want to give the responsibility to the Navy for this big program unless the Navy really wanted to do it, and asked whether I could guarantee him that the Navy really wanted to do it. I said, "Let me talk to these people; the admirals really believe it's going to come out of the rest of their programs." McNamara said, "No, I've made it clear that that isn't what I intend. I think that the strategic program should be over and above the normal requirements of the services excluding the strategic program. If I give this program to the Air Force, it's going to be more expensive and I'm going to give it all the money, and more money than I would give the Navy, because it's going to take more money than the Poseidon conversion program would cost. Tell your admirals that the carrier and submarine programs, etc., will not be cut by virtue of the fact that they've said they would enthusiastically do the Polaris/ Poseidon conversion." So I went back and talked to the admirals and they said, "But do you believe McNamara?" And I replied, "No, I don't. I'm reporting to you what he said, but I don't believe that when it comes down to brass tacks, the fact that the Navy's budget goes way up and the Air Force's goes down isn't going to have some effect over the years. He is just bound to make some allowance for it somehow or other, even though he doesn't now intend to. I think that it

will cost you in the carrier and sub programs, but it is my view that the Navy should do this. The Navy program is by far the best program for contributing to the modernization of our strategic forces, and the most cost-effective one by far, and we'd be delinquent unless we did this." The admirals all declared, "Yes, we'll back you." I went back to McNamara and said, "The Navy will support it and will do it well, with conviction." So McNamara went forward with the Poseidon conversion program. I think it did impinge on the other Navy programs, but not that much. It certainly was the thing that should have been done.

Matloff: What would you say was the overall impact of the McNamara era on the Navy programs, with reference to weaponry, manpower, and the like?

Nitze: I think that the Navy did very well during those years.

Matloff: How about the problem of the budget--did you find that the approach of the McNamara's administration, the reforms that were introduced, such as program packaging and the like, and that the admirals were having their troubles with "the whiz kids" put you in an uncomfortable position between the two elements?

Nitze: Only with respect to the F-111 program. I thought that the attempt to make us get a single modern all-purpose plane which would incorporate the five different new areas of technology in one plane and make it apply to the Navy and the Air Force and meet all their advanced technology needs at once was a misbegotten program, that they chose the wrong contractor, and that they were slow in recognizing what the problem was with respect to the F-111B. There I had serious differences with that kind of approach, doing it through "the whiz kid" approach.

Trask: Why did McNamara persist in that as long as he did? Was he just reluctant to back up once he got started?

Nitze: No, he really felt that that was the right way to go. He believed he could justify whatever was required, but that a modern attack plane specially designed to be carrier capable was not required, and he wasn't going to coddle service prejudices and unwillingness of the Navy and Air Force to work together. He thought that this claim of the Navy's wrong that the task of building a plane that could operate from carriers was so specialized as opposed to a plane that could operate from long runways on the ground. It's perfectly easy to have a Navy plane which will be wholly useful for the Air Force, but it's almost impossible to build an Air Force plane that the Navy can use. It's never been done, and I really don't think that it can be done. McNamara was just intolerant of that. Nobody's perfect, and McNamara did all kinds of marvelous things, but on that one I think it was a bad judgment.

Matloff: I take it that in general you went along with the McNamara approach to budget formulation in defense?

Nitze: Yes, it was a perfectly sensible approach. McNamara was a very good numbers man; nobody's better.

Matloff: Lets turn to the area problems and crises during this period. First, a general question: Did you get involved as Secretary of Navy in any of the planning, policy, strategy, or buildup of NATO?

Nitze: Yes. When our group first came into office, I was given the task of reviewing the budget that had been prepared by the Eisenhower

administration, and figuring out what amendments were necessary in order to take care of our conventional force requirements. Most of those had to do with NATO. Additions to that budget were recommended by us because of the necessities of the Berlin crisis. We were the generators of the amendments to that portion of the defense budget which dealt with conventional forces during that first year of the Kennedy administration.

Matloff: It was also during this period that De Gaulle was indicating that he was going to be taking his country out of the military side of the alliance. Did this factor have any impact on the Navy's policies and planning?

Nitze: Not on the Navy's, but I think that occurred prior to my being Secretary of the Navy. It occurred while I was in ISA.

Matloff: That was the early part, but the actual closing out of the allied bases was in the later '60s. This was also the period in NATO when the Harmel Report came out. Were you drawn in on that in any way?

Nitze: Not on the Harmel Report.

Matloff: Would you have gone along with it?

Nitze: I would have. I did have a lot to do with the Nuclear Planning Group.

Matloff: On Indochina, were your views on the conduct of the war consulted during this period? For example, directed specifically to the question of the Tonkin Gulf incident in August of '64--how and when did you first learn about that?

Nitze: I was flying from Honolulu to Tokyo on the night of the Tonkin Gulf episode. When I arrived in Tokyo, I was informed by the embassy staff that during the night the Tonkin Gulf episode had taken place, and that I was scheduled to have a press conference with all the international press in Tokyo within the hour and that I must deal with that episode. So I can remember this very clearly, indeed.

Matloff: Was there any doubt in your mind at that time about the attacks on both days, the 2nd and the 4th?

