INTERVIEW VI

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INTERVIEWEE: JOSEPH A. CALIFANO, JR.

INTERVIEWER: Joe B. Frantz

PLACE: Mr. Califano's office, Washington, D.C.

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F: You had some experience with General Edwin Walker both at Oxford, [Mississippi] and then later when he was sent to Kirksville, Missouri, to the institute there, and I wondered if you could just take over and talk a little bit about that.

C: Actually, my first experience with Walker was in the hearings on muzzling the military.

F: You got in on that, too?

C: I was [Robert] McNamara's lawyer for those hearings. You may recall that as we saw the major issue in the hearings, the issue was whether or not the civilian leadership in the Pentagon and President Kennedy, at that time, had the right, in effect, to censor the speeches of military personnel so that they could not say anything--

F: Did this come as a surprise, or did you have adumbrations of this long before it really became an issue?

C: No. Well, I have to go back. The best of my recollection is that some time in April of 1961 there was a story about General Walker in the *Overseas Weekly*, which was a kind of tabloid publication for our troops in Europe.

F: This is pretty early in the administration, isn't it?

C: Well, the reason why I remember it is because it's one of the first major things I ever worked on. Walker was accused of trying to influence politically the people in his command basically, as I recall, in two ways. One was through use of the Index of Americans for Constitutional Action and their voting records of people. It's a conservative [organization] like the Americans for Democratic Action on the left. And the second way was in anti-communist seminars. Now, there was a little flurry and some news about that and some complaining in the press and arguing that General Walker either ought to be stopped or relieved of command or what have you. It wasn't a booming, blasting, all-out issue when it first appeared, and the *New York Times* made it sort of a campaign.

F: Mainly it was just among the few that were concerned--

C: You're dealing with the ever watchful corps of the liberal, northeastern press basically. That's oversimplifying it. At the same time, however--and at that point it was going down an independent route--we were facing an issue of the clearance of military speeches by civilians in the Pentagon. For years, any public statement by a military official, or indeed by civilian officials in the Pentagon as well as in the State Department, had been cleared in advance. These were formal speeches, and it was to make sure that they were consistent with the policy that the administration in power was following and wouldn't hurt our foreign policy. You know, it's a very reasonable thing to do. Kennedy and Johnson both felt strongly about speaking softly and carrying the big stick, but the words should not be bellicose. And if you recall, they had campaigned in part on that theory, that [John Foster] Dulles' words had been too bellicose and that we'd--

F: Nixon's kitchen confrontation--

C: Yes. You know, that we had had the words but not the power, and what we really ought to have was the power and the ability to then speak softly. And the censorship took quite a different turn, and we started cutting out of statements really vigorous blasts at the Soviet Union and what have you. You've got to remember at this point in time the administration was trying to work out a variety of treaties with the Russians, and also introduce into them a little higher level of sophistication about Russia and China. One example I remember was to stop talking about the Sino-Soviet bloc on the ground that it was to our advantage that there not be a Sino-Soviet bloc, and on the ground that it might not be accurate anymore.

That began to breach an increasing level of controversy as military officers particularly started complaining to the Hill about the changes in--it was an office called Security Review in the Pentagon and it had some comparable name in the State Department. The upshoot of all of it was that--and also run into that were the cold war seminars, which you remember in late 1960 and early 1961 were a big thing: go to a seminar and learn all about communism. And [there was concern] not so much [about] the seminars, but the fact that the military was becoming involved deeply in the seminars. These things coagulated some time during the late summer of 1961: Walker, the censorship of the speeches, and our attempt to cool off the military activity in cold war seminars.

The upshoot was that that Senator [Richard] Russell announced that there would be hearings on troop information and education and this whole area. And that was the first time I came across General Walker, during those hearings, which started as a full-blown, televised, real top-flight, full circus hearings for the first week or so when

McNamara was testifying. They ultimately degenerated into Senator [Strom] Thurmond and one or two others, and a variety of Pentagon witnesses, pro and con, that they were calling from all over the world, and State Department witnesses, and one of the witnesses was General Walker. By this time General Walker had either publicly resigned or indicated that he was going to resign, I can't remember which. Maybe it was some time after that he actually resigned. But he indicated that he had enough. And he was the turning point in those hearings for two reasons. One, he was a very incoherent witness and the record of the [John] Stennis hearings will show that. And number two, he slugged a reporter. He hit a reporter on the way out, from the *Daily News*.

F: Who was about half his size.

C: That's exactly right. That turned the hearings around for us. That was the best thing that could have happened in terms of getting on with things we thought were a lot more important in the Pentagon.

In 1962 when we were getting [James] Meredith into the University of Mississippi, Walker appeared on the campus and was, from the reports we got down there, extremely inflammatory, and was picked up one night--the second night of rioting, I think, I can't remember which. But in any case it marked my next involvement with Walker, because I got a call from Jack [Herbert J.] Miller, as I recall, who was then the assistant attorney general in charge of the Criminal Division, and someone whose name I don't recall who was one of Bobby Kennedy's special assistants. They wanted me to go over and talk to them--Miller and the special assistant--about Walker's mental capacity. And then I went over, and they told me to bring all the hearings with me so I could point out--

F: This is here in Washington?

C: This is here in Washington and actually I went over--it was the room right next to Bobby Kennedy's office. It was to Bobby Kennedy's office what Marvin Watson's office was to the President. I went over there and along with them was the chief psychiatrist for the Bureau of Prisons. And they laid out the fact that they could not hold Walker in jail without bail, that he'd be out almost immediately unless there were some reason to think that he was psychologically unfit and needed a psychological examination. And there was a section of the criminal code under which they could do that. That's how he got to Kirksville.

