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Matloff: This is an oral history interview with Eugene M. Zuckert, held in Washington, D.C., on September 26, 1984, at 10:00 a.m. The interview is being recorded on tape and a copy of the transcript will be sent to Mr. Zuckert for his review. We shall focus in this interview particularly on Mr. Zuckert's roles as Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, 1947-52, and as Secretary of the Air Force, 1961-65.

First, by way of background, in connection with your role as special assistant in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War for Air in 1946-47, who appointed you to that position?

Zuckert: I was working for Stuart Symington as his special assistant over in Surplus Property. He had been the first Chairman of the Surplus Property Board, then Surplus Property Administrator. I worked for him from late August-early September 1945 until he left and went over to the Pentagon in early 1946. He asked me if I would like to go with him. He said, "After all, you've had some experience with the Air Force." I had taught at the Air Force Statistical Control School at Harvard in 1943-44. He said that it might be fun. I enjoyed working for him, so I decided that I would accept his offer.

Matloff: Was that the first time you met Mr. Symington, in connection with the Surplus Property role?

Zuckert: No, I met Mr. Symington in 1943 when he was president of Emerson Electric. He got me to go out to St. Louis, and offered me a job out there, which I turned down because I had always wanted to get

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of Turner A. Sims, Jr., whom you probably should talk to. Sims was a veteran Air Force officer with a lot of Wright Field experience and who had known Symington when Symington was a government supplier. Symington had very high blood pressure, and his life was threatened. Sometime in the winter of 1947, in January, he went to Boston to be operated on by a procedure that I guess is no longer used. He is probably the only person living who went through the procedure. Sims and I really held the show together and acted like there was a Secretary there for some months while Symington was out. We had pretty broad authority. Also, Symington did not testify on unification before the Senate, because we feared that that pressure might threaten his life. So I went to see Congressman Wadsworth, formerly Senator Wadsworth, who was Symington's father-in-law. Sims and I went up there and expressed our concern about the tension of Symington's testifying could be life-threatening to him. Wadsworth went to Eisenhower, and Eisenhower talked Stuart out of testifying--that's when he went off to the hospital.

Matloff: Did you then appear as the Air Force representative?

Zuckert: I testified, yes. It was kind of a perfunctory thing, because I wasn't the man.

Matloff: But you must have discussed unification with Symington before, so you knew what his position was on it.

Zuckert: Yes, we operated a very close shop. Symington liked to have people that he could work with and talk with.

Matloff: Why did the Air Force push for unification?

Zuckert: Because, I think, of the feeling that we never could get air power to the place where it should be, as long as we were a subordinate arm. There were all sorts of annoyances in being under the Army. We really felt that our opportunities were being limited by this position of subordination.

Matloff: Let's move to the position of Assistant Secretary of the Air Force from 1947-52, and ask the same question about the background of the appointment. Who recommended and appointed you, and what instructions or directives were given to you?

Zuckert: I can remember fairly well. You have to remember, I was a JG in the Navy in 1945, and I'd come in late, so my chances of getting out of the Navy before about 1980 were very small, and then I had the lucky break of the surplus property opportunity with Symington. So here I was in 1945 a JG, and in August or September of 1947 Symington said, "How would like to be an assistant secretary?" I replied, "If that's the only job that's open, I guess that's what I'd like to do." He said, "You won't be the senior assistant secretary, because I have an old friend who's older than you and I don't think that would be right." So he brought in as under secretary Arthur Barrows from Sears, because he wanted Arthur to straighten out the procurement problems. The other assistant secretary, who was senior to me, was Sonny Whitney (C.B. Whitney), whom Symington had known for a hundred years.

Matloff: So it was Symington again who brought you into that as a logical progression from your previous position.

Zuckert: I had been in the position with the Air Force working with Symington where I really had gotten a pretty good knowledge of the people and the problems. Most importantly, Symington had a great concern about the lack of maturity of the Air Force. Most of those people were combat people and the great majority of them had never served in the Pentagon. The young colonels, who had been made colonel when they were 29 or 30, had had mostly combat orientation. Symington often expressed to others and to me his concern about the need for developing a reputation for responsibility, stability, concern for spending the taxpayers' money wisely; and this was really the basis for a lot of the things that he did. One of them, and the most important, is the origin of the Comptroller. Actually the Comptroller business started before Symington became Secretary of the Air Force. It started when he was Assistant Secretary of War for Air. I think that was one of our outstanding accomplishments in the Department.

Matloff: Comptroller for the Air Force?

Zuckert: That's right.

Matloff: Do you recall your reaction to the National Security Act of 1947 as it was passed in July of that year? Were you satisfied with it, from your perspective, as it affected the Air Force?

Zuckert: From the standpoint of the Air Force I had no feeling at all. I could understand why the Secretary of the Air Force would not

be a member of the cabinet. My concern, as I recall it, was that the Secretary of Defense did not have enough power under the '47 Act.

Matloff: You had reflected on where he fitted in, too, then. How about the transition of the Air Force to an independent department under unification--did you become involved in that, and was that transition a smooth one?

Zuckert: Yes. I was amazed how smooth it went. We did have some problems. We had problems with the engineers, as I recall. One of the great irritations was the overhead that the engineers charged the Air Force.

Matloff: The Army Engineers?

Zuckert: Yes. I think we would have preferred to have our own construction, but it probably was the best thing in the world that we didn't get it. We had enough problems. We had a Memorandum of Agreement. Actually they negotiated very well, when you consider the resistance there was to giving up functions by the Army.

