INTERVIEWEE: DR. HAROLD BROWN

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE

P: This interview is with Dr. Harold Brown, Secretary of the Air Force. Today is Friday, January 17, 1969, and it is 10:30 in the morning. We are in the Secretary's offices in the Pentagon.

Dr. Brown, I would like to begin the interview with establishing my background information on you and seeing if I have correct dates and places of what your career in Defense has been. You were nominated and confirmed as Secretary of the Air Force in August of 1965. You first came to the Defense Department in April of 1961 serving until '65 as Director of Defense Research and Engineering. Prior to that, you were associated with Lawrence Radiation Lab in California. Do I have the correct background information?

B: That is quite correct. I'll try to be as accurate in my answers to your questions.

P: Just to get this underway, could you tell me how you first happened to come to the Defense Department and who brought you on?

B: I was invited to come by Secretary McNamara early in 1961. I assume he was acting on the advice of other people because he had never met me before. The first time I ever saw him was in his office in February of 1961 and on that occasion he asked me to take over the job as Director of Defense Research and Engineering from Dr. Herbert York who was leaving to go back to the University of California. York and I had known each other for many years. He was a predecessor of mine as Director of the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory at Livermore. I suspect he had a

good deal to do with my appointment to the position.

P: In my interviews with several members of the Defense Department, there have been more than two that have come from Livermore Laboratories. How has this come about that this has been sort of a cradle for defense secretaries and assistant secretaries.

B: Well, it's like Texas, Miss Pierce, it's a source of good people. But in fact there was a small group of people there--very able people, the ablest group I had ever seen until I came to the Defense Department and they had a very great interest in Defense matters. It was an atomic energy laboratory dealing not only with nuclear weapons but with nuclear physics, controlled thermonuclear reactions and so on. The people in it were relatively young, vigorous, and had a great interest of the problems of national security. Consequently, it's not surprising that a number of them should have come to Washington in positions of one kind or another. Of course, after the first one arrives he kind of invites the others in, either directly or indirectly.

P: How do you relate your first assignment in research and engineering to your present one as Secretary of the Air Force?

B: The assignment as Director of Defense Research and Engineering covered, of course, the research and development activities not only of the Air Force but of the other services and of the Defense agencies as well. So it gave me a broad perspective on the questions of what the future weapons systems in each of the services are likely to be because the development of today is, or will be, the weapons system of five to ten years from now. The Air Force, I think, is particularly dependent upon the state of technology and the development of new weapons systems

because it uses modern technology perhaps more than any of the other services. It's oriented around machines, perhaps too much around machines and the men who fly them, operate them. I would say that my services as Director of Defense Research and Engineering gave me not only a knowledge of the systems but of many of the people and in a service secretary's position, one has to do one's best to try to marry the people and the systems into a program which is aimed at producing military capability in support of national policy.

I think that Air Force people are particularly interested in technology, too, because they are a relatively young service and they promote relatively young people. Many of them are technically trained. In the Air Force we have in recent years given many people advance graduate training. The things fit together pretty well--Air Force, technology, and youth. Without my background in the Office of the Secretary of Defense as Director of Defense Research and Engineering I think that I would not have been able to operate as smoothly as I have here. I know the poeple in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. I know what they are trying to do. I know what the policies are, and relating these to Air Force programs and getting Air Force programs to support them has been my principal job here.

P: Do you see sort of a flexibility in the management in that OSD positions can go into service positions, and out of, again. In other words, is there an interrelationship there?

B: Yes, there has been a history of that in the past eight years--and not only in the past eight years--this was true of previous administrations as well. It was true in the Eisenhower administration that people often moved

from a service to the Office of Secretary of Defense, or vice versa. I think that this is one of the very best ways to assure a smooth functioning of the Department. People understand each other's problems, when they have served in each other's positions.

P: Dr. Brown, when did you first have an occasion to meet Lyndon Johnson?

B: I wish I could pinpoint the day. I do believe that it was at a National Security Council meeting early in May of 1961 when I briefed President Kennedy and other senior people in the government, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the service secretaries, and other agencies on the subject of the Nuclear Test Ban and what might be the pros and cons of resuming nuclear tests. I'm pretty sure that was the first occasion on which I met the Vice President. I don't think we had any special conversation at that time, but I do believe I remember him being at that meeting. I don't think he participated a great deal in the discussion at that time although on later occasions I know he participated quite frequently at National Security Council meetings at which I happened also to be present--discussions of this same matter. But he and I did not talk on that occasion.

The first occasion on which I do remember a discussion with him was at the National Aeronautics and Space Council meeting. The Vice President, which he then was, chaired the National Aeronautics and Space Council, and there was a discussion of the Defense Department space program at that meeting.

P: When was that?

B: That was within a couple of months of my arrival. It was in the summer of 1961. Immediately after that, I believe there was a luncheon for one

of the astronauts at which I wasn't present, but my wife was. I had some other thing that I had to go to. My wife was there, and she met the then Vice President. I remember at another occasion, soon thereafter at the White House, I had occasion to meet Mr. Johnson. I believe again it was another meeting on space programs. He said to me that he had met my wife at the luncheon a day or two before and he was clearly convinced that she was the best part of the Brown family which indicates that he is very perceptive about people.