So I went through the [transcripts of the] hearings, and they were in the process of drafting a sworn telegram, in effect, an affidavit telegram, to get to the judge in Mississippi--the federal judge--by the chief psychiatrist of the Bureau of Prisons which would have enough information in it so that it would support the U.S. attorney going to court and saying, "Walker has to be examined," and thus put Walker out of commission for a couple of days. So what we did was go through--we had the evidence of what he had done in Mississippi, to the extent that people would swear to it--

F: Now, at the meeting that night with Miller and the other fellow, did you get the feeling that they did think he had a psychiatric problem or that they were just trying to neutralize him for the moment?

C: I think it was both. In a situation like that you have to picture what it was like. Here we were, all this violence in Mississippi. We hadn't had a racial fight like that in I don't know how long in this country. It was the beginning of--

F: We were not inured to it at the time.

C: That's right, and it was cracking the college system. One French reporter, I think, had been killed. There were guns all over the place down there. [Nicholas] Katzenbach was sitting in the administration building--and if you go down there to this day you can see all the buckshot [that was] shot there, and he was scared to death. We didn't know what the hell was going on. Troops were moving in. They couldn't get there fast enough--

F: A very conservative *Dallas News* reporter told me that--who is a native Texan--he was scared to death there. He said they shot at anybody who didn't sound as if he came from there locally, and he said, "I was just enough different--"

C: So, you know, it was a crisis, and it was [done for] both [reasons]. I think any reasonable man at that point could have said, "Walker's got to be put out of commission. We can't let him back on that campus," regardless of what his mental capacity was. But at the same time everybody thought there was something a little screwy with Walker. He had slugged a reporter. What he did was, the prison psychiatrist, as I recall, by the time I had gotten there had gone over all the news reports and whatever sworn statements the U.S. attorney had been able to get about Walker's activity. My job was to take him through the Walker testimony and see whether or not he saw anything in what General Walker said or in Walker's demeanor that would permit him to sign this kind of an affidavit telegram, which he ultimately signed and [which] went off to Mississippi. Walker was ultimately sent to Kirksville. And that was really my last contact with General Walker.

F: His going to Kirksville wasn't any sort of embarrassment to the Defense Department? You were really out of it? This was the Attorney General's maneuver from here on?

C: That's right, it was all the Attorney General's maneuver. Also, Walker had long since become an adversary of the administration of the Defense Department, and also of most

of the generals in it. I think if you talk to people like Earle Wheeler, they were saddened by what had happened to him because apparently he was quite a good soldier in World War II and Korea. They thought, not in a psychiatric sense but in some other sense, he had lost his perspective.

F: Let's shift and talk a little bit about something that has been in the news lately and that is the supersonic transport, what you got into there and just how it worked.

C: The first I ever heard of the supersonic transport was one day--it was April of 1964; it was the Friday before the Monday I went to work for Secretary McNamara. He called me up to his office--and I'd already agreed to go to work for him; I was then general counsel of the army, and [he] told me first I had to report on Monday, and secondly threw this draft executive order across the table at me, and asked me if I knew anything about the supersonic transport. I said, no, I really didn't. He said, "Well, President Johnson is making me chairman of a cabinet committee to review the supersonic transport program and you're going to be executive secretary of it. You'd better a) learn something about it, and a hell of a lot about it; b) independent of the staff working for you on the Pentagon problems, you're going to have to build up a staff to work for you on this; c) independent of the cabinet committee"--which was to be made up by Treasury, Commerce, [Najeeb] Halaby, who was then head of the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration], and some outside people like Gene Black and I forget, some others. Independent of that committee, I wanted to have an in-house committee, which we then agreed upon would be Harold Brown, who was then director of defense research and engineering, and Alain Enthoven, who was the head of systems analysis, Gene Zuckert, who was secretary of the air force, and one or two others, and then we began hearings.

The hearings were transcribed verbatim, even the executive meetings. There was a hell of a fight and disagreement basically. We had all kinds of witnesses in, the head of the airline companies, the airplane manufacturers and what have you. The disagreement was over the pace at which the SST [super sonic transport] should be pursued.

F: Was there any disagreement over whether we should pursue the idea?

C: Not after an initial couple of weeks, to my recollection. The kind of social resource issue--whether to use this money for the SST or to clean up the cities or help the poor--was not really the major concern. You have to remember that we all believed--I say we all, at least McNamara and I believed, and I happen to believe to this day, that there's plenty of money in this country. There's plenty of money to wage the war in Vietnam, build the SST, and clean up the cities. The only issue is whether people are willing to pay the taxes.

F: Plus the fact you didn't have quite such a big hunk taken by the war at that time.

C: That's right.

Now, the issues were: one, what was the state of technology? Was this such a quantum jump in technology that we were going too fast? Two, the size of the plane in terms of its economic viability. McNamara and our people felt strongly that the plane as then designed, at the time we got into it, on paper was much too small, that the Concorde was much too small to be economically viable and we needed a much bigger plane. The economics on an airplane are really a cost per seat mile. You've got to get those down if you're going to have a project. Three, sonic boom and whether or not the plane could ever fly over land and what you did about boom. Fourth, what was the systems cost of this plane going to be, which we determined to be fifty billion dollars--something that had

never been done--and that is how much does it cost to build and operate it over its lifetime? Lastly and quite important, and still I gather not fully resolved, what's the government's role and how does the government make sure it recovers what it puts into it?

