Matloff: This is Part IV of an oral history interview with Dr. James R. Schlesinger, held in Washington, D.C., on August 1, 1991, at 9:30 A.M. Again representing the OSD Historical Office are Drs. Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff.

Dr. Schlesinger, we would like to go on with other foreign area problems and crises in which you became involved during your tenure. First, let's turn to the Middle East. Just three months after you took office, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack against Israel, and you became involved. What role did you play during the Yom Kippur war of 1973?

Schlesinger: It shouldn't have been a surprise attack. Clearly, it was a sudden attack. However, we had good intelligence indicating that something was going on, intelligence that we disregarded, partly because we turned to the Israelis, who assured us that they wouldn't dare attack. I don't know the current classification status of this, but the NSA had very good intelligence which clearly pointed to the probability of an attack. This got lost as it moved up through the intelligence apparatus, partly because we consulted the Israelis, who said that they wouldn't dare. The Israelis had the axiom that no enemy would dare attack Israel unless it had established air

superiority. Their calculations turned out to be erroneous, much to their own cost.

Goldberg: It is interesting that the Israeli intelligence people were the most arrogant on this subject. The previous year, 1972, we had a visit at Rand from some Israeli officers, led by Shalev, the Deputy Director of Intelligence. They were the most confident, assertive people I ever met. When the possibility was raised of an oil boycott, they said it was ridiculous. They were enormously self-confident.

Schlesinger: Yes, and that self-confidence misled them and they were later brought down a peg. I've never been able to figure out to what extent these kinds of comments to Americans are designed for our consumption as opposed to what they really believe. We regularly had statements from Israelis that the oil problem was no problem at all, which is counterintuitive, as they say, and yet is designed to reassure Americans that support of Israel does not lead to any problems for the United States.

Goldberg: But all of their other behavior was of the same piece with that attitude. Apparently the Six-Day War convinced them that they had things well in hand.

Matloff: What did you understand national policy to be, at the outset, and what instructions were you initially given, if any, about aid to Israel?

Schlesinger: On the sixth of October Henry and I met with regard to issues regarding the U.S. role. Kissinger would, the next day, state that the best outcome for the United States would be for the Israelis to come out ahead in the end, but to get a little bloodied in the process. But on the prior day, on the 6th, I had typed out a whole set of options. Option zero was to stand aside. Option one was to provide materiel support to the Israelis in which they were responsible for taking that materiel and delivering it to Israel through the use of El Al aircraft or commercial aircraft. Option two--we would deliver such materiel to Israel. Option three--in addition to materiel, they could buy heavy equipment items, including tanks, aircraft, etc. There was a set of six or seven options. Either that night, Sunday, or the next morning, Henry called back to say that the President had chosen option one--that is, basically, cash and carry--all the aid that they could have. The basic policy of the United States government was that we would be supportive of Israel in the crisis, but that we did not want to show our hand. Since the war was expected to last only a few days,

it would not alter our delivery of equipment, as opposed to munitions, to the Israelis. That policy was the one I was instructed to follow until, roughly, Thursday of that week, when it began to get rather confused.

Matloff: What differences developed with Secretary of State Kissinger over either the policy or the American role in the airlift?

Schlesinger: The first problem that we had was somewhat foreordained. I had told the Israelis that they could pick up, using their own aircraft, any supplies that they wished to acquire. The Israelis, however, were told that they should use planes that were not identified with Israel. That raises the question of what we meant, and whether it was clear what we meant.

Goldberg: Who told them that, specifically?

Schlesinger: I don't remember; I probably did, amongst other people, but I probably was not alone in that regard. We had said that they could pick this up with El Al aircraft, which meant that they would have to block out the markings on the aircraft, which was our intent at the time, but whether or not that was consistent with commercial aviation regulations, I don't know.

Goldberg: This was an intent which you coordinated with Kissinger and the President?

Schlesinger: I did not speak with the President about that. I got the instructions through Kissinger, who was the National Security Adviser. That all blew apart on Monday or Tuesday of that week, because there was an El Al aircraft down at Oceana, a naval air station in Virginia, and some enterprising CBS cameraman came to the fence and ran a videotape of this Israeli aircraft at a U.S. naval air station picking up materiel. It was hard for us, at that point, to maintain the fiction that we were not involved with the Israelis. The Israelis tended to move from optimism to pessimism. They tended to be rather cocky prior to the war. Their initial response was that when they were mobilized they would take care of things, and so on Monday they were in good spirits. On Tuesday they were getting quite worried. On Wednesday they had some successes and were in good spirits again, and felt it was only a matter of time. On Thursday, they were in absolute despair, and things began to unravel.

Goldberg: Was that when the Syrians were making progress in the Golan Heights? Was that the real matter on Thursday?

Schlesinger: I don't remember where; I was focussing on the Suez Canal region. In any event, much of that kind of conversation came through the Department of State rather

than directly to us. As you may recall, they were receiving Phantom F-4s from us and I had been told to delay the deliveries. As circumstances turned out, it was just during that week that the deliveries were supposed to take place from McDonnell Douglas headquarters in St. Louis to Israel, and I was told to delay the delivery of the equipment.

Goldberg: That came from Kissinger again?

Schlesinger: Yes. Once again, that was on the expectation that the war would be over in a few days and it wouldn't matter; there was just a little problem with regard to delivering the aircraft. It was the basic presupposition of U.S. policy that we did not want, in these circumstances, to be so openly supportive of Israel that we would alienate the Arabs. Nixon did not tell me that directly. I assumed, of course, that that was a shared belief between Nixon and Kissinger. But Nixon told me some years later something which raises some doubt about whether or not he and Kissinger saw it the same way or whether they remembered it the same way.

Matloff: Did Nixon seek your advice at all during this whole war effort?

Schlesinger: Directly? No.

Goldberg: Did you seek to talk with him directly during that period?

Schlesinger: I don't recall.

Goldberg: Did you have strong views on what we ought to be doing, as distinct from what we were doing?

Schlesinger: No. Kissinger and I were in agreement, based upon the premise that the war would last only a brief time, as the Israelis initially told us, that it would be best not to reveal the American hand.

Matloff: Did you get involved in problems with the allies in this--with their cooperation, or lack of it--for example, the use of their bases?

Schlesinger: Yes, I was quite involved in that. The French and the British were either openly hostile or somewhat covertly hostile. The Germans were supportive, although they were mixed. On the second or third day, somebody in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that we were not supposed to take equipment out of Germany, or words to that effect. The Germans subsequently said that it was an error that this was made a public statement. It never has been made clear to me that it was, indeed, an error,but that was the German position. At that point I made a strong statement to the effect that we would sustain our forces in Germany in order to improve the

flexibility of our posture, and if that was not a judgment shared by the Germans, we would have to reconsider the allocation of our forces. That was sometime mid-week.

Matloff: After the crisis Kissinger blamed the Pentagon for being derelict in its support of Israel. How did you react to that charge?

Schlesinger: I thought that it was untrue and unjustified. We followed our orders precisely from beginning to the end. I did not find it surprising, since throughout the week Henry was attempting to soothe both the Israelis directly, because the Israeli Ambassador was in his office every day, and also members of Congress, because there was a great wave. The most convenient thing to do under those circumstances was to blame it on either the logistical problems or the recalcitrance of the Department of Defense.

Matloff: The Washington Post of October 6, 1974, quoted you as saying "There is a difference between dragging your heels and having your shoes nailed to the floor by national policy." Is this an accurate report?

Schlesinger: Yes, indeed. In fact, there was was an interview in Time magazine about that time. Jerry Schecter came by and had an interview with me and it probably was picked up by The Washington Post. I was

instructed that no equipment items were to be sent to Israel. That instruction was changed about Thursday of that week. As far as materiel and supplies were concerned, the instruction was that the Israelis could have what they wanted, but that we were not to be seen by the outside world to be supporting Israel; therefore, it was a cash and carry kind of arrangement. The thing to bear in mind is that on Thursday I had a very excited call from Henry. It was a denunciatory call about why the items had not been sent to Israel, starting with the F-4s from McDonnell. I reminded him what the policy was, and the conversation went on as if I had not reminded him what the policy was. I was informed later that the reason was that he had the Israeli ambassador in his office and he was pursuing this line that the Department of Defense was responsible for the delays.

Goldberg: Were the military in full agreement on the policy? Did they express any views as to what we ought to be doing?

