

INTERVIEW I

DATE: May 13, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: DAVID E. McGIFFERT

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE McSWEENY

PLACE: Mr. McGiffert's office, 701 Union Trust Building, Washington, D.C.

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McS: This interview is with David E. McGiffert, former under secretary of the army from 1965 to 1969.

Mr. McGiffert, I'd like to begin the interview with briefly recounting your background and your various government positions. You were a lawyer associated with a Washington, D.C. firm for the period from 1953 to 1960 and [you were] also a university lecturer on law. Beginning in 1961 you entered government service, and you were named special assistant to the assistant to the secretary of defense, the area being on legislative affairs. In 1962 through 1965 you became the assistant to the secretary of defense for legislative affairs. In June of 1965 you were nominated and confirmed under secretary of the army.

Do I have the correct dates on your various positions?

McG: Yes, that's correct. I was not actually sworn in as under secretary of the army until the end of November 1965, because Mr. [Robert] McNamara, the secretary of defense, wanted me to go through the then current congressional session in my old job.

McS: Mr. McGiffert, have you ever participated in any similar type of oral history project like this?

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McG: No, I haven't.

McS: Who primarily brought you into government?

McG: I was asked to come over to the Defense Department by Norman Paul, whom I later succeeded as assistant to the secretary for legislative affairs when Norm became assistant secretary of defense for manpower.

McS: Were you in need of any political credentials in this job? Did you necessarily have to belong to the Democratic Party?

McG: Not that I am aware of. I imagine it didn't hurt, but I am not aware that it was necessary.

McS: Do you see Pentagon positions interrelated enough that it is possible to shift from positions? This of course did happen in your case and in several others, there are members that were staffed in various positions along during an eight year period in the Pentagon.

McG: Yes, I do. I think that one of the characteristics of the McNamara regime at the Pentagon was promotion from within, and often those involved what I would call promotions to positions for which the person promoted was not necessarily specially qualified by reason of his previous job in the Pentagon. I think Mr. McNamara had a tremendous ability to detect who the able generalists were among those people working for him and to move them accordingly when the opportunity presented itself. That sounds somewhat self-serving. I'm really not thinking so much of myself as others like Paul Nitze, John McNaughton and Paul Ignatius and so forth.

McS: Was this in the realm of dealing in a management level that you were able to sort of cross lines as far as responsibilities and duties? Perhaps I'm not making myself clear. You

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spoke of it being promotion from within with Mr. McNamara. Was this because of there being similar management techniques one assumed being able to be applied across the board?

McG: Well, I'm not really sure I can answer that question. He typically would promote somebody who had been in a staff job into a line job, and it seemed to work very well. Both Paul Nitze and Paul Ignatius are examples of that.

McS: All right. Mr. McGiffert, I'd like to emphasize two, or actually more than that, but first your direct relations with Mr. Johnson, and then I'd like to go into your responsibilities, actual responsibilities and your positions in the Pentagon. To begin with, do you recall the first time that you met Mr. Johnson?

McG: I don't really, because I suspect it was at some kind of formal function or reception or otherwise. I think the first time I met him other than in such a group was in the Cabinet Room, probably in 1966, when he had a meeting of all the under secretaries in the executive branch, a meeting I think simply designed to promote our morale and to let us know that he knew we existed and that he was counting on our doing a responsible job.

McS: Did you get any sort of impressions from these associations and this particular meeting of Mr. Johnson?

McG: That particular meeting was one in which he followed the carrot and stick technique, which I had heard others attribute to him but never had personally experienced. In other words, he both told us how important we were to the proper operation of the government, and he also told us that, in effect, if we got out of line we weren't likely to last very long.

McS: Had anything particular precipitated this meeting in your mind?

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McG: Not that I know of. I don't believe he'd ever had such a meeting before. I assumed that somebody had suggested to him that undersecretaries tend not to have very much contact with the President, and that this might be a good idea to help their morale, make them feel part of the team.

McS: Did you have very many occasions to meet the President after this point?

McG: Well, I'd say four or five. I attended another meeting in the Cabinet Room, again I've forgotten the exact date, which dealt with Panama problems. I think it was the problem of the treaty negotiations with the Republic of Panama. We had a similar meeting on the question of promoting the sale of government bonds, and again I've forgotten when this was. As you may know, in my position as under secretary I had a good deal to do with civil disturbance matters. I did see the President in his office last summer with Ramsey Clark and Joe Califano in connection with Mayor Daley's request for the dispatch of federal troops to Chicago during the Democratic convention. The issue was, "Do we or don't we send them?" The decision was to send them. They were, of course, never used.

