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INTERVIEW I

DATE: March 18, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: EUGENE M. ZUCKERT

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE McSWEENY

PLACE: Mr. Zuckert's office, 888 17th Street, NW, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2

M: Mr. Zuckert, I'd like to begin this interview with a brief resume of your background to just get the dates down of your various positions. Before your appointment as secretary of the air force, you had been one of the longest serving assistant secretaries of the air force, from its inception in 1947 to 1952, under Stuart Symington. Then you received a two-year appointment to the Atomic Energy Commission from 1952 to 1954. From 1954 to 1960 you were in private law practice in Washington, D.C., and associated with several companies working in the atomic energy field. Also, you co-authored a book called Atomic Energy for Your Business. Do I have the correct background information?

Z: That's substantially true. Actually, I was assistant secretary under both Secretary Symington and Secretary [Thomas K.] Finletter. I didn't receive a two-year appointment to the AEC. I received the balance of Sumner Pike's term and was not reappointed by President Eisenhower.

M: I'd like to get started just generally speaking and ask you if you recall your very first acquaintance or association with Mr. Lyndon Johnson.

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Z: Yes. I think the first time I ever met him was through Stuart Symington, who became a close friend of his when the President was a member of Congress. I saw him only occasionally, and I want to stress throughout this that I've never been actually intimate with the President or close to the President, but I have known him over a long period of time.

In the early days, I worked closest and on a fairly frequent basis with Walter Jenkins on the kinds of things that congressmen and senators are so interested in, such as transfers of enlisted men, hardship discharges. The first contact I remember was making the Finance Office at San Marcos, Texas, a Class B Finance Office, whatever that is, but that kind of problem.

Then towards the end of my tenure as assistant secretary, the President was head of the [Senate Preparedness] Investigating [Sub] committee--I guess equivalent to the old Truman Committee. We got into a hassle over the recruiting at Lackland Air Force Base. What happened was that in that period in December, 1951, over the Christmas vacation--the early part of Korea--the Air Force recruited too many college kids who wanted to avoid the draft into the Army. We had a situation down at Lackland where we combined cold and inclement weather with overcrowding and putting the boys into tents. The rumors went around that they were dying like flies down there. So the Senator [Johnson] formed an investigating subcommittee, a former FBI man and three or four fellows like that. So the Secretary of the Air Force called me in California, and I organized an investigating committee

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of outstanding Americans. We used to go around and follow each other around Lackland Air Force Base at night, picking the blankets off these poor kids and asking them whether they were warm enough. It was almost a comic situation. It was good because actually people weren't dying--the rumors were exaggerated--but the Air Force had been careless. We got out a statement before Senator Johnson got out his statement, and he called me over to his office, and he took me up one side and down the other. He was pretty upset that we had pre-empted his investigation.

M: Your first one, you indicated, was when he was still a congressman. That would be in the late forties, is that right?

Z: That's right.

M: Then you've brought this up to date through the early fifties.

Z: 1952. I don't ever recall having anything at all in contact with him when I was on the Atomic Energy Commission. Most of our congressional contacts were with the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, which kept us busy.

The next real contact that I remember was in the campaign of 1960 when I was working for Senator Symington. It was Symington and Johnson and somebody else, who were hoping to be [nominated]. I forget.

M: [Adlai] Stevenson.

Z: Stevenson. But the Stevenson campaign was a belated thing. Our campaign wasn't very good. We used to call the Johnson campaign

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the invisible campaign with the invisible delegates, because we couldn't see what they were doing in the way of laying in any real grass-roots support. We had the feeling that the Johnson people--and I knew some of them personally pretty well--thought that because they had [Sam] Rayburn's backing and so many of the congressmen [were] beholden to the Senator, that somehow they were going to get delegates at Los Angeles. Well, as it turned out, of course, they didn't and we didn't. I think that people always had the feeling that Kennedy would come back to them, that he couldn't possibly get nominated, and the momentum of that steamroller was pretty badly underestimated.

M: Did you form any alliances during the campaign for any Stop Kennedy movements?

Z: No. I think that from my observations of it--and I was at the headquarters from early June until the convention--nobody formed a real alliance. There was no real unified effort among the two candidates. The Stevenson movement, of course, that was emotional that came at the end, that was very touching, but didn't really have too much substance to it. I always felt that the Kennedy victory was a lot narrower than people thought, because it appeared to me that he couldn't have gotten many more delegates than he got on that first ballot. It wasn't until he swung places like North Dakota and Alaska there at the end that he really had it in the bag.

M: Did you have the feeling that that convention was pretty well organized for him, though?

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Z: Oh, yes. Every time we ran across the Kennedy steamroller, we got the feeling of where the momentum was. Then, of course, while I wasn't close to it, I sat in the Symington headquarters with the Senator when we were sweating out who was going to be the vice president that morning after the presidential nomination. Of course, we didn't get it.

M: Did the Senator think that he was a possible choice?

Z: Yes. I think he did. I mean, Clark Clifford was our ambassador with President Kennedy and his headquarters.

M: Were you much surprised with the nomination of Mr. Johnson as vice president?

Z: No, I wasn't really surprised. I was disappointed, because I had worked hard for Senator Symington from early winter until that morning, but I wasn't surprised.