Schlesinger: There was no disagreement from the military. They responded very well. As I mentioned earlier, on Thursday things began to come apart. Henry reported that the Israelis were running out of supplies. They had counted on a three-week war at the rates of consumption

that they had experienced in 1967; but the rates of consumption were much higher. I received a call from Henry saying that we should persuade the U.S. air carriers to provide commercial airlift to the Israelis. We got Claude Brinegar, who was Secretary of Transportation, to go around to these people--I was involved to some extent. I reported back that we could get only a handful of commercial aircraft willing to provide their planes to the Israelis. When we approached Pan Am, or TWA, for example, they said that their pilots would have to land in Cairo West all of the time. They stated that the law says that they would have to respond if the President declared a national emergency and they said that they would be happy to respond in that event. But their underlying attitude was: why should they expose their own people, when the government of the United States did not want to show its hand and therefore would not announce a national emergency? So all the major carriers politely refused to provide aircraft, and that went on until Friday. We had completed our survey and I told Henry that we couldn't get it done. I talked to him in the early evening, and he was getting desperate. I said that we could move the supplies into Israel, but we would have to use U.S. aircraft and there was no way we could do it without exposing our hand.

Somewhere in the evening I got a call from Al Haig saying that the President was concerned about the Israeli situation. I repeated to him that if we were going to get supplies to the Israelis, we would have to use U.S. airlift, that there was no way of keeping the American role hidden under those circumstances, and that he would have to help me persuade Henry of that. Henry was the last to come to the conclusion that we had to use U.S. military airlift. He told me to get the Israelis over, meaning Gen. Gur, and that we would fly into Israel but that the aircraft would come through at night. The Israelis would have to commit to us that when the aircraft came in in the darkness, they would be unloaded in two to three hours and would be permitted to leave the Israeli airfields before dawn, so that they would not be observed. I got Gen. Gur over to the Pentagon and told him the arrangement. We would start moving with U.S. airlift the next morning, Saturday. I had already given orders to the military to start moving supplies toward Israel, and they had started in depots in the mountain states and in the west. Gur was, of course, very cooperative. Needless to say, he was also delighted. He said, "If what you want is that we unload these aircraft under cover of darkness and get the planes out of there, that's the way it's going to

be." The Israelis lived up to their commitment the best that they could.

There was another problem. On Thursday I had talked to the Department of State, and particularly to someone named Cy Weiss. I told him that if there was a possibility of moving supplies to Israel, we would have to get permission from the Portuguese to use Lajes Air Force Base as a transshipment point and for refueling. The original set of arrangements that I had laid out on the previous Sunday included the option that the U.S. would fly materiel to the Azores and the Israelis would pick it up there with their own aircraft. That would shorten the time and keep us from having to fly into Israel. That option had not been taken up and had serious problems. The commercial airstrip was on a different island in the Azores from Lajes. On Thursday I reminded Cy Weiss that there was a possibility that we might have to move through and that we ought to obtain from the Portuguese permission to use their airfield. Nothing was done about it. On Friday night I gave orders to the military to start moving equipment. They began to move that equipment here towards Dover Air Force Base. We were planning to fly in such a pattern that we could land the next night in Israel under cover of darkness. Gur had come down around 1:00 in the

morning. We had reached the arrangements by which they would offload the planes and get them out. But the best-laid plans of mice and men aft gae aglee. All of our aircraft were beginning to pile up at Dover Air Force Base, and we still did not have permission from the Portuguese. On Saturday morning, around 11:00, Nixon sent a cable to Caetano, then the Prime Minister of Portugal. About two or three in the afternoon permission arrived; Caetano had signed off on it. We were prepared then to start the airlift. The irony was that at that juncture in history, as I start to say about the best laid plans of mice and men, there were crosswinds in the Azores. There is only a single airstrip at Lajes, and because of the crosswinds our planes were not going to fly. They had to hang back here in the United States until the crosswinds died down. As a result, the whole arrangement with the Israelis, which I am convinced they were fully prepared to implement, fell apart. Instead of arriving late Saturday night in Israel, the planes started dropping out of the skies on Sunday morning. All of a sudden you see these C-5As coming down into Lod airfield and they have these U.S. insignia on them. So the whole population of Tel Aviv turns out by the gates cheering that the Americans have finally arrived.

Goldberg: You didn't consider holding them back until Sunday night?

Schlesinger: No, the risk was too great. The machine was rolling, and if they were held back any more, there would have been further congestion. The first planes that went out carried our airmen to Lajes so that they could run a logistical operation there. Others were flown into Israel. The C-5As were the largest planes anyone in Israel had ever seen, with the clear American insignia on them. And so the notion that the United States was not totally identified with the defense of Israel at that point was preposterous. As I said, at that point there was no alternative to using U.S. airlift. That airlift was a magnificently run operation. Our relations with our allies were interesting, because the allies either wanted to stay disengaged, or they were actively or passively hostile. You may recall that the European Economic Community, under pressure from the Arabs, had declared the Netherlands persona non grata and had nominally cut off oil supplies to the Netherlands. We agreed that we would help the Dutch out in that period to the extent it was necessary. The vote in the European Economic Community to punish one of their members, at the behest of one of the Arab exporting nations, tells you where the EEC was at

that time. The German Ministry of Defense was happy to cooperate under those circumstances. I mentioned earlier that the foreign affairs ministry made a statement to the effect that we could not use their ports. We were moving things towards Bremen and Hamburg in order to put them on ships to move it down through the Med to Israel, but I had worked out a set of arrangements with my counterpart, Georg Leber, who was strongly supportive both of the United States and of Israel. He came out of the German labor movement. He was a good friend of George Meany's, and he said, in effect, "There is no reason to have this public noise; we will work out these arrangements. Move anything you want in Germany, but just don't advertise it." After that initial flourish we had no further problems with the Germans at the logistical level. The reason I go back to the allies is that the performance of the United States in that airlift was such that all of the allies said, "We may not like what the Americans are doing, but they are performing with astonishing competency, and nobody in the world could do that but the United States." The fact that the U.S. was competent in its operations compensated, as it were, for their distress at the political decision that the U.S. had taken openly to support the Israelis.

Goldberg: What turned the policy around by the end of that week? What's your view on that?

Schlesinger: I think it's quite clear that the Israelis were running out of supplies because they had planned on something on the order of the rates of consumption of the 1967 war, and in many critical categories they were just running short. We had discussions over at the Pentagon with Israeli quartermaster types saying, "We need this immediately; this in ten days time; and we'd like to have this, but it's not a critical need."

Goldberg: What you are saying is that our fundamental policy was that we would not permit the Israelis to go under. This is what turned it around--the pressure on Kissinger from Congress, from the Israelis, from elsewhere.

Schlesinger: I think that this reflected the attitude of the President of the United States, Mr. Nixon. It was clear that he took the view that the Israelis, even if we did not want to be identified with this, in some political sense were identified with us. They were using U.S. arms, the Arabs were using Soviet arms, and if the Israelis were wiped away, it would be a defeat for the United States and should not be permitted to happen.This is not the most moralistic view that one can take of our foreign policy.

Matloff: Was there a byproduct of all this? I am thinking about the flap over Chairman Brown's antisemitic remark at Duke. You wanted to retain Brown. Did you then link his efforts during the airlift period as a reason for retaining him--that he had done excellent work?

Schlesinger: I did, indeed. You asked earlier what advice we had gotten from the U.S. military. The U.S. military were quite variable. The Air Force tended to be very pro-Israel, because they had worked very closely with the Israelis. They had people over there. You can still see the differences in the services. The Navy was rather skeptical about the Israelis, following the episode of the Liberty in 1967. As you may detect from his subsequent comments, Adm. Moorer has spent 20-odd years trying to get the people from the Liberty honored, and credit and blame given where due. He was not particularly pro-Israel. But when Tom was told that this was what we were going to do, he passed the orders down the chain of command that that was what the United States was going to do and no one was going to stop them. With regard to George Brown, he was not formally in the chain of command. I always use this as an example of the subformal chain of command. Tom Moorer passes the word to the head of MAC in St. Louis that we are going to start moving equipment to Israel.

