INTERVIEWEE: Andrew J. Goodpaster (General)

INTERVIEWER: Joe B. Frantz

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F: This is an interview with General Andrew J. Goodpaster, in his office in the Pentagon, in Washington, D.C., on June 21, 1971. The interviewer is Joe B. Frantz.

Just to start, General, lets talk very briefly about when you first met, I guess, Senator Johnson.

G: Yes, it was Senator Johnson, and it was during the Eisenhower Administration. I joined President Eisenhower in the White House as Staff Secretary and Defense Liaison Officer in October of 1954, and stayed with him through the remainder of his term.

F: As you know, Senator Johnson and Speaker Rayburn were looked upon in one sense as a strong right arm of President Eisenhower, and sometimes it was thought that he got more support from them than he did from his own party. Do you have any observations on this?

G: As just a general comment on the question in this particular area I have to say that the relations of President Eisenhower with the Congress, although I saw a good deal of them in one capacity or another, that was not my field of responsibility, and I don't think I can speak authoritatively in that area. Members of President Eisenhower's legislative staff--General Persons or Bryce Harlow--could certainly speak to that with a great deal more validity.

I did know President Eisenhower's general attitude on this matter, and that is that despite the fact that the government was divided through three-fourths of his term of office--that is, the control of the Congress was held by the other party--he felt that the requirement

that the nation be governed and the people be served was overriding and that it was simply necessary to hammer out the widest area of agreement that he could. In that process of course Senator Johnson in the Senate and Speaker Rayburn in the House had the most influential, the most responsible roles.

F: Did you ever hear President Eisenhower speak of his opinion of Senator Johnson?

G: Yes, on specific items. One point that I thought I would mention to you which I had occasion to speak to President Johnson about some years later was that President Eisenhower held the view and indicated that he had in fact mentioned to Senator Johnson a couple of times that Senator Johnson should be careful about any actions that would circumscribe or limit or damage or reduce the powers of the President because as he had told Senator Johnson, "It's easily possible that you may be sitting in this chair sometime yourself." And in fact he had indicated that in one way or another, he regarded the likelihood as quite high that at some time Senator Johnson would be in that position, and that was even true after Senator Johnson's heart attack in 1956.

F: You bring up the heart attack. Of course, President Eisenhower had his heart attack and his ileitis. What happened to the running of the Administration during that period insofar as relations with Congress were concerned? Did that damage them or did you have to do any sort of jackleg rearrangement?

G: Again, that came within the area of direct responsibility of General Persons, Bryce Harlow, and others of the legislative staff. Of course, what we undertook to do very quickly was organize the work so that the President would simply be involved in the decision process itself and the labor of reading voluminous reports, of analyzing the issues, that

labor would be performed outside of his presence so that he could consider simply the gist of the matters that required his urgent consideration in as efficient a way as possible. There were items that could be deferred in consideration, although the principle that he followed from the outset was that if he was unable to perform the duties of the job, he would step aside and let somebody else perform it.

But we were able to find these means by which the conduct of the Presidency could go forward. By chance, as you know, his heart attack occurred in late September, and that meant that the demands for congressional liaison were really at a low point at that time.

F: When Senator Johnson had his heart attack, did that make any difference in the White House contacts with the Senate?

G: I'm not able to respond to that. I know the President was deeply concerned about it but what, in any specific way, was done to modify the conduct of affairs over what they might otherwise have been, I'm not able to say.

F: You've had the unusual experience of serving at or near the top of four varying administrations--and I won't ask you about the current one--but from Eisenhower through Kennedy and Johnson, was there much difference in the relations with Congress vis-a-vis what was going on? You had the problems of Matsu and Quemoy for instance, the problems even then of Viet Nam under Eisenhower, and those certainly continued. What was the difference in approach among the three Presidents?

G: Let me just say what Eisenhower's approach was as manifested on several occasions when major issues were presented. He would have a very thorough-going analysis of the problem, talk it through with, as he called it, his lieutenants, his principal officers of government,

normally on the basis of a paper and analysis prepared either by the Security Council machinery or by the Secretary of State. This would be talked through, sometimes in a preparatory way. If it were something involving a commitment of the United States he would then want to get--in the international field--he would want to get what he called the leadership of both sides of both houses of Congress down to consider this thing with him. And that came up on a number of occasions. For example, the Suez affair; the Hungary situation; I'm sure on Quemoy-Matsu and the Formosa problem; that kind of thing; the Lebanon affair. He went through all of that because he had a feeling going back to the Korean experience that the Congress not only should be given the opportunity but should be held to a heavy participating role from the outset in these very difficult--

F: It should be involved just in a sense to muffle it--maybe "muffle" is too strong a word!

G: He was very insistent that they should share the responsibility from the standpoint of their responsibilities under the Constitution.

F: There is no critic like the one who wasn't involved.

G: Exactly so.

F: What about Presidents Kennedy and Johnson in this respect.

G: I really did not see very much of President Kennedy's mode of operation. I was with him for only two months at the beginnning of his term and then when I returned from Europe in October of 1962, I was here in the Pentagon and did not have contact with his operation in this particular phase.

F: You had missed the really big problem of the Bay of Pigs?

G: I was away during the Bay of Pigs, and I came back just as the Cuban Missile Crisis was coming to a close.

Now, with regard to President Johnson, all I can say there is that I know that at key times during the development of the Viet Nam situation, for example--and here I'm just speaking from memory--and also in the development of the Dominican problem, he either had the congressional leadership come to sit with him and consider the matter or he had them briefed by administration spokesmen at each critical stage of this development.

F: Without getting into personalities, and relying to a certain extent on the news stories, have you perceived a change in the people who came from Congress to participate in those sessions and some of their public statements?

G: I would here be talking about the Eisenhower Administration because that's the only one I really saw first-hand.

Oftentimes they would be very guarded in what they had to say at the end of the President's discussion. And there was a little bit, you might even call it gamemanship, of saying, "Well, Mr. President, it's your responsibility. We appreciate very much having this information of what you plan to do." And the President, on his side, making it clear that he felt they shared some responsibility in the matter. But with that preamble, I would have to say that instances do not come to mind of such a shift of position in connection with the Eisenhower experience in the Administration.

F: On the domestic scene, did you get the feeling during the Eisenhower Administration that there wasn't much ideological, philosophical, or political difference between the Senate leadership and the presidency?

G: I would say there was a large common element of view. There were differences, of course, of who is the more conservative--and more conservative on particular issues. But there was a broad element of

common view and, I'm sure, commitment--and this was a voiced commitment to what is best for the United States. Of course there were differences, as you can imagine. But in areas for example--about the only one that I can really recall--was one like civil rights. And there there was great effort to try to find out something that could command enough support to get through over the objection of some people who took a very adamant stand against any movement in that period.

F: Were you privy to the developing cooperation between what became the Senate Minority Leader Dirksen and Senate Majority Leader Johnson after Bill Knowland left?

G: No, I was not in those specific terms. I just knew of the efforts made by the Republican leadership which met more frequently with the President, of course, to see how much of an area of agreement could be worked out with the Democratic leadership. My own impression was that both Senator Dirksen and Congressman Halleck were very practical minded men who were looking to find some basis for agreement and constructive action in the direction the President had in mind.

F: In these days did you get to know Senator Johnson socially or was it pretty much a correct, administrative sort of thing?