Nitze: At that time, I just had the telegrams that had come in overnight. But later, when I was Deputy Secretary, I went into the matter much more seriously, because at that time Fulbright was scheduling hearings on the Tonkin Gulf matter. I was persuaded that we must give Fulbright all the facts that bore upon it; that we couldn't be in the position of withholding pertinent facts from him; that that would be fatal. The problem involved was that one of the pertinent facts was the intercepts of communications from the North Vietnamese destroyers that were engaged in that episode in the Tonkin Gulf--their messages back to their headquarters. Of course, the fact that we were utilizing those intercepts and dealing with codes and so forth was highly classified information. Senator Russell was in charge of everything having to do with the Senate concerning those types of operations. I talked to McNamara about this and he suggested that before doing anything I ought to talk to Clark Clifford, who was then Chairman of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board. Clark said that I should talk to Senator Russell about it and request permission to show Fulbright these five

intercepts. I talked to Senator Russell about it and he said, "You're crazy." I stated, "It really has to be done. We can't be in a position of telling Senator Fulbright that he has all the information when we're withholding this information." He said, "I'll tell you what you do. Why don't you ask Fulbright to come here to my office and you show him these intercepts in my office, so I'll be a witness to it." I did all that. Fulbright came in and I showed him these blue pieces of paper, the actual decoding, and he read them and said, "This doesn't prove a thing. These fellows say they hit two U.S. destroyers, and they obviously didn't." Russell couldn't get him to understand that they wouldn't have sent a message like that unless they had been there and tried to do something. It was not a question of whether they were correct and had hit the two destroyers, but whether they had been there with aggressive and offensive intent. Subsequently Fulbright castigated me for having attempted to withhold information from him, claiming that only Senator Russell's intervention had forced me to give it to him.

Matloff: Were you consulted by the White House before the Tonkin Gulf Resolution emerged? After the incident did anybody in the White House consult the Navy as to what had happened?

Nitze: I'm not sure.

Matloff: Do you remember your reaction to the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, when it came out?

Nitze: I remember thinking they were probably right. But I was kind of skeptical; I wasn't sure.

Matloff: How about the stepping up of the war against Vietnam? The bombing campaign got going right after the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was passed; then eventually came the commitments of Army combat troops. Were you consulted at all about these measures?

Nitze: I was consulted about the decision to send the Marines into Chulai. I decided to go to Vietnam to see how my Marines were getting along. I think that it was in the spring of '65. I was thoroughly depressed by what I saw. The airfield at Danang had a barbedwire fence around it and the Commies were in complete control of the area on the other side of the fence. You couldn't get to that inlet, which was on one side of the airbase, at night. Monkey Mountain, which was between the Danang airbase and the sea, was under the control of the Viet Cong. The mountains all around were under the control of the Viet Cong. It seemed to me to be a pit surrounded by high ground commanded by the other side, and therefore very similar to Dien Bien Phu in geographics. Geographically it was almost identical with the problems the French had at Dien Bien Phu. I went down to Chulai to see the Marines where they were trying to capture enough ground on the seashore to build a base. They hadn't been able to drive the Viet Cong back more than a few hundred yards. The area between the main highway and the Chulai airfield was still under the control of the Viet Cong. We went down south near Pleiku, where the Army had an outpost tens of miles inland with all the jungle in between the seacoast and Pleiku under the control of the Viet Cong. Then I went down to Saigon and talked to the people there about

the strength of the government. I thought that everything in that part of the world was against us. So I came back and talked to McNamara and said that I thought we ought to get out. McNamara replied, "If we get out, what do you think will happen next? It may mean the Soviets would attack the Western world some place else." I said, "I'm almost sure they would." He asked, "Do you think our geographic position would be better at this other place?" I answered, "You can't tell, because I don't know where they would attack next. But this is a miserable place, and I would get out." He said, "You are not offering us any alternative. You don't know where the Soviets are going to attack next and you don't know whether that might not be a worse place." At that point I could see his eyes glaze over (I talked to him recently about it, he doesn't remember my ever mentioning it to him).

Only once did he really consult with me, and ask me to bring the Navy into it. I forget when, but he asked Harold Brown and me to come into his office and he started off by saying, "The services are not in the chain of command with respect to military operations. However, I'm not happy with the advice I'm getting from the Joint Staff on the targeting of the air efforts against the VietCong and North Vietnam and I'd like each of you independently, not in consultation, to get people on your staffs that you think are good in this field and do an independent analysis of the prospects of this year's air campaign against the North Vietnamese and whether there are any changes that you think should be made in it." So I did put together a group including Admiral

LaRoche, who was in OP-06 at the time, and had worked with the Joint Staff on their recommendations with respect to targeting. He had been one of the more bloodthirsty members of the Joint Staff group with respect to targeting. We had some Marines in the group too. We went into it in considerable detail. We finally came to the conclusion that we couldn't really reduce the flow of materiel from North Vietnam into South Vietnam below a figure of some hundred tons a day. It was even more difficult to anticipate that we could reduce the flow of materiel from China across the border between North Vietnam and China to such a degree as to make it difficult for them to get the hundred tons a day down into South Vietnam. A naval blockade might be helpful for awhile, but it still wasn't going to prevent materiel coming across that long border between China and North Vietnam. If you were trying to see how long it would take before you could have confidence that you could defeat the Vietnamese Communists in North Vietnam, then the time period might be as long as seven years. Harold Brown's report phrased it a little differently. He said, "We feel confident that one can hold the volume of materiel going down into South Vietnam to not more than a hundred tons a day, and that the campaign can be redesigned somewhat to make it less costly to us to do so." But he held out no real hope of doing better. There wasn't much difference between the two reports, though they were phrased differently. I remember one other thing about the report. We talked to the Commanding General of the Seventh Air Force about the preliminary analysis that we had made which indicated

that it was taking four tons of U.S. air dropped munitions on target to destroy one ton of materiel coming down the railroad from China into North Vietnam. He said, "Of course, everybody knows that." I didn't think that it was well known in Washington, certainly no one had told that to me.