Matloff: How did you conceive your role as Assistant Secretary, or was that spelled out to you by Mr. Symington when you took over?

Zuckert: My title was management. Symington told me to express this concern about the quality of Air Force management. I remember in 1946, for example, shortly after we had come in there, he said to me one day, "Why is it that whenever I want figures about the Air Force-- numbers of people, numbers of airplanes--I have to send out a search

party?" He really saw me as carrying out his leadership, sort of being the executive for his leadership in bringing the Air Force into a higher state of management maturity. He developed that slogan that may have started in '46, but may have been later, "Management control through cross-control." He gave me that charter, and I was very fortunate because I worked with General Rawlings, who was an absolutely outstanding man. I was into everything, really, that had to do with management--e.g., personnel. He really took the leadership in assigning major responsibilities. In 1948, for example, President Truman came out with that order directing the armed forces to be integrated. I didn't realize until many years later that that had been brought about because of the election campaign of '48. Symington called me and General Edwards, who was deputy chief of staff for personnel, in and said, "The President of the United States says we are going to integrate the armed forces, and we are going to integrate the armed forces and you two guys are going to do it." We had the charter, and we were off and running.

Matloff: What were your relations with various positions and people in the DoD, your working relations, for example, with the Secretaries of Defense and the Deputy Secretaries of Defense? There were a number of them. You had Forrestal, Louis Johnson, Marshall, and Lovett in the Secretary of Defense role during this period; Early, Lovett, and Foster as Deputy Secretaries. Did you have any direct or indirect working relations with these people?

Zuckert: Yes, all of them.

Matloff: Did you meet with them often?

Zuckert: Not often. I can think of two examples with Forrestal. One, he set up a committee, headed by Professor Morgan of Harvard, to reform the military code of justice. We met with Forrestal maybe two or three times, when we went over the progress of the committee, and he made decisions where there were differences among the services on positions that should be taken with respect to court martial. Another time was in connection with his last budget. He set up a committee, of which I was a member, to review the budget because we were under great pressure from President Truman to cut the military budget. I knew Early best. I would go to him with problems, and developed a strong affection for Steve and played golf with him. In fact, the first time I ever broke 80 was with Steve Early. He was a wonderful and wise man and it was natural to go to him with problems.

Matloff: Does anything come to mind about Louis Johnson?

Zuckert: Lots comes to mind about Louis Johnson. There may have been worse administrators, but I never knew one, up till then, anyhow. Johnson loved to gather people around him. We had one meeting up at the Greenbrier, with the Joint Chiefs, and even I, as an assistant secretary, was invited. Johnson was a great one for making big pronouncements. I was appointed by the Air Force in response to his setting up something called the Management Committee. Always the principal thrust was to cut the military budget. He was going to cut

it from \$15 billion to \$14, to \$13, to \$12, if I remember correctly. The Management Committee was an absolute travesty, I thought. But I knew Johnson, and he knew me. Particularly with his budget cutting, I think I got a good opportunity to see his management style in action.

Matloff: How about General Marshall?

Zuckert: No, that was much more remote. Marshall was much more of a "take a nap in the afternoon" type of administrator, and so I didn't really get close to him. There was another difference, and that was when Marshall was there and when Lovett was there, and all but the first couple of months of Johnson, I was not working for Symington. I was working for Finletter. Tom Finletter had replaced Symington probably in April of '50, so that my role as assistant secretary was a lot different under Finletter from what it was under Symington.

Matloff: How about Lovett?

Zuckert: I knew and was personally very fond of Lovett, and had known him when Symington was about to become the Assistant Secretary of War for Air, succeeding Lovett. I was driving in Florida and went to Hobe Sound to see Symington and met Lovett there, when Symington was trying to pick Lovett's brains. I always had a very nice personal relationship with him--in fact I saw him three or four years ago in New York--but with Lovett and Marshall there was a different style of organization. You didn't have the personal contacts that we had in the earlier days. I worked mostly with Wilfred McNeil.

Matloff: Whom among the Assistant Secretaries of Defense did you deal with mostly?

Zuckert: In the Forrestal days I dealt with Leva on a day-to-day basis, with Jack Ohly on the court-martial business, and with McNeil very closely because of the budget.

Matloff: He was Comptroller. How about Anna Rosenberg?

Zuckert: Yes, that was during the Korean days, when I had much more to do with Marshall's assistants than with the Secretary himself. I had a lot to do with Anna; she was an amazing woman. We were very often on opposite sides, but she was a dynamic character and fun to work with and even be opposed to. We had a lot of problems in connection with Korea--for example, the problem of the Air Force's getting the cream of recruits and our attempts to avoid being limited to the number that we could take. She had a very active staff, including John Adams, who was later in the McCarthy case, and General Collins, who later became president of the Red Cross. They were a very activist office, so I was constantly involved with these people.

Matloff: Did you deal much with the assistant secretaries of the other services, or with departments outside of Defense?

Zuckert: Yes, with Gordon Gray, for example, when he was Assistant Secretary of the Army. I kind of got every job that there was. I sort of picked up all the functions at one time or another. My friends in the Air Force used to kid me and call me assistant secretary in charge of everything, at one point. I sat on the Munitions Board a lot in place of Arthur Barrows, so I dealt with Koehler and Alexander from the Army a lot. I was also on some kind of a personnel

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group, as the Air Force member. I had a lot of dealings with my counterparts from the other services.