The first thing that fellow will do will be to check with his chief of service. Even though formally he is not in the chain of command, as a practical working matter he is an essential part of the process, just as the Marines were an essential part of the process during the Beirut episode in 1982, even though the Commandant was not in the chain of command. You can't divide these things all that nicely. George Brown was enormously supportive of every American effort and it was the Air Force that was doing the job and they did a splendid job. I pointed that out subsequently, during that episode or the aftereffects of that episode at Duke that you mentioned. There was no real problem. Clements was not particularly supportive of Israel. He tended to support the Arab states. But once it was clear that it was American policy, there was no problem; the military turned to. Indeed, in the subsequent week we were flying A-4s all the way from the United States to Israel. We put carriers at various places in the Atlantic. An A-4 would fly out of Norfolk, set down on a carrier deck, get refueled, and fly to the next carrier.

Goldberg: These were naval aircraft?

Schlesinger: A-4s, yes. This was explained at one of the meetings of the WSAG and Kissinger said, "You fellows are really good at this, when you get going."

Goldberg: Who were the people you relied on most during this period--the people in OSD you were talking with, who were helping you work out the positions and all the rest of it during that first week and the second week, too?

Schlesinger: I don't recall; I don't think that I particularly used the OSD staff that week as opposed to the subsequent week when we went on alert.

Goldberg: So you were handling this yourself, you were on top of it all the way and you were fully immersed in it?

Schlesinger: Yes. I was dealing directly with the Israelis and with the Department of State.

Matloff: Nobody in ISA?

Schlesinger: The people in ISA were thoroughly involved, but I don't remember the details about that. I remember events much better than I remember personalities. You mentioned the question of the Israelis. Sometime around Tuesday of that week, the Israeli Ambassador came over, and Henry said to me, "You must treat him with the utmost brutality."

Goldberg: Was it Rabin?

Schlesinger: No. It was Dinitz. It was part of the game of Kissinger saying that he was doing his best for Israel but could not persuade the DoD to be cooperative. At that time I did not know that he was following that particular game, however; I assumed that we were operating more or less on the same wavelength.

Matloff: In the subsequent negotiations of Kissinger in the Middle East and the attempt of the administration to defuse potential conflict in the area--were you drawn in on any of that?

Schlesinger: I was drawn in on that, yes. I was drawn in both in the Nixon years and in the Ford period.

Matloff: Let's move on to the dispute between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus which flared in July of 1974, shortly before Ford became President. What was your position on this? Did you make any public statements about that intervention by Turkey?

Schlesinger: No, none that I can remember. I referred to it as a Greek tragedy, kind of a banal statement on my part. Kissinger picked that up when he was in Europe, that the Secretary of Defense had said that it was a Greek tragedy. In any event, you are not asking about public statements, primarily. I had press conferences, in which I made some banal statements such as political figures

will make under such circumstances. I was perfectly happy with the position of the Nixon administration, which had been to support the colonels; I was perfectly content with that until it became clear around June of 1974. It came up in one of the the NSC subgroups, the WSAG, or the Washington Action Group, in which I was participating, and I said that it was about time for us to begin to distance ourselves from the Greek colonels. Henry went crazy about that. It was not a moral judgment on my part. As long as they were clearly in command in Greece we could deal with them, but the probability of their surviving was going down and for the United States to be wholly identified with the Greek colonels at that point would have worsened our relations with the Greeks subsequent to their departure. At one of the WSAG meetings I had said that it looked to me as if the colonels were likely to lose power in Greece and that the United States would be well advised to distance itself from that, but for a variety of reasons Kissinger and the President did not want to do so. I thought that it was in the best interests of the country that we not be identified as the last-ditch supporters of the colonels; and that if we were so identified, any subsequent Greek regime was likely to take a very harsh attitude towards the bases that the United States had in

Greece. Indeed, any successive regime to the colonels was bound to be much further to the left and to reflect some of the hostility to the United States that was current on the left in Greek politics. Henry felt that this was a positioning of the Department of Defense more than it was a positioning of the United States.

Matloff: On the question of continued aid to Turkey, do you recall any strong differences of views with Nixon and Kissinger?

Schlesinger: No. We were all together on that, and Jerry Ford as well. On the issue of the necessity of sustaining our support of the Turks, everybody was in exactly the same position.

Matloff: When Ford signed the Foreign Assistance Act in December 1974, he signed it with the prohibition. I guess his hand was forced by Congress on that one.

Schlesinger: He felt that it was forced by Congress; and then the Turks began to cut off our water at our various bases. I was very anxious to resolve the differences between ourselves and the Turks, which meant getting a reconciliation between the Congress and the administration. So I talked to various parties on the Hill, including Rosenberg and Sarbanes, who were engaged in the cutoff, and sought to get a resolution of that.

Ford did not like my intervention, because it suggested that there was a compromise possible, and he felt that no compromise was possible.

Matloff: Let me ask a few questions about our relations with China and Japan. Did you favor a tilt toward China, to play the so-called China card, vis-a-vis the Soviet Union? Were you ever consulted on questions of that kind--about China's role in the world and our relations with China?

Schlesinger: I became Secretary of Defense in 1973, after the Shanghai Communiqué. I thought that Nixon's finest hour in foreign policy was the patching up of our relations with the Chinese. That was more significant than some of his accomplishments in the Middle East, and certainly was not checkered, as was the policy of détente. I had no problem with it, and thought that it was long overdue; that the long frigid relationship between Washington and Peking did us no good at all.

Matloff: Were you and your office drawn in in any way in support of those initiatives to China?

Schlesinger: Yes, both at the Central Intelligence Agency and in my years at the DoD. ***[two and a half lines of text redacted]***

[six lines of text redacted] I'm not sure what this means in terms of U.S.-China relations; that is a rather ambiguous element in those relations. ***[three lines of text redacted]*** As Secretary of Defense, I was regularly concerned about China, because Kissinger felt that there was a lively possibility that Brezhnev was going to attack China. Kissinger at least professed that if the Russians successfully attacked China, that was the end of American power, and therefore we had no alternative, he felt, but to go to China's assistance militarily. I, as Secretary of Defense, was not eager to see American forces involved in any way in a fight with the Soviet Union over China. So I was very concerned about the problem, but not because I was not very much in favor of the reconciliation and rapprochement between Peking and Washington. I thought

that that was the greatest contribution that Nixon made in foreign policy.

Matloff: How did you envision the role of Japan in relation to U.S. security interests in the Pacific?

Schlesinger: I was out there in Japan. I was the first Secretary of Defense to visit Japan, and was the object of curiosity and some very limited hostility. For the most part I was welcomed. I went out there in 1975. The general discussions were of our joint strategic interests with Japan--the need for the Japanese to play a larger role than they had been playing and to spend more money on security. I said that they could do that without spending more than 1 percent of the GNP; that they might go slightly over that, but that they really ought to have a stalwart defense of Hokkaido and the logistical capabilities to support their ground forces and air forces in such a defense; and that we were interested, above all, in their assistance in terms of protecting the sea lanes--all of which subsequently became U.S. policy. I had a very good set of relationships in Japan at that time.

Goldberg: On the subject of visits, did you also contemplate visiting the Soviet Union?

Schlesinger: No, I didn't.

Goldberg: Not seriously, at any time?

Schlesinger: The Soviets would occasionally throw out hints of that sort, with regard to meetings between defense personnel of the two countries. But I was the ogre in the eyes of the Soviet Union, a role which I played with some willingness, and I am not sure to what extent they were particularly eager to see me. In their press I was the bête noire.

Matloff: Why were you the ogre in their eyes? Did it have to do with your relations with CIA, or what?

Schlesinger: No, it had nothing to do with that. I had a jovial encounter with Brezhnev when I was Director of Central Intelligence. The central question was the announcement of the new targeting doctrine. The Soviets professed, and I think to some extent believed, that this represented an American attempt to reestablish strategic supremacy and, in any event, was not consistent with their notion of mutual deterrence, which was that the two nuclear capabilities should deter each other. This, in my judgment, would leave them free to use their conventional force or advantages against the West, or threaten to use them. In any event, the consequence was that the Soviets regarded me as an element of the U.S. community hostile to détente, which I was not. I was strongly in favor of détente, but not a détente in which the Soviets had

superiority in nuclear weapons because of greater counter-force capability and conventional superiority. As I mentioned before, my central concern as Secretary of Defense was to protect Western Europe. The change in that policy and the strengthening of our forces in Europe led the Soviets to use me as something of a bête noire in the press. I don't know that the Soviets had pressed particularly hard to have any encounters at that level with me. By contrast, the Chinese always were inviting the American Secretary of Defense to visit China. None of those invitations reached me, because they were cut off at the Department of State. However, the fact that I had been invited reached me, not through official channels, but through unofficial channels. The Chinese reasons for insisting that I come, or for repeatedly inviting me, were the same as the Soviet reason for not being particularly eager to speak to me; the Chinese regarded me as representing American strength during this period of détente wobbliness, which they worried about greatly.