Matloff: What role, if any, did you and the Navy play during the June 1967 six-day Arab/Israeli war in the Middle East? Did it have any impact on Navy operations, planning, or policy?

Nitze: Is that the one where we lost a ship--the LIBERTY?

Matloff: Was that the only element during that crisis that the Navy got in on? What was its position on that bombing?

Nitze: We were trying to find out what happened, which was very difficult. A message had been sent out to the LIBERTY to get away from the danger zone, and the instructions had been misrouted and not transmitted. The messages marked immediate were to take priority over everything else--and my recollection is that it didn't get there for 36 hours, due to an error in the Army communications center. Why did the Israelis do this? How did this thing foul up in Israel? We finally found out that it was one of those errors that take place in the shift from one group to another group in manning the Israeli situation room. There had been some antagonism between the two groups, and the one evacuating the situation room had erased from the blackboard the information that had come in earlier which would have helped the second group to determine where the LIBERTY was. It takes a long time to figure out how these errors come about.

Matloff: As you look back on the evolution of the roles of the Service Secretaries, in light of your experience, is there still a need for the position, as you see it? Mr. Zuckert, for example, one of your counterparts, has called the position of the service secretary a "group vice president." I think that he was somewhat unhappy with his experiences in the role, particularly vis-a-vis the Secretary of Defense.

Nitze: That's what Mr. McNamara thought it should be, a group vice president. That wasn't my view of it and that isn't what I made of it.

Matloff: Is there still a need, and what should the Secretary's role ideally be?

Nitze: I'm prejudiced. I think that the role should be the one I thought it should be at the time I was Secretary of the Navy. I thought it worked very well. The military liked it; we did a good job; I don't see any problem with it.

Matloff: You would still retain it pretty much as it was?

Nitze: I certainly would. Where do you get the horse power, somebody who really wants to do something? What OSD and the Congress do is look over everybody's shoulder and complain, or guide, but who gets anything done? Who actually builds a plane or sees that a plane gets built, and that the avionics work, and the discs work, and so on? The Navy does that; the Air Force does it; and the Army does it. They have really trained soldiers and produced fighting qualities. Somebody else can purport to instruct them what not to do and so forth, and see that they don't spend too much money, but the fellows that do it are in the services.

I think that they do better with civilian leadership, if that's good leadership. They think so too; they like it, if it's good. They would much prefer to have a competent Secretary than they would to have an incompetent one.

One further factor is the role of the Secretary with respect to personnel and management, which I think is a very important role. I had been in the Navy for some time and came to the conclusion that Navy management was not as good as it might be and sheer management practices could be improved. So I hired a man that I thought was an expert on management, whose name was Beaumont. He ran an institution called the International Institute of Management. I asked him to recommend somebody to me and he said, "How about myself?" So I hired him. He spent about three months seeing and listening to what happened and finally was ready to make some recommendations. He said, "Your top admirals don't really understand the principles of management." I responded, "Yes, but what does one do about that?" He said, "Nothing is going to happen, unless they really want to learn. Since they have great admiration for top businessmen, my suggestion to you is that you get the top seven admirals and I'll get the top seven businessmen in the country who not only understand the principles of management but carry them out. You get the SEQUOIA for a day and these fourteen people will go out for a day and these businessmen will explain what they think is important in management. Let the admirals talk to them and listen to them and I think they will be persuaded." We got people from Humble Oil, the

chairman of Goodyear Tire and Rubber, General Dynamics, and so forth, and all of them had the same line: "Any top executive of any good U.S. corporation C.E.O. devotes at least 35% of his time to the selection, promotion, elimination, and pay of his top subordinates. That's what's going to make a corporation run. He can't make all the decisions in a big corporation. All he can really do is to see to it that the people that he chooses for the top places are the right people. That will turn a corporation around from being a lemon into being a rose. That's also necessary in the Navy." Lo and behold, the admirals listened to all this and came to the conclusion that there was something to it. Then Beaumont suggested that Dave McDonald and I get 250 5x7 cards and make one out for each of the 225 admirals and rank these: A-those having the potential to become CNO; B-those having the potential to rise to three-star but not necessarily to four-star rank; C-those who were good, but did not have potential for top positions; and D-those that had reached as far as their capabilities warranted. So each one of us went through this--I didn't know all of the admirals, McDonald did--and we didn't differ that much; our judgments were very comparable. Where we differed, we argued about it, and finally came out with a consolidated list. Then Beaumont insisted that we get an organization chart, and promotion chains where some Admiral was expected to retire, and work it out so that the people that we thought were the three best candidates for the CNO job would have all the right prior training and get up toward the top of the pyramid so that they would be available for consideration for CNO the next time. You do the same with the top

vice admirals and other four-star jobs, and get some orderly way of giving early promotions to the people who were the real comers. Then you select out those who have fulfilled their usefulness. That made an enormous difference, I think.