The major disagreement was between McNamara and myself on the one hand, and Halaby on the other hand. Halaby wanted to go all out with what he'd had, which we thought was too small, too fast technologically and what have you. In every case the committee sided with McNamara, and where Halaby felt strongly enough to express dissent to President Johnson, the President sided with McNamara. Along the way, every recommendation that was made by that committee, through the time I was in the Pentagon and executive secretary of it and the time I was in the White House in Washington and watched it from that vantage point, was with McNamara.

F: You had come [inaudible] with the committee when you moved into the White House?

C: Yes. Now, the upshoot of it all--and one of the interesting things about the SST, to digress for a minute, was that prior to the time Johnson became president, at the Space Council meetings, where the SST had previously been handled in terms of the government-wide review, Johnson was all for it, going the way Halaby was going as fast as we could with the small plane and what have you. He had some terrific arguments with McNamara. It's interesting in this sense that when he came to have the responsibility not just to recommend, with Kennedy making the decision, but to commit fifty billion dollars of the nation's resources, not necessarily all government money, but fifty billion dollars, to the project, before he made that decision, he looked to the guy that was on the other side of it, McNamara, to chair the committee to review it for him.

In any case, eventually it was decided to run a lot of sonic boom tests. Then after those tests, we decided that to judge the economics we would assume that it would never fly over land. That we wanted to build an economically viable plane that would not fly over land at supersonic speeds, that it would always be subsonic over land, which is the basis, I assume to this day, of the economic judgments that have been made and one of the things the press never really gets through.

F: What's the idea, to get it down below sonic speed over land? You can't avoid land.

C: No, you'd fly subsonically over land because you couldn't solve the sound problem. The idea was in terms of the economics of the airplane, whether or not this was an economically viable venture, the only way, we felt, to judge that was to do it conservatively. And the conservative way to do it was to assume that the sonic boom problem was insoluble. Therefore, if it were worth building a plane, we would have to assume that it were worth building a plane that could fly supersonically only over water.

F: I presume that President Johnson took a fairly active interest in what this committee was doing.

C: He did. I am not privy to McNamara's conversations with him when I was in the Pentagon. He approved all the reports we made to him.

F: Was this a matter of national pride and the economics of staying in the forefront of this?

C: It was quite relevant, quite relevant. But the judgments and recommendations that were made by that committee when McNamara was chairing it, even after I got in the White House, were all based on the assumption that the plane would be economically viable flying supersonically over water and flying subsonically over land. Number two, that the plane would be safe. And number three, that--well, those were the only two assumptions.

The other points were that it was important for our balance of payments; it was important that we lead in this area. The arguments were really over how to lead in the best way. To this day I believe that the Concorde will not make it. It's too small. It's going to be heavily subsidized by the British, and even if the British get a little temporary pride out of it and the jump of a couple of years over us, in the long run they will rue the day that they built the Concorde that I think holds what, about a hundred people, maybe a little bit more or a little bit less, nothing like--

(Interruption)

--our plane, when it is built, will be economically viable, it will be big enough to carry enough people, and it will be smooth enough and safe enough and all those things. We'll make out on the long run even if we're late.

F: You don't buy the argument then that it's an either/or proposition? Either millions go into the supersonic and you neglect that for the build-up of social programs or--

C: No, I feel that that's as phony as the argument that you take twenty billion dollars out of Vietnam and you put it into domestic programs at home. That won't happen. The history of every war that we've ever been in is that after the war the taxes are lowered. Now, the only issue is whether people are willing to spend that much money. It's either or . . .

(Interruption)

There's some element of tradeoff in terms of will, how much taxes will people pay, and you can only get so much out of [them]. But in terms of any direct tradeoff, I don't think there is.

I also think you have to remember with the SST a couple of other things. One, there is an assist in terms of balance of payments, certainly to the extent that we'd lose

money if only the Concorde were flying, because there are a certain number of people, businessmen on expense accounts particularly, who will fly on anything supersonic. So you save then what would otherwise be a drain-out. Number two, I think our plane will be bigger and better and draw in more, so you'll have that advantage in terms of balance of payments. And number three, you're going to employ a hell of a lot of people with that plane. You can't deny that, a lot of people will go to work.

F: Do you think prestige is a factor?

C: Definitely. I think prestige is a factor. Now, if you talk to McNamara about it, the last time I talked to him about it, he's become increasingly concerned about the sort of psychological/environmental problem associated with what happens to a human being when he suddenly can get anywhere in the world in three and a half hours. *Anywhere*. [There's] no place you can't go for lunch. And at the extent to which, when you look at what television has done with instant communications and you look at what jet travel has already done to the human condition, whether you want to add that pressure to the human condition, which is an interesting point, one I might say we never--the only person that ever raised that point during the hearings that I recall, was Charles Lindbergh, who said he thought that was a major issue and that we were looking at the problem a little too technically. I might go off the record for a minute here.

(Interruption)

If the Johnson Library does not now have, they ought to get the verbatim transcripts of those hearings. They're a remarkable reflection of how a government committee operates.

F: Where are they?

C: Somewhere in the Pentagon.

F: Now, this hung fire all during the Johnson Administration and it has now become a Nixon problem.