G: I think I only met him, and then very briefly, in connnection with his visits to the White House for matters of this kind. I don't believe I had met him socially at all. I learned from him in later years that even then President Eisenhower had described to him some of the functions that I performed in my work as Staff Secretary and Defense Liaison Officer there.

F: Did you see enough of him to get an idea of his general grasp of the necessities and realities of the politics of the late 1950's?

G: Oh yes--and the depth and the detail and the precision of his understanding

not only of the substance, content, of issues but the positions that would be taken on those issues by people in the Congress. Well, he wasn't a computer type, but you could say that he was a walking computer of information on issues and individuals and the possible breadth of consensus that could be found on any issue.

F: Did you get the feeling then or later that he had more or less an equivalent high regard for President Eisenhower's grasp?

G: I think he did, yes. And I think they talked--I know that they talked privately many times. And I know that he had then, as I would discern it through President Eisenhower and later through what he himself said to me on occasions, he had a tremendous respect for President Eisenhower's grasp of issues, particularly in the international field. But in terms of basic activities and efforts in behalf of the United States, its social progress and so on and social fairness in the United States, he had high regard for President Eisenhower's grasp and effort in that direction as well.

F: Did you get the feeling that President Eisenhower looked on Johnson as his advantage being limited to the domestic scene, or did you think he thought he brought some strength to foreign affairs also?

G: Oh, to foreign affairs also. Particularly defense affairs. I might just mention in passing one little area, a very sharp divergence associated with an individual, a very able man who became the Chief of the U.S. Information Agency, Arthur Larson. Larson had done some work in political philosophy, and particularly in the philosophy of political parties of the United States, and had written some fairly caustic things which appeared on the public scene. He then went down to seek his budget for the USIA and then-Senator Johnson carved it up pretty aggressively, as much I think to provide a lesson to the Administration

that there were bounds beyond which it should not go in carrying out partisan conflict as for any other purpose. But in the field of defense affairs, as I recall, he took on this work of the Preparedness Subcommittee at a later time and was active in that field.

F: You came in just at the time that Senator McCarathy was working over the Army and particularly Secretary Stevens. Did you ever see any evidence of Mr. Johnson's participation in this or any dissatisfaction on the President's part of Mr. Johnson's lack of participation?

G: No, I have no knowledge of anything on this particular issue affecting the Congress. It was shortly after I came in that that issue began to be resolved.

F: Right. Did you see any evidence of the President taking Senator Johnson into his confidence on matters like Indochina and the Pescadores, Formosa, Cuba?

G: Through the device that I mentioned, the meeting with the legislative leaders on both sides and here I can only be a little tentative in responding. In close personal discussions that they had I'm personally persuaded, I'm confident that President Eisenhower did discuss these matters of rather acute importance with the then-Majority Leader.

F: What about the later affairs like the Lebanon landings and the Suez crisis?

G: On those I'm quite confident that they had a large measure of understanding. Of course, that could have come from the meetings with the legislative leadership, but it could also reflect these direct contacts. But I know that there was a large measure of mutual understanding as to what the President's line of action and the President's views were.

F: You were present at the time of the launching of Sputnik. What was the climate around the White House when you received the news of that? Did you get slipped up on some way?

G: The popular reaction to this, although foreseen and anticipated in what I would call just an intellectual sense, had much more emotional impact and was more powerful I would say than had really been appreciated in advance. President Eisenhower and members of his staff, felt that the popular reaction to this was exaggerated, particularly in such things as implying that this meant that we were defenseless, that this meant that somehow we were inferior on the military side, and so on--and some degree of surprise that the emotional surge here would be so great as to bring those things into question. And, as you know, in the Congress there was a great response to this and it became quite a popular thing and a very fashionable item for political activity at the time.

F: Was there a feeling with President Eisenhower and his associates that in a sense Senator Johnson was just grabbing onto a noncontroversial issue, like Mother, and running with it?

G: Oh, I think there was some feeling that within the Congress and Senator Johnson, as chairman of the committee dealing with this, that they were making hay while the opportunity was there.

F: I remember a Herblock cartoon a little later that showed the Democratic candidates that were lining up in 1960. It showed Kennedy embracing something on labor and Symington something on Air Force budgets and then out here was Lyndon Johnson on the Space Committee on which there is no way to be controversial. Actually, I don't know whether it was luck or foresight, but it worked out quite well for him.

Did you ever have any opportunity to observe the Vice President's relationship with the Senate Majority Leader at this time?

G: No, I did not. I saw a good deal of the Vice President, but it was either in the Security Council meetings, Cabinet meetings, or other

important meetings in the White House which he regularly attended. During the illnesses of the President, I frequently briefed the Vice President to put before him the kind of thing that I normally would be putting before the President--and did put before the President as well during his illnesses.

But I saw nothing of the relationship between the Vice President and the Congressional leadership.

F: Not to put you on an immodest spot, but weren't you during this period the man who did basically the briefing of the President and then during the illnesses the Vice President?

G: Yes, that was one of my duties--to conduct the briefings on all matters of intelligence and military activities and operations, plus any activities in the foreign affairs field that were not dealt with either by the Secretary of State or the Undersecretary of State directly. That was my area of staff responsibility in the White House.

F: I'm sure that you've been through enough crises that at times you must have trouble separating them, but one of the recurring Cyprus crises came during this period in 1956. And then, of course, you had the Hungarian uprising. Did the--more than just informational--did the President feel called upon to work with the Congress on this?

G: On the Cyprus, my memory just doesn't serve me enough to pull back the details. On the Hungary affair and on the Suez affair, very definitely, because these were major problems that engaged the President and which he felt he must engage the Congress as well.

F: One result of Eisenhower's heart attack and subsequent illness was even deeper concern for the presidential succession, which of course would involve Congress. Were you privy to any of these discussions between the Administration and Congress?

G: I knew of the arrangement that President Eisenhower made with Mr. Nixon, which I might say I knew also had been thoroughly discussed with the Congressional leadership. The President felt that he was acting within his powers to put into effect the arrangement that he did, authorizing the Vice President to initiate the performance of the duties of the President in the event of the incapacity of the President. And it was my understanding that it had been privately discussed with the senior leadership of the Congress.

F: Sort of an informal agreement as to what the procedure should be and then just a matter of working out Congress' consent.

G: That was my understanding, yes.

F: In this matter of politics, of course 1956 was an election year and Texas, despite Mr. Johnson and Mr. Rayburn, held firm for President Eisenhower. Did you ever get any feeling of how the President--I realize politics is not your prime consideration in this--but any feeling for how the President felt about Texas and the twin obstacles with Johnson and Rayburn down there, or did he feel they really weren't going to give him much of a problem?

G: I really don't have anything that I could report on that. That was wholly outside of my field and the President's contacts on that were largely outside the White House staff itself.

F: Did you get any insights into the replacement of Senator Green on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by Senator Fulbright?

G: No.

F: This was strictly Mr. Johnson and the Democratic Party workings and not--

G: So far as I know.

F: It didn't reach the White House level as far as you know?

G: It did not come to my knowledge.

F: Did you ever have any opportunity to watch the Senator work with either Secretary Dulles or Herter?

G: Senator Johnson you're speaking of?

F: Yes.

G: No, I have nothing direct on that that I could offer.

F: As far as the press was concerned, Senator Johnson did not show his hand in the Little Rock crisis. Can you elaborate on that or is that about the way you know it?