Matloff: I take it that you look on this as one of your major achievements in that position?

Nitze: Yes I do.

Matloff: Now to the Deputy Secretary of Defense role from July '67 to January '69. Your service covered that whole decade of the '60s. It's fascinating in many ways. You're one of the few people who went all the way through.

Nitze: I think that I was the only one who was a presidential appointee during the entire period and lasted the full eight years of the Kennedy-Johnson terms.

Matloff: Coming to this position, I can't help remembering what you said last time, that when you were first considered for the position there was some reaction that you might be too prickly. What happened that you did get the job at this point?

Nitze: I think that by that time McNamara had gotten used to me. And Mr. Kennedy had promised me the job when he asked me to take the job of Secretary of the Navy. He guaranteed he would have me out of there in six months. Of course, I didn't get out for four and one-half years, because he was assassinated. He would have gotten me out, but he wasn't there to do it.

Matloff: Were you briefed by your predecessor before you took over?

Nitze: I'd seen a great deal of Vance when he was Deputy. He did a very good job. He illustrated, I think, what McNamara had wanted in the beginning, and that was somebody who wasn't going to differ with him but would somewhat soften his sharp edges and carry out what he wanted done, make it more understandable to the rest of the people and carry back to McNamara those complaints that he really did want to hear about. I thought Cy did that job very well indeed. He was an excellent Deputy.

Matloff: Did the position change from what it had been with Vance and McNamara, when you took over?

Nitze: It changed somewhat, because shortly thereafter Johnson asked McNamara if he wished to become president of the World Bank. McNamara, I'm sure, looked upon that as being an expression of lack of confidence, and from that point on really didn't have his heart in the job of Secretary of Defense.

Matloff: When was that?

Nitze: Sometime in the fall of '67. The thing that was on his mind in June of '67 was the question of ABM defense.

Matloff: You got pulled in on that one?

Nitze: Yes, right away. That was the first thing that we got into. That was a complicated and difficult issue.

Matloff: Did you have much of a staff when you were operating as Deputy Secretary of Defense? Did you have to bring in somebody to help you, or were you operating as an alter ego?

Nitze: McNamara didn't believe in having much immediate staff. I had two military assistants and he had two or three. Beyond that we had a few people that he used for special purposes. He had Colonel Haig handling a unit that dealt with the White House--Califano was Haig's assistant; and he had a PR fellow (the people that dealt with public relations), a very good man; he was around a lot. Then there was someone who helped him on the posture statements; and Doc Cooke, who helped him on administrative matters. Doc, you know, is the memory of the Pentagon. You wouldn't really call them staff people; they had specialized functions. I didn't have anybody, except at one point a civilian as well as my two military aides.

Matloff: What in general was the division of labor and functions between you and McNamara, and later on between you and Clifford?

Nitze: McNamara didn't want to have any division of labor. He wanted his deputy to be his alter ego, deal with the same problems he did, speak with the same voice, and express the same opinions as he did. He insisted on having lunch every day with his deputy. Very rarely did he have anybody else there. At lunch you would talk everything over.

Matloff: Did you encounter any serious differences of views with him in this position, on policy, administration, or strategy?

Nitze: During the first three months I had no serious difference with him. We had a lot of difficult problems to get settled and the Vietnamese War was going on. I did have differences of view on some of his approaches. He never relinquished his theory that the U.S. could afford whatever military forces and weapon systems, etc., that it needed; that he could

rigorously determine what those needs were and then go to the Congress with no more, no less, than what he had determined those needs to be; and that he would not make any concessions to the idea of a budgetary ceiling or anything like that. My view was different from that. It was that the political realities were such in that budget year, '68, that we weren't going to get more than \$80-85 billion and we might as well recognize that in the beginning, and do our planning to see to it that the allocation was within those limits rather than just giving the services no guidelines at all as to amounts that were involved, and then cutting it back to that under the aegis that they didn't need it. The better aegis, I thought, was, "You're just not going to get it because it isn't going to be there." I thought he got into illogicalities because he recognized the political realities but then wanted to hide them under the rubric that no more was needed. To define need is a very difficult thing to do. That was the basis of our difficulties, for instance, over his strategic policy, because I thought that he was right when he advocated the no-cities policy. Then he retreated from that because he could see the budgetary implications of it, which could be high.

Trask: A lot of people have written and commented on Mr. McNamara and this period at the end of his term to say that he was very depressed about Vietnam, and this related to his differences with the administration; that psychologically he was not in particularly good shape. Did you have any sense of this, or could you comment on these suggestions?

Nitze: I didn't think that was true in the summer and fall of 1967.

Frankly, he and I saw eye to eye with respect to Vietnam. I thought we were overcommitted there, causing us to shortchange our strategic effort and other parts of our program, that we were losing our support domestically and amongst our allies; that Vietnam was a drain far larger than the strategic importance of it. I considered it to be an important thing, but the question was how important? These things are always a matter of degree. If we could get out of it, even on some not very satisfactory basis, we certainly ought to try to do that. He thought the same, so we didn't differ on that at all. With respect to the ABM business, I think he's told some people that he was really against it but the President was for it. I never got that impression from him; he never told me that. It may have been so, but I held the impression that what we had worked out he thoroughly agreed with, and if we had made a mistake, we had made it together. Certainly we underestimated what the safeguard program was going to cost, but very careful estimates had been made and turned out to be too low, as those things often are.