Then shortly before January 20, the President had a lunch for all the under secretaries in which each of us presented him with some sort of memento. That lunch he was extraordinarily mellow. It was a very enjoyable occasion. It went on for a considerable period of time.

McS: How do you mean extraordinarily mellow?

McG: Well, he was in a mood to reminisce about some of his experiences as president and some of his experiences in the Senate, and he had several amusing stories. I don't frankly remember what they were anymore, but I do have a very pleasant recollection of the

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occasion.

McS: At these various meetings that you mentioned, does anything in particular stand out in your mind, impressions gained of the man?

McG: In those meetings where there was a difficult substantive issue that had to be resolved, I thought he was an awfully good listener. He asked for and obtained the views of most of the people there. He seemed to me to absorb them well. On the other hand, he rarely gave very much indication of what his own views were. In the Panama case I don't believe he made a decision on the spot; in the Chicago case he did. I think one of the problems he had, and I'm not sure but what it's a problem that every president has, is the simple one of scheduling. Most of these meetings started late because he was late. I don't know whether this was characteristic or not, but if it was, then there was a substantial loss of time of many officials simply waiting for the President to arrive.

While I've been talking I just thought of another meeting which was interesting which I remember attending, again in the Cabinet Room. This was a meeting on the morning after Dr. [Martin Luther] King's assassination, to which the President had invited maybe ten or fifteen Negro leaders. The purpose of the meeting, I think, was to discuss with them what they saw as the likely result of the assassination and how the government ought to react. That was a meeting which, from the Defense Department, Secretary [Clark] Clifford and I attended, and I remember we got out about noon. About an hour later, the first reports started to come in about all hell breaking loose in the streets in Washington, D.C.

McS: Had the reports indicated that was going to happen?

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McG: No. You remember they had had some trouble during the previous evening. The news of the assassination, I would guess, came on the radio about eight o'clock or something like that, and there was trouble in parts of Washington for the next three or four hours. But the police were able to handle it, and the question then was, "Can we expect renewed trouble on the following day?"

This is an area in which the primary responsibility within the executive branch was the Attorney General's within the Defense Department. I had responsibility for certain aspects of calling the National Guard and also of course use of federal troops, and cooperating with the Justice Department. Actually, Warren Christopher, who was the deputy attorney general, was also at that meeting at the White House with the Negro leaders, and we sat down in the corner of the Cabinet Room after the meeting was over with Pat Murphy, who was then the director of public safety for the District of Columbia. We decided that we ought to call the D.C. National Guard into the armory, so that if trouble broke out they would be available by sunset. This was before we had any news of renewed trouble. We had gone on the assumption, based on experiences with other disturbances in other cities, that if trouble broke out again, it would not reach major proportions until after dark. Now, in retrospect that turns out to have been an inaccurate estimate. The plan was to have the National Guard ready to go by dark in case they were needed.

McS: Mr. McGiffert, were you ever involved in any of the Tuesday Lunch meetings?

McG: No.

McS: The congressional briefings?

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McG: I may have in my job as assistant to the secretary for legislative affairs gone to a couple of those briefings in which McNamara participated, but I don't really have any clear recollection of doing so. See, these things tend to run together in your mind. Because I in that job went with Mr. McNamara to the Hill continuously and listened to him testify before congressional committees, which often involved a briefing very similar to what he gave the congressional leadership at the White House. I'm not really sure whether I ever went to the White House or not for one of those briefings.

McS: Did you ever hear Mr. Johnson discuss relations between the Defense Department and Congress?

McG: No.

McS: Did Mr. McNamara comment on Mr. Johnson's opinions of developments of the Hill with relation to the Defense Department?

McG: Did Mr. McNamara comment on the President's view? Not that I'm aware of. Mr. McNamara always seemed to me to have as one of his rules that he never commented on what the President might be thinking.

McS: Mr. McGiffert, did you think that there were any changes that occurred as a result of Mr. Johnson becoming president? This is in organization of the running of the Defense Department, the relations between the White House and Defense Department.

McG: Well, from my rather narrow perspective at the time, i.e., from the perspective of McNamara's legislative affairs man, I saw virtually no change.

McS: Were there ever any occasions--I'm thinking particularly of a crisis nature--where you were called into the White House, not necessarily to meet with the President but to be

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there in preparation for planning and decision making?

McG: I think other than that meeting with the President with respect to the Chicago convention the answer to that is no. To the extent I went physically outside the Defense Department on crisis matters, it was almost always to the State Department for Panama matters or to the Justice Department for civil disturbance matters.

McS: How often did you have contact by telephone or otherwise with members of the White House staff?