We had a number of discussions in those early days of various space programs including the communication satellite program. I do remember that on one of those occasions we talked about communication satellites.

Later that week, Mrs. Brown and I were at a party at the home of the Donald McArthur's. Mrs. McArthur is Mrs. Johnson's niece, and I got into an argument with Lee Loevinger who was then--I'm not sure--that was before he went on the Federal Communication Commission--I think he was then in the Justice Department. He claimed that the government should collect for the use of its research and development by private companies when they utilize that R&D in the space field. Mrs. Johnson was nearby and listening--I think it is an interesting commentary on the closeness of the relations between the two of them, Mr. Johnson and Mrs. Johnson--that the next day at a meeting the President approached me and repeated the request for my opinions. He wanted to make sure that my opinions on this subject had been heard, that he had heard them, and wanted, also, to make sure that they were the same as his. Well, it happened that they were.

There were a series of meetings at the White House in the summer and fall of '61 on the question of whether we should resume nuclear tests

after the Soviets had. I recall President Kennedy on each of those occasions would have the Vice President there, and the Vice President Johnson would always be asked for his opinion. He would always give it when asked, and yet outside of those meetings he never expressed an opinion on these matters. He was really remarkably loyal in this regard. He clearly had opinions about these matters. Many of them turned out not to be the opinions he found when he became President because the responsibilities change the man. He gave the opinion inside and when outside of the official family he kept them to himself.

Those are, I guess, the principal contacts that I had with Mr. Johnson during his tenure as Vice President. They were at the Space Council and the National Security Council. He was very interested in the space program. I attended a large number of occasions when some event was being celebrated by NASA. He took great pride in that program.

Yet I'm convinced that it was confining to him. He was interested in a far broader range of things. Yet in national security matters, aside from space, he wasn't in them very much. President Kennedy always was sure that he got taken along and was involved in those meetings. I remember at least two meetings in which two trips that President Kennedy took on space matters, on which I happened to be along, President Johnson was there. There is one in September of 1962 in which I travelled on Mr. Johnson's plane for at least part of the way, and I remember getting into a long discussion with Jim Webb and Jerry Wiesner about what was the right way to do the moon landing. Wiesner and I both felt that the way was to do earth orbit rendezvous first and then go directly to the moon rather that do it the way we are now planning to do it--and which I'm sure will work--doing

lunar orbit rendezvous. Webb was strongly to the other opinion. He had set the program that way. I remember that I told Mr. Johnson that that would work, but I didn't think it was as good a way. He supported Mr. Webb. The program has gone the way it has. I still believe that there would have been more side benefits from the program that would have been better if we had gone the other way, but I'm also convinced that the way we went was an acceptable way.

P: What are the benefits or advantages from that?

B: The advantages of going into earth orbit rendezvous first is that it allows you to have the most critical parts of the voyage, namely the rendezvous parts, done near the earth where you can perhaps rely more on aid from ground stations. Some of it is going to have to be done now on the moon and no one on earth can help at all in lunar orbit.

Furthermore, earth orbit would have put us closer to a space station which would have allowed us to do earth observations in science and so on earlier. I think this is going to happen anyway, but it would have happened earlier the other way.

But there are arguments on the other side, too. Although I haven't changed my opinion, what was done was not by any means an egregiously wrong decision. In the end I think the President and Vice President had to support their agency here, the head of NASA. I don't see any other way they could have done it.

I think that pretty much covers Mr. Johnson's period as Vice President.

After he became President, the first contact of any substance which I remember with him was at a budget meeting, and I have the date of that. It was on December 21, 1963, just a month after he had become President.

We discussed I think the atomic energy program and space program. I was still director of the Defense Research and Engineering at the time. Both of these were related to Defense although they were not, strictly speaking, entirely Defense matters. President Johnson was clearly using Mr. McNamara, who was present at the meeting, and myself for the purpose of getting another view on NASA and AEC programs about which he had his doubts.

One of these was the nuclear rocket, and McNamara and I both said that nuclear stage to a launcher was really not justified unless you are going to make many, many trips of large payload between the earth and the moon, or unless you are going to do manned exploration of the planets. So that unless you were sure you were going to do either or both of these things and do them relatively soon, you need not fund the nuclear rocket at a very high level. This annoyed the NASA and AEC people, but it was clear that President Johnson was looking for different opinions.

He was also looking for ways to reduce the budget. That's the year that he loudly proclaimed the budget couldn't possibly get down below one hundred billion dollars and then at the last minute came out with a ninety-nine point eight billion dollar, or something like that, billion dollar budget. So he was looking for money but he was looking for the right things to take it out of. And he did. He took some money out of these programs--not enough in my opinion. He retained his interest in space, even though with his accession to the presidency the space council was headed temporarily by Ed Welsh, who was the executive secretary. Mr. Johnson had been deeply involved in the final decisions to go ahead with a manned

orbiting laboratory which took place in the summer of 1963 and he has supported it ever since.