Matloff: To return to the domestic crisis in the summer of 1974, as a result of Watergate, when the President was being forced to resign from office, would you describe your concerns during that period and what instructions you

gave Brown, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs? and whether orally or in writing?

Schlesinger: I gave them orally. My first concern was that these were unique circumstances in the history of the United States, and because they were unique, nobody could necessarily predict what might happen. It was my responsibility as Secretary of Defense, both in terms of the office and in terms of my moral obligations as a citizen who happened to have that office, to take whatever steps I could to assure that the United States would get through this difficult period as smoothly as possible and with as little instability as possible. My responsibility was to see to it that there was no threat or difficulty as far as the maintenance of our constitutional procedures was concerned and to avoid the DoD doing anything during this period that was untoward, either in terms of the way society viewed the Department of Defense, or in terms of any deviation from normal constitutional practices. What were the orders that I gave to General Brown? I said to him, "These are strange and unusual circumstances, and these are circumstances in which any orders that come to the Department of Defense from the White House should be brought to my attention immediately." My specific concern

was to maintain what I regarded as the integrity of the chain of command.

Goldberg: Can you date that approximately?

Schlesinger: It would have been in July of 1974.

Matloff: Do you recall Gen Brown's reaction, if he had any?

Schlesinger: Gen. Brown was not one normally given to excess emotion. I think he may have been surprised, but did not express any surprise. But I gather that when he went downstairs into the tank, he expressed a good deal of surprise. Holloway later told me that Gen. Brown came in and said, "I've had the strangest conversation with the Secretary of Defense." He passed on to them the gist of what I had said.

Matloff: Let me quote from Ford's book, "Soon after I became President, I had to admonish Schlesinger about newspaper stories suggesting that he had put our armed forces on alert just prior to Nixon's resignation. . . For the Secretary of Defense to speculate to the press that our military commanders--men who are controlled by civilians under the Constitution--might take some unilateral action at a moment of grave national crisis was to stab our armed forces in the back." Would you want to comment on that statement?

Schlesinger: In the first place, Ford didn't write that book. But I have a certain sympathy for Ford in those circumstances, because the press stories indeed were quite volatile. They had nothing to do with whatever I said in response to one question in a background. It was the usual journalistic exaggeration. But, taken the fact that he was reading the press, he was quite right to be 1) concerned, and 2) angry. He did not ask me about it directly, as I recall. I think I had some admonitions from Haig, but I don't remember a conversation with Jerry Ford. I did hear that he was deeply concerned about it, but he did not raise it directly. I regarded the stories as sufficiently preposterous that I did not take any action to dispel them. I made a clear mistake even responding to a question in what was supposed to be a background session, and I thought I had gone off the record at that point. What was clearly a distortion was this notion of a military coup. For example, I had said in response to that question that many people in the Air Force felt a deep loyalty to Nixon because of his unending efforts to bring the POWs back from Southeast Asia, and that there was great affection for Nixon in the Air Force. Somehow or other that was transformed into the suggestion that the Air Force was the possible center of this

hypothetical unilateral action, which certainly had nothing whatsoever to do with it. I was trying to say something supportive of the former President for his actions in support of the Air Force, and that these men might understandably have a certain loyalty to a commander-in-chief who had never forgotten them. In the mood of the press of that period that got twisted into something altogether different. That Ford had that reaction, under the circumstances, strikes me as quite understandable. I probably erred in not going to talk to him about it, but I regarded the stories as so preposterous on the face. That was a bad period. As to your statement about a stab in the back of the armed forces, I think that anyone who knew my record in the Department of Defense knew that wasn't so, and that the attitude taken by the military who might have been offended was, basically, "That's the press, again."

Matloff: We have touched on arms control and disarmament. Did you feel that your views differed in any way from those of Nixon, Ford, and Kissinger--whether it be SALT II, the MBFR, or any of those things?

Schlesinger: Curiously enough, I was much closer to Ford on those issues than I was to Kissinger or to Nixon. Kissinger was very eager to have a SALT II agreement, and,

in my view, was acting too hastily in moving toward such an agreement, with less concern about the details. Nixon, when I became DCI, and at least during the first few months of my tenure at the Pentagon, was very skeptical about the Russians, much more so than Kissinger was. As time wore on and the burdens of the Watergate crisis became ever more a threat to him, he became more eager to cut a swath internationally, and therefore he was less wary about the Russians in the spring of 1974 than he had been in the spring of 1973. I thought that Kissinger was too eager to reach this agreement. My concern was the long run nuclear stability, and I did not want to have long run stability of the relationship with the Soviet Union undermined by an eagerness to have an agreement that seemed to me to convey things that would suggest to others that the Soviet Union had a permanent advantage over the United States. I spent a great deal of time talking about throw-weight. I kept talking about it when I was back at the AEC, and increasingly as DCI, and subsequently. Throw-weight is the critical element once you have MIRVed your forces. I had stressed when I was DCI that the Soviet Union, as it moved to MIRVs and improved guidance, would have a counter-force capability that totally outclassed the American capability. I did not want that

to transpire without our reacting. Part of the reason for my pushing along the MX was to provide a hedge against the Soviets continuing with their strategic program that became obvious only after May 14, 1972. Indeed, I think when I became Secretary of Defense I began to reveal some of the Soviet actions with regard to their strategic program. I talked about the SS-18s and -19s and what they implied, and about throw-weights. It was part of the reason that the Soviets regarded me as hostile to détente. I advocated at the outset, when I was Secretary of Defense, a policy of persuading the Soviets that as they moved away from the SS-9 (which Mel Laird had, in my judgment, in an exaggerated way treated as a threat to the American retaliatory capability)--that as they moved away from those heavy, but inaccurate and un-MIRVed vehicles toward their new forces, they must bring down their throw-weight. This was primarily a problem of the SS-9; that was my first position. As we learned more about the SS-19 and its throw-weight, which only became clear in the fall of 1973, it was plain that the problem of Soviet throw-weight was more than the SS-18, which was the successor to the SS-9. My position at that time was that the Soviets should pull down their throw-weight.

In the spring of 1974, as we moved along in the SALT II negotiations, it was apparent that simply converting the throw-weight of the SS-9 to much lower throw-weights, as they converted their force to the new missiles, was insufficient. At that time I began to advocate something else, which was a limit on MIRVed throw-weight, and which I pressed on Kissinger and Nixon. Nixon told me that they had tried that on the Soviets when he was in the Crimea in June of 1974, and it was just brushed off. I don't think it was pressed very hard; I don't think either of them particularly had his heart in that. My objective was a long run relationship of the strategic forces which would not put us in a position of inferiority or of instability. Particularly as Watergate ran on, that focus on the long run became less an interest, if anything. Kissinger, who had to conduct the diplomacy, by and large, would point out to me regularly that the Soviets were very unsophisticated, that they didn't understand questions of throw-weight, that it would take a long time to educate them, and that we wouldn't have a SALT agreement. I took the position that we should spend our time educating them. So there was a great difference. I think that his objectives had become more tactical than long run. You will remember that somewhere during that period he

exploded and said,"What, in God's name, is strategic superiority?" And I had a full answer for him. I was prepared, if that argument continued, to go public, explaining what strategic superiority was in words that members of the public could understand.