M: Did you think Senator Symington had much of a chance at the convention?

Z: For president?

M: Yes.

Z: No.

M: Was the campaign geared to set him up for vice president?

Z: No, I think he was really trying. But on the other hand, I think that we just didn't have the horses to buck the kind of professional politicians that we were up against.

M: People have expressed a lot of surprise that Mr. Johnson accepted that nomination due to the powerful position he already was in.

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Do you have any comments on that?

Z: I didn't have any feeling. I was surprised, too, because I knew there was a lot of bitterness between the Senator and some of the Kennedy people, and between his people and their people. But I wasn't surprised. Things happen in politics so that we rarely get surprised.

M: Let me ask you here, what were your, more or less, first impressions that you had upon meeting and talking with Mr. Johnson over--this was almost about a ten-year span here.

Z: I was always tremendously impressed with his strength. The range of the man has always been the thing that impressed me, the fact that he could be so many places at once. This has been an impression that has been with me since the beginning.

M: Do you recall any direct conversations in these meetings that you have already mentioned, beginning back with the San Marcos one, coming forward?

Z: Oh, I can recall . . . Yes, from time to time we would talk to him, and if we weren't able to do what he wanted to do, he would express his great displeasure in forceful terms. But it always seemed to me that if he had the feeling--and I don't mean to sound trite about this--but I always had the feeling that if he really thought I was trying, that he was apt to be more forgiving than otherwise. On the Lackland Air Force Base one, though, he was really upset. And he was upset with the general who went in with me that day to try to explain the thing to him. We got the impression that Senator Johnson would carry a grudge, when he had a feeling

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he'd been badly dealt with--as perhaps he was, in that case, by our pre-empting his investigation.

M: I have noted down here that in 1948 you served on a committee to set up the Unified Court Martial Code. Did you have any contact with Mr. Johnson then?

Z: No. This was purely inside the Defense Department, although I think I did testify on the Hill in favor of the code that we came up with. But we had no contact with him.

M: To bring this up a little chronologically here, did you have occasion to meet with Mr. Johnson during his vice presidency?

Z: Yes. Several times. A couple of times socially that I remember. I remember him being kind enough to invite me up to a lunch in Senator [H. Styles] Bridges office in January 1963, which is the locus of an event that I'm going to want to speak about a little later when we get to the TFX case. But I saw him socially. He was kind enough to invite us to his house.

But the only business meetings, I recall, that we were in was in the Programs for Progress. In other words, the program where we, as Defense officials, were supposed to get our contractors to sign agreements not to discriminate--those who held our contracts. The [Vice] President had been put in charge of that program.

There were two things I remember. One was--and I can't recall the chronology--but I do remember that originally, if I remember correctly, it was a fellow named Bobby Troutman from Atlanta, who was a Kennedy man I'd first met in the Kennedy campaign in 1960, [who] was in charge of the program. There was quite a conflict

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over how that program should be run. I forget the details, but I remember there was a real hassle.

The second thing is [that] I remember the Vice President being very unhappy about the results that we were achieving. At one of the meetings he chewed me out the hardest, which I felt a little bit upset about at that time, because the Air Force was doing the best of any of the services. I got the impression that this was really quite a limited use of the [Vice] President's abilities. Although I knew he was interested in the program, sincerely interested in the program, I didn't get the idea that he was too happy with having this kind of thing he had to work with.

M: Sir, who was the gentleman you mentioned?

Z: Troutman. T-R-O-U-T-M-A-N. He comes from a fine Atlanta family. He was a Kennedy campaign manager. He was an advance manager in Los Angeles, if I remember correctly. I forget whether the problem was whether it was to be a voluntary program, or where it was to be compulsory, but there was some issue like that, and eventually Troutman left.

M: Do you recall any direct conversations during this period with him, between you and he?

Z: I want to go back to that one when you get to the TFX, that either did or didn't take place.

M: All right, Mr. Zuckert, that is some of my next questions. Let me just add here that I'm not necessarily approaching this chronologically. I'm sort of taking some of the most controversial issues.

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Z: You are the doctor.

M: The TFX of F-111 series has developed over time to certainly be one of the more controversial ones. You were one of the principals involved in this decision to develop a multi-service plane and the awarding of the contract to General Dynamics, along with Mr. [Fred] Korth, Mr. [Roswell] Gilpatric, and, of course, Mr. [Robert] McNamara. Would you sort of begin and tell me about the problem?

Z: Let me try to put it into two different phases for you. Let's see if I can make it short enough so that we can do it on this tape. There were two phases to the problem. The first was whether or not there should be a single plane for the two services. This argument started early in Secretary McNamara's administration, and he directed us to get together with the Navy to try to find out whether we could compromise our requirements so that we could come up with a single plane. I designated Under Secretary [Joseph] Charyk--C-H-A-R-Y-K--to represent the Air Force in the negotiations. By August--and I'm approximating because I don't remember the dates, but it was either July or August--I wrote Secretary McNamara that I was convinced that we couldn't compromise the requirements so as to get one plane for the two services. The Air Force was willing to take the weight, but we needed the range and the supersonic dash and the Navy was concerned about lower weight because of carrier suitability.