C: Let me stay with it during Johnson for a minute. Either 1967 or 1968 there was a major appropriations issue *vis-à-vis* the SST. I guess it was 1967. Johnson had made a tentative decision to go forward in his own mind, subject to getting the necessary votes. I guess it was 1967. And it became in 1967, as you recall, one of these issues of, as you put it before, whether the money will go there or whether the money goes to the poor. Johnson, with that sort of sixth sense of smell, particularly for the Senate, told [Warren] Magnuson and [Henry] Jackson, the two senators from Washington, that he would move with the SST only if they had 75 votes for it.

F: He didn't want a simple majority; he wanted--?

C: Because he thought there would be a lot of fall-off. It drove them out of their minds, because they kept coming up to the White House and they'd have 60 and then 68 and then 72 and, you know.

F: He wasn't budging from his 75 [votes] position?

C: And they got 75. They didn't get 75 on the floor but they went in with 75 and it passed by a substantial majority.

F: So that at least you set the groundwork for it. Well now, what was Mr. Nixon's--?

C: Now, I might say one other thing. In 1969, some of the technical problems that we were concerned about in 1964 turned out to be serious problems. There were two major ones. One was the engine itself, which was going to carry that much weight at speeds far beyond anything [before], we felt, skipping a full generation of engines, and was going to have to meet a level of safety that was unprecedented. In this sense, every major airplane

flying today in the commercial civilian arena was developed and tested in military flight. And not just flight tests, it was flown for months, thousands and thousands of hours in actual military flight.

(Interruption)

That was one problem, the engine. The second problem was something I think called the intake temperature. This was the temperature to which the backs of those jet engines are subjected. The highest temperature that anything has been subjected to and flown for any length of time--as of 1964-1965-1966--was about 1700 degrees Fahrenheit. The SST metals were going to have to be able to take a temperature of twenty-two hundred degrees Fahrenheit, and the greatest jump in temperature that had ever been made previously had been of only two hundred degrees, actually a little less than two hundred degrees, from something like fifteen-fifty to seventeen hundred. We were deeply concerned about whether or not metals could take that.

Both of those problems began to plague the plane a little bit in 1968, and as a result it was a likely candidate and was slowed down, more R & D was done, and we were pressed on budgetary grounds anyway. Now, I think some of the stuff I've given you about temperatures may be classified, I don't know, but that's about it. And Nixon's decision was to go forward with development. All I know about that is what I read in the newspapers. Presumably he re-examined it, decided to go forward with development, and gave them more development money, which as I recall from reading the papers is not going to be spent until fiscal 1970 and calendar 1971. So he really hasn't changed the program at all.

F: Now, this is primarily a commercial venture. Does the military lobby for it? Do they see any advantage to themselves in it?

C: No. Our decisions, in the McNamara task force and during the Johnson presidency, were made on the assumption that there was no military value to a supersonic transport carrying commercial passengers. The military plane that we were most interested in was the C-5A that could move 750 fully equipped men, we hoped, when it was fully off the ground. I might say that became another issue, which we injected into the SST. When we started looking at it in 1964, we had been working on the C-5A and we saw down the road, maybe in two or three years, not just the jumbo Boeing 747, but a commercial version of a C-5A. I think the 747 is now 350 passengers or something. But we saw a commercial C-5A which in roughly a ratio configuration of first class and tourist as our current jets are, would carry about 680 people, which meant that even at projected increases in cost, you could probably fly to Europe on a C-5A in 1973 at half of what it costs you to fly to Europe today. Whereas the SST under the most optimistic assumptions was going to cost a hell of a lot more that it costs you to fly today. One of the things we did in our economic study was have a lot of computer runs made of--to the extent you can predict this--the impact of a commercial C-5A on the economic viability of the SST.

F: Did you point to the fact that you have to really redesign every major airport in the world to handle this . . .

C: Yes.

F: . . . and redo your geography and your architecture?

C: Well, not the geography so much. You'd have to redesign a lot of major airports, but you've got to remember you've got to redesign airports to handle an SST. You don't have to redesign all of them in either case. A C-5A can land at Kennedy, I think, as I recall. I've forgotten now.

F: But it can't disgorge that many people without utter pandemonium.

C: No. One of the problems with the SST, at the big size which we thought was necessary for economic viability, was the fact that there were very few landing strips in the world big enough to hold them. But look, you know, it's coming. The C-5A is simply too attractive commercially, it seemed to us. And I haven't looked at it now. I have heard McNamara say that even with the overrun in costs it still is going to be an economically justifiable judgment for the Pentagon to have gotten into that contract.

F: Johnson was great on task forces, Kennedy to some extent. Where did you get your personnel for task forces? You're always talking about building a staff and it seems you're using all the good people already.

C: Well, task force is different from--you mean the White House task forces?

F: Yes.

C: The first group that I set up in 1965, I got the personnel largely from people in the government that knew experts and a few people I knew outside the government.

F: Did you call around and say, "Who can help me on what?"

C: Yes. Say we were going to study higher education, I'd go to John Gardner and Frank Keppel, who I guess was then the commissioner of education, Doug Cater, Charlie Schultze, Gardner Ackley, two or three other professors in the government, and I'd ask them, "Who do you think should sit on a task force on higher education?" Then they'd all

come in with names and I'd take those names and do a little cross-fertilizing and talking to each of them and I'd put a group together. Then I'd send it around and clear it with all of them and then I'd send it on in to the President.

Most of the time the basic criteria I used were skills. I mean, for a task force on higher education you needed certain skills represented. You had to have a guy that had experience in big state schools. You had to have a guy that had experience in parochial schools. You had to have a guy that had experience in Ivy League colleges. You had to have a guy with experience in teachers' colleges, you know. If it were the economy, you had to have macro, micro, industrial experts, manpower economists and what have you, so you had all the skills you needed. Then I'd send it in to the President. As I said, most often he'd just take it as it was. In some cases he added people, and in some cases he knocked people off.