Matloff: At the outbreak of the Korean War, do you recall the reaction of the office of the Secretary (it was Finletter's period) and the impact that that war had on the Air Force, on its programs, strategies, and policies?

Zuckert: I remember the Sunday morning that we got the word. I don't remember much except that we suddenly were thrown into having to do a hell of a lot of things--get planes out of storage; order a lot of procurement. There was a sudden relaxation of all the rules. It was at the end of the fiscal year and we had a lot of money, so we could start obligating. I was not in on the policy side, I was in on the facilitating and supporting, signing my name like crazy to things. It was an exciting, active period but it was mostly just doing things to try to turn this thing around 180 degrees overnight.

Matloff: You may recall that there had been a study, the NSC 68, in the spring--

Zuckert: Which had said that we wouldn't defend Korea, if I remember, didn't it?

Matloff: No, this one laid the basis for rearmament; then when the Korean War came along, the groundwork had already been laid in this NSC 68. Had you gotten drawn in at all on that?

Zuckert: No, I was just a worker in the trenches.

Matloff: The impact of the war itself on the Air Force--did it change any of your thinking about the role of air power, what the future of the Air Force might be?

Zuckert: One thing--you have to take yourself back to that atmosphere-- I didn't know very much about atomic weapons. In fact, I wasn't even cleared, even as an assistant secretary. I had no reason for that. So it was a strange new world to me and I really didn't have a perspective on what the effect of nuclear weapons would be on the Air Force. One of the reasons why, when they asked me what job I would like if I left the Air Force, I wanted to go to the Atomic Energy Commission was that I felt that I really was ignorant about what was probably the most important development of my lifetime.

Matloff: So you hadn't gotten in on the problems of buildup, use, and control of nuclear weapons in this capacity, the thinking on conventional versus nuclear defense?

Zuckert: No, I was really on the logistical, financial, and personnel side of the business.

Matloff: In that connection, how serious a problem was interservice competition for you in your capacity as Assistant Secretary of the Air Force? For example, were you drawn in on the rivalries?

Zuckert: Yes. I wish that I could recall some of the incidents.

Matloff: Let me just suggest one possibility--B-36 versus the supercarrier.

Zuckert: That illustrates very well the way that Symington operated. The B-36 was his problem and my job was to do all that I could in keeping the shop running. He carved out for himself maybe three, four, or five problems that were his. The great thing about him was that he would give you a problem and that was your problem--the integration of the services, for example. He gave me the problem and I could be like Symington. I'm trying to remember the name of the program that we had for dealing with security risks. He gave me that one. I got into a serious disagreement with Secretary Royall. Royall came to Symington complaining about me and the position I was taking against the Army position. Symington called me in and said, "Secretary Royall thinks you are wrong, and you know he's a pretty great lawyer." I responded, "Yes, he's a great lawyer, but the Army's wrong on this one." He said, "All right, you little S.O.B., the only thing is, you better be as right." So that what he did was really save himself for the big ones, but he had a beautiful ability to keep track of what he delegated. About every two to three weeks that squawk-box would jump and down the way it only did when he hit it, and he would ask you some pretty pointed question about the progress you were making on something he had delegated to you. But I did not have the high class type of function. That involved Norstad and Symington. One issue--refueling--he took over as a project of his own.

Matloff: How about the 70 groups?

Zuckert: 70-wing group--that was his, too. I did support it up on the Hill, but he was the leader. He never got submerged. Never is the wrong word--sometimes he would get submerged in things we thought he oughtn't to be submerged in, but he always retained the ability to be dealing with the big ones.

Matloff: You didn't get in on the Key West conference in the spring of '48 then?

Zuckert: No.

Matloff: You talked before about the budget. What responsibilities did you have for the Air Force budget? Who was setting the ceilings for the Department at this time?

Zuckert: If I remember, Forrestal set the ceilings. Of course, they came from the President, and he was very determined that \$15 billion was too much and came to Forrestal. Somehow it always came out that everybody pretty nearly got the same.

Matloff: Did you have much dealing with McNeil on the Air Force budget?

Zuckert: Yes. A lot of dealing.

Matloff: How did you regard your association with him? Was he sympathetic to the Air Force position?

Zuckert: No, he was very pro-Navy, as you know, and, in fact, the whole Forrestal group--Leva, McNeil, not so much Jack Ohly, were very anti-Air Force. They were bitter. It partly stemmed because of their feeling that there was a rivalry between Symington and Forrestal and that Symington was trying to do him in. McNeil was smarter than

I, so he was able to give me a pretty hard time. He is a very bright individual. I sometimes couldn't understand him, but he was very effective.

Matloff: In connection with management, I take it that you didn't get involved on such things as the Berlin airlift of '48 and '49?

Zuckert: No, I didn't, but my job was to see that they had what they needed. I really was not in on the planning. I didn't go over there, or anything like that. My job was to see that the logistics were there.

Matloff: On the question of management--did Mr. Symington's philosophy of management, or even Mr. Finletter's, in retrospect, differ from that of the Secretary of Defense very much?