Secretary McNamara directed the group to intensify its efforts to come up with a single airplane, and by September, if I recall, we had requirements that people could agree on that would seem to

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indicate it was useful to begin a competition. Now this was about September, 1961. The competition has been, I guess, gone over from Maine to Spain and lasted from the fall of 1961 until the end of November, 1962.

There were a great many misconceptions. I'm not going to go into those in detail, because they are well covered in the hundred page statement that I gave to the McClellan Committee in the hearings in July and August, 1963. There are several questions I know you'll want to ask me about this period. But I wanted to get over that there were two distinct phases to this thing and that in the competition, the second phase, we were accepting as a major premise--I was taking as a directive--that one plane should be built which would be for the two services.

Then we get to the post-award phase, the third phase, and this was the trouble phase, when in December, 1962, I guess with the prodding of Senator [Henry] Jackson, the McClellan Committee got into this thing. At least partly because of some, perhaps, bad handling--at least, unfortunate handling--between the Defense Department and Senator [John] McClellan's committee, we got into the morass of the hearings.

You want to go to Senator Johnson now? Have I laid the outline of it?

M: Yes.

Z: Senator Johnson--the Vice President he was then--the Vice President was an unfortunate victim of this, if indeed he ever felt it did

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him any harm, because nobody had less to do with the TFX case from its beginning than the Vice President. I was interviewed on by Jack Anderson of [Drew] Pearson and Anderson. I took great pains--this had to be in 1963--to emphasize what was the truth, that the Vice President didn't have the slightest connection with the selection process. In fact, he didn't know on the Saturday that we made the announcement in late November that there had been an award to General Dynamics. He was out of the pattern completely. I cited to Anderson--I don't remember the question he asked me, but he later published it in the column, and it's out of context--that the Vice President and I had discussed it on only one occasion. It was unfortunate however I worded it, because what happened was the Vice President didn't remember and denied that the conversation ever took place.

At that luncheon that Senator Bridges gave in January 1963, the Vice President stepped up to wash his hands behind a screen. I remember it being apart from the group. And all I said to him [was], "Mr. Vice President, we are going to have a hell of a time with this TFX thing." Because, by that time, the McClellan Committee had been into it. I didn't know what he had heard or how much he'd heard, but I felt he should know.

When Pearson and Anderson came around to the Vice President--I guess he was president then--he denied ever having that conversation. It was so short that he could have forgotten it. But that was the only connection he ever had, to my knowledge, with the TFX case.

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M: And that came after the awarding [of the contract]?

Z: And that was after the award. That was in January in 1963. The award was a month or so earlier. Now, I've always felt that it was unfortunate that because General Dynamics was in Texas, there should have been any implication that President Johnson was involved. This was entirely the work of McNamara and his cohorts, including me. What happened on the award was that Secretary McNamara was always concerned about the cost. This is November now. We had a meeting one day in which I told him that the Boeing costs were lower, but that there were a great many technical factors which made the Boeing plane a greater risk. He said he didn't believe the cost figures. He hadn't ever seen any costs he believed, and he didn't believe that anybody had the basis upon which they could truly evaluate the difference in cost. When we got into the figures, of course, this turned out to be true. You just couldn't substantiate a cost advantage for either one.

I talked to Secretary McNamara at a meeting that afternoon. . . We went into discussion again. This was early November, probably, 1962. I told Secretary McNamara that I had made a tentative decision to recommend that we would go the General Dynamics route, but I said that I wanted to go through the record, the entire record, in order to determine whether or not there were any factors that gave me doubt. In which case, I would go back.

I spent the next couple of weeks going through that record. I'm the only man who ever went through the whole record of that case. (Interruption) The generals--so-called military experts--they were given briefings, and they made their decision very quickly.

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The decision that was made by me and by Secretary Korth was based upon my close, thorough study of that record. The details of this don't need repeating, because they're well described in the McClellan Committee hearings. But, again, I say, it was just unfortunate that it was Texas, because there was not the shadow of a connection between the Vice President and the decision in this case.

M: Let me back up now and ask you some specific questions. On the decision to have a multi-service plane, did you finally justify to yourself that this was practical and desirable?

Z: Let me put it this way--and there is an awful lot of hindsight that probably goes into this. I'm going to tell you something that I finally figured happened in this case. We have had many cases in the past where one plane has been used for the two services. Take the F-4C, the McDonnell airplane today, that's being used by the Navy and the Air Force. There are a great many other examples. If I had time I could tell them to you. The difficulty, though, is if a service doesn't want to use it, it becomes very, very tricky to try to build an airplane that will suit their purposes.

The difference between the F-4C case, which I've cited to you, and the TFX case was that the F-4C was originally a Navy plane, the F-4H. When we got to the point of deciding we could use it for the Air Force--or rather Secretary McNamara told us we had to--the F 4 was in being. It was there. There were just a certain number of things that you could do to it. But when you have a paper airplane--which was the status of the TFX airplane in the period that we're talking now, right after the award--you had a preliminary

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design. Then you get the service in, and they say, "Oh, that nose won't meet our requirements, not enough visibility." So they change the nose. They can make so many changes that they'll compromise the airplane right out of practicality for dual service use. They were able to degrade the airplane, because they didn't want it, and because they wanted to make it ideal as far as they were concerned. They didn't accept something that was in being. Am I making myself clear?