F: You didn't have to clear every last appointment with him?

C: Well, every outside task force I set up I cleared with him. I sent him a list of the names and the charge that we recommended we give them and asked for approval or disapproval.

F: Now, when you sent a list, did you identify the people?

C: Identified the people and where they were from. But not like [John] Macy, not like putting guys on a job. And I'd say, if you went back through all those memos--[there] must be a couple of hundred of them--in a hundred and ninety of two hundred, say, he just bought it the way it was. Sometimes he'd get hung up on the subject, sometimes on one or two people; sometimes he'd want somebody added. We learned some of the rules. I mean, you know, he wanted somebody from Texas on every task force we had. But

once I understood that, we did. Incidentally, in many cases it turned out to be pretty good. One was Jerre Williams, who I put on a labor task force, and one was that poor guy that got crucified as Wilbur Cohen's deputy, the guy that wrote the thesis.

F: James McCrocklin.

C: McCrocklin was terrific on the task force he was on.

(Interruption)

F: Let's shift off that and talk about something you saw both sides of, and that is this military base closure problem, which satisfied the people who wanted economy in government until they faced it.

C: The side of that that I actually saw most of was the Pentagon side. In 1964, or I guess shortly after [Barry] Goldwater was nominated as Johnson's opponent, McNamara called in all the principal people in the Pentagon, military and civilian, and essentially said to them, "On the assumption that Johnson wins in an enormous landslide and that we can do anything we want to do to make this building better and this military establishment better, I want proposals for what to do." And as part of that we looked at a major base-closing program which we'd been working on on and off for a couple of years. We'd closed a few here and there. We had been blocked in closing navy yards on prior occasions. Well, I forget what day election day was, but on November 10, the day before Armistice Day, McNamara flew to the Ranch with a package to close bases that would result in a billion dollars a year in annual savings. It was enormous, and it was everything you could think of in there.

F: This wasn't any token closure; this was real?

C: This was the biggest ever. And when he came back, he told me when he showed it to the President his face turned white, one of the few times in Johnson's life he'd ever seen that happen. But the President went with it, agreed to it. He came back, because he called me from the plane--McNamara called me from his airplane--to tell me that he wanted seven or eight people in his office the following morning. I remember I had to cancel an Armistice Day speech to be there. We then put the package together and announced it about a day later, and I'll tell you, all hell broke loose.

Johnson took an attitude of, "This is McNamara's decision. I will not review it. I will not overrule it." Johnson's staff at that time took a different view. They were furious. They called me endlessly, screaming about what we were doing and all the congressmen we were hurting and everything else. My answer was that the President had okayed it with McNamara and we'd been told that everything would be referred to us.

The stickiest problem we had in connection with the base closure in terms of whether we were right or wrong, was an installation called the Brooklyn Army Terminal. Have I told you this?

F: No.

C: We had a lot of other major political problems with Springfield and in Texas and California and elsewhere, and with Mike Mansfield, who was still hanging on when I was in the White House, I forget, to some town in Montana [with] a big air force base. But the only one in which somebody came along and made a pretty damned good case that we'd made a mistake was the Brooklyn Army Terminal. About a week after we'd made the announcement, Bobby Kennedy came over--ten days maybe, two weeks--well

prepared and with people who were arguing to keep the army terminal open. A fellow named Scotto, Tony Scotto--

F: Bobby was a new senator by then.

C: Was a new senator. Tony Scotto's sort of a tough guy; [he has] some relationship with dock workers down there, but very bright, and they laid a case out.

F: To whom, to you and McNamara?

C: To me and McNamara and Paul Ignatius, who was then the assistant secretary for procurement, and whoever was the assistant secretary for procurement in the Army. Ignatius was assistant secretary for procurement in the Army and then we had Tom Morris who was the assistant secretary in Defense. They laid a damned good case out.

After the meeting, McNamara ordered some restudy done and what have you, and then he called Kennedy into his office. Bobby sat down, and said to McNamara, "Bob, I've got you. You're wrong on the army terminal." McNamara said, "I'm surprised you didn't argue that hard for the navy yard." Bobby said, "Well, you may be right on the navy yard, but I've got you on the army terminal." McNamara said, "That's not important, because it's like the gold watch story." Bobby Kennedy said, "Well, what is the gold watch story?" McNamara said, "Well, when I was at Ford, I ordered a whole program of cuts to bring down costs by 7 per cent or something one year. One of my vice presidents in one of my divisions, I think it was in the Ford Division, ordered that the company no longer give gold watches for twenty-five years of service, which they had given for years and years and years. And I started getting all kinds of nasty letters. It had been a tradition from the beginning of the company. I called the guy in and he said, 'Well, you wanted cuts made and this is where I cut.'" McNamara said, "It was a terrible mistake, what he

had done." Bobby Kennedy said, "What did you do?" He said, "I had to continue the program, so I continued the program, but I fired the man." He said, "The base is going to stay closed," and we closed it.

F: Was this in [John] Rooney's district?

C: The army terminal? No, it would have been--

F: Well, that's not important.

C: I don't know whose district it was in--not Rooney.

F: One thing I was going to ask, Rooney's reputation as sitting on appropriations, of course, is notorious and deserved, I think. How did Johnson particularly keep Rooney sort of mollified? He had been a terror to lots of presidents.