Matloff: Did your position change when Clifford came in in relation to the SecDef, in functions, role, etc?

Nitze: Yes, they did. McNamara was the expert on figures and on the budgeting and planning process, and I thought that he did it very well. Nobody could have done that part of the activity better than he. It required a vast attention to all the details of each one of the services and its role and so forth, and he did that. He would get to the office at 6:00 every morning, and leave at 7 or 8:00 P.M.

When Clark [Clifford] came in, he was much more interested in his relations with the President and with top people in the Congress--not in the day-to-day testimony before the Congress, but in his relations with Fulbright, the chairmen of the committees, etc. He spent 90% of his time worrying about that, and what he would say to the press, in his speeches, and so forth. So it was in the articulation of Defense policy and in the relations with the White House and talking to Congress that more than 90% of his effort went. He was delighted to leave to me all the management of the budgetary and planning process, and I would say that 90% of the decisions he left to me. He didn't really want to hear about it. Frankly, I found that things went much faster that way.

Matloff: In connection with your relations as Deputy Secretary with the Joint Chiefs of Staff--did you ever have any problem getting information from them, or even from the services, for that matter? and if so, how did you get the information that you needed?

Nitze: One episode comes to mind, when I was Secretary of the Navy. All our carriers had as their primary mission contributing to the SIOP. As a result they couldn't leave those stations which were appropriate to carrying out their SIOP mission, without tremendous prior to-do. This seemed to me to be all wrong, because the vulnerability of the carriers was greatly increased by keeping them in these positions, and they couldn't be in the right position for support of the things for which they were really important, namely, third world threats. So I suggested to the admirals that I propose to McNamara a change in mission of the carriers, making this their second rather than their first

priority. In order to make up my mind whether this was a wise recommendation or not, I asked the CNO to get for me the contribution that the carriers made to the damage expectancy under the SIOP. What I got back from the CNO were about 20 10-page telegrams from the commanders of the Sixth, Seventh, Second, Third Fleets, commander of SAC--everybody involved--about what an outrageous thing this proposal was, but no information as to the damage expectancy. Then one day I was having lunch with one of Enthoven's people and I said, "I can't get from Navy any estimate as to the contribution of the carriers to the damage expectancy of the SIOP." This fellow said, "I know just exactly what it is. Come to my office and I'll give you a full run down on it." So he did, and I asked, "Where did you get all this." He said, "I got it from OP 0-6 of the Navy, where else would I get it?" I was so G-D- mad I could slit their throats, giving me all this balderdash and not giving me the information. They had it and were giving it to OSD, not to me.

Matloff: How about as the Deputy Secretary of Defense, did you run into any similar problems?

Nitze: The Navy came up with a recommendation that we build a 686 class attack submarine. It seemed to me to be a much bigger and more expensive attack submarine than I'd ever heard of when I was Secretary of the Navy. The Navy had a unit called the CONFORM unit whose specific assigned task was to keep up to date the design of the attack submarine that the Navy would build if at any time the decision were made to build a new class of attack submarine incorporating all the new technology that the

experimental submarines were developing, and which had gotten to a point where one could be confident that it would work, if incorporated into a new class of submarine. So I asked to see the captain who was in charge of the CONFORM unit of the Navy and have him explain to me the differences between the 686 design and the CONFORM design, and why. It turned out that this captain was seven echelons down the chain of command; I was told, "No, the Office of the Secretary of Defense does not inquire about things seven echelons down." I replied, "I am inquiring about something seven echelons down; that unit knows what I want to know." They said, "Do you really want to have all the intervening people, eight layers of officers, come up and tell you all about this?" I answered, "No, I don't, but I want to have the head of the CONFORM unit; the Navy can choose anybody it wants to in the intervening echelons to be present, and the complete report of whatever goes on can be given to everybody up and down, but I don't want to have this captain reporting through eight layers." So the captain came up and told me the story. It was perfectly clear that there was no relationship between his CONFORM design and the 686 design, but that Rickover was adamant about it. I finally agreed to that design, but reluctantly. Then when the Nixon administration came in, the first thing they did was to fire the captain whom I had ordered up to answer a question on which I thought only he would give me an honest answer. He did give me an honest answer, but I had ruined the man's career. That makes it difficult.

Matloff: In the capacity of Deputy Secretary of Defense, did you have any dealings with the State Department, and if so, with whom and on what issues?

Nitze: The main problem was the Vietnamese War. I dealt with Katzenbach, the Undersecretary. He and I had a group that met once a week in his office called the "non-group." The President had a group that met at breakfast once a week. I used to be a member of that, but after I got into a row with Clifford and the President about the Vietnamese war, I was no longer invited. Katzenbach wasn't invited to it either, and we would have been frowned upon to have our own little group so we called it the "non-group."

Matloff: How about your access to President Johnson, could you go directly to him, or again, did you go through intermediaries, for example, the National Security Adviser, and did you clear with the Secretary of Defense first?

Nitze: I wouldn't have thought of going to see the President without clearing it with the Secretary first. If it were appropriate, he would say to go ahead.

Matloff: Any problems in dealing with Congress during this period, particularly when there were any differences with the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

Nitze: I guess there were a lot. Not particularly because of differences with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but all kinds of problems with the Congress. Quite frankly, I rather enjoyed, and still enjoy, testimony before the Congress.

Matloff: What sort of issues were those during this period?