Zuckert: I don't really see Forrestal as a great administrator. He was a tremendously reflective, thoughtful person. But if he had a fault, it was that he tended to see that there were two sides to every question, and he tended to compromise more than I think even I would have as a Secretary of Defense. Symington was a strong partisan, and a tactician, and this wasn't Forrestal's game at all. I think that's where they got into it. They were great personal friends, but the friendship wore kind of thin when they got into the 70-group issue, for example. I remember standing by Symington's squawk-box and Forrestal calling him on the box, and, of course, I could hear the conversation. Forrestal said, "Stuart, I don't want you to go up there and testify for the 70-wings." Stuart responded, "I already

have testified before the Finletter Commission under oath." Forrestal hung up the phone. He called back a minute later, and said, "Well, I guess you'll have to go up there and testify." He didn't play the game in the way that Symington did. Symington was a hard charger.

Matloff: In the relations of the Secretary of the Air Force to the Secretary of Defense in those early years when unification came into effect, was there much change in the position and relations of the position of Secretary of the Air Force under Symington vis-a-vis the Secretary of Defense when Finletter was in charge?

Zuckert: We had Johnson, but we didn't have him for long. I think that Finletter was highly regarded by Marshall and Lovett because intellectually he was an unusual man. It was much more like the State Department than it was like the Defense Department that I had been used to. I did not have the same close relationship with Finletter that I had with Symington, so I really was more circumscribed. I really couldn't testify on what the relationship was with the Secretary of Defense.

Matloff: A few names in that period on the OSD level--would you give me a generalization of how you would characterize the styles, personalities, and effectiveness of the Secretaries of Defense, the Deputies under them, and other top officials both in OSD and the Air Force, with whom you worked or served. I'll just tick them off. Anything more that you would like to add about Forrestal?

Zuckert: No, but I've often said that Forrestal proved to me that it isn't how tough you look; it isn't how tough people think you are;

it's just how tough you are. I was very fond of Forrestal, but I had great concern. I remember riding with Leva and McNeil to Forrestal's farewell--at the Mayflower, I think it was--that the Joint Chiefs gave, and I said, "Forrestal will either be the Barney Baruch of the next generation, or something terrible is going to happen." You could just sense it, and this isn't rationalization, you felt it at the time. He was an unhappy person. He wasn't one of those people like Louis Johnson, who didn't understand. He understood. It was just that he couldn't play the role that maybe he should have played.

Matloff: Speaking of Johnson, do you want to add anything more about his style, personality, and effectiveness as a Secretary of Defense?

Zuckert: He was awful. I didn't understand it, because he had such a fine reputation as Assistant Secretary of War for Air, when he got in the fight with Woodring. But as a friend of mine once said, "The worst state you can get into is when you start believing your own propaganda." That was Louis Johnson. He could say the most outlandish things; he could make the most outlandish predictions and when they didn't come true, his credibility was destroyed. He had terrible people around him, too.

Matloff: Anything more you want to add about George Marshall?

Zuckert: He was a revered figure to me. I was then 38 or 39 years old.

Matloff: How about William Foster?

Zuckert: He was an able guy, but very stiff and hard to deal with. With most of the people you had your problems, because the issues

were difficult, but at least you could fight with them. But Foster was kind of a stick.

Matloff: How about McNeil?

Zuckert: I always felt McNeil was slippery, but he was good. He was loyal to his boss and to what his boss was trying to do. But I found him difficult to deal with.

Matloff: Ohly?

Zuckert: Jack Ohly was kind of a saint in my book. I had known Jack Ohly before, when we were both in law school. We put together the first Harvard-Yale Moot Court debate that had ever been done, and I had gotten to know Jack then.

Matloff: Anna Rosenberg?

Zuckert: A tremendously able, effective woman.

Matloff: Let me ask you about the adversarial relationship between Forrestal and Symington. How do you account for it?

Zuckert: I think that in the first place there was some element of Forrestal's bias, not prejudice, for the Navy. Symington [?] had a feeling that the Air Force was immature, rash, and too apt to be pushing air power and not really looking at the whole problem. I think that it just was natural that there would be an adversarial relationship with Symington being such a strong advocate of the 70-group program.

Matloff: You think that it was over issues? How about personalities, was there a clash of personalities too?

Zuckert: I think that Symington, being more decisive than Forrestal, grew restive with Forrestal's deliberateness. Things were much more black and white to Symington than they were to Forrestal.

Matloff: Do you suppose the relative stature and authority of the two positions set forth under the National Security Act and their amendment had any play here?

Zuckert: I wouldn't be surprised. Symington was never used to being anything other than the number one man--for example, in the little company that he organized up in Buffalo and when he went to Emerson. When he went to Surplus Property and found that he had a board there, he got the act changed so that he was the number one man. I think that Symington was primarily and basically a line operator and a leader, and it galled him. Another thing I've never been able to assess properly was that Symington had a closer relationship with President Truman than Forrestal had with President Truman. I think that this situation worried Forrestal and his people.

Matloff: Did you get pulled in in any way in the controversies between the two?

Zuckert: No, I just had my job to do.

Matloff: What are you most proud of and what do you feel you accomplished in that position?