C: I really can't tell you that. I had very little to do with that.

F: That didn't come under your purview at all?

Okay, on this base closure, before we leave that, as I recall there were forty-three bases closed and two of them were in Texas, which on a proportional basis means that the President certainly gave Texas its share of the shaft, if you want to put it in those terms. Some of the cynics said that he closed bases that were already phased out anyhow in Texas. Did you get any sort of flak on this?

C: No, I got none of that. We only got the one side of hell, that we were closing them out. Believe me, I don't think--

F: Did you have to fight a delegation from every last community?

C: Well, I didn't and McNamara didn't. Bobby was an unusual one; he brought it to us. There were two or three others, guys like Mike Mansfield and what have you. But I'll tell you one thing, the case that Bobby presented for the army terminal was the best prepared

case of all. Mansfield had a terrific human argument--I can't think where in Montana that base was--but he didn't have a really good military argument.

F: Did McNamara pretty well take all this bombardment himself or did he use the President as a backstop?

C: No, he never used the President as a backstop, ever. That was one of his attributes, *never* did. His attitude basically was that it was a decision, it was made, and it would not be reversed. None of them would be reversed. We went through an enormous amount of study. We had a book like this on every installation we closed, with all the reasons why we closed, all the alternatives we looked at. And Tom Morris, who was the assistant secretary for procurement, and the three assistant secretaries in military services for procurement were, in the first instance, charged with handling the congressional flak and what have you. If it got beyond them and somebody wanted to feel they were getting a little closer to McNamara, I'd see them. If it got beyond that, Cy Vance or McNamara would see them, but Vance and McNamara saw very, very few.

F: Were congressmen forewarned that this was going to happen in their districts?

C: Not long enough to make announcements in advance. That night before.

F: They didn't hear about it over the radio either?

C: No, Johnson never would have stood for something like that.

F: Shifting again, let's talk a little bit about the circumstances surrounding two major funerals in the Johnson Administration. One is the death of Martin Luther King and the other one, of course, is the death of Bobby Kennedy, both of which I'm sure put the White House into quite a turmoil.

C: On the King assassination--

F: That was right about dusk.

C: Yes. It was also the night of a political dinner, a Democratic fund-raising political dinner of some kind here in Washington for the Senate Campaign Committee or what have you. I can't remember exactly what it was. I don't know whether I was in my office or in some dinner staff member's office when, to the best of my recollection, Larry Levinson called me and said he'd just seen the ticker; King had been shot. Shot. At first we didn't know he was dead, just shot.

F: You got it off the ticker first?

C: I raced that into the President. I just don't remember whether I was the guy that handed him that ticker or whether I gave that ticker to Juanita [Roberts] or somebody else to bring it into him right away with the message that I would immediately get a statement up. We then at some point shortly thereafter got word that he was dead--very quickly, as I recall. It wasn't like Bobby Kennedy's thing. I then started working on a statement, I guess a quickie with [Harry] McPherson or Larry Levinson, one of the two. You'll have to ask them, I just don't remember; maybe my notes will show it. And then we were all in the President's office. I was in the President's office; others were in there. I say we were all, I just don't remember who else was in there.

F: Did the President have much of a personal relationship with King, or had they just seen each other?

C: I don't think he really liked King personally. Do you want to digress on that before we get to what happened?

F: Yes.

C: I think the President basically thought that King was a hypocrite and dangerous. I say that . . . I hesitate because it's so hard to know what Lyndon Johnson thinks about someone. I say it because he would repeatedly cite the FBI reports on King, which had all kinds of stuff in them, allegedly, about his sex life and what have you, about Communists around him. Secondly, because he'd constantly bitch about how dangerous King was for the country. You know, I don't think he thought that King was anything like Whitney Young or Roy Wilkins. Johnson certainly understands human nature enough not to go berserk because a guy screws around a lot. But he didn't like him and I think he was honestly and sincerely worried about communist influences on him, and communist in a subversive sense, not just--you've got to remember that Bobby Kennedy was worried about influences around Martin Luther King, too.

So he was ambivalent when King was killed in terms of how he should respond. We got into, that very night--well, instinctively he did the human things he always did. He picked up the phone and called Coretta King. Then we sat around and talked about what we ought to do. Well, his first instinct was nothing. And my recollection was I was arguing for a statement. There were other people there; I don't know why I don't remember. I can't remember whether it got to be a big deal, whether a lot of people came over that night, whether he brought the crew in, [Clark] Clifford, or whether Harry was there, whether Larry Levinson was actually in the office or was just feeding us information. You have to get that from his records; I just forget.

But the upshoot of it was that we did put together a little statement, and I did call [Edmund] Muskie.

F: Why Muskie?

C: No, I'll tell you who I called. I called either Jim Jones or Sherwin Markman. As I recall, the President still had the option of going to this Democratic campaign dinner that night. While in the immediate shock of King's death there was some disagreement about whether he could go, it was pretty quickly agreed that he should not go. It was also pretty quickly agreed that the thing ought to be turned off as soon as possible, that this was not the night for a lot of campaign oratory. I think Harry and I were both arguing to him that King was really something to the blacks, and we could have a hell of a mess on our hands, and we ought to stress the peaceful aspects of King and what have you.