When Ford came in, Ford was not so much enamored of the position that Kissinger was taking with regard to these arms control issues. As we headed up to the meeting at Vladivostok we had various presentations to Ford. Kissinger was advocating something called "offsetting asymmetries," in which the United States accepted on the surface that we would have fewer missiles deployed than the Soviet Union, and that this would be offset by the asymmetry that we had forward-based forces in Europe, etc. I took the position that we should never acquiesce in a position formally, on paper, of inferiority. I advocated equality of throw-weight, basically; it was more complicated than that, but the central position was that we should work on persuading the Soviet Union to accept equality of throw-weight. Equality of throw-weight meant something different from strict equality. I felt that I could live with the Soviets having twice as much throw-weight as we had in the ICBM force, but not four or five times as much throw-weight, so I emphasized that this was

a rough equality of throw-weight. The Joint Chiefs of Staff put forward a proposal for equal aggregates, and Ford just simply overruled Kissinger on that. He sided with the Department of Defense by embracing the position of the JCS. He did not side with the Secretary of Defense, who wanted to have some rough equality in throw-weight. Kissinger argued that the Soviets would never accept equal aggregates, and that he understood this from negotiations. In fact, as time wore on, not only did they accept equal aggregates, but they are also now in the position of moving towards a rough equality of throw-weights, although we now have Gorbachev and not Brezhnev.

Matloff: In Kissinger's pushing for a SALT II treaty, from where you were sitting did you think that this was for tactical reasons because of Nixon's position, Watergate, and the rest of it?

Schlesinger: No. There was also a strong element in there that he would like to have this diplomatic triumph.

Matloff: Was there anything also to do with a strategic difference of views, that the Soviet Union was drawing ahead of the United States and that it had to be nailed to a treaty of some kind?

Schlesinger: Kissinger felt this very strongly at that time; he was quite Spenglerian in his views.

Matloff: Did you go along with that view?

Schlesinger: No, I did not share that. I thought that the nation was in a rough patch, but that, if you look at the history of the United States, its mood is quite cyclical; it is not secular decline.

Goldberg: It's irregular, not just cyclical.

Schlesinger: And it's certainly not inevitable.

Matloff: There are some general questions about Cold War policies. What was your view of détente, for example. At one point in August 1973, you said that it was "a mailed fist in a velvet glove." How did you see the relations among détente, military force, and deterrence?

Schlesinger: One can look at my farewell observations there. I am a strong believer in pressing towards détente, but that that relationship had to be something other than the way the Russians defined détente, which meant the United States slowly adjusting to the shift of the correlation of forces against the United States and the West and in favor of the Soviet Union, which Brezhnev and his troops believed. We should not accept a Soviet definition of détente. Détente did, indeed, mean the lessening of tensions, but the lessening of tensions in such a way that the Soviet Union did not represent a growing threat to what I regarded as our vital interests.

Our vital interests were , first and foremost, Western Europe. You will recall all of the concern at that time about Finlandization of Europe. Our armed forced had to convey, not only to the Russians, but to the Europeans as well, the capacity of the United States to provide the necessary degree of protection for Western Europe. A clear inferiority of the United States posture might continue to dissuade the Soviet Union from taking any overt military action, but it would not provide reassurance to our West European allies that the United States was therein capable of defending them.

Matloff: At one point in your remarks at Gainesville in Florida in 1975 when you were summing up your reflections on the position of Sec/Def, you remarked to the effect that détente is no substitute for defense, or for deterrence.

Schlesinger: Exactly right. It is something that goes back, indeed, to my days at Rand, and also to when I was Assistant Director of the Bureau of the Budget and Mel Laird was developing his new thesis, which we argued about in the WSAG. The Department of Defense developed something called "realistic deterrence." I kept insisting, even though I was supposed to be trying to cut the budget of the DoD, that deterrence must be based upon

real capabilities, not something that is either imagined or subjective. Unless you have the real forces, there is no reason to spend a lot of time talking about deterrence. So defense, that is, the real physical capabilities, underlay deterrence. Therefore, since deterrence was the heart of an appropriate lessening of tensions between ourselves and the Soviet Union, defense also underlay détente of the sort that we were prepared to have.

Matloff: How effective, in your view, was military aid, on the basis of your reflection and experience, as a tool for political leverage in the Cold War?

Schlesinger: There were two types of aid that served the purpose. One was military assistance to the forward defense nations--military assistance to those countries that were across the line from the Soviet Union or from the Soviet Union's principal client states--Korea, and to some extent Iran, Turkey. These are all countries that I felt were in different ways requiring aid. In the case of Iran, the Iranians could pay for it, particularly after the oil price revolution. The Turks were most deserving of aid.The Greeks and the Koreans were deserving of aid. So forward-defense countries in which the United States was augmenting, as it were, the overall aura of battle, made a lot of sense. Another form of aid was walking

around money for U.S. diplomats, and particularly for Henry Kissinger. It was a kind of currency that was quite useful under some circumstances. Henry tended to regard it as more than walking around money, because he gave it out rather indiscriminately. When he went to a country, he would offer aid as military equipment to them more or less as a door prize as he went in the front door. There is a legitimate role, which most critics of military aid do not see, in that it represents for many governments a kind of cementing of good relationships.

Goldberg: What were some of the instances of that that Kissinger did?

Schlesinger: Basically, wherever he went--in the Middle East, Indonesia, and most dramatically, perhaps, in the case of the Shah. The Shah's case was a mixed bag, partly because his was, in my judgment, a forward defense country, and in the judgment of the White House he was going to be the guardian of the Gulf, in accordance with the Nixon doctrine. That was a more complicated case. Pakistan was another forward defense country. He would go through Southeast Asia or Africa, and he was very unhappy that we could not provide jet aircraft to Latin America, because that would have given him a greater flexibility. I think that Henry understood the use of military

assistance as a tool of politics, but he tended to use it rather indiscriminately, at least from the standpoint of the head of the Department of Defense. All of this equipment came out of my inventories, and especially after the 1973 war, to which George Brown averted so inelegantly down at Duke. The inventories of the Department of Defense were depleted and therefore any drawdown of those inventories for purposes of walking around money came home quite painfully to the Department and its Secretary.

Matloff: It's interesting how that Middle East business keeps running like a skein all through this.

Schlesinger: You know, there was no Middle East business until October 6, 1973.

Matloff: Do you recall a typical work day in your life as Secretary of Defense, if there was such?

Schlesinger: There was no typical day. I tended to put in very long hours, getting there at 6:00 or 6:30. My view of the job was that I was there to manage the Department for the President and for the American public and that I was not there primarily as a social glad-hander. So I very rarely went to official parties, and all that, because I had to go home and get to sleep. On those rare occasions when I went to the White House functions I found myself very tired the next day. At the

Department in the morning I would indulge in conversations of what I regarded as important substantive value to the greatest extent possible. If the conversation was rewarding, I would let my calendar slip, to the annoyance of John Wickham, my military assistant, and probably to the annoyance of everyone else in the building. But I felt that I had to know as much substantively as I possibly could know about the job, and therefore I would let the calendar slip. I did as little as I could possibly do in terms of the ceremonial aspects of the office--they can be very time consuming--so that I could devote myself to mastering the substantive aspects of the Department.

Matloff: How much travel did you find yourself having to do, either within the U.S. or abroad?

Schlesinger: I tended to think that I had to be in Washington as much as possible, and to limit my being out of Washington. So I did relatively little travel. I would pop off to Omaha, and to Fort Leavenworth, and lecture at the War Colleges, but such domestic trips were relatively few in number. The chief call on my time outside of Washington tended to be going off to Europe to various NATO conferences, because I had to reassure the Europeans that, indeed, the United States was capable of

defending them; that it was not a spent superpower after Vietnam. I had to persuade them that not only were we not going to withdraw our forces, à la the Mansfield amendment, but that we were going to rebuild our forces. I had to explain to them why the new strategic targeting doctrine had been adopted. It was adopted in the interest of providing a strengthening of deterrence in Western Europe. I would visit Europe at least three times a year and I would tend to spend a great deal of time with my colleagues. I went to the Far East just once, to visit Japan and Korea. I tried to concentrate my time in Washington.

Goldberg: In what areas of the Secretary of Defense's functions did you concentrate your efforts?

Schlesinger: I was most interested in the continued deployment of U.S. forces overseas, which was threatened by the Mansfield amendment. It required continued efforts for the first year and a half I was in the job just to head that off. It was difficult to explain to members of Congress as they tried to cut the budget that the role of the United States as a superpower required deployment of forces overseas. The nature, the role, and the strength of those forces were of great interest to me. Secondly, interlinked with that, was the strategic position of the

United States; the strategies, nuclear and non-nuclear, that we were in the process of changing. I spent somewhat less time on weapon systems. I spent a great deal of time on the Secretary of Defense's guidance to the services, less on the implementation of that through the budget. There were specific kinds of weapons systems that I got deeply interested in, mostly because I had been interested in them when I was in the old Bureau of the Budget. I spent a good deal of time on intelligence matters, but less than on the budget and particular weapons system choices, with the exception of the F-16; and the high-low mix and things of that sort tended to be of less than first-line interest with me. Then, of course, I spent even less time in the usual morale-building visits to the field or to this or that group.