M: Yes.

Z: I think that's what ruled out the possibility, that the working part of the Navy, the people in the Bureau, civilians and military, were so incensed by not having a procurement program that they weren't going to manage--a Navy airplane that wasn't going to be managed by them--that they had no heart for making the thing work.

M: Just prior to the awarding, sir, do you recall any or were you aware of any political pressure brought to bear on the decision of which corporation got the bid?

Z: I told Jack Anderson when he interviewed me, that if there was pressure, I must have been the fellow who was in the eye of the hurricane, because I didn't feel it. I got several calls and I detailed those in the McClellan hearings. One of them, I remember, was from Senator [Robert] Kerr, but this had to do with subcontract work and not the award itself. The people who did talk to me were easily brushed off by the statement that we were giving both sides full consideration. I think, actually, I received something like seven calls. But there was nothing, nothing resembling pressure.

M: What conversations did you have regarding this issue with the White

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House, then-President Kennedy?

Z: I never had any. The conversations between the White House--and I think these have been detailed in the hearings--were between Secretary McNamara and the President. He informed them of our tentative decision in November, 1962.

There were a lot of real bloopers that permitted this thing to get to the stage that it did. One of them was mine. I thought that we should have some kind of rationale just so that if this thing ever did come into controversy--and Secretary Korth and I were both afraid that it would because of the feelings of the military--we thought we ought to have at least the outlines of the rationale. The difficulty was that's just what it was, an outline. It was not a thorough, well-prepared, full expression of our views. As a result. . .You know every once in a while you learn by your lessons and in the C-5A competition in 1965--which was the big transport, where we decided for Lockheed against Boeing--we had a thoroughly documented explanation of the rationale. This was one serious difficulty.

The second was that when the McClellan Committee got into this at Senator Jackson's urging, two things happened. One was [that] they asked us to hold up the award, or the signing of a contract or a preliminary contract or whatever it was, until they could have a chance to discuss the matter with us. And while I was away in the Far East, Under Secretary Gilpatric wrote Senator McClellan a letter--which Senator McClellan indicated to me many times afterwards didn't make

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him very happy--in which Gilpatric said flatly that he wasn't going to hold up the award.

Another thing happened. I wasn't an eyewitness, but this was my understanding. Secretary McNamara went over to see McClellan. He and the Chairman [McClellan] didn't get along from the beginning of this little conversation, and I think this hardened the Chairman's inclination to have a full-scale investigation. What happened was pretty funny. The Chairman said, "Well, you're a very busy man, Secretary McNamara. We'll just have the lower level people in for two or three days, and then we'll have you in to sum up." By the time the lower level people got through mangling the testimony, we were behind about 273 to nothing, and we were in for the hearing that we got. I testified on eighteen different occasions for thirty-one hours. When I was down one time in Arkansas with Senator McClellan, I told him I thought that I probably had testified before him longer than anybody who wasn't actually under indictment or in jail. He agreed that was probably true.

M: I don't want to stop you on this. Do you have any other areas that you recall?

Z: No. I think it's pretty well outlined in the hearings. There was a very good rationale for the choosing of General Dynamics. It's tough now, of course, because you're judging the General Dynamics plane against a plane that was never built. The airplane we did not select is like someone that's gone to heaven and acquired a lot of previously undiscovered virtues. But there were some very good reasons for picking the General Dynamics airplane.

M: The F-111 that has been flying has not been very successful.

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Z: I don't believe that's true. In the first place, the Air Force people tell me it's not true. In the second place, the statistics will show you that you have a high rate of accidents in any new airplane in the early life, rather dreadfully high in any research and development airplane. If you compare the number of hours the F-111 has flown against any earlier plane you want to pick, the F-111's record is still a comparatively good record.

M: Perhaps it's the publicity that's misleading on this.

Z: Well, it's response to the old law that when things are bad, they always get worse. When the plane became the focus of attention, then everything that happens acquired some kind of an extra dimension of attention.

M: I agree. Do you think that there are any other things in this area that we haven't covered. I think you have fully elaborated on it.

Z: I can't think of anything because I think, for your purposes, that we have to go back to the one solid fact that Vice President--or President Johnson--just wasn't in it.

M: I'd like to sort of throw this open and ask you, just in general, some of the more significant events that occurred during your service as secretary of the air force. I think this begins, of course, in the area--in terms of controversy--with something like the Cuban missile crisis. [That] would be one of the first ones.

Z: I guess the German crisis was the first thing.

M: The Berlin . . .?

Z: The Berlin crisis was first, in the fall of 1961. Cuba was 1962.

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The TFX was 1962. Let's see what do we have here . . . 1963 was . . .

M: 1963 would be the change in administrations, which I do not . . .

Z: That's right. 1963 was the death of President Kennedy. I was down there in Texas with them the day before he was killed.

M: I'd like to go into that with you.

Z: Would you?

M: Yes.

Z: We have a picture outside that you should see. It has part of the platform on which he spoke that day. Do you want a brief thing on that event?

M: Yes. Why don't we go into that, and then I'll go back to ask you some of these others. I do have some others.

Z: We had some good things happen in these years, too, you know.