Except for relatively formal occasions, visits by the President to the Pentagon or other things of that sort, I don't recall any close contact with him until late the next year -- December of '64 and January of '65 when there were two very extensive budgetary things. Those were important budgets, the question of anti-ballistic missile system came up as it has every year since the late fifties. We didn't think it was ready. The Army pressed strongly for it. President Johnson, as did his predecessors, agreed that we weren't ready for a large anti-Soviet system then and were not ready for deployment then. That was a critical issue. It was decided again about that time.

The President I think always displayed a reasonable appreciation of the need for research and development in the Defense Department and supported a level which, although not as large as I would have urged, I think a level that was adequate. It was actually Mr. McNamara who made those specific decisions. It was simply a matter of President Johnson's being willing to support him on them.

He did not have the same kind of personal interest in science and technology, the same kind of curiousity that Kennedy had. Kennedy was not technically trained, but he always had a curiousity about them. Johnson has always seen them, from my view at least, it has always seemed to me, that he has seen these problems--the problems of science and technology--in terms of what can they do to solve problems, what can they do to solve human problems, military problems, political, any kind of problems. By themselves, I think he doesn't have a deep curiosity

about how science works or the details of the scientific programs.

P: What changes did you see in the man from your first time to present?

B: Well, in the Vice Presidency he clearly was frustrated but very much under control--very, very well controlled. But frustrated and sometimes rather bored. His interests in space, I think, comes at least partly from the fact that that was a specific responsibility. He didn't have very many. No Vice President really does, no matter what the President says he has. On occasion, he would get into other things--by request.

I remember one discussion of the supersonic transport which he had called in '63 as part of the space council. I was there. It was an inter-agency discussion of the supersonic transport, but it had some other people. It had some Labor Department people, some Commerce Department people, and so on. At the end he gathered a few of us around him including Pat Moynihan--who is now coming back--and started to talk about another problem that had been thrown at him, the problem of discrimination against minorities in employment. He pointed out that he had not expected me to be the representative of the Defense Department that day. He had expected Secretary McNamara, who couldn't be there. But he charged me to take back this message, and it was a very firm message about getting something done in this area. The vehemence with which he attacked the program convinced me at the time, or caused me to believe at the time, and I haven't changed my mind, that that's the kind of problem he was really interested in doing something about. Whenever he was given such a problem as Vice President, he leaped at it.

When he became President, his more cautious instincts as regards

trying to save money clearly came to the fore. He wasn't all that much for hardware as he was in the space council days when that was all he had to do. It's easier for the Vice President to be for something than for the President. And so I saw a change there. I saw he was much more willing, as a President should be, to make his opinions known publicly than he was as Vice President. At these budget meetings, he was clearly the man in charge and although he respected McNamara very much, it was clear that he still regarded himself as the boss, which of course a President is.

It seemed to me that he had quite an affection for McNamara. I remember on one of these budget meetings, I think one of the ones in December of '64 or January of '65, McNamara was going down a list of aircraft and he gave the number, the designation F-4 aircraft and A-7 aircraft, and so on. Recognizing that the President couldn't be expected to know what each of these was, he tried to ease the situation by saying, "Well, there are all these names and all these numbers, Mr. President, and I myself can't really identify all the numbers with the aircraft that they are supposed to belong to." And he was clearly being polite because everyone in the room knew he could identify every one of them. The President turned to him and said, "Yes, we all know you are kind of backward and can't be expected to understand these things." It got a very big laugh and it was the President's way of saying how smart he considered McNamara to be. And he did. And he was.

The years of '64 and early '65 I think the President was at his high point, I won't say at his best because maybe he was at his best in more recent years when it was clear that he was much less popular and yet he went ahead with programs that he thought were right. But in '64 and

early '65 everything was breaking for him. He was very, very euphoric. He accomplished an enormous amount, and it was clear that he was having the time of his life. Things went well for him and for the country. I really didn't see him much through most of the first half of '65.

Then I did see him after I had been named Secretary of the Air Force but before I had taken office as Secretary of the Air Force, at a meeting at the White House in the summer of '65, it may have been in July of '65. I was named in July and took office the first of October, so it was, I think, in July or early August as part of the meeting about the decision to send two hundred thousand troops to Viet Nam. It is clear that he saw what he might get into at that point and how this might very well cost him popularity. I think the decision had, in effect, already been made. But he asked all the service secretaries and all the joint chiefs into the room, into the Cabinet Room of the White House, listened to the arguments for, and the agruments against, went around the room and asked each person his opinion, knowing that each person would support the decision which had, in effect, already been taken, but wanting to hear whether they had any last thoughts and wanting also to get them on record.

He came around to me--I was on the other side of the table. He had gone through the chiefs. I really should have kept quiet. I said that I was coming new to the situation because I had not been in operational matters. I had been in development. I gave what probably is a fairly primitive version of the domino theory which I believed. Although I don't believe that the next domino to fall is necessarily the next one in line, I still believe there is truth in it, that we were really faced with the alternatives that McNamara had laid out, keep our present

forces in and probably get thrown out, pull out entirely, or send in more people. I think everyone realized that they were all bad choices and it was only a question of which one was the least worst. I said I didn't think we could be sure of succeeding, but that if we got out or if we stayed at the then present level and got thrown out the repercussions in the Philippines and in Thailand and Indonesia--that was before Indonesia underwent its great crisis--and ultimately in Japan and other places would be very grave. The President, I remember, listened carefully and kept--and said after each of my points, and I made a number of them,--"And therefore--" which made it clear he wanted a conclusion from this, a statement as to where this reasoning led. At the end I said, "Well, it leads to sending in the two hundred thousand, even though that may not be a good choice either."