G: I think the President did that very much on his own, working with his Attorney General and in the White House with his special counsel.

F: On that problem of the U-2 and the Geneva Summit, did the President feel that the Democratic party was making undue political hay out of it?

G: He really didn't address it to the Democratic party. In a matter of foreign affairs that wouldn't be his style. I think he felt that he did not get much help from the Senate. There were several leading Senators whose interventions were, in his judgment, far from helpful in terms of our country's needs at that time. He received a message, as I recall, from Senator Johnson expressing a concern in the Senate while he was still over there in Paris at a very critical time in the negotiations. But he felt--I think he was rather disappointed that the reaction of both the more vocal elements of the press and the more vocal elements of the Senate did not seem to concern themselves so much with where the interest of the United States would lie as that this provided a wonderful opportunity for them to attack the President. And he, of course, had no choice but to take that kind of attack and go forward, try to handle the situation as best he could. I think he

felt the furor to which these interventions contributed may well have resulted in the Soviets taking a harsher line than might otherwise have been the case, because they felt that they had sort of been able to bring some blood--

F: They could sense a slight moral advantage here.

G: A tactical advantage in trying to put pressure on the President and to damage his standing.

F: During the campaign of 1960, of course, the Presidential candidate Kennedy and Vice Presidential candidate Johnson made a great deal of the missile gap. Was it a serious issue and if it were--you know we've argued since whether it was--why didn't Mr. Nixon really go after the Democrats on that?

G: I can't speak for Mr. Nixon on this, but I do recall that President Eisenhower in his final public statement in a passage which I had discussed with him and worked on with him, said that the bomber gap was always a fiction and the missile gap shows every sign of being the same. It was well known to us within the government that the only way you could talk about missile gap was by according a program of increase to the Soviets of which we had no indication. This point was known to many of those who were trumpeting the existence of a missile gap, so that it was in my judgment a spurious issue. I think there's ground to believe that at least some of the people involved in it knew that it was highly questionable, had information that would certainly tend to indicate to them that it was highly questionable--

F: Good politics as long as it didn't blow up in their face.

G: It was an issue that had attracted a good deal of public attention so that it was something that they could exploit.

F: Now, looking ahead, you've got this matter of the missiles, you've got

the ICBM, and of course now you've just gone through a session in Congress which has a strong urge on the part of some people to clear out of Europe or to reduce essentially our bases overseas and so on. Does the presence of the ICBM and the missile--or did the presence of those measures reduce in a sense our need for troop commitments overseas? In other words, what I'm trying to get at, not very well, is the fact that does this affect our setting timetables in our general troop consideration?

G: I probably ought to refer to that in the terms in which it presented itself during the Eisenhower Administration and then during later administrations.

During the Eisenhower Administration there was heavy emphasis on--to use the exact terms--a capacity for massive retaliation in order to dissuade as a political pressure, a device to dissuade foreign powers from taking aggressive action. As the other side began to enlarge its nuclear power, and particularly its deliverable nuclear power--that is the ICBM's and so on--that factor then no longer could carry the weight it had at an earlier time. And even as early as January of 1957, discussions between Mr. Dulles and President Eisenhower resulted in Mr. Dulles pointing out publicly that a shift was occurring in which the major area of concern to the United States was becoming the so-called "third world" and a shift away from the policy of massive retaliation. This really foretold, I think, the later shift to the increased emphasis on conventional forces that came about somewhat during the Kennedy Administration, but particularly during the Johnson Administration.

F: Did you get any reaction--this is more Eisenhower than Johnson, and yet Johnson's always been so strong in Latin America--did you get any

insight into President Eisenhower's reaction to the trip that Vice President Nixon took to South America in 1958 that had the students spitting on him and general demonstrations?

G: Yes indeed. I was there, of course, in the White House at that time and this was a matter of great deep concern. There was later some criticism over the action that we took to move forces forward so that if it had been necessary we could actually have intervened in the Vice President's behalf. But these were preparatory steps that would simply cut down the response time--

F: You put a stand-by group in Puerto Rico, didn't you?

G: We moved them forward--as I recall it was Puerto Rico, perhaps Panama as well. But in any case those were the actions that were taken, and they were matters of very deep concern to us at the time.

F: Did you have any memory of whether Senator Johnson contacted the President on this?

G: I did not. But my--this would be just a deduction from the manner in which we had habitually operated--that would be a matter on which the President would immediately be in contact with members of the Congress because there was the possibility of having to go to the aid of the Vice President in some way.

F: You will probably have the same answer to the enlargement of Fidel Castro's activities in Cuba--as far as the reaction of the White House and its relationships with the Senate majority leadership at this time.

G: This never presented itself, as I recall, in any unique or single crisis form. It was more a gradual development, somewhat ambiguous, which later became clarified as being worse than some people had anticipated or tried to describe it. I'm sure that it came up in

periodic sessions, just reviewing the broad world situation, the kind of thing Mr. Dulles would sometimes do with the senior leadership of the Congress at the White House in the presence of the President. But I don't recall any specific session on that.

F: In this period you had the unsuccessful nomination of Admiral Lewis Strauss, Secretary of Commerce. Did, as far as you know, Senator Johnson tip his hand on this and incur the President's wrath?

G: I don't recall anything specifically relating to Senator Johnson. I do recall the President was intensely disappointed at the performance of the Senate in this matter and had hoped for, not only for more support but had hoped for a different line of action because he felt that this action was completely without justification insofar as Lewis Strauss was concerned.

F: In 1960 one of the French journals, Humanité stated that you had stated that a French army group was going to assassinate Khrushchev and Eisenhower during the French visit. I never have been able to find that there is any basis to this, but did you say it?

G: I never said anything like that. I didn't know that Humanité had made that statement.

F: It's a total fairy tale?

G: It's a total fabrication insofar as I'm aware, both from the standpoint of my having said it, and from the standpoint of my having any information to that effect.

F: What do you think they were trying to do, just get a little something stirred up? But if you don't know it, you don't know what's behind it, do you?

G: I never heard of that until this moment.

F: It's back there somewhere.

G: But I haven't felt the loss.

F: Did President Eisenhower confer with the Senate over his original plans to visit Japan and his withdrawal of those plans when the Japanese feared that it might not be safe?

G: No, that decision came while the President was out in the Philippines on this trip to the Far East, and--

F: It was an Executive decision?

G: It was his decision. I think we immediately passed the word back to the White House as to what that decision had been based on and what the revised trip would include.

F: Where were you during the time that the--when you talk about crises you don't have to identify which one, but the one that led to the Berlin Wall?

G: That's on August 13, 1961.

F: Right.

G: At that time I was in Europe. I had gone to be the Assistant Division Commander of the 3rd Division and had just received word that I would be moving to assume command of the 8th Division which was the unit that sent the battle group to Berlin. But at the time it occurred I had not gone to the 8th Division; I was still with the 3rd Division in Europe.

F: Did you see any signs at all of LBJ's hand in this as Vice President?

G: I only knew of his visit there which had a tremendously powerful impact.

F: Were you involved in planning for the visit?

G: Not at all.

F: No participation in it after he got there?

G: None at all.

F: Now where did you pick up your reaction to it?

G: Through the general press coverage in Europe and also through the reports that I later had of my own unit of the 8th Division, after I got to the 8th Division, as to how they had been welcomed on their arrival by President Johnson.

F: The feeling in military circles was that this was a good move, then.