McG: In my legislative job I had really very frequent contact with people on Larry O'Brien's staff, like Mike Manatos and Claude Desautels and Henry . . . He's now president of the Board of Trade in Chicago [Henry Hall Wilson]. His name doesn't come to mind at the moment. As under secretary of the army most of my White House contact was with Joe Califano or his assistant Larry Levinson.

McS: Were there particular issues where it became a rather in-depth relation with the White House staff members?

McG: Most of the contacts with Joe were on civil disturbance matters. They were often in considerable depth, particularly where those matters affected the District of Columbia. As a matter of fact, we often had rather long meetings in Joe's office, sometimes with Mayor [Walter] Washington there. But other than that I think most of the contacts were not ones in which whatever matter was involved was dealt with in great detail.

McS: Did you have occasion to travel either with or for Mr. Johnson?

McG: I never traveled on his plane, and I really think the only travel I ever did sort of in conjunction with one of his trips was to go out to Fort Campbell when he stopped by

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there to inspect the base and to make a speech. I was the, I think, senior Department of Defense official there to welcome him, and I remember I escorted Luci for a while. We had a wonderful review of ten thousand troops while it poured rain, and the President was the only person who had a raincoat. I think, as I say, that's the only time that our trips coincided in any way.

McS: Were you appointed to any task forces or committees or boards outside of directly related to the Department of the Army or Defense area in legislative affairs?

McG: No.

McS: I'd like to continue on in the interview and ask you if you could tell me what your main responsibilities were in the areas of legislative affairs and then in the Department of the Army. I know that's a very broad question. If I can get a brief answer from you.

McG: I think that most people on the outside think that legislative affairs job can best be described as the secretary of defense's lobbyist. If that is meant in a pejorative sense I don't think it accurately describes that job. I think one must recognize that the nature of that job depends very much on the personality and style of the particular secretary of defense involved. For example, Mr. McNamara and Mr. Clifford, his successor, were quite different people with respect to their knowledge of both the workings of and the members of Congress. Mr. Clifford was personally acquainted with far more members of Congress than Mr. McNamara was, and I think by reason of his own background, was somewhat more sensitive to the how and whys of congressional behavior.

In any event, the responsibilities of the job when I held it, which was under McNamara, were I suppose really threefold: first, to see that the Department of Defense

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legislative program was properly presented; secondly, to see that the Department of Defense response to congressional investigations was a responsible response; and thirdly, to try to make sure that the flow of information to the Congress was not impeded unnecessarily by the inevitable difficulties that are imposed by such a huge bureaucracy. Now, each of the three military departments, the army, navy and the air force, have their own legislative organization. The man in the job that I held has to exercise these responsibilities which I've described, not only directly *vis-à-vis* the secretary of defense and the relationship which he and his staff advisors have with the Congress, but also in what I suppose is best described as a coordinating role *vis-à-vis* the military departments.

Reporters who used to come in and ask me about what I did used to want to know how much time I spent on the Hill and how much time I spent in the office. I suppose the answer to that is about 25 per cent of the time on the Hill and 75 per cent of the time in the office. Which I think indicates that the job, as Mr. McNamara wanted it done, was much more a job of administering this response to Congress in these various areas, rather than padding around the halls of Congress trying on an individual basis to convince people of this, that and the other thing. I think this is probably the right way to do it, because McNamara himself was an enormously persuasive man. While he aroused antagonisms in the breasts of some members of Congress, in the end if you look back he succeeded in getting almost everything he wanted and succeeded in stopping almost everything he didn't want. I think primarily because he had a good reason for almost everything he did, for everything he did, really, which he could articulate and present very persuasively.

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Now, one of the problems, you have when you're around a secretary of defense like this, who is very busy on a variety of things, is to try to persuade him to take enough time to use these great persuasive powers in ways that go beyond just the hearings and other formal appearances before the Congress, which he had to make in any event. In other words, [you try] to get him to invite members of Congress over for lunch or to occasionally to talk to them in their offices and so forth. He was a very busy man, and [it] was a matter of continually pointing out that this would be a good thing to do and get him to do it.

I think the press, oh, starting not so long after Mr. McNamara took office, began to try to make something of what they conceived to be not wholly happy relations between McNamara and Congress, or some members of Congress. I think it is quite true that there was, if you want to call it, some personality conflict between McNamara and some members, such as, let's say, Mendel Rivers. There were some very bitter battles over particular issues: like the way in which base closures ought to be announced, how much advance notification should Congress have; the manned bomber, should we or should we not go to a new bomber; nuclear power for ships, for surface ships in the Navy; the Reserve Guard merger. [There was] a great deal of heat generated in those areas, but in the end, in my judgment, there was really no result which could be characterized in any way as showing lack of congressional confidence in the Secretary. As I said before, I think he got almost everything he tried to get. But this sort of friction, if you want to call it that, certainly made life interesting.