Then he kept going around the table and he got to Stan Resor, who had just become Secretary of the Army. I don't know whether Resor told you this anecdote. He may not remember it, but I remember it very, very well. Resor said the same thing as I had started to say to him--"Well, I'm new to this, and so my opinion shouldn't be taken too seriously." The President said, "Look, I want all of you to know that if we go ahead with this, we are going to have bad troubles. We are going to get all kinds of criticism and it may be very grave criticism. The nation may be in grave difficulties. When that happens, I'm going to be up there getting attacked and I want each of you, I want Secretary Brown, I want Secretary Resor, and all the others, to recognize that they are there with me and they ought to be there with me." I remember that, and that's one of the reasons why, although I may have criticism of individual

actions taken then or thereafter, I'm not about to disclaim my responsibility in this even if it was no more than saying I agreed with the decision.

Well, that made a big impression on me. As you can see, it made a big impression because it showed that the President did not go into this blindly. He know that it might cost him his popularity, although I think that he may not have realized, any more than any of us realized, how unpopular it might make us. I think the President may have realized that he was putting his political career on the line and might end it prematurely.

P: Have you had occasions to either travel with Mr. Johnson or for him? You mentioned one when he was Vice President.

B: Yes, with him on several occasions, but never very close since that occasion. I've been at various places with him through the country when he was making appearances and delivering speeches in connection with military matters, but not at any great length.

P: Dr. Brown, have you been appointed to any task forces or committees, commissions, boards, panels, that are not directly related to the Office of the Secretary of Defense or--I mean, Secretary of the Air Force, or when you were in OSD?

B: No, the things that I have been connected with have generally been in the national security area and functioned really as part of the Department of Defense. I mean, there are lots of inter-agency committees that I have been on, but I don't think that's the kind of thing you mean. I can mention a few other individual occasions.

On one occasion I remember going over there on the budget when the decision was made to try to keep the supplemental budget down. This is,

I guess, the fiscal '67 supplemental. This was in the summer of '67. The President got from each of the service secretaries a commitment that we would keep that supplemental down and live within the numbers that had been agreed on as a part of an agreement with the Congress to extend the debt limit. There was a great fuss about that. Everyone got all excited about the thought that the Congress wouldn't extend the debt limit. Well, the consequences of that would have been so disastrous that there was never any chance that the Congress wouldn't do it, but when they counted the votes, it didn't look all that good.

That night, I remember the President called me at home and said, "Thank you for your support. Now, go talk to some Congressmen"--and he gave me a list--"and persuade them that they have to vote for the extension of the debt limit." He particularly mentioned one who had been very negative, and pointed out that he had an Air Force Base in his district and that maybe we didn't need that Air Force Base quite so much. I indirectly handled that congressman--well, handled the approach to that congressman and he actually voted for the extension of the debt limit. I went to talk to about eight of them and they all ended up voting for it which I think they would have done anyway, but--

P: Who was this one particular person?

B: Well, all right--it's a Louisiana congressman named [Joe D.] Waggonner [Jr.]. He might have been ready to vote for it anyway. And I didn't handle that one directly. We had an indirect way of handling that. But you know you don't really have to--and none of us did--use threats to close military bases. We don't close military bases on that basis. We close them on the basis of need and open them on the basis of need. But I

think the President had a very good point, which is that these congressmen ought to be reminded that military bases which they count on so much in their districts to a degree (in fact, that perhaps is not the best thing for American democracy)--rely on Federal expenditures which in turn rely on the debt limit, and some of them tend not to connect these up.

P: In cases such as this, do you point out that a cut or--

B: We point out that a cut would inevitably affect all, not theirs particularly, but all. I think the message gets across. One meeting I want to mention is an anti-ballistic missile meeting on January 4 of '67 when the President had the--had Secretary McNamara and Deputy Secretary Vance, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a large group of technically qualified people, all the previous presidential science advisors, all the previous directors of the Defense Research and Engineering in, and got opinions. I think he was at that point just about all ready to go with an anti-ballistic missile system. He got negative advice from almost all of the scientists from all of them. He got negative advice from all of the scientists--more negative from some than from others--then included some money in the budget but didn't decide to go ahead with it. That meeting, I think, was the occasion--I won't say it's the cause because Presidents often use such meetings as a way of getting advice that they want to follow. In other words, they have decided what they want to do, they call in the people who will tell them to do that, and then they listen to that and then they do it--postponed it, I think, for about six months. I think that the decision didn't come really until McNamara's San Francisco speech late in September of '67, I guess.