Zuckert: In the first place, I've been dying to tell this story about how the Comptroller started in 1946. I don't recall how I first heard of it, but somebody from Harvard, perhaps Professor

Learned, perhaps one of the younger fellows there, told me about a memorandum that had been written to Lovett as Assistant Secretary of War for Air when they were thinking about the post-war Air Force, One of the points that they made was that the Air Force was going to be faced, particularly if it became a separate service, with management responsibilities, and particularly with control of money, in which they had no experience at all. So when Symington in the spring of '46 began to demonstrate his concern that he couldn't get people to talk in terms of figures, I thought about that memorandum, instituted a search in the files, and gave that memorandum to Symington. One thing you never wanted to do with Symington--if you didn't want him to do something about something, you didn't want to show it to him or tell him about it. He picked that up and he was off and running. He called General Spaatz, or General Eaker and said, "By God, that's what we need; we need a Comptroller." Months went by, and he called me in one day and asked, "What's happening on that Comptroller thing?" I said, "My grapevine tells me that there's a hell of a lot of resistance from the staff." Originally I think they called it the Controller, and control in the military, of course, equates with command, and nobody wanted a staff man to command. Whether that was the problem or not, there just was resistance. Symington called Spaatz and Eaker in and said that this had a very high priority with him and that, if it didn't happen, he was going to be very much upset. It happened. That was when they didn't take my advice on who the first Comptroller

should be, but that was kind of a political bow by Symington to the military. They picked a guy who was certain not to make anything happen. After a few months they brought in General Rawlings and things began to go.

Matloff: The establishment of the Comptroller's position is one you take pride in?

Zuckert: I take great pride in that. I have to take pride in something, I guess. I also take pride in the way we handled the integration of the armed forces. I think that I had some responsibility for making management a word that people paid attention to in the Air Force. We were very fortunate that we had as the assistant vice chief of staff General McKee, who probably was the finest military administrator I've ever seen. Anything that I was able to do, I was able to do partly because of my relationship with him. I was not the top man; I was sort of the utility infielder; and I think we did some things very well. We handled the very difficult problem of the organization for handling the security risk problems very well, and, in fact, we got quite an accolade from Cornell, or somebody who studied the administration and the program of the Air Force.

Matloff: As a member of the Atomic Energy Commission--did you have many dealings with OSD, and, if so, over what issues?

Zuckert: No, the problems we had with OSD were in large part the fact that OSD's relationships with us were handled by a special assistant of the Secretary of Defense who stayed on through several changes of

Secretaries of Defense. I hate to speak ill of the dead, but it was Robert LeBaron. He was an impossible character. When I came into the Commission, I began to hear about how bad our relationships were with LeBaron and I said, "I have never had problems that I couldn't work out with somebody." Gordon Dean said, "You're going to have them now." LeBaron was head of the Military Liaison Committee and he was a special assistant, maybe even later an assistant secretary. I said, "I'm going to make it my job to get to know LeBaron because it's silly for us to have a position with the military such as we have now where we disagree on so much." The situation was aggravated by the fact that the military did not like the '46 Act, the removal of the weapons decisions from the military. We had that innate hostility, which was aggravated further when Eisenhower became President. The other thing aggravating the relationship was that LeBaron, who was a trouble-maker, was telling people in the military, and civilians as well, that the Atomic Energy Commission was dragging its feet on the development of the thermonuclear weapon. This produced big fights like the fight over the second laboratory at Livermore, which was favored by the military and LeBaron pushed, because they thought that Los Alamos was really not trying to build the weapon. Also, in connection with the weapons expansion program, there was a huge suspicion that we were not really trying our best. To show you what kind of rodent LeBaron was, he kept beating on us all through '52 on the weapons expansion program. When Charlie Wilson came in in early

'53 and they decided that we had to economize, LeBaron came in and without even changing expression was beating us over the head for going ahead too fast. I braced him on it and he said that he did whatever his boss told him. There are two kinds of people, those who try to make things work and those who try to make them work the way they'd like them to work. LeBaron was a bad man. He was one of the few people I have ever dealt with whose word I could not accept. It aggravated what was a basically antagonistic situation. The other problem we had was Rickover. That's where our relations with the Defense Department became strained, because Rickover had two hats. He was on the staff of the Atomic Energy Commission, but he also had his Navy hat. When we told him that we didn't want him to do something, he would run to Dan Kimball, the Secretary of the Navy, and complain about the Atomic Energy Commission. It wasn't serious, but it was sometimes in the way. Rick was good, and just as long as you don't have too many Rickovers--you need at least one.

Matloff: In the Secretary of Air Force role, from January 1961 to September 1965, I will ask the same question as before about the background of the appointment: Who recommended you and what instructions or directives, written or oral, were given to you?

Zuckert: In 1940 when I came to Harvard Business School, at the same time that Robert McNamara came to teach accounting, back from one of the accounting firms, he and I got to know each other. I knew Margie and Bob, and we were good friends and had a fine relationship. In

1942, when they created the Air Force Statistical School, McNamara was one of the first instructors and I was Assistant Dean. When McNamara left the business school and was commissioned a captain to go to England and start statistical control in the field, in the Eighth Air Force, I asked Professor Learned, who was the head of the program, if I could have McNamara's place. So I took his place in Stat. Control, and on several occasions during the war and afterwards, I was in contact with McNamara and he stayed at our house and my wife knew Margie. We were fairly close friends, and I always had a great affection and admiration for him. He came to our house the night that he had been to see Kennedy down in Georgetown about the job. I was working in California and all of a sudden I thought that maybe he was going to ask me to work in this administration. I really didn't want to because I had been working in private practice with a Republican administration and I thought maybe things were going to get good and I really wasn't interested. I had just helped start a company on the West Coast in acquisition, and was interested in what I was doing; also I was chairman of the board of a little company up in Pittsburgh that I was working hard with. I knew Harold Stuart would love the job of Secretary of the Air Force--he had been Assistant Secretary with me after Sonny Whitney. McNamara called me over to the Shoreham, and I went over there and he had those damn cards on which he took notes of all the interviews he had. McNamara's getting ready to be Secretary of Defense was a fantastic operation--one of the finest