The President told me to call, and I called I think it was either Jim Jones or Sherwin Markman who was at the dinner, advancing the dinner, and I called Vice President Humphrey. I said Muskie, but Muskie was speaking, and I guess I may have called Muskie because he was chairing the campaign fund-raising committee or something. My recollection is I talked to those three people, or two of them and asked them to get a message to the third, [and] said that the President felt that there ought to be a minute of prayer for King and they ought to close the dinner off as promptly as they could. That King had been assassinated, if they didn't have word, and that the dinner--the damned dinner was being shown on television because the networks were now picking up the King assassination and what was going on and they had cameras right there on the spot with all these Democratic politicians.

All right, having done that, we talked and the President said he wanted to get all the black leaders down to Washington the next day: Wilkins, Young, et cetera, and a whole batch of people, Dorothy Height. The list will be in his records; it would be the day after King's assassination. And I spent most of the night calling them. I think I was

at the White House until 3:00 a.m. At the same time I put together points to be made, checked the points with people like Katzenbach and Ramsey [Clark] and McPherson and a little agenda for the meeting with those guys.

The next day there was a dispute. I had not called I believe it was Floyd McKissick. Again, the records of the guards at the gate will show. McKissick tried to get in and we didn't let him in. We kept him downstairs and then we asked him to go.

We had Bob Weaver and Walter Washington, maybe a couple of other Negro officials in the federal government at that meeting, which was in the Cabinet Room. The President said his words, talked about the need for peace--oh, I know who else he had. We had Andy [Robert] Hatcher there. Hatcher made a very rough speech at that meeting which gave--

F: You mean abrasive?

C: Not abrasive towards the President, rough in terms of society. Nothing rough about the President. It was basically that "this is a racist society" kind of speech. And I was worried, although I realized he was relatively hard on that issue. He was talking privately, and if he was this worried, we could have some real problems.

There was a memorial service for King. Boy, this is really tough stuff.

(Interruption)

It was the fourth of April because my day--

F: That Hatcher you mentioned is the mayor of Gary, [Indiana]?

C: Yes. [Long pause] We met with the civil rights leaders at eleven o'clock on Friday, the fifth [of April].

F: Was that a long meeting?

C: It lasted over an hour. There were some senators there, too. At the end of the meeting we went into the President's--

F: Was the President with you? Did he greet them?

C: Yes, he greeted them. It was in the Cabinet Room.

(Interruption)

After that meeting we went to the President's office and Walter Washington and I were there--no, Walter Washington and I and a little smaller group--and all hell was beginning to break loose in Washington. We couldn't tell how serious it was; we sent Washington off to find out . . .

You see, what I can't get in perspective here is the Negro civil rights leaders went to the [Washington] National Cathedral for a religious ceremony, a memorial ceremony of some kind. The President went to Washington Cathedral. The night before, one of the things we had done was put together a proclamation and we had some remarks with the proclamation, and before the President went [to the memorial ceremony] he made some changes. He was going to cut a television tape with the proclamation when he got back. I went out to the memorial service but I just turned around and came back. He went in. I came back [to the White House], made some changes, and added two sentences which we had talked about, which was whether he'd go to Congress with a message asking that Congress pass all the programs that were up there. He came in and he read a little statement, he read the stuff about going to Congress, and he read the proclamation.

We immediately went back to his office and we started getting reports about increasing trouble in Washington, as a result of which I called--Walter was still there, I guess. I told Walter to--wait a minute, now I've got it pieced together. What I puzzled on

was why the President would go to the Cathedral if there were trouble in Washington. We didn't have the trouble at the time we went to the Cathedral. We had the meeting with the civil rights leaders and some senators and congressmen. They went off to the Cathedral. Then the President went to the Cathedral, then the President came back and he picked up a couple of them. He took Walter Washington back with him, Whitney Young I think was back there, and some others, and a few of them sat in his office with him and Walter and myself.

(Interruption)

And while we were in that meeting a note came in to the mayor, to Walter Washington, about some trouble, and at the same time a note came to me. The Situation Room was charged with calling me if there were any domestic violence of any kind. It came to me. So we then ended that meeting fairly quickly and the President and Walter and I--I think either Ramsey or Harry McPherson were there for a while--went into his office and chatted for a little bit. We sent Walter out right away to survey the situation.

I had my guys begin, if they hadn't already done so, drafting up a proclamation for the use of troops. Then we broke that up and I then went back and got the proclamation, went over and had lunch with the President. Lunch--now it's three-fifteen or something. By this time he has assembled some of his other advisers. I think Clark Clifford was there, I'm not sure. I can't give you who was there; his records will show that. This is Friday, the fifth of April.

The President was terribly distressed that we couldn't get Walter. He was up in a helicopter and then he was in a car and there were no phones and it was very difficult and finally--and you know there was more and more trouble in the District. Woody's

[Woodward and Lothrop], the department store downtown, was having windows smashed and other things. General [Harold] Johnson, who was the chief of staff of the army, wanted to move troops, and I think he was in and out. I had the proclamation; I had the executive order right there with me. Finally we got through to Walter Washington. Walter Washington made the request. I told him to get it in writing as fast as possible. But in any case, the President was at this point--something like 4:01 p.m.--signing the proclamation and the executive order. We would announce it immediately. [General] Johnson by this time had left. I called Johnson, told him the President had signed and wanted the troops moving and what have you, *et cetera*, *et cetera*. And that was our worst night in Washington. We had real trouble that night here. I, at the President's direction, went back to the office and started going through the raft of phone calls you have to go through, telling a variety of people what to do.

I remember one minor thing. Bob Byrd, the senator from West Virginia, called me and I couldn't talk to him, and I never got back to him that night. He called the next day and tried to get the President and say that I was so arrogant, I'd never talk to him and that was a terrible thing.