I remember a luncheon meeting that the President had in the White

House in the spring of '67 with a group of people who might be characterized as the intellectuals in the government. The people who come from the universities, that are connected with the universities, or who are thought to be intellectuals. John Gardner was there, Bob Wood from HUD, who had come from M.I.T., I was there, Alain Enthoven was there, Bill Gorham was there, a lot of people who had contacts in the intellectual community. The President asked, "Why is it the intellectuals don't like me?" He thought it was Viet Nam, and Viet Nam had a lot to do with it. But a lot of it, I think, and I told him so, was a lot of them just didn't like his style which is the truth. A lot of them, a lot of intellectuals, aren't governed by reason. In their own private lives, in their attitudes, hopefully not in their professional lives, although that happens too, they are governed by emotions like everybody else. If they don't like somebody's style, they don't like him. The President was much concerned with this question, and, of course, that's appeared over and over and over again.

P: What do you think it is in his style?

B: Well, he's obviously not an intellectual himself. He's bigger than life-size, and I think that may frighten a lot of them. I could see where it would easily put many people off, especially people who are less concerned with accomplishments than with style. That may be the real key to why President Johnson has not been successful in the new politics. The new politics is more a matter of style than it is of accomplishments. When the problems become impossible of solution, and I'm sure we have some problems that are impossible of solution, then what you accomplish may seem to some people to be less

important than what you say or how you say it or what kind of grace you display and eloquence, and so on.

P: How did he respond to your remarks?

B: He listened, and he seemed to think that that was right. Of course, it's a much more--I won't say flattering--but, it's a much less critical judgment than others might make on him, so that I'm not surprised. Others might say because he did such a terrible job in Vietnam and made promises and didn't keep them and so on. You know, I think that can be said about any President, and I think it's no more true--maybe less true--of President Johnson than most. But his style was different, and I think that had a lot to do with it. I think he likes to think so.

P: Were you surprised at that meeting?

B: At its existence or what--that he called one?

P: Yes, regarding that.

B: No, I think everybody knew that he was concerned about his image and wished desperately that he could do something to stem the ebb of public opinion from him; the flow against him--the ebb of public opinion as regards his performance--and I think he rightly recognized that a good deal of it was the result of the intellectual response to him because, although intellectuals may not get a lot done in a short time, they influence opinion very, very strongly.

President Johnson's method of dealing with problems is perhaps illustrated by a case in which he was attacked by Senator Williams for having a picture taken of his ranch, and he called me and he had me go up

and point out that this was not the President's initiative, this was done by the Air Force at the direction of the Secret Service so that they could look at the security situation on the President's ranch.

P: What was it, an aerial?

B: It was an aerial photo and the charge was that a squadron or a wing of airplanes had been diverted to take pictures of the President's ranch so that he could hang them on his wall. Well, he did hang one on his wall, but he was not involved in directing the flight. It really was done by the Secret Service.

I think very often the President has been embarrassed by people around him who direct trivial things in his name and then he has to explain them. I'm not saying that happens all the time, but I'm sure that's a large part of it. But wherever possible, he would like to have these things shut off with information at the source rather than having them blow up into big things, and that was one that we managed to keep from blowing up into a big thing by getting the information in early.

He liked people--his members of his administration to go on television, or appear at things, or in situations where they could support policy. Two examples--I remember I appeared on Meet the Press in May of '66 on a Sunday, and later that afternoon he called me up and told me how happy he was at my appearance and thought I had represented him well. He admitted he hadn't seen the whole program. He had been asleep. I told him I hoped he hadn't fallen asleep again during the program after having waked up to see the second half of it. Later on he heard about the beginning of the program, the part that he hadn't seen and he wasn't quite so happy with that, but he repeated the injunction to go out and

make the administration's views known.

Again, just before the bombing halt, he wanted it made clear what the arrangement had been with Hanoi and as a consequence I went on the Today Show for five minutes in the morning, not saying anything that hadn't been said many times--but he recognized that it was important to get the word out. The difficulty, of course, which is also one that he recognized, is that to do any good you have to be on a question-and-answer program in which you don't control the question. Then there is always the danger that you will make some horrible bobble that will get the administration in far more trouble than you could possibly save it by appearing on such programs. We, in Defense, have not been on many such programs. A few of us have been on a few. I've been on a few. Secretary McNamara never appeared on one until after he had resigned but before he left office he and Rusk appeared on one together one Sunday afternoon. I'm not sure what's the right way. I have the feeling that you have to do it sometimes and just take the risk.

P: What were the biggest emphasis in your appearance on the Meet the Press program?

B: Well, they badgered me about Vietnam, and shouldn't escalate militarily--this was in 1966--and I weaseled out of it--obviously very uncomfortable--pointed out that what the risks were of an expanded war. They clearly weren't satisfied. Then I talked about future programs, big bomber programs and anti-ballistic missile programs and why one should be very careful before going ahead and spending a lot of money on those. That is the part the President appreciated. The other part, one couldn't be successful at, because no decision had been made whether to reduce bombing, increase bombing or

keep it the same, so one would have to carry water on three shoulders on such a program, and that's why people don't go on such programs.

P: Dr. Brown, you've had several occasions here of meeting with congressmen and appearing publicly like this. Why have you been so touted?

B: What do you mean?

P: Well,--

B: People told you I do it well, or that I should do it, or what?

P: This is something you appear to have been able to do with handling it quite well.