M: Yes, and along those same lines is the SST development which occurred during [that time], the decision to go into that. Some very advanced aircraft began developing at that point.

Z: That's right. We came into missile age, really, then.

M: You had the beginning of SAC [Strategic Air Command] development--

Z: No.

M: --way back in 1961 actually, wasn't it?

Z: SAC missile--SAC as a missile force, yes.

M: Yes.

Z: Although they had been in the Atlas and Titan. They had a few Atlas missiles before we really came into the missile program which had been started in the Eisenhower Administration. Really

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it came into being in 1961, 1962. In 1963 the first solid propellant ICBM, the Minuteman went into the ground, actually became operational.

Well, the other . . . it's a small incident, but, of course, lives in my memory. That was in 1963. The President [Kennedy], as you know, went down to Texas, because of that political problem down there. I guess that's a fair statement. At least, that's what I was told. And somebody, I don't remember who, asked us if we had anything doing down there that President Kennedy could legitimately attend. It just happened that we did have. We had the formal opening of an addition to our Space Medicine Facility down in Texas, near San Antonio. So the President was invited and accepted with alacrity. I flew down that morning and introduced him. He was the speaker and gave his famous, "We have thrown our cap over the wall of space" speech. He had Mrs. Kennedy there, and they let all the base personnel and their kids on the place. I'll never forget how striking Mrs. Kennedy was. [I] walked along with her, and these kids would look up with just adoration in their faces. After the President's speech, we had a little tour. They took the President and Mrs. Kennedy over to some place where we had some people living in an oxygen-free environment, and he saw the place, and it's quite impressive.

Just as we were going at the end--he was going that night to Houston, if I remember--he stopped me at the top of the stairs. He said, "Are you coming on the rest of the trip with us?" I said, "No, sir. I just came down here for this, and it's a great honor that you would come over here." He kind of grinned, and he said, "Well, it was very nice. They can't say that this trip wasn't non-political now, can they?" And he ran down to the car, and

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that's the last time I saw him.

M: You didn't stay in Texas during this period of time?

Z: No, I flew right back.

M: Did you have any immediate conversations with Mr. Johnson after the assassination?

Z: No. I just saw him that next day, that Saturday, in the White House.

M: Could you tell me about that event?

Z: I can remember it so vividly, because, of course, all of us were . . . Our nerves were just, I guess, so tremendously scarred. I can remember what a miserable rainy day it was. I can remember even the smell of the people's wet coats as they stood there. I had gone up to pay my respects at the bier and come down with my wife. Then all of a sudden somebody said, "The President is coming through." Well, that made me jump about a foot-and-a-half, because I hadn't thought of Mr. Johnson . . . had never heard it said, you know, the President. I was standing next to Carl Rowan. The President walked quickly through this mob, and, even with all the tension he was under and everything, he suddenly saw Rowan standing next to me, came over, and he grabbed him by the arm. He said, "Carl, I want to be talking to you in the next few days." Then he turned and went on. Of course, four or five days later, he named him head of the Office of--what's it called--Information?

M: I keep thinking USIA?

Z: Yes. USIA.

M: To get this a little wider span in time, did you have any meetings

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with Mr. Johnson within the next couple of months after the assassination?

Z: That picture up there is a picture of the lunch that was the first time that Mr. Johnson, that the President came over to the Pentagon after the assassination. It was probably Tuesday or Wednesday the following week. It came very quickly. It may have been ten days, but I doubt it. As you see, we had the service Secretaries, the Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense. And that's Walter Jenkins there on the end. Nothing great was decided, except the President said some gracious things about all of us and how he relied on our help.

M: Didn't it come to your mind, or do you recall if you submitted a letter of resignation at this time?

Z: I can't remember whether we did. I know it was discussed, but I can't remember whether we did or not.

M: Did you see any immediate changes in the Defense procedure or policy or decision-making process?

Z: No. I don't think so. The President relied so heavily on Secretary McNamara, that down at my level--and President Kennedy had, too--that most of the direct, the important issues came to us through Secretary McNamara, not in direct contact with the White House.

There was a different pace to the--I don't know to describe it--a different tone from the way that President Kennedy operated in contrast to President Johnson. I remember one of the assistant secretaries the night--the Monday night . . . Of course,

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this was partly emotional . . . But just early, the Monday after the assassination, I was going out of the building, and one of the assistant secretaries of defense came to me--we were walking out together--and he said, "Well, things will go on. But they'll never be as much fun." And they weren't. There was a certain fun in working for President Kennedy that's very difficult to describe. But it didn't exist in the Johnson Administration. This is not a criticism; it was just a total difference in style. Your contacts with President Kennedy--there was a lot less tenseness when you dealt with him even though some of my meetings with President Kennedy involved serious problems like the B-70. President Johnson was much more all business in his dealings with those of us with whom he only dealt occasionally.

We attended a ceremony over at the White House in President Kennedy's last months, for example, for General [Emmett] O'Donnell on retirement or giving him the DSM or something. It was a lot more relaxed, a lot more--just light. I'd go to bill signings at the White House with President Johnson, and there would be jokes and everything, but it just wasn't the same. There were a lot less contacts with the White House assistants. At least, I had a lot less. I mean more people were at me from the White House in the Kennedy regime than in the Johnson regime.