G: A very effective move. And it had a tremendously stiffening affect on the morale and confidence within Berlin and within Europe--Germany and Europe at large.

F: This is jumping ahead. One question to bridge the gap. You are gone during part of this, but did you get much opportunity to observe the LBJ-JFK relationship?

G: I had no real observation of that. The few times that I went to the White House after I came back during President Kennedy's tenure I had no real opportunity to discern what that relationship might be. I think perhaps the Vice President was present at one or two of those sessions, but I do not recall anything illuminating that relationship.

F: What about the Bay of Pigs problem?

G: I was away. I had left--

F: So whatever you got was second or third hand.

G: Yes, I'd left in late March before that occurred.

F: And the missile crisis?

G: I came back just--

F: just as it broke?

G: Just at the close of it--and got the aftermath of it.

F: There's no showing of the Vice President's hand in this?

G: No, none of which I'm aware.

F: Where were you at the time of the assassination down in Dallas?

G: I was right here in the Pentagon, attending a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

F: Tell me briefly about that, what it was like.

G: Well, we had a German party visiting us on that day; the head of the German Armed Forces was meeting with the Chiefs of Staff. We had scheduled a meeting at about 2:00 in the afternoon. As I recall about 12:30, or maybe a little later than that, maybe as late as 1:30, we got word that the President had been shot. We immediately checked to find out where the Vice President was and whether he was safe and had word back that he seemed to be.

F: I presume that you were as much mystified as anyone else as to whether this was an isolated incident or was part of a massive plot?

G: The first question you'd have to ask yourself is, "What does this mean? What about the next man on the list?" and so on. We asked and found that he was apparently all right. We then waited for information. It was obvious that information was being very much controlled and that the President's situation was very, very serious because he had been taken to the hospital and so on. We then went ahead with out-- began our meeting at 2:00 o'clock, and within a minute or two after that we had word brought in that President Kennedy was dead. General Taylor, who of course, was devoted to President Kennedy, was Chairman. He announced to our German colleagues that he had had this word--we had told them earlier that we had had word that the President was shot. As I recall we had only a very brief discussion then and immediately were concerned to learn what further steps were being taken and so on.

F: You didn't try to continue the meeting, then?

G: I think we wound up our meeting very quickly.

F: As you know, it's awfully easy once an event is over to start rationalizing,

but at the time was there a consensus among the people at your level in the Pentagon that the new President did belong on his way back to Washington?

G: Oh yes, by all means, and--

F: Get aboard and get back here!

G: Yes, indeed, and take control of the processes of government. I'll have to say the way in which he did that, the compassion that he showed and the seriousness and yet the strength, was a matter of tremendous admiration for all of us over here during the succeeding days.

F: One of the whirlwinds that he inherited from the previous year was this young MLF proposal that the Russians were upset about. Did you get any opportunity to observe the new President on this issue?

G: I was involved in that insofar as the operations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were concerned. Over the succeeding months my information on this is second-hand. I can only say that I sensed that he was not convinced of the viability of the project and retained really a lot of questions in his mind about it, was not prepared to make any kind of an iron-clad commitment. I don't think he was negative on it as much as just unconvinced; and he was prepared to take steps to explore it, to test its feasibility, and so on. But that would be about the attitude I sensed as new proposals or revised proposals were sent up to him.

F: Did you have to do a lot of briefing or did the Pentagon generally have to do a lot of briefing on the new President, or was he pretty well up-to-date on issues? Of course, I realize that you've got your daily briefings as things break, but I mean a matter of closing a gap.

G: He met with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and with the civilian leadership of the Department and I think got his up-dating in

that way. Then of course he had on his staff people who performed the same function that I performed pretty much during the Eisenhower period. So he had had a flow of material, and of course he had had briefings and was familiar with the operations to a very considerable extent before hand.

F: You had the feeling, I gather, that in foreign affairs generally and in military affairs specifically there was no sort of a valley you had to go through before you picked up the sort of plateau of leadership again?

G: No, from where I sat certainly my feeling was that he was well read on the problem. I recall what we had heard from Mr. Truman of what an experience that it is to have that whole burden on you so suddenly.

F: There's a difference between being first and second.

G: Then I recall some of the apparent impact of this on Mr. Kennedy when he took over the responsibility from General Eisenhower. It was one thing to be running for office, and it was something else having won it, now to face the heavy responsibilities that he would have. And of course this fell without notice on Mr. Johnson. But we had no sense of any failure to shoulder the responsibilities and move right forward with them.

F: Right after Johnson became President, there was--I don't want to embarrass you, but it may be political--there was some opposition by at least a couple of Senators to your promotion to Lt. General. Was it political? Was Margaret Chase Smith--

G: Let's see. I've forgotten when my promotion--

F: This was just before Christmas of 1963.

G: of 1963.

F: Congressman Vinson also held it up.

G: Yes, I recall now. That was connected with the change of my title which had been Special Assistant to the Chairman--

F: Now you were going to be deputy.

G: It was going to be Deputy to the Chairman, and there was a misconception there that this amounted to being deputy chairman in the sense of presiding over meetings in the absence of the Chairman. That was not the intent and was not in fact in the proposal. But to resolve that part of the problem the shift of title was made simply to Assistant to the chairman so there would be no implication of presiding over officers who were many years and a full grade my senior.

F: Was there any significant change in duties, really?

G: Yes. I would say the duties had evolved in this direction; but it was made clear that in the absence of the Chairman, I would attend and give the view of the Chairman or the chairman's office so to speak. There was some question as to whether the Chairman had a view, an independent view. But in fact that issue had been resolved when some language was taken out of the National Security Act. Previously it had said that the Chairman was a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff but he had no vote. Those words "that he had no vote" were removed and that meant that he did have full substantive participation, and that meant that his views should be introduced. I think there was perhaps a little failure within Defense. The Defense legislative people were supposed to have discussed this with the people upon the Hill, and it later turned out that there had been a failure on their part to do so, so that it hit senior people cold up there. They reacted by putting it on ice until sometime after the first of the year. I think it was approved finally in late January of 1964.

F: This is kind of a matter of just showing who had the right of confirmation then?

G: Oh yes, and they had concerns that had to be discussed. I regard it not only unfortunate but a little bit disrespectful, particularly to the Senate Arms Services Committee not to have had some prior discussion on this matter. But, as I say, that was a slip-up here in the office of the legislative liaison people.

F: This wasn't a White House oversight?

G: No, no, it was right here in this building.

F: A failure to touch base in other words. In the summer of 1964 then you get into this matter of the Tonkin Gulf attacks. Now then that has been hashed every which way and is going to be talked about a lot more. I think two questions that I need to ask you that I might not get elsewhere, that we would like an opinion on.

One is, is there any real reason for Senator Fulbright having, in a sense, reversed his position on this. He supported it in 1964 and now says he was gulled.

G: I can't, of course, address this question from the standpoint of Senator Fulbright. But let me address it simply from our best information and judgment here; and I can tell you that our best information and judgment here, with all of the uncertainties which we broke our necks to try to clarify and satisfy ourselves on, we were quite persuaded that these attacks had occurred. We had gone to considerable efforts to nail it down just as hard as we could. I think our judgment was as near a certainty as it's possible to be in circumstances of that kind, that these attacks had occurred.

F: Could you testify, were you a witness to, the sort of evolution of the President's thinking in this?