B: I can give you some counter-examples. I won't, but there have been plenty of occasions where I haven't done all that well. When I have done well, I think it's because I have been able to convey an impression of sincerity and of honesty. Now, you can't do that without being sincere and honest, but being sincere and honest isn't always enough to give the impression. I think a facility with words helps. An ability to think quickly helps. But most of all I think you really have to want to convey the right impression and you have to be very careful not to say anything that is either false or can later be accused of being misleading. You can't play it too cute. This is, of course, something the President has occasionally been accused of doing and it is something you can sometimes get away with in small groups but you can't do it in public. It is very dangerous to try to do it in public.

P: Whom do you work with in the presidential staff when you are dealing with the White House?

B: It varies. Joe Califano very often, just because I knew him when he was here, and he might call me up. The military staff, Jim Cross and so on,

simply because that's a channel that the President often uses. When Marvin Watson was over there, I worked with him fairly often because he was pretty much the resource manager over there. If they wanted an airplane or if they wanted to arrange something for the President, it would often go through Marvin.

P: Your normal association--

B: A couple of other people--Doug Cater and Harry McPherson occasionally on speeches for the President. They would just get facts from us, by and large.

P: In your working relationship can you give sort of an idea how much contact you have with the White House, how much direction you receive from it?

B: Not a great deal. Most of it comes through the Office of the Secretary of Defense. There is a lot of direct dealing on the staff level. My executive assistant will deal very often with White House staff people who want airplanes, Air Force resources, or who want to pass along information that something should be done to satisfy some congressman. But I would probably not talk to White House staff people more than once or twice a month.

P: Was this the same in your previous position, too?

B: You see, there is a National Security Staff which was Bundy's, now is Rostow's, and the Presidential Science Advisory Staff which was Hornig, will be Lee Dubridge. There I had more regular contacts because they'll ask us to be briefed on programs. But I don't regard that activity really as quite presidential staff activity.

P: Could you tell me a little bit about how the operation of Air Force One in relation to--in the planes and services the Air Force supplies to the executive office?

B: Well, we run an airline for him. Actually, there is a military aircraft, sort of a military airlift command organization, over at Anderews Air Force Base, which supports and maintains the big 707s, DC 137s which are the Presidential jets. There are three of them, a number of 140s which are Lockheed Jetstars, 131s--there must be a fleet of twenty aircraft over there which, however, are not just used for the President. They are used for the senior executive echelon of the government. But, of course, the White House has full-time use of some of them and preemptive use over any of the others that it may want. That's a pretty smoothly running operation, and it's very efficient as well. We also, of course, supply stewards and food service and all the rest, and it is used not only for the President, but for people who he wants to invite here from other countries or people come in from various other parts of the country at presidential request. I couldn't tell you how many flights a day we run, but it's several.

P: Can you draw any comparison as to how this has increased or developed over the years?

B: I don't think it's greatly changed over eight years. I think that there has been a steady customer demand. I don't think there has been an increase. I think what is likely to happen in future years is that we'll modernize some of those aircraft, change some of the C-131s for bigger aircraft, for DC-9s, for example, and this will give a bigger capacity and then when the capacity exists it will be used more. More people will

will use it. But I don't see a large change over the years.

Now, of course, the President--and President Kennedy before him--have spent a lot of time travelling between their homes and Washington. Facilities have to be selected at the other end. Bergstrom Air Force Base has been used for this just as Otis Air Force Base was used when President Kennedy used to summer on the Cape. Everything is done to make the President as free as possible from the exigencies of time, space, and discomfort, and I can't think of any better use of those resources.

P: Do we have some unmarked planes in that fleet?

B: Not that I'm aware of. I think they all say either--well, they all say "United States of America", I believe, which is one way to tell them from the other planes. They don't have Air Force markings.

P: To kind of talk in some very broad and general terms, Dr. Brown, thinking of all of your service here at Defense, what, in your opinion, have been some of the most important developments in Defense technology and weapons systems?

B: Well, of course, ballistic missiles, although a lot of development had taken place before I came, really became operational while I was here. I think they've had the biggest effect of all, perhaps.

Space technology and the regular use of space in a military support function has been an enormous change since 1960-61. There are satellites up there all the time looking at various things, doing communications, and so on. I think actually that has been one of the most successful and efficient uses--well, most successful and efficient development program, maybe not the most vital--perhaps the missile program was that--but one of the most vital.

The great amount of work that was done on anti-ballistic missiles--which has not led in my view to a really successful system, one that would defend us against all-out attack by a determined and capable power like the Soviet Union--but, we certainly know a lot more about it, We have made enormous advances in technology, and I think we've made, perhaps, a limited, small defense feasible.

Those are the three biggest and most spectacular changes.