McS: Traditionally, Mr. McGiffert, the military has a special relation with Congress. Did this

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cause much of a problem during your tenure as a member of legislative affairs?

McG: We had the problem at the outset. This was a problem which started just after I got over to the Pentagon but was still going on, as I remember it, when I became assistant to the secretary for legislative affairs, which was the so-called problem of muzzling the military. This grew out of Senator [J. William] Fulbright's accusation that senior military officers were going around the country propagandizing the American public about various evils when that really wasn't what they were supposed to be doing, and that the troop information program of the services also had interwoven in it this view of the world with which Senator Fulbright didn't agree. Senator [Strom] Thurmond challenged him on that, and we had a long, difficult hearing before, I guess it was the Preparedness Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee, which went into such things as censorship by the Office of the Secretary of Defense of the speeches of Defense Department employees in and out of uniform, and so forth and so on and so on.

In the end the department came out really relatively unscathed. I think part of the reason for that was what I would call a negative reason. Many of the witnesses called in opposition to the department's position [were poor witnesses]. McNamara's position [was] basically, "I can't run a railroad if my subordinates are disagreeing with me in public. If they want to disagree with me after a decision is made, then let them resign. On the other hand, I encourage internal disagreement before the decision is made." Many of the witnesses appearing in sort of an opposition role were really pretty far-out, and in a sense discredited the opposition. I think General [Edwin] Walker was an example. General Walker when he got on the stand seemed at least to me and I'm reasonably sure

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to most of the spectators there to be suffering from mild paranoia. Whether he really was or not I don't know, but that's the appearance he gave. So that when those hearings were over, whenever it was, sometime in 1962, the department had come through with a recognized policy that its members were not to go around voluntarily disagreeing with settled policy.

Now of course, anybody who is requested by a congressional committee to come up and testify and has no excuse for not going has to go and answer the questions that he's asked truthfully. Of course, when that happens there are going to surface disagreements of opinion, and the degree to which that happens really depends on how the particular congressional committee, or member of Congress who is calling the witness, sees his role. There are some members of Congress I think, again Mr. Rivers and Eddie Hebert for example are among them, who appear to believe that too much power has come to reside in the secretary of defense. In a sense, you can look at this as a contest between two parties, both of whom believe in civilian control of the military but who disagree on what civilians ought to be in control; members of Congress thinking that it ought to be congressmen and the secretary of defense thinking it ought to be the secretary of defense. So there's always this tension, always this opportunity for the expression within the congressional arena by Defense officials of views which differ, and the possibility that members of Congress will exploit those differences.

Having said all that, I think what I'm basically trying to say is that the muzzling hearings and their result had the effect of minimizing what otherwise might have been a rather continuous expression of differing views by Defense Department employees. And

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actually, in terms of a real tension between Secretary of Defense and Congress and the exploitation, if that isn't too strong a word, of differing views, I don't really think that there was a major problem except with respect to the House Armed Services Committee after Carl Vinson retired. It has always seemed to me that Mr. Rivers, from the time he became chairman, wanted to stake out a strong position against both the Department of Defense and the Appropriations Committee. He has consistently, both while I was in that job and since, looked every year for at least one major issue, be it the bombers or nuclear power for surface ships or the procedures for base closures or the role of systems analysis in defense planning, on which he could have a confrontation with the Department of Defense. I personally don't believe it makes any difference who the secretary of defense is, that that's going to happen anyway.

McS: Did you become involved in the issue over the TFX [Tactical Fighter Experimental], the contract or the F-111 Series?

McG: Yes, yes. Let's see, it all started in late November and early December of--no, I don't remember. I was going to say 1962, but I'm not sure that's right. The award of the contract to General Dynamics had been publicly announced in late November. Sometime early in December we received a request from Senator [John L.] McClellan, as chairman of the Subcommittee of the Government Operations committee, to hold up any actual proceedings under the contract, such as advancement of funds and so forth, until his committee had had a chance to look at it. I've always understood that he did this because Senator [Henry] Jackson had come to him and said that it had been reported to him that there were some problems with the award, that he, Senator Jackson, wasn't saying that he

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endorsed that report. He just didn't know what the truth was, but he thought it ought to be looked into.