pieces of management that I've ever seen. Then he asked me, "Would you consider being Secretary of the Air Force?" I said, "You put me in a very awkward position because I told Harold Stuart that I would be his campaign manager." He replied, "You can forget that, because Harold Stuart isn't going to be Secretary of the Air Force." I said, "Let me think it over." He answered, "Think it over quickly." I went out, it was around Christmastime, and we had a big family meeting. I really was reluctant. Another thing was I had been very active in the Symington campaign and I had had a couple of altercations with Kennedy people, and I didn't know how that was going to work out. So there were a lot of reasons why I didn't really feel I ought to be secretary. My wife said, "You were assistant secretary. I don't think you'll ever be happy if you're not secretary. You have this opportunity." So I said I'd do it. Later, one of my friends in the Kennedy administration said that when Kennedy told him that he was going to appoint me Secretary of the Air Force, the man that I'd had the problem with during the Kennedy campaign, when Symington was running for the nomination, had burst into tears. He didn't view my nomination with much favor. The President called me and that was it.

Matloff: Had you met Kennedy before?

Zuckert: No.

Matloff: Who gave you instructions?

Zuckert: Nobody. The first thing I remember is that McNamara told me that he knew that I had the problem of getting rid of my business affairs

but that he wanted me to try to get up to speed. I spent a lot of time over in the Pentagon. Dudley Sharp was very gracious and sat and talked with me by the hour, and I took at least two trips around the Air Force and was briefed.

Matloff: Did you have any connection with the Symington Committee that President-elect Kennedy set up to come up with a reorganization plan for Defense?

Zuckert: No, because I was against what they were for. If I remember, they were going to have under secretaries or assistant secretaries of defense to replace the service secretaries and I always felt and still feel (I wrote an article on the service secretaries) that they were wrong. I understand there are moves being made in that direction now. I think if you're going to have services, not just one suit, you've got to have enough substance in that service structure so that it can perform its job. The service secretary is a very important part of it. The service will never feel that it has the same degree of opportunity to get its views across if you have an assistant secretary of defense rather than its having its own secretary. I know that's regarded as a highly parochial view, but it is my view today. You can keep taking things away, but then you're asking the service to be the base logistically and technologically for, in our case, the development of air power, and making air power an effective part of the war-making machinery. If you take too much away from that entity, you will find that you have lost something that's very vital. Either

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the requirements won't be realistic, or the morale that comes from a uniform and a unified objective will be lost. You might as well not have a service.

Matloff: When you took over the position, what problems did you face?

Zuckert: I wish I could find, to help me answer your question, my memorandum for record of the meeting of January 18, 1961, that McNamara had with the service secretaries, when he laid out, on the basis of his month's review of the situation, his program for the first four years. My problem was at least twofold. In the first place, the Air Force was aggressive about what it felt it needed. Remember, we had talked about the missile gap, and the blue suiters felt that this was the time to push and had a long wish list which they felt that the times would enable them to turn into reality. They also had no conception of how to deal with McNamara and I really wasn't the degree of help to them that I should have been. McNamara's hallmark was quantification. If you wanted something, you had to justify it in a logical and, to the maximum extent possible, quantified way. As a result of the failure of the Air Force to understand this and their overenthusiasm or feeling that this was a bull market, not a bear market, for military expenditures, we got in a lot of trouble. We didn't do a good job of justifying what we wanted. We also had the B-70 problem, practically at the outset. Then there was a whole different facet to McNamara's operation, and that was the things that he wanted to put together-- like the Defense Supply Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency.

My problem was that I was losing on all fronts and I was ineffective really and sort of caught in the middle between McNamara and the service. The service felt I wasn't producing these great victories for it and McNamara felt that I was completely under the control of the Air Force. So for about eleven months I had a damned unhappy job.

Matloff: Did McNamara try to set any priorities for you at all?

Zuckert: It was really that these things were going to be done and he had the perception to know that he had to get a lot of things done at the same time if he hoped to get them done.

Matloff: In selecting and organizing your staff, did you change it in any way once you came in as Secretary?

Zuckert: My general counsel had been there for a long time. My assistant secretary for materiel had been my deputy with whom I had worked before. Joe Charyk, who handled the black programs, had been the under secretary. The only thing that McNamara asked me was to keep Charyk as under secretary. Charyk stayed on from the previous administration. The White House bunch did push one fellow on me, and he turned out to be pretty able; but I really had no problems.

Matloff: Let me ask you a little further about the working relations with McNamara and also with Mr. Gilpatric, the Deputy Secretary of Defense. Had you some dealings with Gilpatric before?

Zuckert: Gilpatric had been assistant secretary when I was assistant secretary, and then he was made under secretary when I was still assistant secretary.

Matloff: So you had met up with Mr. Gilpatric before. How closely did you work with McNamara and Gilpatric? How often did you meet with them?

Zuckert: We met at breakfast once a week. And I would be in McNamara's office four or five times a week. It was quite frequent, and more often, even, with Gilpatric.

Matloff: Did the position of Secretary of the Air Force change much from what it had been in Symington's day, vis-a-vis the Secretary of Defense?

Zuckert: I think yes, in one basic respect, and that was that we were much less involved in the strategic side, the doctrine, that type of thing. Symington was much more involved in the role of the Air Force than I was.

Matloff: Was this a matter of interest, personalities, or legislation?