As a consequence of the Viet Nam war, and of course, we should have done more before then, attention has refocused on tactical systems all the way from anti-guerrilla systems up to large-scale conventional war, which one might have to fight some day. There are so many individual projects I can't really treat each of them, or even treat them in classes. I can only mention a few examples of classes. Target acquisition, that is, looking in all weather and at night, and trying to find either trucks, or fixed targets, or groups of people. Rapid processing of data for intelligence purposes so as to determine where the other side is. Successful use of air-to-air missiles in air-to-air combat and electronic countermeasures which are extremely important against surface defenses, anti-aircraft or surface-to-air missiles. The use of helicoptors is not principally an Air Force matter but the Air Force is involved to create greater mobility. New kinds of munitions, conventional munitions which are more effective, which can cover--which can compensate to a degree for our--for the inevitable missed distances when you drop weapons or bombs. The use of guided missiles, air-to-surface, either optically guided or electronically-guided so as to get higher accuracy which is an extremely important matter in trying to deny the enemy transportation

routes or denying them success in ground attacks. Those are some examples.

P: You touched on this just briefly in these examples, but what do you think--where do you think emphasis should be in nuclear and non-nuclear capabilities or nuclear versus conventional?

B: I think that the United States has to be able to be perfectly sure that it can deter a thermonuclear attack, insofar as such an attack can be deterred by having enough power, nuclear power, and the kind of nuclear power that would prevent a surprise attack from not only from wiping out enough of our forces so that we couldn't retaliate against the population of the country that attacked us, but I think we should go farther. I think we should have enough, and the kind of strategic forces, that would keep another side, the Soviets, from gaining a relative advantage by initiating an attack. In other words, if they know that they'll be worse off militarily after an exchange as well as worse off in surviving population, I think that's more of a deterrent than simply the knowledge that we would have enough left to damage them fatally as a population. That I think is <u>the</u> most important thing.

Once you've got enough to do that, then I think you have to devote the rest of whatever is available in defense capability to conventional forces that can move quickly, get to a distant place in a short time, fight relatively autonomously, be precise, and handle moderate-size attacks. The United States can't handle all attacks from the Soviets, or the Chinese, or anybody else, all over the world. We have to depend on other people to defend themselves to some degree, but if we can get a striking force of considerable power, although not necessarily large size, in early, we may be able to slow things down to the point where

the indigenous population can handle what's left, providing that they have put enough effort into it beforehand and providing that there is enough political stability and base that the people of their own country will support them.

P: The issue, Dr. Brown, of security gap came up during this last campaign. Do you think it has developed?

B: Well, I don't know what security gap means.

P: I think it was the missile superiority ratio they were talking about.

B: No, I don't think it was. I think it was deliberately made more general.

P: Dr. Brown, you've, in part, answered my next question, but I'd like to place it directly to you. What do you think our posture should be on the deployment of ABM? You've mentioned this, you know, as one of the developments?

B: I think that ABM technology is such that in the race between offensive and defensive weapons, the offensive weapons are more effective for a given amount of expenditure. They will always be able to pentrate, given enough effort by the offense side, at the present state of technology. That may not always be the case, but it is certainly the case for the foreseeable future. Under those circumstances, I think it does not make sense to deploy large anti-ballistic missiles systems aimed at the Soviets. With respect to a smaller, so-called thin system, a Sentinel system, aimed at preventing a Chinese capability for ICBM attack on the United States, I think that that is feasible, at least feasible through the 1970s, and I think that the system that is presently approved and being put in will be able to do that. It also complicates the Soviets' problems, although I think that

by fairly simple and not terribly expensive means, they can be sure that they will be able to penetrate the Sentinel with no trouble. After all, Sentinel is not even directed at them. So that from a feasibility standpoint, clearly an anti-Chinese system is achievable. The question is whether it, plus its side benefits, is worth the five billion or six billion dollars, these things always go up, and they may go up more--that it cost? My judgment, on purely military grounds, would be yes, it probably is. I do believe that we should carefully explore the possibility of limiting ABM systems by agreement with the Soviets as part of a general strategic arms limitation agreement at a level perhaps lower than Sentinel, and I would do that before making an irrevocable commitment on Sentinel. I don't think we should go faster than we are going on Sentinel. I have considerable concern lest a Sentinel deployment lead gradually, or maybe not so gradually, to a full-scale ABM deployment, which I think would be a waste of money as Sentinel is probably not a waste of money.

P: These are outmoded rather rapidly, aren't they? Is that a reasoning behind it?

B: Well, not quite. You can always add on to them or update them. They always look as if they are going to be outmoded very quickly, but then when you put them in, you find that outmoding takes place more slowly than you think. That is, you leave them in quite a lot longer than you think before you change them so that if you put in something like Sentinel, I don't think you should change it for five, six, eight years in a very substantial way. You might expand it or modify it, and I don't really think there is going to be a new technology, or new approach to

ballistic missile defense, before five or six years. I think it will be at least six, maybe eight years, before any other idea has come along far enough to be in the position that the Sentinel system or the Nike-X system, or any one of the terminal defense systems, now is.

P: Do you think that our strategic defense currently is, and will be, a credible deterrent?

B: Certainly it will and will continue to be not only credible but an overwhelming deterrent to any out-of-the-blue preemptive attack. The consequences of such an attack to the attacker would obviously be so great as to be all out of proportion to the risks. We are sure our bombers can penetrate. We are sure that our missiles can penetrate. They would just devastate the Soviet Union or China. So that that gives me a fair amount of comfort.