But in any case after doing that, sometime around--I notice here it's six-fifteen with the President, and then he came down to my office that night and we had all the relevant people over there, the Secretary of the Army and [General] Johnson. By this time I think we had [Abe] Fortas in it. I think Ramsey was there, Stan Resor, Larry Levinson, myself. I had the long table. We were all sitting around that table, had a map of Washington, where the troops were and where they were supposed to be, and we had a long meeting to talk about the strategy, what we ought to do, did we have enough troops,

what was the violence like? The President was there--if my calendar is right here--he was there roughly from seven-fifteen to sometime about eight o'clock, and then he came back again at a quarter of nine. Well, I guess he left about ten o'clock. The group had thinned out. [General] Johnson had gone back to the War Room and most guys had gone home except a fellow named Matt Nimetz, who worked for me and who was working on this, and myself. You ought to interview Nimetz.

And I might say, earlier that afternoon we also brought Cy Vance down. The President called Cy Vance when we were in the little green room and we broke off to bring him down to be the Mayor's assistant. Cy had arrived.

We had a command post at the police department, and we went through the night. I think we stayed up most of that night. I have a picture of the President about 2:00 a.m. or so in my office, he and I going over the situation. He then went to bed and he asked me to stay at the White House. So I stayed at the White House Friday night and I stayed there Saturday night. The first night I went home was about ten or eleven o'clock Sunday night. Vance was staying at the White House, too. Saturday we started and Sunday we started the day by early in the morning talking to the President. I think we usually had breakfast with him, as I recall, in his bedroom, and we'd go over what had happened the night before and where we stood, and then just keep track of what was going on in the District that day.

General [William] Westmoreland came in Saturday night, quietly, for a conference--that would be Saturday, the sixth--to see the President. I remember Vance and I and Westmoreland and the President had breakfast on Sunday morning. Then Vance went down to the District Building, and I went back to my office, and the President

met with Westmoreland alone. Then we all went to church together. Not all of us. I went to church with the President and his secretary and the Catholics that were available and came back to the White House and spent most of Sunday there. By Sunday there were a lot of troops on the streets but things had cooled off, and that Sunday Bobby Kennedy took a tour of the damaged area in the District, I remember. And then it was over Sunday night. I went home.

F: In the midst of all of this, Mrs. Johnson had foreign news editors and travel writers, and so forth, as her guests to go down into the Southwest. There must have been some discussion as to whether she should cancel the trip or go on. That didn't come to your attention?

C: Not to my attention.

There was a funeral for King--

F: Did the President ever consider going?

C: Yes, we talked about that. I think the funeral was on Monday, was it?

F: I had the feeling--again being a little cynical--that a number of people showed up there just to be seen there. This isn't quite fair but--

C: No, some people may have done that, I don't know. There was an issue as to whether the President should go and then there was an issue as to, if he didn't go, who should be his representative. And we finally decided the President shouldn't go.

F: Was that for security?

C: Well, I think it was for a lot of reasons. One was security. The Secret Service was worried about the situation. Where was his hometown?

F: It was in Atlanta.

C: I forget whatever the physical situation was at his church and the size of the crowd. Secondly, the President throughout this period was very ambivalent. I mean, he didn't want to turn King into a national hero; the TV was doing that pretty fast. And I mentioned his earlier feelings about King, so I don't think he had the desire to go. I think, you know, if it had been Roy Wilkins he would have gone. On the other hand, if it had been Roy Wilkins, it would have been in New York and you'd have had a whole different picture in terms of the security problems.

We ultimately sent the Vice President. I can't remember whether--I think we sent the Vice President as the President's representative and so announced. Then came the big deal of who flew on the Vice President's plane. Humphrey basically didn't want to decide that issue, as I recall. Either he didn't want to decide it or the President didn't want him to. In any case, I ended up arbitrating that airplane passenger list.

F: You had to have clearance in two directions then, didn't you? You had to clear them with Humphrey and with--?

C: Yes, but there was really only one direction.

We then got the plane put together, and they went down and they went to King's funeral and came back. People went a lot of ways; a lot of people went commercially and what have you. There was no violence there. We did a lot on the night before the funeral in connection with quietly trying to help the people down there handle the crowd. We sent people from Justice down quietly. And we had earlier done something else; the President sent Ramsey Clark down to investigate, to make sure the investigation was going well, and directed [J. Edgar] Hoover to do whatever you direct Hoover to do in times like that. But Ramsey Clark was physically sent down. We sent Roger Wilkins down and left some people

down there. We quietly put some people from Justice down there to help work with the crowds. And that was it.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview VI

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Addendum to the Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of

Joseph A. Califano

Interviewed by: Paige Mulhollan, Joe B. Frantz and Michael L. Gillette

I, Joseph A. Califano, hereby remove the restrictions on the use of the transcripts and recordings that states, "During my lifetime I retain all copyright in the material given to the United States by the terms of this instrument. Thereafter the copyright in both the transcripts and tape recordings shall pass to the United States Government. During my lifetime researchers may publish 'fair use' quotations from the transcripts and tape recordings without my express consent in each case." of the sixty-three personal interviews conducted with me by Paige Mulhollan, Joe B. Frantz, and Michael L. Gillette, currently at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library. (see attachment for interview details)

Joseph A. Califano Jr. — Donor

5-28-19 — Dated

Susan K. Donius

Director for Presidential Libraries

July 17, 2019 — Dated