So the first question was, "How do we respond to Senator McClellan?" Here's an important contract. We want to get started and get this plane built, and furthermore, we don't want to get ourselves into a position where Congress, simply by saying, "Hold up," can really run the Defense Department's business when the statute gives the secretary of defense the power to do so and not the Congress. So I guess I drafted the letter back to McClellan saying while we'd be happy to participate in any hearing, we'd be happy to talk to his investigators, we were not going to hold up on the contract. Ros Gilpatric, who was deputy secretary of defense at that time, okayed that point of view and checked it I believe with McNamara, and off the letter went and from there on we were off to the races. One wonders whether one should have done it differently, but I'm not sure the result would have been any different in the end. I think that as the investigators got into it and found out that McNamara had overruled some of his subordinates, a hearing was inevitable in any event. And, for whatever time it was thereafter that those hearings went on, and it was a long, long time, I was deep in them from the point of view of procedures, tactics, selection of witnesses and so forth.

McS: Were there some basic procedures and tactics that you were following?

McG: We decided at the outset, and I think this turned out in retrospect to be a mistake, that we wanted the Secretary of Defense to testify last, because then he would have the benefit of knowing what the other people said. That was acceptable to the committee. I think in retrospect it was an error because we had thought originally the hearing was just going to

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be about a week. In fact, that's what the committee told us, a week or two, so that he [McNamara] would come on very soon. But in fact, six months later they were still hearing from other witnesses, with the result that we could never adequately get our side of the case before the public until much too late, until various impressions had been built up by the testimony of others, which were unhappy impressions from our point of view. I've forgotten all the ins and outs now, but we had all sorts of problems; such as, how far can you go in talking about conversations with people at the White House, executive privilege problems, associated perhaps with White House conversations or with other conversations. Anyway, it was a long and tedious and exasperating exercise, in which I in the end became much more of a lawyer than I was a legislative affairs man.

McS: Mr. McGiffert, did you yourself feel there was any either direct or underlying political pressure involved in the awarding of the contract?

McG: No. As a matter of fact, I think that it makes you wonder about Defense procurement and whether we can ever do a really good job. Because here was a case where the Secretary of Defense made a decision to award the contract to the company which on paper was the higher bidder of the two. He did that because he thought, as I recollect, that the other company, Boeing, had vastly underestimated their actual costs; that they were proposing a more sophisticated airplane, one which pushed the state of the art farther; and that it was simply inconceivable that under these circumstances they could build it for less than the company, General Dynamics, which had proposed an airplane which pushed the state of the art less far. In effect what he was saying was, "I think I can get a plane, the development and building of which has less technical risk but which still meets the

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requirements, at less cost if I go to General Dynamics." Then he was attacked simply on the grounds that, "Well, Boeing said it could build it for less; therefore, you ought to give it to Boeing." This makes it very difficult for Defense Department officials to exercise their best judgment in how you get a weapons system for the least cost if you're going to be attacked in this way.

McS: Mr. McGiffert, Mr. McNamara's relations with Congress did decline over a period of time from the beginning until the end of his appointment. Can you think of one particular thing, or several things, that are particularly responsible for sort of the deterioration of the relationship between the Defense Department and Congress?

McG: I just don't accept the premise. Except for perhaps the honeymoon period, I think Mr. McNamara was in substantial controversy with members of Congress right from the beginning. I think, really, much of the reason that people think that his relations with Congress deteriorated is due to the fact that members like Rivers and Hardy and Rebert achieved through the passage of time greater influence in the congress and continued to express their unhappiness with the Secretary of Defense. Now this is not making a personal attack on these members of Congress, because they were carrying out their duties the way they saw fit. But I think if you would talk to most members of Congress you would find Mr. McNamara's credit was pretty high right down to the end with one exception, and that is the problem arising over his statements on Vietnam.

I think that did raise a serious problem, starting with, I guess it was that October 1963 statement at the White House. He and Max Taylor talked about the relatively early possibility of withdrawing American troops. I think he lost credibility over time because

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he appeared to be in his public statements more sanguine about Vietnam than in retrospect the facts justified. Leave out Vietnam, and I really think his credibility remained, in my opinion, very high.

Now, I better make one other exception. He did get into a lot of flak over base closures. Not so much I think over the merits of the closures but over the procedure, because a member of Congress does not naturally want to be taken by surprise and have his constituent complain to him before he knows anything about it. This is a legitimate concern on the part of members of Congress. On the other hand, it's often hard to close a base if the word that you intend to do so leaks out substantially ahead of the actual announcement, because then those who are opposed are able to gather their political forces and try to stop it. Whereas once you're publicly committed to it, it's much more difficult to stop it. So you have these legitimate concerns on both sides of the question, and it's almost impossible to completely resolve them satisfactorily to both sides. I think that given that dilemma, McNamara tended to give the Congress less notice than the Congress wanted, and this made some members of congress mad.