G: This would be very difficult for me--

F: I suppose the news was broken to him out of the situation room rather than in there.

G: I was not in any direct chain of communication to the President. I can only say that generally there had been deepening concern and spreading concern through the past months prior to this time over the situation that had been developing in Viet Nam. But just trying to talk from memory would be very risky for me in this development. And I gather that there are plenty of documents available now that will--

F: What did you do in general to try to verify the fact of these attacks?

G: We went back out to the Commander-in-Chief, of the Pacific, who was in touch with the commanders in the area with repeated messages "Are we certain?" "What kind of evidence did you have?" and so on. Some of it was radar tracks and the direction of closing, that kind of thing. Some of it reports of actual firing, supposed eye-witness reports, the kind of thing that you get in combat. You were confronted with a decision, "What do you do about this," within a short period of time, and this was the best information that we were able to develop.

F: In the testimony before the Senate, there wasn't a great deal of questioning. Weren't your attempts to verify pretty well accepted?

G: I think they were at that time. That certainly was my recollection of that period.

F: In this matter of initiating bombing attacks on North Viet Nam, was there a real sort of division of feeling on whether we should give all-out attacks or do a kind of measured and gradual use of air power?

G: Yes.

F: And how did LBJ get mixed up in this?

G: I'll have some difficulty in saying how much he was involved in it because I was not a direct witness at that time. But I can say, and here I will not talk about matters internal to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, But I can talk about the matters on which the Joint Chiefs of Staff took

action as a body, which then went to higher echelons.

There were these various options that were analyzed repeatedly over a period of many months--a year or more--prior to the period of late-1964. One of them I recall had alternatives--and I think this has been carried in the press--A, B, and C, and the Chiefs came forward with the alternative which happened to be the one I strongly supported of option "C-Prime." Instead of the notion of an incremental and a slowly increasing program, you would initiate your program with a heavy effort which would establish in a sense an outer parameter of how far you were prepared to go, and then apply heavy pressure within that.

These matters were talked about within the Administration. The extent to which they actually got before the President, I can't testify to. I was not present in those meetings. But I think we do know that no affirmative decision was taken through that period of months in late-1964, when as you know, we were having reports from the field that the situation was not only deteriorating but deteriorating very seriously, and the margin left there was becoming very, very thin.

F: Did the Chinese explosion of a nuclear bomb in the fall of 1964 play any great role in your decision in Viet Nam?

G: Whenever that occurred I recall we gave that very close study, but it did not play an significant role insofar as any activities of mine were concerned or anything I saw in relation to Viet Nam.

F: Did the White House, as far as you could tell, show great alarm at this explosion of the Chinese nuclear bomb?

G: I don't recall any--

F: Something that was anticipated finally happened?

G: I don't recall any alarm at it. It was intensively studied, of course,

to see what its implications would be. It had been anticipated as a general proposition.

F: How much did this gradual buildup in Viet Nam that came in 1965 affect the general condition of the United States' armed forces to wage war or defense in other parts of the world. You must have had a drain there.

G: Oh, it drained it very heavily, and this took what I would call a phenomenal effort by the Army to generate the forces and get them out there to Viet Nam on the schedule that was maintained. As I mentioned, this was on a very narrow margin. I would say by the middle of 1965 this situation was probably within weeks of being completely lost except for the intervention of the American forces. And once they were pushed in there, and combat forces were pushed in, it was necessary to try to build up a logistic base as the combat forces were themselves engaged. It was a tremendous effort; and I will say in terms of achievement, it was a tremendous achievement on the part of the Army, which bore the brunt of this, to do that despite the conditions of shortage in many, many areas that existed at that time.

F: Was there a great deal of concern on the part of the Pentagon leadership as far as the other parts of the world were concerned that maybe--I think that General Abrams said at one time that except for Viet Nam we couldn't fight our way out of a paper bag. I don't know whether he said that publicly, but I've picked that up somewhere.

G: The detrimental effect of this was certainly well recognized. Now, I've forgotten just when the Dominican operation occurred.

F: The Dominican operation began in September of 1965. Actually it began somewhat before that; the crisis broke out earlier in the summer of 1965.

G: Yes. I thought it was in June, late May or June. I had some interest

in that. I was supposed to have gone to be the commander of the 18th Airborne Corps, but--and you might be interested in this, and this was by an intervention of President Johnson himself. When this proposed reassignment was brought to his attention, he asked that it be changed and that I be kept on duty here in the Pentagon. That change was just being made and General Bruce Palmer was put up to take that job in my stead. Just about the time I or he would have been taking over is when the Dominican thing broke. And the 82nd Airborne Division was--I think it was the 82nd--I should remember. It was either the 82nd or the 101st that was sent down there, and they performed well. They were part of a high-readiness force that was being maintained at the time. I mention that because although we drew down heavily and quickly and reorganized forces and organized new forces and so on, a small component was retained in a ready state here in the United States.

Now there was also a drawdown of logistic support for Europe within the United States. The impact was very heavy, but even so the forces in Europe would have given a very strong account of themselves in case there had been any conflict. And these forces performed, I would say, quite excellently in the Dominican Republic.

F: Incidentally, I was on a seven months' assignment in Chile at this time and many people would stop me and say, "Now, naturally we've got to make a public demonstration against you but privately we're very much for what you're doing."

G: Yes, we've heard a certain amount of that relating to Viet Nam as well around the world.

F: Did you get the feeling that President Johnson was on top of the military situation in these various crises that were arising or that he was pretty well leaning on Secretary McNamara, or on the JCS?

G: If I could pursue the Dominican Republic affair, he was immediately drawn into that and took a very active and vigorous stand and took action to head off any gradual deterioration or worsening of the situation. He called on the military to accomplish that part of it and called on his State Department foreign policy people to support the case of the United States on the political side. And although there has been criticism of the Dominican Affair, in fact, given the premises on which he was operating, it was very effectively and quickly conducted.

I had one little role in that in making it quickly effective. It was obviously advantageous to seal off the city, the area where the main focus of rebellion had occurred, and it was possible to do that by establishing a line of communications from our forces--where they were located--to the Port area. And by establishing that line of communications that effectively sealed off the inner city and broke any contact between the inner-city and the country side. So it was then just a matter of time and searching for some kind of an acceptable political solution to which both sides could be brought to agree.

F: In the India-Pakistan War that broke out also in 1965, you had this problem that the President had really gotten on a pretty firm personal relationship with President Ayub Khan, and then you get the Pakistanis holding hands with the Chinese Communists. Was there a great deal of concern at the White House level on this turn that events had taken, and a certain sense of perfidy on Ayub Khan's part?

G: I never heard that implication at all. I don't know in detail--I can't recall the details of this sufficiently to say very much about it, but I never heard any imputation of perfidy to Ayub Kahn. Instead there was extreme and acute distress at the position in which the

United States found itself caught--between India, which the United States had been trying to support and where they had been trying to enhance the development of India, and on the other side Pakistan, whose performance had been that of a friend of the United States over many years.

F: In this case supporting both sides.

G: Yes, it was more of an issue of that kind, as I recall.

F: Did you get to observe the role of the President, or more the attitude of the President toward the ouster of Sukarno in Indonesia?

G: No, these attitudes were ex post facto when the attempted coup was made and failed. Then Suharto took over and acted pretty much on his own, and the Indonesian military which had been attacked responded as they did.