But they both had one quality in common, and I guess that's the politician's sense of how important it is to do some human things, humane things. For example, in President Kennedy's case, one Saturday at the office, I got a call directing me on behalf of the President--a call from [Pierre] Salinger--directing me to

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provide airlift for some child down to a hospital in Florida who was suffering from some disease. I don't remember whether it was a friend of the President's, or whether . . . No, I think the case had come to his attention through the newspaper.

In President Johnson's case, the same kind of thing happened, when we had the Titan II missile disaster at Searcy, Arkansas. I guess that was 1965. On August 11, I was out of town, and when I got back, my office was jittery because the President had called. He had either called McNamara, or had someone call us and told me to get myself down to Arkansas with Senators Fulbright and McClellan, Congressman Mills, and come back and make a report to him about the incident. It was very effective. You'd think that a man who had all that he had to worry about wouldn't be worrying about a tragedy, even one such as that. But he sensed the importance to it and directed us to get down there. Fulbright went down there despite the fact that he had only gotten back from Europe either late the night before we flew down, or early that morning and could hardly keep his eyes open. But the President said, "Go down there." Everybody then began to assume it was pretty important, so we went down there.

With President Kennedy, although it didn't happen often, he'd call people way down the line, or down the line, to get a fact. In this way, they were both pretty similar. But it was a different kind of an operation, much warmer. The things I had to deal with, President Kennedy would confer with a lot more people than

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it was my observation that President Johnson would.

An exception to this was in 1965. The decision was pending as to whether or not we should escalate the troop strength in Vietnam. I had resigned in July. This meeting, I guess, was in August. The President called us all over there--the Chiefs, the Secretaries, the Secretary-designate of the Air Force, Harold Brown--and went around the table and asked each one of us our opinion on whether or not we should escalate. I remember Stan Resor, the secretary of the army, had been in about two weeks or something and he said he didn't really know whether he should, because he hadn't been there very long. The President wouldn't let him get away with that answer. I remember that. But this was rare. Let me see, how should I say it? I think the President had a lot more . . . His team of advisors was a lot more structured than under the Kennedy Administration. I don't know whether I'm expressing myself well or not.

M: Who did you deal with, primarily, on the staff under Mr. Johnson?

Z: Well, on the occasions that I had to, I dealt mostly with [Joseph] Califano or [Larry] Levinson--Levinson, because he had been one of my counsel on the TFX case.

M: Since you had known Mr. Johnson before--and a relatively long time before, at least when you'd first met him--did this bring about any occasions where he either remarked about instances of having met you before, or [was it] a sort of entree?

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Z: I was never intimate with the President. He knows my first name, and I'm sure he would recognize me today, but we never were close.

M: Were you aware of any friction, or did you see any example of any friction between John Kennedy's staff and Mr. Johnson's staff?

Z: No. I had no more access than anybody else. You could sense it, but you never saw it.

M: Just a question on your own opinion, do you think that Mr. Johnson should have kept on as many of Mr. John Kennedy's appointments? Of course, you were one of them yourself.

Z: I think there was a lot that was gained by it. In the first place, I think it was important at the time to stress continuity. I don't think it would have reflected well on the President to do otherwise. In fact, it's inconceivable to me that he would have gotten himself in that position, when it would [not] have reflected well if he hadn't taken the Kennedy team. Of course, I was not one of the longtime Kennedy men. I was not beloved by many of the Kennedy people, because of my close connection with the Symington campaign in 1960. You know. to be for him during the election was a little bit late from their point of view. But my feeling is that it was eminently the wise thing to keep them on, because some would stay, and inevitably some would drift off in a short time, as they did.

M: And what about, of course, after 1964?

Z: Well, 1964.

M: After his election.

Z: I can't remember anybody except [Lawrence] O'Brien and McNamara.

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Well, there was [Stewart] Udall. There were quite a few of them still, but that goes to show what I mean. Some of them, the ones you wanted to keep, would stay, and the ones who didn't have it in their heart to stay would gradually peel off.

(Interruption)

M: Do you have any further comments on that as far as appointments, personnel?

Z: No.

M: Did you have occasions during Mr. Johnson's presidency to be called to the White House? You've mentioned one, of course--the discussion of the commitment of ground troops in Vietnam in 1965. Were there others?

Z: I'm wrong. I know there were a couple, but I can't remember the incidents. But I know that most of the time it was in connection with ceremonial events like bill signings or presentations or this type of thing.

M: Did you get directives from the White House very often?

Z: No. I got my directives through Secretary McNamara.

M: Was the impetus of it being from the [President]?

Z: Oh, yes. He would often say that the President wishes this, the President wishes that. But you'd go back through McNamara, or he would designate Mr. Califano--who was McNamara's assistant prior to the time he was [at the White House]--to work on problems. Occasionally we'd get one [a phone call] from Mr. Califano. You know, "Come up with a list of Negro officers by name, above the rank of second lieutenant." We'd get that around seven o'clock at night and wouldn't

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have to have it before six-thirty the next morning. You know, one of of those things.