Goldberg: Did you pay much attention to the acquisition process, as such?

Schlesinger: Yes, indeed. I was interested in the acquisition process in a generalized kind of way, but it was not my foremost interest.

Goldberg: I'm not talking simply about interest in weapons systems, but about the actual organization and functioning of acquisition. Or did you leave that largely to Clements?

Schlesinger: I did not spend a lot of time at that, unless it was on an ad hoc basis in weapons systems selection; but the organization itself, for one thing, I regarded as a very difficult morass to clear up. I believe that that is the case. To clear up the procurement problems of the Department of Defense requires a President of the United States who is prepared to invest considerable political capital in battling through some of these issues on Capitol Hill, and also a Secretary of Defense who is not only knowledgeable but prepared to slogger away for four to six years. It was clear to me that I wasn't going to have that kind of tenure.

Goldberg: Or have a good Deputy Secretary of Defense who would do it with the right kind of support. I raise the question because we may be tasked soon to write a history of DoD acquisition policy and practice for the last 40 years or more.

Schlesinger: That's very interesting. Are you going to do that?

Goldberg: The current Under Secretary for Acquisition is making noises that he would like to have that done, but that would require that it be done also by all the military services, which are, after all, the front line

when it comes to acquisition. So I am interested in getting reaction and views on this subject.

Schlesinger: I have a great many views on that subject, but I also have recycled them so many times that I am getting tired because the views are recycled and nothing ever changes. We do it the wrong way. The whole set of procedures that have become anchored in by the regulations, the laws that govern it, and the manuals and the equivalent, are designed to correct every mistake that has been made by procurement offices for the last 40 years, but there is no imagination about the forthcoming mistakes. You have to get the Congress to back off. It is a mess. We did this thing so much better in the '50s, but the morale of the Department was different, the position of the public toward the Department was different, and the behavior of defense industries was quite different. The attitude of the Department towards defense industries was also quite different. You could send a letter out to North American Aviation and say, "Start work on a fighter. We will get to the specs later on, but this is the kind of plane that we want." Within a year's time you were pretty close to completing the process. Now you wouldn't trust them unless you had a set of contracts a shelf long, but the fact of the matter is

that if they are untrustworthy and you are depending on contractual arrangements to keep them in line, it is a hopeless cause anyhow.

Matloff: We have come to the question about the end of your tenure. From your perspective, what were the important factors that led to this? What went on in the Oval Office on November 2nd, 1975? Was that a total surprise to you?

Schlesinger: No, because I had gotten good intelligence over the weekend. Everyone was coming in to warn me that it was coming.

Matloff: So you were alerted.

Schlesinger: I had been alerted for two or three days.

Matloff: Did Ford give any reasons for the change?

Schlesinger: He tried to sell me on some other post.

Matloff: Was any one else present?

Schlesinger: Jack Marsh was there.

Matloff: Did he say anything?

Schlesinger: No. It was a very brief meeting. The President said he would like to replace me. I asked who it would be, and he said Rumsfeld, and I said that would be a good choice, or words to that effect. He offered me another position.

Goldberg: Was it a Cabinet position that he offered?

Schlesinger: No, I'll remember what it was, later. It took about 15 minutes. Since I had been forewarned that this was coming, I did not express much astonishment or surprise. I said I would think the other position over and send my letter of resignation, which I did later that day.

Matloff: How much of the exacerbations or strains that were developing in your relationship with the President might have been a result of differences of style, personality, or background? Your background was far more academic, obviously.

Schlesinger: I'm sure that that was a major consideration. He described me as a damn academician.

Matloff: Before you left, did you get a chance to brief Rumsfeld?

Schlesinger: We had a conversation. I don't recall that he changed very much. In fact, he's told me in recent years there were very few people whose policies he wouldn't have changed.

Goldberg: You had the impression that he very much wanted the job, didn't you? I keep hearing this from people.

Schlesinger: I would assume so. I didn't have an impression at the time, but most people who work in the White House would like to get out of the White House.

Goldberg: Is it your impression that Ford had a pretty good White House, compared with Nixon's? My impression was that it was better run under Ford.

Schlesinger: I think it was better run. Whether the people had that much substantive knowledge or not, it was a much more pleasant place. I recall going in there one day with George Brown after Ford took over, and all of the darkness and the atmosphere that had weighed on the White House for so long was gone and I said to George, "This is sure a different place to come into" and I got a George Brown "You bet it is."

Matloff: I would like to ask you a general question about the role of the Secretary of Defense in such matters as active political campaigning. Do you think the Secretary of Defense should get involved in that? Some have; some have not.

Schlesinger: I have thought about that in the intervening years since 1980. I think that the Department and the Secretary should stay clear of partisan politics of any sort. If you read my farewell address, I said that this Department serves all the people, Republicans and Democrats, left and right, and it has to be seen as serving all of the people. For the Secretary of Defense, who depends upon support from both sides of the aisle, to

be out there in partisan politics strikes me as bad for the country, as well as bad for the Department. But that is a personal view. Mel Laird and Don Rumsfeld did not declare themselves to be nonpartisan, and they certainly participated in party issues and election campaigns. I guess it never bothered me so much when they did it, since they had been chosen because they were, in some sense, ex-politicians. I was bothered in the summer of 1980 when Harold Brown got engaged in making speeches at the Democratic convention, because Harold Brown was not a politician before. He had nothing to do with it; he was just like me. When Harold did it, I found it much more bothersome.

Goldberg: How about when McNamara did it in 1964?

Schlesinger: I thought it was a disgrace.

Goldberg: And Charlie Wilson in 1956?

Schlesinger: I don't remember that, but I would have thought that that was a disgrace, too.

Goldberg: It's a matter of degree. Some did it a lot more than others.

Schlesinger: The out-party is likely to raise issues about defense policy. I think that there is no reason why the Secretary of Defense should not respond to questions on the record, and be as factual and careful as he can be

and apparently nonpartisan in his responses. I think that there is no reason he cannot discuss substantive issues on a substantive basis rather than as a partisan issue. I guess that is a matter of judgment. When Goldwater was talking about delegating responsibility to the field commanders for the use of tactical weapons, that McNamara would speak on that subject strikes me as necessary. As I recall that campaign, it was a shabby campaign, at best. Not only was there objection to Goldwater's substantive views, but there was also a good deal of talk about whether he was a stable personality. I think that we should stay away from that; as the Secretary of Defense you should try to keep things away from personalities, which is hard to do in politics, and away from party issues.

Matloff: Let me turn your attention to your perspectives on OSD organization and management after you left that post, as a result of that experience and your reflection over it. Did you see the need for further changes in the structure, functions, and working relations in DoD; for example, the roles of the Secretary of Defense vis-a-vis the JCS Chairman or of OSD vis-a-vis the services?

Schlesinger: I think all these issues came up during the prelude to Goldwater-Nichols and I discussed them at that

time to a considerable extent. I was strongly in support of the changes that were embodied in Goldwater-Nichols, irrespective of commentary from the Department of the Navy that this was establishing a Prussian General Staff, etc.

Goldberg: They said that in 1946 and '47, too.

Schlesinger: They trotted out their old speeches. I think that the new position of the Chairman was overdue; that he should be more than simply reporting the joint views of the Chiefs or, alternatively, feeling guilty because he is going beyond that. I was strongly in favor, although the services were opposed, of the establishment of the Vice Chairman, or Deputy Chairman, as I called him. The downgrading, as it were, of the service secretaries struck me as dealing with a vestigial element of the Department of Defense, and did not much worry me. I think there should be a very close and intimate relationship between the Secretary and those in the tank, and I tried to have that relationship. I spent a great deal of time and worried a great deal about the personalities down there.

Goldberg: You dealt more with the military Joint Chiefs than you did with service secretaries, presumably, and you felt that was the proper way to go.

Schlesinger: That the Chairman should be liberated in some sense from his institutional role so that he is giving his personal advice, I think is desirable, but that does not mean that the Secretary or the Chairman ought to be engaged in ignoring or condescending to the Chiefs of the Services. They are part of it and I hope that that arrangement in which the Secretary goes downstairs and chats with them each Monday afternoon continues.