Nitze: There were a lot of budgetary issues, hundreds; and policy issues.

Matloff: Did your views of the threat change much in the late '60s from the earlier part of the decade?

Nitze: From '61 through '63, I became more and more confident that we had a fully adequate deterrent that was crisis stable, and that there would be no temptation on the part of the Soviet Union to attack us in a crisis. That continued through '65-'67, because it was during that period that we were getting the Polaris/Poseidon conversions and conversions from Minuteman I to Minuteman III underway. They weren't fully deployed until '70-'71, but they were underway, so you could pretty well foresee maintaining a good and adequate deterrent through that period, at least those elements of it. But beyond that period it looked doubtful, and it seemed to me that we were not doing the things that would cover the longer term future period beyond '73. The situation would turn adverse to us after that and nobody was paying adequate attention to it. We didn't have the money or support to do it, and this was one of the reasons why I wanted to see if there was any way we could get out of our excessive attention to the Vietnamese war and get back to a more strategic approach to our longer range problems.

Matloff: Did you get involved in the strategic issues as Deputy Secretary of Defense? You mentioned the no-cities question on which you had views. Were there any real differences other than that, with McNamara, on basic views?

Nitze: We talked about the strategic concepts at some length. One problem was what do you do about defense--ballistic missile defense in

particular. There it was both McNamara's and my view that dollar for dollar you would get much more out of civil defense than you would out of ballistic missiles, at least with the technology of those days. Both of us agreed that the prospect of getting any support for a civilian defense program was nil. We had tried it earlier in the Kennedy administration, and nobody wanted to support it. There were a few people in the Congress who saw what the problem was, but they were a small minority. You can't really make a civil defense program work, unless the public as a whole feels the need for it and is willing to collaborate. The combination of a civil defense program and an active defense program, such as an ABM defense, is what would really pay off dollar for dollar in real effectiveness. It was McNamara's view and mine-- I don't remember who first suggested the point, but we didn't disagree on it-- that in the long run what you needed was both passive and active defense, but that the long lead time item was the active defense. Therefore it made sense to begin with an active defense, the radar infrastructure and so forth, because that was the thing that took a lot of time. The civil defense program you could get into being with serious effort in two or three, maybe five, years; but the thing to do was deal first with the long pole in the tent, and then fill in later with the shorter but more important pole. There wasn't any difference of opinion between McNamara and me on that, or on the Polaris/Poseidon conversion, as the best program we could deal with at that stage. There wasn't really a difference between us on the desirability of Mirving a new missile to be deployed on converted Polaris submarines and developing Pen-Aids program to assure penetration of the Soviet ABM's, deployment of which

the Soviets were prosecuting very heavily at that time. One difference between us was on the question of whether or not it would be wise for the Navy to develop a capability for anti-SLBM work, not anti-attack submarine, but anti-strategic missile submarines. McNamara was reluctant to, and in fact forbade, the Navy to advance this mission as a justification for any expenditures whatsoever, and, frankly, I thought that was in error. One other one had to do with the development of a star-tracker for the Navy missile program. McNamara had X-ed that out of the budget and had gone to Texas to see the President. I put it back in the budget and he came back and X-ed it out again.

Matloff: There's been much writing about the President's growing disillusionment with McNamara's presentation of the options in the conflict with Vietnam from 1967 onward. Did you get the sense of any of that reaction when Mr. McNamara came back from discussions with the President?

Nitze: Somewhat. I got the reaction that the real problem that McNamara was having was with Clark Clifford and Abe Fortas, who were close advisers to the President and were pouring poison into President Johnson's ear every day, saying that McNamara had become weak and was not interested in victory, and that we ought to bomb North Vietnam more heavily, and so forth. It was from the very belligerent viewpoint of Fortas and Clark Clifford that much of McNamara's troubles with President Johnson arose.

Matloff: On the question of the budget that you touched on before, again I would ask: Were you drawn into any controversies between the "Whiz Kids" on the one hand and the military on the other?

Nitze: When you are Deputy Secretary of Defense, and particularly when you've got the prime burden of making the operative decisions, your main concern is with economy of time. You have lots of issues you have to decide and you don't have much time. So I came to the conclusion that with respect to all the recommendations that came up from Tom Morris, who was in charge of Installations and Logistics, and who is a very careful fellow and researches his things very carefully and had a good staff, I would sign all of those almost without reading, confident that if there were something wrong, somebody would reclama it. With respect to some of the other parts of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, I would read them more carefully. With DDR&E I was interested to understand the recommendation and make a judgment as to whether I thought it was right or wrong. With respect to the recommendations coming up from Systems Analysis, I never approved a single one without totally rewriting it. I had no confidence in Systems Analysis. So it wasn't a question of the differences between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Systems Analysis. It was that I thought that each of the people in Systems Analysis saw himself as being the top strategist and secretary of defense himself; that was my view of the organization. Maybe that was too stern, but I was not satisfied with their work product.

Matloff: One of the crises that arose in this period was the Czechoslovakian crisis in August 1968--the Soviet invasion. Did this have any impact on OSD operations and policies? Were you consulted during that crisis?