Zuckert: It probably was because I was more a management type and had never been involved in things like arms control and the theories of mutual retaliation, assured destruction, and the like. It was not familiar territory to me.

Matloff: Did it have anything to do with the personality of the Secretary of Defense?

Zuckert: Yes, because he pretty much called the shots. McNamara's era was different from Forrestal's. In Forrestal's era, for instance in the Armed Forces Policy Council, there was much more of a collegial nature to the approach to the big problems than there was in McNamara's era.

Matloff: Did you sit in with the Armed Forces Council?

Zuckert: No, I didn't. McNamara was not one for big meetings. He had a saying, "If it takes a lot of people, it probably can't be done." McNamara really was pretty much of a one-man band.

Matloff: Did you enjoy working with him?

Zuckert: No. We used to have a saying around there that sometimes things got so bad that in the morning we used to drink the Listerine. You were always under pressure and you rarely won. McNamara didn't have much respect for the Air Force. He didn't feel that we had adapted to him very well. He disagreed with many of our views. But on some things he knew that operationally we were good, and LeMay particularly. Whenever we got into a crisis he would get on the phone and call me up and say, "Where's LeMay?" If there was a warlike situation as we might have had in Berlin, Cuba, Vietnam in '63--every October we had a crisis--he always wanted LeMay handy. I think part of McNamara's opposition to us was tactical, to keep us on the defensive.

Matloff: About your dealings with Mr. McNamara, I was wondering whether there were any matters of policy or administration on which you differed.

Zuckert: Sure. I was very much opposed to the Defense Logistics Agency, because I could see the erosion of the service role. Another thing that we disagreed on was that we had his assistant secretaries and deputies down there and were just peppered with directives, so most of the time I was on the defensive. It was very hard

to try to get things done in the Air Force when you were spending most of your time fighting wars with the third floor.

Matloff: Did you agree with his philosophy and approach to management? Your paths had apparently crossed back in Harvard Business School.

Zuckert: I didn't know McNamara as a manager, but I still think that he and Symington are the two great managers with whom I have worked. I really think that I learned so much from McNamara about how to do things and how to get things done. I am not as tough as McNamara. He is basically and intellectually a very tough person, and he had a philosophy that was, "I'm going to be here for four years, and I've only four years to do it and I'm going to go all out in those four years and damn the torpedoes." The problem was he stayed seven and you kind of get abraded in a great many ways over the course of seven years. When I left in 1965, I told McNamara in the early summer that I wanted to quit. They announced my resignation in July and I stayed until October. I dropped in on McNamara and he said, "I can understand your going. Four years is as long as anybody should serve in these jobs." But McNamara was great because he didn't get distracted by a lot of little things, the furniture that some of us pick up; it's an impersonal, hard-driving kind of thing that I just personally am not equipped by temperament or ability to do. One of his great contributions was the five-year planning, whereby you could turn back from your desk and pick out a volume that showed you the constituents of the forces for the next five years, and that had never been done. They ridicule

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the quantification of military requirements. Sure, you cannot make decisions 100% on the basis of quantification, but nevertheless you have the obligation when you're going to spend this kind of money, the money that we spend for our weapon systems, to quantify to the maximum extent that you can. McNamara and I had an intellectual disagreement. I said intuition played a part; he denied that. I think that was tactical with him. I think a lot of his decisions were intuitive and the quantification and the explanation were rationalized. But I think that one of his problems was that he recognized the necessity of always being right because, if they once started to pick holes in the structure, the structure would fall apart. Therefore he just ran all over you. It was like being always on defense; you never could mount an offense against McNamara. He got a lot done, but some of the things I didn't agree with. I'll never forget when President Johnson asked him to get into the supersonic transport problem, say on a Wednesday. He called me up and said, "I want so and so and so on." He took Al Flax, who was my assistant secretary for research, and Larry Levinson, who was one of my brilliant young lawyers, and got a group of maybe 8-10 people to organize a complete analysis of the supersonic transport problem. The next week, say Tuesday morning, he goes into a meeting at the White House, and has a thick book and hands all the volumes around--to John McCone, Najib Hallaby. McNamara was the only one who had read the book, and he just ran all over them. He was absolutely the greatest assembler of facts

and positions that I've ever seen. It's a devastating technique.

Matloff: Did you feel free to drop in on him whenever you had a problem?

Zuckert: Yes, I could take the elevator and go into his office and I had good relations with his secretary and his exec. His exec for a considerable time was George Brown, who was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs later.

Matloff: How about the fact that you had known Mr. Gilpatric before. Did this prove a help in dealing with Mr. McNamara, or did that not matter?

Zuckert: Gilpatric and Vance were completely dominated by Mr. McNamara, and therefore nobody could help you.

Matloff: So it made no difference when Vance succeeded Gilpatric?

Zuckert: No, they'd give you a lot of sympathy but you didn't accomplish very much.

Matloff: How about your dealings with the assistant secretaries in this period of '61-'65?

Zuckert: It was tough, because Tom Morris, Harold Brown, and so on, were pretty aggressive. They were under orders and under pressure from McNamara, so they just made your life miserable. Harold Brown's people did not basically respect the Air Force. So we had a rough time. Harold Brown had an assistant by the name of Colonel O'Neill, who later became deputy head of systems command and one of the most effective officers I ever dealt with (he's dead now). He'd come up,

which was pretty rare for a colonel, and say, "You know, the Air Force is screwing up, as far as Brown is concerned," and he'd tell me what he thought we were doing wrong. The Air Force had been pretty high, and this was tough to get adjusted to. The interesting thing was that the Air Force was always the one that wanted a strong Secretary of Defense, until they got one.