We got a pretty good view that the President was an activist, and when he wanted something, he wanted it pretty fast. So that I developed a regular machine over in my place for handling these requests from the White House. I had a very capable exec who knew our part of the Pentagon real well, and we could get organized pretty fast, because there were all sorts of requests for information that would come across on a tomorrow-morning-deadline basis.

M: Do you recall any of these, in particular, that stand out in your mind?

Z: I don't know. But I do remember that there were some, particularly in connection with the discrimination problem. My exec sure would remember.

M: You mentioned his name before. No, that was the general counsel. I'm sorry. Who was your exec that you're speaking of now?

Z: General [Buddy R.] Daughtrey. D-A-U-G-H-T-R-E-Y. Now serving in Japan. You mentioned the SST. You want to go back to that for a minute?

M: Yes.

Z: All right, the SST. I can't remember the chronology, but I do remember that President Kennedy became concerned about [Najeeb E] Halaby's recommendations and that the problem landed in McNamara's lap as to what we should do on the SST. I just can't remember the dates. I remember McNamara getting this assignment, like on a Friday, and organizing a task force to which I supplied Secretary [Alexander] Flax, my assistant secretary for research and development,

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and Bert Goodwin and Levinson. Larry later went over to the White House. And between Friday and Tuesday, Secretary McNamara and this task force, of which my boys were three of the members, I think, put together a book about six inches thick for that first meeting of the President's special SST committee. This was a typical McNamara operation.

Then I kept tuned in to the play. I had to fight off various generals in the Air Force who wanted the Air Force to build the SST. Their argument was, "If we build it, it will be built right. We need it. Can you imagine having a supersonic transport airplane, and we not having it, and being able to ship passengers to Paris faster than you can fly military people there?" And I resisted this. I said the best way not to get a SST is to have the Air Force look as if they want it. McNamara, of course, had concluded, with no uncertainty at all, that there was no military requirement for it. So I kept our people out of the play, except my people who were on McNamara's team.

Now, this had to be back in Kennedy's time. Yes. The next thing that I remember was flying to Colorado Springs with President Kennedy to the Air Force [Academy] graduation in June, 1962. I had my counterpart from England on the plane, who was an old friend of the President's, Hugh Fraser. He was the Labour secretary of state for air. And the President came back during the flight where we were sitting, and told us he had just decided to go ahead with the SST. I've got to separate what he told us from what somebody else told me. Somebody else, and I don't recall who, told me that Juan Trippe had told President Kennedy

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that morning that he was exercising an option on some Concordes, or Kennedy had heard it, one or the other. The President felt that this was not in accordance with what he had understood that Trippe was going to do, and he was pretty incensed. I guess this was the final event that catalyzed him into a decision to go ahead with a U.S. supersonic transport. While we were on Air Force One going to Colorado, he had written something to interpolate into that speech, which was the announcement of our decision to go ahead with the supersonic transport. Senator [Richard] Russell was on the plane, too, but I don't think that you could say that Senator Russell said he was in favor of the supersonic transport on that plane trip. I can't remember. But that was when President Kennedy decided to go ahead with it.

M: Did he call some meetings with Mr. Johnson on the supersonic transport?

Z: I never was on the supersonic transport business after 1962. I just kept current with it. Then, of course, I also have acted as sort of a shoulder for General [William F.] McKee, head of FAA, to cry on from time to time. I used to act as a consultant to him, and so I kept abreast of it even after I left the Air Force. But I never had anything to do with it.

I did also have something to do with picking General Maxwell as head of the program. I recommended him to the President for the SST, recommended him through Secretary McNamara .

M: Were you called upon to submit recommendations?

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Z: Yes. General [John P.] McConnell and I got together and decided that Maxwell was the best man we could give them.

M: What about some of the other significant issues and events that happened while you were secretary of the air force? Particulary if these related to Mr. Johnson?

Z: Let's see if we can find some here. One I can remember was the problem of the extension of General [Curtis] LeMay's term when we extended it until February, 1965. If I recall, he was supposed to go out in July of 1964, and we extended it until February of 1965. I think that's true. I didn't ever talk with the President directly on this. I would have to check the record as to what my recommendation actually was. So I can't say as to how we happened on the 1965 date, but I do know that this was an issue. I'm sorry. I just don't remember it.

M: Do you recall the circumstances around General LeMay's retirement?

Z: Well, General LeMay had been in the Pentagon for Lord knows how long, as vice chief and then as chief. Well, I can figure it out. General [Thomas D]. White was chief when I came in in 1960 and retired in July, 1961. At that time, I was asked and discussed with Secretary McNamara--we had extended discussions on chiefs--and it seemed to me, at that time, that since General LeMay was the only person we had--in a way I thought we were between generations--the best interest of the Air Force certainly required General LeMay being there. I felt again in 1963, although there were different names that we considered, that General LeMay should be renominated even though he

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was a kind of thorn in the administration's side on a lot of issues. I don't remember the 1964 decision at all. That was in April. That came before his term ran out. Let's see if I can find it here. I could check the record if you were interested [and] at some subsequent time tell you exactly what happened.

M: Do you recall any incidents where something that General LeMay had said or done touched off any . . . ?

Z: I think President Johnson had a lot more admiration for General LeMay than President Kennedy had. I think that President Johnson admired LeMay as a fighting man. Therefore, we didn't have the trouble between the Air Force and the administration over General LeMay, although General LeMay was obviously unhappy about our Vietnam policy.