Nitze: I wasn't really consulted. It went straight to the White House. The decision was made there at the White House with the advice of the Secretary of State. But none of us in the Pentagon thought that we should react to that '68 crisis in terms of doing anything militarily. We didn't have the assets to do it. After it was over, the question was whether one could use the crisis and the agony that it produced in Europe to revivify the NATO defense program. It seemed to me that we couldn't really get them to do that unless we ourselves were prepared to do something more, even though I thought we were doing an excessive amount with respect to NATO in relation to what they were doing. I proposed that we say that we would add \$50 million to our program with respect to NATO, if the Europeans would do much more in adding to their program. Then the question was, if we added \$50 million, what would it be for? I turned that question over to the Joint Chiefs to come up with a recommendation. They recommended adding so many units here and there--kind of a mixed bag of various additions. The Air Force had just finished a red/blue kind of a study on modeling a war in Europe and what would happen there; it turned out very badly for the U.S., because of the vulnerability of our planes on the ground to an initial surprise attack by the Soviets, similar to the '67 Israeli war. The Air Force study recommended a program of shelters for those planes on those fields, called the Tab-V program, as I remember. In this \$50 million program that the Chiefs came up with there was not one penny for the Tab-V program, which their other study had indicated was the key to whether or not you got clobbered. I took this up with Harold

Brown and asked him for an explanation. It was just poor planning work. They were playing it from the political angles rather than giving us good military advice. So they redid it and had most of the money going into the Tab-V program, and I signed it out.

Matloff: How about during the Pueblo incident in January 1968--the seizure by the North Koreans of the American intelligence ship--did OSD get drawn in on that in any way?

Nitze: Yes, there was a 303 Committee that reviewed projects of that kind and I was a member of that committee. The project was discussed--I forget all the ins and outs of that. I was madder than a snake at somebody--at the Navy. The fellow who handled that kind of intercept business, listening in on Soviet transmission, in the Joint Staff, a very competent man, had protested about the fact that this mission of the Pueblo hadn't been properly vetted. The Navy had made a crucial case of it, and the Chiefs had backed the Navy. I had let this go by, which had been a mistake.

Matloff: A general question about initiatives to China that were later taken by the Nixon/Kissinger combine: Were any of these anticipated in the McNamara era, possibly by OSD, or in relations between OSD and State? Was any thought given to a tilt toward China--playing the China card, as it's sometimes termed?

Nitze: During the Johnson administration, when I was Secretary of the Navy, I was asked by the National War College to give a speech on policy toward China. I did work up such a speech and I got John Rhineland and Craig Whitney to work with me on it. Everybody that heard it thought it

was a good speech, because nobody else had said a word on policy toward China during that period. Then the people at the National War College suggested that I get the speech published, so I asked Foreign Affairs magazine whether they would like to publish it and they said they would. I sent it over to the State Department for clearance, and Bill Bundy, the Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, who had been my deputy in ISA, turned it down and said that the President had decreed that nobody was to say a word about policy toward China. So the speech was never published.

Matloff: Some general questions: As you look back on the whole Vietnam experience, was Vietnam a failure in your view? Was it a failure of American national policy, military policy, or was it that American public opinion wasn't taken into sufficient account? How do you view that in a nutshell? I'm sure that you have given this matter lots of reflection.

Nitze: Not much, because it's an impossible question to capsulize.

Matloff: That's a very complex question, obviously.

Nitze: No one sentence explanation does it justice. Lots of factors entered into it.

Matloff: Would those I mentioned play any part in the answer?

Nitze: The problem with these things is if you make a wrong turn initially, you are continuously faced with the problem of whether to accept a check and humiliation or to double your bets, buy some more time and see what will happen. Every time you double your bets, the more difficult it is to pull out. Then you get in further and further, to a point where your freedom of action becomes nil. I could see that

freedom of action becoming nil at the time when McNamara and I recommended to President Johnson three things: one, to reorganize the procedures in the draft act, because we both thought the inequities in the draft procedures were the heart of the disaffection of our youth. The procedures were unfair; students doing graduate work were getting by with murder. We took a reorganization of the draft procedures up with Mr. Johnson but he wouldn't approve of them. The second thing was to recommend that Mr. Johnson raise taxes in order to take care of the inflationary effect of our defense spending. Mr. Johnson wouldn't approve of that, because he thought that would reopen the debate in Congress on Vietnam and that he would be defeated on the Vietnam issue. The third was that he go to Congress and ask for authority to call up reserves. He wouldn't do that because he thought that would get a debate in Congress on Vietnam off on the wrong footing. So we were in a position where we couldn't do anything; we were hamstrung. By that time it was terribly expensive in prestige and everything else to get out of Vietnam, but what do you do?

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

Nitze: There's no measuring stick; you can't translate it into numbers. The number of tools that you have to conduct diplomacy with are limited. One of the things that countries care about most is their military security, and therefore, one of the things that you can do to buy more good will, and the denial of which will cost you more ill will than anything

else, is military assistance. So it is an important tool. If we had left the field in military assistance solely to the Russians to exploit, we would have been in even worse trouble than we are in. Also, if you are going to be prepared for such things as the attack by North Korea into South Korea, they are better off if they have some capability; if they can't afford it themselves, it's better to give them some military assistance. It's probably a more efficient way of spending your money than it is to build equivalent forces in the United States that you'd have to have, in the event that you hadn't given military assistance.

Matloff: On perspectives on OSD organization and management, what do you feel the role of the Deputy Secretary of Defense should be? Should he be a manager, an analyst, an alter ego?

Nitze: It depends upon the Secretary, what kind of a person he is, and what he needs in order to make a good team.