McS: In your activities in legislative affairs, was there any particular area where you had a reaction from the Defense establishment itself? In other words, there was a reluctance internally in some of your areas.

McG: A reluctance to do what?

McS: In any direction that you were going in the development of legislative affairs?

McG: In the development of legislation, no, I don't think so, other than the usual budget problems. No, the air force wanted a new manned bomber and McNamara didn't, but

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that's just a normal part of the game.

McS: To continue on with your position in the Department of the Army, could you describe to me some of your main responsibilities as under secretary.

McG: The under secretary wears a great many hats. In the first place, he's the alter ego to the secretary. In my case this was Stan Resor, and Stan liked to have me pretty well acquainted with the things he was doing so that I could both be a sounding board with respect to them, give advice with respect to them, and handle them in his absence. That was a fairly time consuming aspect of the job. Now the under secretary also has some specific responsibilities. In the first place, he's responsible for what I guess you could call the international affairs of the army, which consist principally of the problems of Okinawa and the Panama Canal Zone. Okinawa is run by a civil administration which is headed by a three star army general who reports right back to Headquarters, Department of the Army, for Civil Matters.

We were faced all during my tenure as under secretary with growing pressure, both from the Japanese government and from the residents of Okinawa and the other Ryukyu Islands, for reversion of the island to Japanese sovereignty. This is of course a problem that still faces the United States government and may well come to a head this year. In any event, one of our problems was to try to diminish this pressure as much as we could by a gradual granting to the government of the Ryukyu Islands more and more power over their own affairs. This was a continuous process while I was under secretary, and together with people in the appropriate section of the State Department we worked on this very hard. I took three or four trips out there. We were fortunate in having two army

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generals as high commissioner during that period who were really quite sensitive to the political aspects of the Okinawa problem, and I must say this helped us a great deal.

Now Panama Canal Zone, the under secretary by reason of his position is also chairman of the board of the Panama Canal Company, the president of which is also an army general who doubles as governor of the Canal Zone. The army really has the responsibility for the civil administration of the Zone. Panama Canal Company itself is a business operation, although it being in effect a government corporation it has aspects to it which the private industrialist would find rather odd. But we did run it, or try to run it, like a business organization, with due regard to the political problems in the relations between the U.S. and Panama which any particular action we might like to take might raise.

Now the other kind of problem we faced was those growing out of this sometimes volatile, sometimes tense relationship between Panama and the United States. [This] blossomed into the riots of 1964, which were before my time as under secretary and which I had nothing to do with, but which cropped up in the treaty negotiations which were initiated after the riots of 1964. In [these] the army, really the Under Secretary's Office--I and my deputy under secretary for international affairs who was first Thad Holt and then a fellow named Jim Siena, and both of them very good men--was contributing both people and ideas to our negotiators in the process of that negotiation.

Then, of course, we had this problem last October when Doctor Arias, the popularly elected president, was kicked out by the National Guard. The good Doctor came to the Zone for asylum, which posed a very difficult problem. Because even

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though one of the normal rules of asylum is that the asylee does not engage in political activity, the good Doctor, or at least his henchmen, certainly did engage in political activity. Thus raising the possibility that the new people in control of the Panamanian government would try to come into the Zone to get him, or that he would be able to stimulate some kind of riot in the Republic of Panama which might spill over into the Zone and raise again this thing that everybody wants to avoid, of Americans and Panamanians having a violent confrontation. We had long meetings at the State Department about that one, and I finally went down to the Zone late one Saturday night to try to help. Anyway, we got him out finally, voluntarily.

Another area of my responsibility was manpower and personnel until about a year ago, when the Congress finally gave us permission to establish an assistant secretary position for that function, a long overdue reform. But until that time it was the under secretary's responsibility, and manpower and personnel is an enormous field, running all the way from how you structure your forces from a manpower point of view down to the other end of the scale involving the personal problems of individuals. It's hard to pick out any particular highlights in an area so vast, but I remember we did revise the ROTC curriculum, to provide what I would call an option for universities to have an ROTC curriculum that had less military subjects, less drill and more academic subjects.

Unfortunately, that doesn't seem to have forestalled the kind of ROTC problems we're having today. We did a lot, I think, to help with the problem of the minority group, particularly the blacks in the service. I personally think that the army has been far ahead of most other American institutions in achieving true integration, but there are always

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rough edges in this sort of thing. I think that in various ways we were able to improve the legitimate promotion possibilities for minority group members. We certainly were able to get a foot in the door on increasing the number of Negroes in the National Guard through the so-called New Jersey Test Program.