F: You've spent your share of time in Viet Nam and in Washington and elsewhere. Do you hold to the thesis that perhaps one reason that they could move so efficiently in Indonesia and put down the Communists was because you did have U.S. presence in Viet Nam? Do you get a feeling that aside from Viet Nam involvement, which is something else indeed, that we have brought a major stability to the Far East and South East Asia because they feel they don't have to worry about one great problem?

G: I've seen this thesis, and I would say in my own judgment that had the United States not stood against Indochina, the Indonesian situation would have gone completely bad much earlier. And it would not and could not have been retrieved.

F: How did you get the Koreans to take such an active part in Viet Nam?

G: Well--

F: Did you have a quid pro quo there?

G: Yes. The details of that others would have to testify on, but there was an effort--this was one of the efforts of President Johnson to get additional flags to join in. He had, I think, Clark Clifford and General Taylor go around and make these propositions in the various countries. I know there was hard negotiating, after there was acceptance in principle to negotiate, to reach agreement as to just what the terms of that participation would be.

F: Did you find the Koreans really to be as good soldiers as the press has portrayed them to be?

G: Here I'll limit my comment a bit. But let me say that their units were extremely effective military units. Their company commanders were excellent; their whole command chain well trained, tough, highly professional, quite excellent in their military performance. I will not undertake to discuss this in detail because it takes me I think a little further afield than I want to go.

F: When I edit this, I may want to edit a little portion right here.

G: Right.

F: You had an involvement in an intensifying degree with Viet Nam since the mid-Eisenhower days. Did you get the feeling that the French had done nothing to build up the South Vietnamese insofar as leadership was concerned? I'm thinking not only of political leadership but also military leadership. In other words, you started with them in the mid-1950's just about where you would have, say, in about 1960.

G: Well, as to what the intent of the French was, I'm not a good witness on that. As to what the achievement--

F: We're dealing with actualities here.

G: the actuality--on that I would say only very limited progress had been made until the mid and late 1950's to build up any kind of indigenous leadership. I know that this was a major area of effort by the American advisers when they went out there. This kind of thing builds up very, very slowly, and the base simply did not exist. The French had not in the past developed leaders above the level of sergeant, and many of the present leaders of the South Vietnamese forces were in fact sergeants during the French period. It takes a long time to build up a body of leadership.

F: And particularly someone who can plot the grand strategy of affairs, tactics.

G: That is right.

F: Did you get to observe the President in the Arab-Israeli war?

G: No, by that time I had been out of action for a bit. In the beginning of the fall of 1966--just a personal note, I had a heart attack in November of 1966, and it was only in the spring of 1967 that I began to get back into duty. I had an assignment in the U. N. as Army Member of the Military Staff Committee so that I stayed in some contact with the Arab-Israeli situation up there. That was an extra duty. My main station was here in Washington. But I was not directly involved, since I'd left the office of the Joint Chiefs, in the overall handling of that affair.

F: Before that, in the summer of 1966, President Johnson sent you and Walt Rostow and Averell Harriman to brief the governors--had you down to the Ranch beforehand. Would you like to tell about how he handled that as far as instructions were concerned and what it was, in a sense, you were trying to get over.

G: He wanted us to go out there and simply give the best perception that

we could of the Vietnamese development--the military and security situation there. As I recall, one comment that was made was that I should not overdramatize the situation. I recall the response of Averell Harriman, whom I have worked with for many years, to whoever it was that made that comment, that he "didn't really think they had to fear that." But we met with the President down at the Ranch, and I reviewed the essentials of how I would describe the military situation, how far we had come, how much more remained to be done. Rostow and Harriman covered their part, which would tell a bit about the pacification--the efforts to institute a pacification program--and some of the efforts to try to find a political solution to this thing. We then went out and gave it, not in the sense of salesmanship, but simply trying to present the situation.

I recall that I brought out that in a situation of this kind where you're just starting at a point very close to a collapse of the country--a collapse of resistance--and a victory for the other side, in a situation where the enemy have dug themselves in in all the villages and throughout the country, that it's going to be a long and costly and difficult program to work them out of this. And much of that would be dependent upon the South Vietnamese themselves because there were certain things outsiders simply could not do. But the role the United States was taking at least gave the breathing space for that operation to go forward.

F: How did the governors react to you?

G: A number of them expressed considerable appreciation for it; a number of them, I think, made clear that they were not taking any public position themselves, that they would reserve their judgment in the matter.

F: Back on the Ranch, in a situation like this, did the President have certain working hours, or did you just sit around in the front yard and talk? How did he handle this?

G: We flew out there--I've forgotten the time of day but I think we got there--yes, I think we did get there before lunch and he drove us around the Ranch and pointed out the deer and talked to his foreman and took us around in his big car. Then we came back and had lunch and talked all of this over and flew on out to California.

F: You flew on out that same day.

G: That same day, that's right.

F: So it was really in a sense a whirlwind, except that he did give you adequate time you felt.

G: That's right.

F: How did you happen to go to the Paris Peace talks?

G: He had asked that I do that, and had set up the delegation man by man in fact, and had worked out exactly how he wanted this thing to go forward. By that time I was over as Commandant at the National War College. I should perhaps take a minute to say that from about late-1964 on, at his request, I met with General Eisenhower about every two months--

F: You were the liaison.

G: To bring him up on the conduct of the war, and to let him know what was on the President's mind, and then bring back and discuss with the President any observations that General Eisenhower might have on the war. Those meetings are recorded in memos of which I furnished a copy to President Johnson and a copy to President Eisenhower. That process was one by which President Johnson formed his view and assured himself and gave himself confidence, I think, as to the operations that he was

undertaking. President Eisenhower, as you know, felt that it was the duty of all to rally to the support of their President, and he certainly undertook to do that.

He would give his views on the various aspects on the conduct of the war, but he always made very clear that this was not given in the sense of pressure but in the sense of whatever value his advice might have to President Johnson. So that perhaps was part of the background of his asking me to go out to California in 1966. I had also been asked to head up here in the Defense Department, as an extra duty from my work over at the War College, a study in late-1967 and early-1968, on the possibilities of a cessation of the bombing. President Johnson knew that I had been through that issue repeatedly--the bombing halt at the end of 1965, and again certain ones at later times so that when he wanted to set up his delegation and to have a kind of a balanced composition, he asked me to participate in that. Then he gave us our direction, and we met with him to be sure that we had an understanding of what our policy positions would be.

F: How long did you talk to him?

G: On this particular meeting with the President, which our whole delegation attended, I would say that we had a meeting of a couple of hours to explore this pretty thoroughly. Then we met with him perhaps once or twice again during the course of that negotiation. I only stayed until late-June and then I went out to take my assignment in Viet Nam.

F: Now there's almost continuous communication in a case like this between the White House and Paris, and yet you get Cyrus Vance and Averell Harriman coming home with great regularity. Is there something that can be accomplished man-to-man that--

G: Oh yes, you must periodically just come back and review the whole

situation and see what the possibilities are--convey a sensing of where the hard points are, where there might be something that could be probed, could be examined.

F: Was President Eisenhower approachable until pretty near the end of his life?

G: Oh yes, very much so.

F: He stayed alert to what was going on?

G: I happened to be back from Viet Nam in early-1969 and he knew, of course, he was party to my forth coming assignment in Europe. I called on him twice and discussed the NATO undertaking with him twice in the week before he died, the last time being the day before he died. He was quite alert and keen and strong in his comments and his interest in NATO.