Matloff: Were there any particular issues with Brown's office that you recall?

Zuckert: There were many cases where they were wrong--for instance, it took much too long to put the Titan III program together. They raised all sorts of objections; they just made life too hard for us. Then they weren't always right and we did win some share of them, but it was a hard litigating atmosphere in which we were working.

Matloff: Did you deal more with some assistant secretaries than others? For example, with Paul Nitze in ISA?

Zuckert: I didn't deal with Nitze until he became Secretary of the Navy.

Matloff: And not with his successors William Bundy and McNaughton?

Zuckert: I dealt with both of them.

Matloff: Manpower and Reserve Affairs, people like Carlisle Runge and Norman Paul?

Zuckert: Yes. Paul was the easiest of all to deal with, and he later became Under Secretary of the Air Force. Runge wasn't the most formidable of them.

Matloff: How about Installations and Logistics?

Zuckert: Tom Morris. He was good and reasonable. But all of them were cowed by McNamara. McNamara's capacity for getting into things was amazing.

Matloff: Did you have any dealings with Comptroller Hitch?

Zuckert: Yes. I could convince Charlie. But if it was something that McNamara was in, there was no doubt about it, McNamara's word was going to prevail. Take the analysis people--I have a lot of respect for Alain Enthoven, but I feel that a lot of their analyses were based on the indications that they had of which way the wind was blowing.

Matloff: How about your dealings with other military services in your role as Secretary of the Air Force? What were your relations with the other service secretaries?

Zuckert: We worked very closely together. Not that it was the only communication we had, but we had a weekly lunch that we observed pretty faithfully, and I had very good relations, particularly with Ailes. He is a wonderful, reasonable person, and is still a good friend of mine. I got along fine with Nitze. Korth is a good friend of mine today. My principal dealings with him were on TFX, on which he was easy to deal with. The rest of the Navy wasn't so easy to deal with. The funniest one with Korth that I had was when we were getting graduates from the Naval Academy in the Air Force. One graduation they had they announced the number one man in the class and told where he was going--the United States Air Force; the number

two man, the United States Air Force. It was the most embarrassing thing that ever happened. Korth came roaring back to Washington, went in to see McNamara, waving a paper, and saying we shouldn't be allowed to take them. I went down and pleaded my case, but, as always happened, McNamara decided against me. Korth and I still kid about that today. McNamara was very rough on us and I don't know what it was. He had been an Air Force officer. As I say, I think it was tactical. It certainly wasn't personal, because he was and is a good friend of mine.

Matloff: How about Connally?

Zuckert: I think John Connally was pretty smart. He didn't fight any of these battles and he stayed a year. Then they asked me to become Secretary of the Navy. I think that they wanted to break up LeMay and me. The President was very upset when I wouldn't do it. I probably should have, but I just didn't feel I could go over there and be effective having been as active as I was as Secretary of the Air Force.

Matloff: Did McNamara ever draw you in on problems other those of the Air Force?

Zuckert: Yes, but I can't think of any.

Matloff: The reason I asked this is because there is some evidence in the records that he used Connally at one point, during the Berlin crisis of '61, to do some planning.

Zuckert: I think McNamara assessed me as being not a big thinker/big planner type. If I had any strength at all, it was that I was a pretty good administrator.

Matloff: Was there any common feeling among the service secretaries during the McNamara period that their roles were being somewhat downgraded from before?

Zuckert: Yes, that's why Stahr quit. McNamara could absolutely paralyze Stahr. It was terrible to watch. McNamara is a devastating person when you have to argue with him. He is so much in command of his facts. Stahr just felt himself completely ineffective.

Matloff: Did you exchange these views?

Zuckert: We bitched plenty; we had a lot in common.

Matloff: On the relations with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, first with the Chiefs of Staff of the Air Force, Thomas White, Curtis LeMay, and John McConnell--how did you divide the labors with the Chiefs of Staff of the Air Force? What role did you play and what role did they play in administering the functions of the department?

Zuckert: I took the attitude, and McNamara expected this, that anything to do with the Air Force was my ultimate responsibility. For example, I have some very definite views on the Secretary's role with respect to promotions of the higher officers. I feel that, when you have the ultimate responsibility, you have the obligation to listen to them give you the military point of view, but ultimately the decisions are yours. That's, of course, where my most famous confrontation was on the TFX, with LeMay and the staff.

Matloff: What position did you take?

Zuckert: I overruled them on their source selection of Boeing to build the TFX.

Matloff: In a nutshell, why?

Zuckert: Because I was the only one who read the whole record, and in the analyses that were presented to me the technical people felt that the General Dynamics airplane offered less technical risk and the greatest chance of being built on time on cost, and the arguments for the Boeing airplane were principally operational arguments which, when you looked into them, really didn't hold water. If you recall, that was the subject of hearings with McClellan. I appeared before McClellan longer than anybody who wasn't either under indictment or in jail. It was a pretty rare example of civilian control and the military's reaction to it. I must say that, despite the force of their disagreement, the military, as a result of LeMay's insistence, acted with complete loyalty to me and two of the people who were the most vehement, General Schriever and General McKee, are still my closest friends. So it was really in many ways a grueling experience, but it was a heartening experience.