One, however, must postulate rather more difficult situations in which we and Soviets, for example, somehow manage to get into a situation in Europe or in the Middle East--let's talk about Europe, because that clearly is vital to both sides. A situation in which backing down would cause enormous repercussions throughout the respective alliances, and domestically in either country. I think that both sides might succeed in backing down, but the way in which they back down, and who backed down fartherest and fastest, and so on, would depend, in my view, on the relative military strength--strategic strength--not just that both sides could destroy each other but how a strategic war might look if it happened.

And a strategic war might conceivably happen. Both sides might be unable to back down, and there might be a strategic exchange, either a demonstration strategic exchange with a few missiles on each side--which might then

scare both sides into backing down, or a gradual exchange of blows against each other's strategic forces and no scenario is really likely here. Each has to be looked at by itself and one has to be prepared with a military capability which can respond to a v riety of different scenarios. I think that in those circumstances military capability on each side and projected military capability in the fact of alternating strategic strikes would determine the outcome--peaceful, warlike, or some combination of the two.

This is the sense in which I think military superiority, or strategic superiority, may have some meaning. I'm not saying it does or how much is has, but if it has a meaning, it's in this context, and I think that we ought to concentrate on designing our forces so that they can do this or face that kind of situation, as well as have a deterrent against an all-out attack out of the blue which I think they clearly do. We do have an assured destruction capability against such an attack, and I think it deters war. Whether it will deter it in all circumstances or whether it will in some circumstances cause a serious loss of power even if a war doesn't happen is what concerns me as the next step. I'm not saying that that's as important. It isn't. That's what we've already got, but we've got what we've got. Now the question is, does it make sense to get something in addition? Well, the answer is, it depends on how much it's worth and how much it costs. And I don't think that that exploration has been adequately made yet. So I don't think we have the right answer to that yet.

P: Do you see it as a continued build-up?

B: It may be an alteration rather than a continued build-up. Of course,

the present rate of expenditures allowed for operation and maintenance and some modernization. I would say modernization rather than build-up. I'm not saying necessarily--that we should have more missiles than we have or even that they should be bigger or that we should have more aircraft or that they should be bigger. I do think the characteristics required to meet the kind of contingency I was talking about may be rather different from the characteristics of the systems we've got which were built partly as deterrent systems, partly as war-fighting systems, as well, but in an era of different technology, a war-fighting system, or even a deterrent system, that is appropriate when the other side has one set of weapons becomes less as when the other side has a different set of weapons.

P: What do you see as this posture in relation to disarmament?

B: I believe that a very serious attempt ought to be made to limit arms. I think we should have started talks with the Soviets before this. We would have, of course, had it not been for the Czech invasion. I think we should have anyway, myself. Perhaps not right away, but between then and now we should have begun such talks. I think it might have been possible. I think it may still be possible to reach an agreement on a level of armament no more than a certain amount, no more than a certain number of ABMs, for example, and then one would have to work within those constraints. I believe that within those constraints, one might have a more stable situation. Stability is more likely to occur in an arms control situation if one is in a situation on where not only the nature of the weapons but the number of the weapons is uncontrolled.

P: When it becomes put in a controlled situation, won't we be the first to sort of lose ground?

B: I don't think it is necessarily true. It hasn't happened with the nuclear testing business. We are both having underground tests, and I think that there is no evidence that we haven't done as well, relative to the Soviets, as we would have had we kept going in the atmosphere. But it has damped things down some. I agree that we have a problem--because we are more open. We tend to interpret or be forced to interpret agreements much more rigidly than the Soviets.

I think that the Soviets will get away with what they can get away with. But I don't think that that's an impossible handicap. We have a fair amount of information on what they do and could have more. We would, of course, make every effort in such a situation to get more. I think we would have enough to monitor such an agreement, or could. There are agreements that we could monitor this way.

Now, as to whether it would make the United States decide to do less than the agreement allowed. The question is, would we say--We have an arms limitation agreement now; therefore, we don't need military strength. I don't think that's likely because I think that the political differences and the military confrontations are likely to remain and those are what determine, within whatever limits we have agreed, what we do.

P: Dr. Brown, you've talked about what we are doing today in research and development as being the weapons systems in the future. What particular breakthroughs and what do we have to look forward to in terms of weapon systems?

B: I don't like to predict the future. Whenever I've done it, I've been wrong. I can't point to one thing and say that that is going to be

the next area, because if I could and do it with any confidence, of course, I would be urging much more effort on that particular area. I believe that guided weapons systems, accurate delivery of conventional munitions in limited war is likely to be extremely important. Target acquisition information is likely to be extremely important. But those aren't single breakthroughs--those are just areas. And beyond that I don't think I would go.

P: How would you describe our weapons systems ten years hence?

B: I'm afraid they will be more complicated, and I'm not at all sure they will be that much more effective against what they have to face then. I think that the environment in which they will have to perform then will be more difficult because the North Vietnamese have shown that within the political constraints that a limited war imposes, a relatively promitive society, if it has an access to a source of weapons can operate those weapons quite well. I think that that is going to limit the strength of the super powers quite a lot, us and the Soviets both. I really think I ought to stop now.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Dr. Harold Brown

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

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Signed Harold Brown

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