Matloff: Do you see a need for further changes at the top levels in OSD with reference to working relations, functions, relations between SecDef and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or between the services and OSD? Do these strike you as important areas for changes?

Nitze: I thought the Blue Ribbon Panels selected from time to time to make recommendations to the Defense Department on how it should reorganize itself were all more hurtful than helpful. Let the darn institution itself work out its problems; it can do a better job on that than can outsiders.

Matloff: How would you characterize the styles, personalities, and effectiveness of various people with whom you've worked in the Defense

Department briefly--for example, in retrospect how do you view McNamara's strengths and accomplishments, weaknesses and failures?

Nitze: He has enormous energy. He has an appetite like a horse to consume as much as he does--he digests it and turns it all into energy. He doesn't need much sleep; he's full of vitality. You need that kind of vitality really to give drive to a great big organization like the Pentagon. He used to say that when you take an institution as big as the Pentagon, or General Motors, and so on, you've really got to kick it hard, or you'll never get anything done. You can't just coax it along. In a way I think he's right about it, to get these things done in a big organization you've got to be full of energy, vitality and drive, and McNamara had that.

Matloff: Do you think that he was an effective administrator?

Nitze: That's a different question. I don't think so; I don't think he was good in his relations with the people working for him. He would listen only up to a point, as long as he was satisfied that he was learning something and communicating. But the moment that anything occurred in the conversation which caused him to think the fellow didn't know what he was talking about he'd turn off his hearing. From then on the person wasn't talking to him. Sometimes he turned it off when he shouldn't have. Maybe the person he was talking to was not as articulate or not quite on the same wave length. He should have been more careful about listening to people. Also he was very inadequate, I thought, in keeping all the members of his team apprised as to what he was doing and why. I recommended to him that he have staff meetings.

He didn't want to, but he agreed; then he got bored with them and would have somebody come in and talk about an issue, but he didn't have any real staff meetings. He really wasn't that good at selecting people. I think that half of the people that he selected I recommended to him, because he didn't know that many people with diverse backgrounds. I made mistakes in some of those I recommended to him. Some of them turned out well, some didn't.

Matloff: How about Forrestal as Secretary of Defense?

Nitze: I had the greatest admiration for Forrestal. I thought that he was a truly great man, way ahead of his time.

Matloff: Louis Johnson?

Nitze: The kindest thing that you could say was that he had a tumor on his brain. He was hopeless.

Matloff: General Marshall?

Nitze: I had great respect for him.

Matloff: Lovett?

Nitze: Each one of them had great virtues. Lovett had virtues that I haven't seen duplicated by others since. On some issues I quarreled with him, and on some I quarreled with Gen. Marshall.

Matloff: [Charles] Wilson?

Nitze: I think he was better than his reputation, but still not that good.

Matloff: McElroy?

Nitze: I didn't really know him that well.

Matloff: Gates?

Nitze: I had a high opinion of him; a good man.

Matloff: Any others that you want to comment on?

Nitze: Who was McElroy's deputy?

Matloff: Quarles?

Nitze: He was an interesting and competent fellow.

Matloff: To move up a level, how about the Presidents that you have served--FDR, Truman, Eisenhower?

Nitze: FDR was bubbling with charismatic energy. I often didn't approve of the positions that he was taking, which I thought were too political and demagogic, but perhaps that was what was needed at the time. In any case, he led the country during World War II with great success; he did it well.

Matloff: Truman?

Nitze: He turned out to be much better than I thought he was going to be. Everybody understands Truman now. We didn't understand him when he started, but he turned out to be a pretty tremendous person.

Matloff: President Johnson as commander in chief?

Nitze: He was a complex person. He had enormous qualities, and, in part, I think that he was not properly understood. He was so concerned with how the eastern establishment and the press regarded him, and he couldn't let it alone. He was looking at TV all the time. He had to have people around that were totally loyal to him. He could, however, respect somebody who wasn't totally committed to him. I got along fine with him because I think he respected me. He once tried to enlist me in his little group of true friends and loyal adherents. He came to

the conclusion that I was not for him and I concluded he was not for me. We parted with mutual respect but not loyalty.

Matloff: What do you regard as your major achievements during your tenure as Deputy Secretary of Defense? Anything that might have disappointed you the most, or was something not accomplished that you would have liked to have done?

Nitze: I guess what disappointed me most was my inability to persuade Clark Clifford and Paul Warnke that, even though it was important to get out of the Vietnamese war as promptly as one honorably could, it was wrong just to escape, to cut; really, from that point on, to feel that the only course of operation was appeasement of the Soviet Union and the left. Having been very much on the right, they flipped. I tried to get them to understand that to flip to the other side wasn't any better. There wasn't an easy solution; there isn't one. The problem was not one where you could have an easy road. They were tempted by the idea that either you bomb them to hell and cause them to say "uncle" or else you lie over on your back and say "scratch my belly." I just couldn't persuade them that that was wrong; that's had serious consequences ever since.

Matloff: How about on the other side, of what achievements are you most proud during that period as Deputy Secretary of Defense?

Nitze: I guess holding the Pentagon together during a very difficult period.

Matloff: Some people of whom I've asked that question have said "surviving."

Nitze: I didn't care about my surviving, but the Pentagon and the nation survived.

Matloff: Thank you very much for your cooperation and your willingness to share your recollections and observations with us.