F: Did President Johnson ever comment further on Eisenhower's statement at the end of his Presidency about warning about a military-industrial complex?

G: Oh, he and I talked about that many times and some of what had been built on it. He was flagging here the existence of the tremendous concentration of power which under our system has to be carefully scrutinized and controlled. I think he continued to hold that view. I would think that some of this business over the missile gap and the deliberate fostering of that notion--in which I'll have to say people within the government and some within the military and many within industry had a joint role. I think this was very much on his mind as the kind of danger this poses to the United States.

F: I've seen Cyrus Vance at work, and I can see his effectiveness. Now my association with Averell Harriman has been perfunctory, and he has always been rather reserved, even to the point of reticence. Can he turn on when--

G: I think he's quite an effective negotiator, a great sense of key issues that might have some possibilities.

F: He knows how to bore in.

G: Yes. And great experience in matters of that kind.

F: Did you ever get to witness particularly the relationship between Secretary McNamara and President Johnson of which a lot has been conjectured and I think a lot of it is wrong.

G: Not too much. My meetings with President Johnson were generally just the two of us when I talked about the Eisenhower relationship or one or two other matters in which he had me come in. But I seldom saw him and Secretary McNamara at the same time.

F: In the Spring of 1967, to duck back just a minute, you were assigned to conduct a special study for the Army Chief of Staff. LBJ approved that. Can you tell us what kind of special study--

G: That was really an interim assignment. They would not allow me to come back actively to duty as Director of the Joint Staff after my heart attack, and that was an interim assignement until the War College assignment came open. In that I simply made a review of the whole study effort of the U.S. Army and initiated a broad study plan that would coordinate the major studies they had in mind. But it was really an interim assignement.

F: Now, your leadership of the National War College really did not remove you from White House performances of the President?

G: I still had a number of duties working with him.

F: You just took on another assignement.

G: That's right.

F: Why did you go to Viet Nam?

G: Because he offered me the opportunity to command there--serve as deputy

commander--and at that time the expectation was that I would succeed General Abrams when the time came for him to come back. I suppose I would have except for being asked by Mr. Nixon to go over and take the NATO assignment.

F: What was the reaction in the military when President Johnson made the March 31, 1968 address that he would not run again. Did you get any feelings that--most particularly in Viet Nam--was there consternation?

G: I happened to be away at that time. I was taking a contingent of the National War College on an African trip and I got the word over in Africa. As soon as I got back here--

F: You had no forewarning?

G: I'll come back to that. As soon as I got back here I had word that he wanted to see me immediately. I came over and he told me that he had in mind for me to take the deputy command out in Viet Nam and also do this job for him over in Europe if the negotiations were to be opened up there.

On the other point, a curious little point that I'll want to keep very much in confidence. Late in 1967 President Eisenhower, having some obvious difficulty finding a way to ask me a question, asked me whether I had had any intimation from Mr. Johnson that he might not run again. And I had not. But to ask that question it really developed that President Eisenhower had to let me know that he had had that question raised with him--some questions raised with him by President Johnson. Later I learned that this had been to ask whether President Eisehower felt that President Johnson would be doing less than his duty if he declined to run again, and pointing out that no president who had succeeded a President who had died in office had--

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No president who had succeeded a president who had died in office had run for more than one more full term. This I found very revealing, but it was only that little bit of information that I had ahead of time that the President might have been thinking about this.

F: As you will recall, it was almost a comic opera if it hadn't been so serious, the situation regarding the opening of the peace talks, all that table discussion and so forth, what was President Johnson's reaction to the troubles in getting the conference started?

G: I was not here when we had that--

F: But the period you were there it was still not easy.

G: During the period we were there there were only two sets of people in the room, the North Vietnamese over across from us and all of us strung out on our side. It was only after the bombing halt and the attempt to get the broader negotiations going that this business of the table and all of that began to come out. And, at that time, although I was back here very briefly after Mr. Nixon's election, from Viet Nam, I was not involved with the White House in any of that business. So I didn't have opportunity to see President Johnson's reaction to that.

F: Was the situation when you got to Viet Nam in April, a feeling that perhaps peace could be managed or was there a feeling that this was so much election year window-dressing.

G: No, I would say neither of those. There was some feeling that the war had in fact gone on far enough. Despite the appearance of the TET Offensive and the May offensive in 1968, the war had in fact gone on far enough so that the allied side could afford to do this without endangering their position. There was, I think, regret at the pressures that had been placed on President Johnson and say, the undercutting of his position that was evident both in public and even to a degree within

the government here. But that was well realized. He was suffering from those problems but was still trying to press on.

When I went, I went with the clear understanding that our mode of operation would be what I had, in the earlier discussions before going to Paris, I clarified with him, that was that we would continue a policy of maximum sustained pressure, to complete the work that had been begun. And most of us felt that we could carry forward with the military side of this to something that would represent a very substantial success in due course. In the meantime, if something could be accomplished in Paris, so much the better, but, with the memory of the Korean negotiations, we wouldn't pin our hopes on anything very early.

F: What was it like at the Paris peace conference? The feeling on the outside is one of utter frustration, and I can imagine what it must be like.

G: I was there, of course, during the very early period when we were probing the other side to see whether there was any serious interest in negotiation. They were hardlining it. I was struck by the degree--they seemed to each have a little pack of three by five cards in which they had multiple quotations from many, many people in the United States and around the world--

F: They had done their research.

G: That they would quote back to us to show as support for their charges that it was an illegal war, that the United States was the aggressor and so on and so on and so on. I think we all had the feeling that we had to go through a certain amount of this to see whether there would be finally be any readiness to negotiate on their side--and also a feeling that so long as they felt by holding on they could accomplish through political means what they couldn't accomplish on the battlefield, that they would in fact, hold on.

F: Is it a little bit like say watching water drop on a steel bulkhead for days and you feel that nothing is happening, but you've got to have just a blind, almost simple, faith that somewhere in there a dent will appear?

G: Well you don't lose much by trying this, and you can always envisage two general types of solution. One would be simply that the war would move out of South Viet Nam as it has very much, and that, de facto, a situation would be achieved that would represent substantial success. The other is that some kind of political accommodation could be made, and this was simply a means of keeping that option open. You put up with a certain amount of vituperation and just hard line statements from the other side. But it doesn't cost you very much to do that, and if you do find some opportunities to negotiate then at least you've got a forum for it.

F: You never get personal in this, or do you get the strong feeling of one man--

G: No, no, I don't think you have any personal feeling there. The North Vietnamese were rather correct in their manner--distant, tough--as you could expect, their arguments just a repetition of the same position over and over and over again.

F: Did you ever meet them socially?

G: Never met them outside of the context of the negotiation. We had some tea breaks--

F: I thought somebody else's embassy party.

G: We had them at tea breaks. We met with them.

F: That's hardly social, I gather.

G: Not social, no.

F: The thesis is advanced that South Viet Nam and our policy there really

is a continuation from Eisenhower through Kennedy right down to the Nixon days, and that all we have done is intensify kind of a logical culmination of a seed that was planted back there. Do you buy this thesis?

G: I'd say that everything that exists in the world today is a product of everything that has existed previously. But there were many forks along the road, and many points of decision, many new developments that have affected this.

F: There's not any sort of inexorability in it. The President had to stop and take a choice here and there.