I might say in that connection with minority group problems, I spent a great deal of time on the open housing program which McNamara initiated, the program which was designed to remove discrimination in housing for military personnel in the United States. [This] involved each military department concentrating on their own bases and installations. In my particular case it involved going to many installations, gathering together the leaders of the local community and the realtors and speaking to them, trying to get them to see what the problem was and why we were concerned with it; in some cases trying to put it quite traumatically; that we asked black men to shed their blood on an equal basis in Vietnam, and, "Goddamn it, they ought to be treated the same at home." Of course, we had no jurisdiction except with respect to our soldiers, and that's who we were talking about.

We were greeted at the outset by the prophets of gloom and doom who said that housing is the one area where you simply cannot make progress, people feel so strongly about it, and apartment house owners saying, "My God, if I let a Negro in my apartment [house], everybody else will move out." Of course, when people really began to try nothing like that happened. All these bogey men turned out to be just that, bogey men, not real. Even a place which I thought would prove almost impossible and where we would have to impose sanctions, that is, put the owners who wouldn't comply off limits,

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put their apartments off limits, a place like southern Virginia, after great initial reluctance came around. Frankly, looking back I think it was one of the most extraordinary success stories that I had anything to do with. I don't think it's by any means perfect yet, but the change is just extraordinary. Another thing that it did was stimulate the same kind of action in communities around the country with respect to all housing. In this area, we saw Montgomery County and Prince George start to talk about open housing laws and so forth and so on.

I think that, going on with the specific responsibilities of the under secretary, he stands at the peak of the whole army judicial system. He has, in effect, the power of amelioration or pardon that a governor of a state has with respect to state crimes, or a president has with respect to a federal crime. There is a whole organization in the under secretary's office which processes cases which come up through a variety of different systems and ways. You have to develop rules about what cases you will personally look at, or you will be overwhelmed with cases. My rule was that I only wanted to look at a case under one of three circumstances: either that there was a division of opinion below; or that it raised a question of policy which was a serious question and had not been adequately resolved in previous cases; or that my special assistant for this matter thought that even though there had been unanimity below that it was just wrong, the result recommended was just wrong for one reason or another. I suppose I spent maybe half a day a week on fulfilling this function.

I had another function which I acquired, I suppose, sometime just after the Detroit riots in the summer of 1967, and that was as the senior Defense Department official with

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day to day responsibility for the military response to civil disturbance. This was a very time consuming job because, really, until Detroit came along there had been no civil disturbance or riot in which federal forces had had to intervene since 1943 or something like that. So while there was a lot of doctrine in the area and so forth, there hadn't been any really detailed planning. Particularly there hadn't been any detailed planning for the kind of situation where, as happened after Dr. King's assassination, you had to respond to several different contingencies at roughly the same time.

So we had a tremendous planning operation which I really headed, and we had in the course of this to resolve with the Justice Department some pretty difficult policy problems. "Who's in charge on the local scene?" "Is that general in charge, or is there a civilian in charge, or who is in charge?" "What are the rules of engagement?" "How much force do you use under what circumstances?" That latter problem is one which is still being debated in America, and it's a very, very tough problem. My belief has always been that one uses minimum force necessary to accomplish the mission, which is a statement which doesn't say very much, actually. It happens to be army doctrine going back to 1800. But when translated into actual operations, what that means is you get the maximum number of people there just as fast as you can, because the more people you have more quickly, the less likely it is you'll ever have to shoot.

Now you can see that if you follow that theory your planning problem of marrying up airplanes and troops and so forth and so on is a pretty difficult problem. So we want to get a lot of people there fast. Anyway, we had to go through all this, and I hope we left our successors a pretty good set of plans and organization and a much larger

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number of people trained in civil disturbance control techniques, not only the army itself but local police and National Guard. One hopes that because the local authorities are better trained and better understand their problems, that maybe the army won't have to be used anymore. We will just cross our fingers and see.

Another special responsibility of the under secretary was the old problem of the reserves and the National Guard. We had this knockdown, drag out fight over the so-called merger of the two, which involved really an administrative melding of the reserve into the guard. But more importantly, it involved the discontinuation of a large number of units as being no longer necessary and a strengthening of the remainder of the force. That was finally resolved. We didn't get the merger, but we got everything else. We got the more important part, and I think now have a reserve and National Guard which are matched roughly to the national requirement, rather than one which was out of balance. The whole area of reserves and National Guard, however, I think needs a great deal of work. We spent so much time on this merger that we really didn't put in enough effort on the other things which needed to be worked on: increasing readiness, improving the training, improving the quality of the officers, and so forth. All those are continuing matters to which I gave attention which are going to need a lot more attention.