Matloff: Did you feel that the unification of the services had gone as far as it could, or should it go further?

Schlesinger: No, it did not. I think that the propensity of the services to choose equipments different from one another and, in the ultimate case, communications equipment that they could not communicate with one another, reflected a departure from appropriate practices, and that had to be corrected. I also felt that the role of the CINCs should be enhanced, à la Goldwater-Nichols, so that the component commanders were not in the position to veto their hypothetical wartime chief. On the other hand, there is a great deal to be said for the services, and those who want to reform the Department forget all those things about tradition, esprit, and competitiveness that inspire the people in the individual services. To

the extent that you suppress all of that in the name of efficiency, you are suppressing something that it is desirable to retain. There is a tendency among academic observers to assume that esprit is a given, and they fiddle with the structure on the assumption that it is not going to cause any significant change in performance. I think that's just wrong. McNamara did a lot of that, and I think that it backfired on him.

Matloff: Should centralization in OSD have gone further?

Schlesinger: I think that I stand on what I stood at the time. I believe that policy should be centralized in the office of the Secretary of Defense and that there should be no question anywhere, in any of the services, that the services respond to those policies that are set down but that there should be considerable latitude in the implementation of policies for the uniformed military. There are two aspects of that, or two down sides of not doing that. In the first place, if the uniformed military people come to believe that their judgment is not being called upon and that they are simply there to obey orders, taking orders from the civilians, you not only forfeit what they can offer, but their spirit and motivation will decline. I think that that is a serious problem. Secondly, there is no way that a civilian Secretary of

Defense is going to know all the possibilities. He has got to motivate these people to support him, with all of their capacities. That means that they have to be motivated. You remember in our discussion of the budget, going back to my years at the BoB and my critique of the way McNamara had handled these things, that I felt that you had to incentivize the services to do the efficient thing. If you do not give them an incentive and simply tell them to be efficient, as prescribed by you, and treat them as being stupid for not having seen this in the first place, you will have a group of people who are resentful of the Secretary, and understandably so.

Goldberg: They still are about McNamara.

Schlesinger: I think that there should be policy guidance, and that the central vision of how the services are supposed to support American foreign policy must come from the Secretary and be accepted by the military. Figuring out how best to serve those purposes is something in which the military should be allowed considerable latitude, but not total latitude. Earlier you raised the question about the performance in 1973. There was never any questioning. Once the decision was taken by the civilians that we were going to airlift to Israel, there was never any difficulty. Later on, as those inventories

became depleted in peacetime, there tended to be some backfire, but that would have been the case if we had taken away the inventories for China. You were stripping first-line equipment out of the services, and particularly out of the Army. During the war, when they were told this was the policy, they responded immediately.

Goldberg: There is a push on in OSD now for greater centralization in functions. They are setting up new agencies to consolidate functions from all of the services into agencies under OSD.

Schlesinger: That doesn't surprise me.

Goldberg: There is a strong push to set up several in the past year. There are more on the way, and the services are getting unhappy about some of the proposals that are being made, such as centralizing aircraft supply. It doesn't make sense to them.

Schlesinger: I think it makes some sense to them, but they prefer the other policy.

Goldberg: They have some strong arguments.

Schlesinger: It's a very difficult situation, because these are institutions of a long and proud history. Along comes 1947 and we say to the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, the CNO, and, conceptually, at least, to the new Chief of Staff of the Air Force, "By the way, fellows, you

are out of the chain of command. Don't bother to think about what we should be doing, because we are going to go straight down from the Secretary to the component commanders."

Goldberg: They should be used to it by now; it has happened to them before, more than once.

Schlesinger: We also say, "Your job is to equip your services to provide training for the individuals, to provide supplies, equipment, and facilities." So their jobs and the jobs of the services have been reduced, basically, to a logistic job on paper. Then we come along and say that for reasons of efficiency we are going to take that job away from you, too. It is understandable that there is considerable resistance, because that is their job on paper.

Goldberg: But you made the point already that they still have a great deal of influence and power because of other functions that they have which affect the unified and specified commands and everybody else who wears their uniform. They have a good bit of clout left.

Schlesinger: When they get around to centralizing the promotion system, then that will be the moment of truth.

Goldberg: The blood will flow.

Schlesinger: But as long as the services can basically control promotions, they can obtain considerable deference.

Matloff: At this point we ask for thumbnail impressions of some of the personalities with whom you came in contact in and out of the Department. We have touched on a number of these, but did you want to add anything to your impressions of Moorer and Brown? or any of the members of the Joint Chiefs?

Schlesinger: I had gotten to know Tom Moorer pretty well in his days as CNO and then as Chairman, because of my role in the Bureau of the Budget. I knew Tom reasonably well, and he was always supportive, which gives you the nature of the man. Tom tended not to have enormous intellectual capacity, but he was extremely shrewd, a superb politician and judge of the circumstances in which he was. He understood political requirements. He managed to deal with the appalling circumstances in the period that Mel was in there, in that he got along well with the White House, aside from the flap, and he got along reasonably well with Mel. Mel, who was something of a skeptic about human nature, had figured out that Tom was not totally and exclusively his man, but he did that very well. I think that he behaved quite differently toward me

during the period that I was Secretary. It wasn't the political contest that he tended to run with Mel. I am sure that he was doing things to help the good old U.S. Navy. He wasn't totally blue suit, but, by and large, I think he played it straight. Or he played it straighter with me than he did with Mel, partly because I was not engaged in political competition with him.

Goldberg: Was it your impression that the Navy people, the CNOs and other top Navy people, were more fiercely partisan and parochial than were the leaders of the other services?

Schlesinger: Yes, it is a gradation, but the Navy regards itself as an independent barony, like Burgundy was wrongfully included in the kingdom of France in 1947, if I may mix my metaphors. To the Navy that was a mistake, and in reality it should not have taken place. There is a great deal of sole service loyalty, which is not the case in the Air Force, which is in between. The Marines, of course are even more like the Navy than the Navy itself. The Army people tend to play it straighter than the others, and when you tell them that they are purple suiters, they are purple suiters.

Goldberg: You know the Marines criticize the Navy fiercely for not fighting the National Security Act harder. They felt betrayed.

Schlesinger: They have done very nicely under the National Security Act. It has given them an opportunity to expand, relative to the Army, which was their original motivation.

When you talk about Tom, there is the episode in which the issue of the yeoman came to the surface, and I told Tom that he had to apologize. He didn't want to do it at the time, but subsequently he saw the necessity and wisdom of having gotten that off his back. The White House had made quite an issue of that. They created this alleged national security issue in the midst of the Watergate affair. John Ehrlichman was central to those allegations. I felt that this was using the DoD quite inappropriately to suggest that it was a national security problem in some form of twisted logic. I was quite supportive of the Department at that time, and I said at one meeting of the Armed Forces Policy Council, "Now we've finally discovered that the real danger to national security is none other than the Department of Defense and its JCS." In the summer of 1974 I had Ehrlichman and those particular kinds of attempts to unload guilt not only on the CIA but also

on the Department very much in mind. While Ehrlichman and Haldeman were gone by the summer of 1974, the desperation was not gone. Do you want to talk about George Brown? I don't remember what I said about him.

Matloff: You touched on his good work in the period of the airlift to Israel, the episode at Duke, and the Mayaguez.

Schlesinger: The thing about George Brown was that he inspired confidence in his subordinates during difficult times. I mentioned that he could chatter on in a totally indiscreet way, even when on the record. There was that episode in Djakarta that I mentioned earlier. He started to chatter on one day with Rumsfeld on the platform about the British being pathetic, that they were reduced to a few military bands; and he had something to say about the Shah--and this was unlike the Duke episode, when he thought he was off the record. So he did not have that sense of what it is inappropriate to say on the record, and of what it is unwise to say off the record. But he was a good commander. He was at his best in the Mayaguez episode. He tended to make use of his staff, and on all of those issues other than military policy. For example, when he was commanding officer of Systems Command, a staff paper would come up from the bottom and he would initial

it. He would ask why something was being done, but he was not one to impose his own views or judgment on staff recommendations. For that reason he tended to be loyally supported by his subordinates, who appreciated that. This was somewhat in contrast to his successor, Davy Jones, Chief of Staff of the Air Force and subsequently Chairman, who tended to think for himself. Staff papers would come up and Jones would do something quite different. The episode with regard to the invention of Stealth technology is a perfect example of Jones at his absolute best. He overruled what was the instinctive tendency of people in the Air Staff to say, "This was not invented here, and therefore we will fight it to the death." I don't think George Brown would have done that. He would have stayed with the staff position, whereas Jones said, "Find the money."