G: I would find that the range of possibilities that existed at every stage were so wide that to say that this would be the particular outcome, that this was inexorable--I would find that impossible to support.

F: Did you--this is sensitive, but let's try. Could the President work better--I'm talking about President Johnson now--better with some generals than others? We've got Taylor, Wheeler, Abrams, just to name a few.

G: No, let me say that he was quite ready to work with the senior military people that I knew, had a regard for their military competence, felt they were well selected. He always quoted Sam Rayburn who said, "If we start making the military decisions, I wonder why we paid to send them to West Point." He was quite prepared to give full consideration and weight to the senior officers who came before him. And I'd say these senior officers have come to those posts through a sequence of selections and responsibilities and that means that they have a high degree of professional integrity, a great sense of responsibility, dedication to the country and so on. So I think he found that he was able to communicate with them quite effectively.

F: Washington Post, Newsweek and other publications have said that the senior adviser group on Viet Nam which includes Major General Dupuy and Mr. Carver, are to a certain extent responsible for the reversal of the U.S. policy in Viet Nam, the de-escalation because of the briefings that they gave the President, that helped him decide not to run for reelection and so on.

What could possibly have been in those briefings that he didn't already know. Was there anything new in it?

G: I don't think you set this up in quite the right way. The President called the Senior Advisory Group in to meet with him and to review with him the situation in Viet Nam after the TET offensive and when he had the problem within his own administration over the question of whether to send further reinforcements out to Viet Nam. This group came in, many of them who had not been following the war in detail and they had some briefings. I think that the perceptions that were put before them, I would be surprised if there was anything of a widely different or dramatically different nature. It's a long, tough proposition there, and I think that's what was presented. Probably, in all candor, no one could say when it was going to end or what the ultimate cost would be or, in precise terms, what the ultimate outcome would be. The impact was on the senior advisory group, I believe. But to know--I was not present--to know what that impact was and to know what their views, what bearing that had on the President's decision, is really very hard to fathom. Because I think he was very much affected by some of what was going on within his own Administration at the time.

F: Did the coming of Secretary Clifford, who replaced Secretary McNamara, make any great difference in the Department of Defense? Did he listen to a different group or was this just a matter of fresh trail?

G: I would find it difficult to try a comparison of the two men or their methods. I think that Secretary Clifford spent a great deal of time with about the same senior civilian people in the Department of Defense that had worked with Mr. McNamara, and I am referring to such people as Mr. Warncke, Mr. Enthoven, and Mr. Goulding--that particular group. The information I have is that he gave a great deal of time and attention to the views of this particular group who of course had been, I'm sure, conducting much the same discussions with Mr. McNamara.

F: When you got to Viet Nam did you find that the TET offensive had demoralized the South Vietnamese as much as --

G: No, quite the opposite. The South Vietnamese had been stiffened and hardened. The only demoralization of which I'm aware occurred right here in the United States.

F: This has puzzled me. The North Vietnamese, Viet Cong, pulled off the TET offensive. It was a great initial thrust and then it failed. They evidently had expected a general uprising of the people, and it didn't come off. But somehow or other it turned into a psychological defeat for us--

G: Psychological defeat for the United States?

F: Yes.

G: On its home front.

F: Yes. Where did we lose it? I've been curious on this. You can make an awfully strong--

G: That's a broad subject. Let me just say that the North Vietnamese and their Viet Cong allies there took tremendous losses. The South Vietnamese gained tremendous confidence out of their performance. The American forces, I think, felt that they had met the situation very well. The same was true again in May.

The impact on the United States home front was disastrous. Nothing other than that can be said. The United States home front was badly demoralized. I think that the responsibility, when the time comes to assign primary responsibility for that, you would have to look to elements within the Administration who certainly hold responsibility for providing an accurate perception of what was involved. They failed to get that across.

In the Congress, I think there was a sensing that blood had been drawn on President Johnson perhaps somewhat in the way that a little blood was drawn on President Eisenhower at the time of the U-2. Then you'd have to also add that the media through which this is purveyed to the American people provided again a perception that was quite different from the realities, or what seemed to be the realities in Viet Nam, through exaggeration, dramatization, and that kind of thing.

When you put it all together the effective result of this was to destroy the composure of the American people and government at a very crucial time on an issue of very great importance.

F: Were you involved in the Pueblo crisis?

G: No, let's see--

F: That came just before the TET Offensive.

G: That came in January or February of 1968.

F: Right.

G: I guess the only thing that I did there was get information on it and brief General Eisenhower on what was involved and what actions had been taken.

F: You were in South Viet Nam at the time that the election was held for president in 1968?

G: That's right.

F: And before that you had the complete bombing halt?

G: Just a few days before that.

F: Was there a feeling in South Viet Nam that this was a political deci-- sion, or that it was a presidential political decision--

G: A great mixture of feelings about it. I think it was understood that President Johnson was very desirous of trying to arrange this. Also, there was a lot of respect for President Johnson there and the burdens that he had been carrying--was indeed carrying. As you know there was an altercation between senior officials of the United States and the South Vietnamese--Mr. Harriman in particular--as to whether the South Vietnamese had been misled in what the terms of the agreement would be in respect of them. There was some feeling in the United States I understand--this is second-hand--that people in Viet Nam had been counseled on this and not go along with it because there could be a change of administrations coming out of the elections.

In any case, by that time we'd come to the judgment--and I was acting in command at the time because General Abrams was right back here--we'd come to the conclusion that we could accommodate this, that the situation of our military operations had gone far enough so that this would not have any damage to us that we couldn't manage quite well. We were going into really the deepest part of the rainy season, and we were quite prepared out there to see it happen. But it was always on the understanding that suitable terms would be reached under one formula or another. It was only when the argument developed over whether suitable terms had in fact been reached that the thing broke down.

F: As the number one-number two man in Viet Nam, did you have some sort of quasi-ambassadorial functions, or could you stick pretty well to what you were sent there for.

G: Oh no, my main function was strictly military. I spent at least three days every week away from Saigon, going around throughout the country [to] all of the military units of every kind. I did however take the responsibility for General Abrams of acting for him with the Embassy in evaluating these various proposals that were constantly coming in for how we might enter into negotiations, the terms and so on and so on.

F: I'd like to ask you two quick ones and sign off. One is, does this political infighting between President Thieu and Vice President Ky hamper the military effort?

G: While I was there it did not hamper the military effort because we had good consultations with them. Ambassador Bunker had very little time for any foolishness of the kind that you suggest here. The same was true of Abrams and of me. And--

F: A pretty strong team then on our part?

G: Yes. We took a very strong stand that we had serious business to attend to and no time for this kind of thing. And Thieu himself was very active at the pacification level. It was his pacification plan in fact which [was] worked out with Komer, but Thieu was the man who put the real push into that late in 1968. That's what finally broke the back of the enemy forces.

F: I had several interviews with Komer on that. That's pretty well set up.

Did you get to witness Johnson's relationship with De Gaulle, particularly with the deterioration of the French attitude toward NATO. Or is that a subject for another talk?

G: I observed all of this of course, I don't know of any very great personal participation of Johnson in this. It was really a confrontation between his administration and what De Gaulle was trying to do. But I don't believe President Johnson was personally drawn into that to any

very great extent. There was the little business of the visits and so on, but I think it was small change in relation to the main, really, clash over policy.

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by Andrew J. Goodpaster

to the

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Date March 10, 1975