Now needless to say Vietnam was something we were all involved in all the time. One of the penalties I think you pay for being involved in something like that is that quite obviously you have much less time to spend on anything else. It's sort of sad as you think back, you think of all these things that needed doing that simply nobody had time to do or pay adequate attention to. Reserve and Guard is one example. But we went through a

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series of build-up plans for Vietnam as the President approved increases in forces there, and while this, as I said, on the one hand left people with less time to work on some other problems, it did stimulate the progress toward solution of some matters.

One of the great problems in the army, with this enormous organization, [is that] problems of inadequate management, information systems, are very difficult to overcome. And the senior executives like the secretary and the under secretary are often lacking adequate information on which to make a decision. This is something which is soluble over time by the use of computers and so forth, and I think really under Stan Resor's leadership we made great strides. The ability of people in the army, both military and civilian, to manage the army in an intelligent way has already been greatly increased over what it was three years ago, and three years from now will again have been greatly increased over what it is today. That's probably from a management point of view the most striking advance that's been made in the army while Mr. Johnson was president.

From an operational point of view, I would suppose the ability to send all these troops to Vietnam and supply them and keep them supplied and support them, even though they were rotating on a twelve month basis, is really quite an achievement. Had we had the management system in effect that we now have, or will have, at the time Vietnam began, we could have done it all more cheaply, I think. Flow much more, I don't know.

McS: Mr. McGiffert, I'd like to go back and just ask if you had any activities in some specific areas. Regarding Panama, did you ever do any studies on the second sea level canal?

McG: I didn't work on any of them. I was generally familiar with what was going on, but I had

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no direct participation.

McS: Can you shed any light on what happened to it?

McG: Oh, they're still working. They got, I think, another extension from Congress, but they haven't come up with a product yet.

McS: Now related to Vietnam, were you in any of the conferences regarding a troop build-up and use of the reserve?

McG: Yes. I wasn't in a policy making position with respect to what we ought to do in Vietnam. I was in innumerable conferences about how we should do what had been decided on, a method of implementing decisions going back, as a matter of fact, all the way to the summer of, I guess, 1965, when I was in my previous job. There were a series of planning conferences within the Pentagon which started out on the assumption that we were going to call reserves. The planning was going on on the basis that we were going to call reserves. Then those signals got switched, and by whom or in what way, by what means, I don't know. All that planning just stopped, and we started over again on the basis that we were not going to call reserves.

McS: What time was this?

McG: Summer of 1965.

McS: Did it have anything to do with the level of the army? Troop level. Force level. I think you brought it up.

McG: Cy Vance was running the initial planning meetings. McNamara was not there; I don't know where he was. And things changed when McNamara came back. I don't know for a fact, but I've always suspected that McNamara thought, and certainly this is what he

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said to Congress after the fact, that from the point of view of public support of the war--I'm phrasing it wrong--from the point of view of the overall U.S. military posture it was unwise to call the reserves, because they were essentially a wasting asset. Once they were called and used, they couldn't be reconstructed quickly, and he thought that they ought to be held in reserve. The problem could be handled by using the regular forces, and indeed he turned out to be right over a considerable period of time. I suspect he may also have thought, and again I don't know, that calling reserves would pose a much more difficult problem of public reaction to the war. Because these are units that are much deeper embedded in grassroots America than just the regular units. There was great pressure from many members of Congress to call the reserves, but he resisted it.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I].

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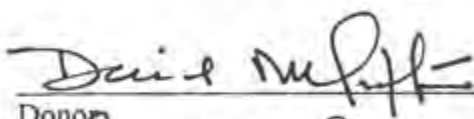
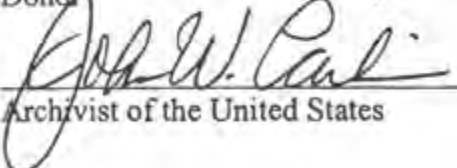
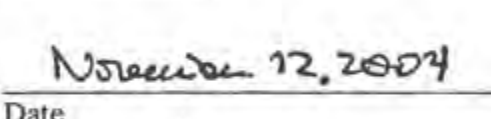
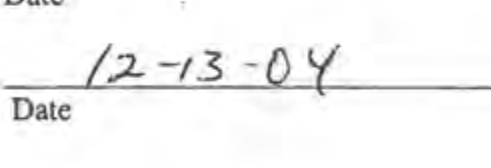
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DAVID McGIFFERT

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