Matloff: As a result of your own experience as SecDef, which of the previous or subsequent Secs/Def did, or do, you admire the most?

Schlesinger: I thought highly of Laird's political skills. Each Secretary, as I think I have mentioned, has his own strengths and weaknesses, and you have to assess them in those terms. Laird was in a difficult set of circumstances in the Vietnam and, to some extent, the

post-Vietnam period, and he was extremely skillful in guiding the Department politically through those difficult circumstances, including the shrinkage of the budget. On the other hand, his concern about substantive matters was secondary. When he invented realistic deterrence, that was a way of covering up the shrinkage of expenditures in that area, rather than to provide a true strategic document. But that was fine, from his standpoint and given his strengths and weaknesses.

Iam, as I indicated, of two minds about Bob McNamara. I think he was a great Secretary of Defense and a terrible Secretary of War. As Secretary of Defense, he introduced the rationale of cost effectiveness into the Department and a set of budget procedures to back that up, and that has become accepted since that time. But McNamara doesn't get much credit for it in the eyes, particularly, of those in the services. But they have all adapted to the system of analysis that was flimsy, at best, prior to his arrival in the Department. He could have done that a lot better if he had been more tactful in dealing with the services, and brought them along instead of ordering them to do things. As Secretary of War, he had clear limitations. Ithink that Harold Brown was good in certain areas. He was particularly good at the assessment of technology and

of technological possibilities. He was good at analysis and budget. He tended to be much less interested in foreign policy, the role of the Department in support of foreign policy, and in terms of U.S. deployments and their roles overseas. He was less interested, I think, in strategy, and tended to be something of a skeptic about strategy. Initially he came in with a whole set of the preconceptions of the liberal professoriat about the evils that the Shah represented. But I think he changed during his years there, and that in these areas of analysis, budget, and systems development he was as good a Secretary as we have had.

Ithink that the current Secretary, although he has only been in office a year and a half, has been impressive in handling the affairs of the Department, particularly in handling the outside affairs of the Department. He does not get into the detail of running the Department; perhaps he should do more of that.

Of the old school, I think that Gates was quite good, in that he began that process of integrating across service lines for the strategic forces that moved toward, or perhaps even introduced, the SIOP. But they were moving in that direction, so that we have the assessment. Some of his predecessors were less than inspiring. Of course,

there is George Marshall, who was particularly useful in solidifying the Department and its position once again after the severe setbacks in the early days of the Korean War. Louis Johnson was something of a political hack, and ultimately it showed that that was what he was. Forrestal was, in many ways, an admirable figure, in that he stood for the nation's security and was prepared to resist the political entreaties, as it were, of his president, in behalf of the nation's security and of the Department.

Matloff: How about the presidents whom you served? Do you want to add anything, particularly in the areas of directors of national security policy and as commanders in chief and their styles of decision-making?

Schlesinger: Nixon tended to make his decisions on his own, and frequently had made up his mind before he met with his advisers. He was perhaps the most reflective of the presidents I served, not necessarily sufficiently reflective about his personal activities. But he was a student, as it were, of government. I got to know him quite well during my years at the BoB. He understood most of the agencies of government, more so than other presidents that I have seen. Carter was quite a student of that, and learned during his years there, but Nixon came to the job knowing how the Executive Branch functioned.

That is different, I think, from most presidents. He tended to be reclusive. He tended to shear off from any kind of personal confrontation, and that was, I think, exploited by some of his subordinates. If he got angry, he got angry in private; he made his decisions in private. When I first got to know him, he was quite deeply involved with all of the major policy issues of government, and maybe some of the minor policies and issues of government. That tended to fall off as his administration proceeded, and then, of course, as he got into the Watergate period he tended to be concerned primarily, and, some would argue, almost exclusively, with his survival. For that reason, it was very hard always to know what was on his mind. He would say things for effect, and tell you later on that he had said them for effect, and would not always tell you what he was thinking about policy. He was perhaps the most intriguing figure psychologically that we have had in the presidency.

Ford is a straightforward fellow, and a much simpler personality, and I mean simple in the better sense. I think I have discussed with you the argument that we had in the NSC at the time of the collapse of South Vietnam, and that is part of the problem of different styles of personalities. I was looking at what I regarded as the

simple realities of the situation and he thought that I was not cheering for the home team. I'm not sure that if you could press him that he would disagree with the analysis that I made at the time, but you just never say die. That is kind of a simple approach to life. He tended to enjoy things immensely. I mentioned that I rarely went to the White House for social occasions, but from time to time I was obliged to accept invitations. He was a very sociable creature; perhaps they make them that way up on Capitol Hill. Nixon was almost antisocial. Ford would be out on the floor dancing at 11:30 at night and having a fine time. He had simple pleasures and simple ways, and in many ways that was refreshing. I was probably too complex a personality for him to deal with readily.

Goldberg: Did you find much sense of humor in either one of them?

Schlesinger: It depends on what you mean by sense of humor.

Goldberg: The ability to look at themselves with some humor, as well as others.

Schlesinger: I think that Ford was a modest man. It requires a certain modesty to be able to look at oneself with the kind of humor that you are describing. Ford, I

think, could do that from time to time. Nixon could not; he was too wrapped up in himself. But If you mean wit and insight, Nixon had a lot of that.

Goldberg: Seeing the comic element--

Schlesinger: --in the behavior of others; he would make wry remarks; indeed the remarks would get to be quite cynical. Seeing the downside, or the wry element in everything, tended to reinforce the streak of cynicism, which was his ultimate weakness.

Matloff: Coming to the last question that we pose: looking back at your service as Secretary of Defense, what do you regard as your major achievements, and conversely, what disappointed you the most or was not completed that you would have liked to have completed?

Schlesinger: I'll come back to the latter question, which is most difficult to answer, because you have a whole list of things that could possibly have been done and many of them didn't even get started. For example, I've mentioned the procurement issue. The changes in that area are long overdue in the Department of Defense. I think in terms of better integration amongst the services, some of the things that were later done by Goldwater-Nichols or some of the things in process now--for example, common intelligence units for the CINCs, rather than having this

all drifting up by three different component commands. That was one of the things I started on and it disappeared after I left. But I was enormously happy with the accomplishments in the period. The chief one was, I think, a set of things--the rebuilding of the NATO forces; the refocus on NATO after Vietnam; the preservation of the forces to do that task, including the U.S. Army, which was threatened after Vietnam; the alteration of the Strategic Targeting Doctrine, which tied the United States and its strategic forces to the security of Western Europe. I include in the rebuilding of forces in Europe the rebuilding of morale, particularly of those forces which were badly battered in that period. And I think tied in with that was the stopping and ultimate reversal of the erosion of resources going to the Department of Defense; the adverse trends issue, which I managed, I believe successfully, to convey to Capitol Hill, and managed to get members of Congress, who had never understood it before, to look at real resources going into the Department as opposed to nominal resources, and which has now become the standard way of approach. That is a set of achievements in the post-Vietnam period, of which I think one can be quite proud. I think that that set of achievements was central to what we have done. I still

regret that I was unable to get sufficient aid in a timely manner for South Vietnam, after the collapse in South Vietnam, which, given the constraints imposed by the Congress, I think we handled remarkably well. There was the further question that came with regard to the security of South Korea, in the wake of the collapse of South Vietnam, but that was done with efficiency and dispatch, and we began to develop a much closer relationship with the Japanese on defense matters. So, as I look back, the chief areas of accomplishment are of conceptual design and strategy. Secondarily, I think we lived reasonably well with the budgets, and did that with some degree of efficiency, but that, in a sense, is subsidiary to the main issue of the refocusing of the role of the Department of Defense in the post-Vietnam atmosphere. I wish I could have done more with regard to the strengthening of the unity amongst the three services; upgraded personnel; always one wishes that one could have done more in those categories.

Goldberg: The three, really four, services problem probably will be with us for a long time to come.

Matloff: Let me thank you, Dr. Schlesinger, for your cooperation and sharing your insights, knowledge ,reflections, and experiences.