General LeMay was always about six months ahead of what we later did. General LeMay urged that the jets be put in Vietnam long before the administration--I think it was the Kennedy Administration--went along with placing jets.

On this Vietnam thing--which I guess you're going to get into--the military, particularly General LeMay, just didn't understand gradualism. LeMay simplified the point where you had a war, you want to win the war. You win the war by doing what you have to do. He never could grasp that there were subtleties involved which might make you want to run it a different way.

M: Did he ever run sort of cross purposes with Mr. McNamara?

Z: Continually. I mean, intellectually, they just didn't meet.

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Secretary McNamara, of course, had worked for General LeMay in the Pacific in 1940--whatever it was, 1943 or 1944--and had the greatest admiration for General LeMay as an operational commander. He was an operational genius. There was no doubt about it. Whenever we got into trouble, for example, in Cuba or the Berlin airlift, the first thing McNamara would do was ask me where LeMay was, because he did have great admiration [for him] and knew he wanted him there if there was a situation that might lead to combat. But he felt that--and you can find this out from him better than you can from me, but my impression is that he felt that General LeMay didn't recognize the subtleties involved in the problem of Vietnam, and also, he felt for a long time that General LeMay overemphasized the role of air power in Vietnam.

M: Do you recall any associations or meeting with Mr. Johnson during--or where he was included in meetings--the Berlin airlift or the Cuban missile crisis?

Z: No. I never was in any of the White House meetings in either one of them. You read my article or looked at my article on the role of the service secretary, and as you could see, we were managers; we weren't policy makers. I want to find here when we had the over-flights of Eastern Germany.

M: Oh, the crash?

Z: The two crashes--the B-66 and the T-39.

M: I think there was an early one.

Z: Was it early? You know you get the chronology of these events all mixed up in your mind.

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M: Did you ever see Mr. Johnson's or receive Mr. Johnson's talent for what is called the Johnson treatment, his persuasive ability?

Z: Not directly. No.

M: What about his temper?

Z: Well, as I told you, there were two events in which I gathered that the President had a temper. The particular ones that stand out in my mind were the chewing out I got in 1952 and the chewing out I got around 1961 of 1962, when he was vice president.

M: I had read an article that was in the New York Times about a phone call that your daughter received on your private line. Did you ever discuss this with the President, the event that occurred?

Z: No. That had to do with the Norfolk Azalea Festival.

M: I just wondered if he had ever mentioned that to you.

I think I'd like to continue this on with our involvement in Vietnam and begin with your activities and role surrounding the Gulf of Tonkin crisis which would have been in 1964.

Z: On the Gulf of Tonkin thing, I again say, that while I was informed all the time, I did not have a policy-making role in connection with the Tonkin Bay crisis.

M: What was your feeling about the use of the Air Force in Vietnam, North Vietnam?

Z: I had felt that there was a lot more that we could do in the way of using air power, always recognizing that you took a calculated risk--whatever a calculated risk is. My own view is that the policy makers . . . And I used to tell this to the Air Force people, because

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one of my jobs--as you may have seen from that article--as I interpret it, was trying to represent the administration effectively to the Air Force people so as to keep the military people, if not happy, at least to try to get a greater degree of understanding. It always seemed to me that the great danger here--the first thing was there had to be one cardinal objective, and that was that you not start a nuclear war. I couldn't see getting involved in a ground war with the Chinese, but I always felt that this was the last of the possible evils. I just didn't feel that this was the thing you had to worry about the most. If the Chinese had decided to go in, you would have probably had to come out. If they got down there and started to overwhelm you in large numbers, you just would have to come out.

But the thing that always impressed me as the great difficulty in the Vietnam situation--and I didn't think that the military appreciated it--was the Russian situation. Here the Russians were vying with the Chinese as rival leaders in the Communist world. They were both supplying the North Vietnamese with military weapons, and you could win the war against North Vietnam by just blasting them. But I wasn't sure that this was the name of the game, because what I felt you would do would be to give the Russians no alternative except take some action against you. I think the Russians acted with considerable restraint in this period.

Despite Secretary McNamara's assurances to the contrary, I think there was no doubt in anybody's mind that we were quite strained in our ability to meet military situations any place else.

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Now there were a couple of situations over Berlin in the period 1962, 1963 through 1965, but there was nothing compared to what the Russians could have done had they wanted to. So that I feel that it was imperative upon us--and I don't say that there was any explicit agreement between the Russians and ourselves, or anything of this sort, but it always seemed to me that in judging what should be done in North Vietnam, you had to take into account the kind of problems that were facing the Russians and the kind of reactions that you might expect from them. Do I make myself clear?

M: Absolutely.

Z: So I think there was a lot more that could be done. I went there in 1962. I followed a trip by Secretary McNamara. I've said some things indicating some disagreements with Secretary McNamara. But let's get it straight once and for all, Secretary McNamara was a great secretary of defense. He was the finest secretary of defense in my book. I went there in 1962, and I didn't fly around as fast or as far as Secretary McNamara did, but I listened to General [Paul] Harkins. I listened to our air general there. I went around, I looked, and I saw the kind of equipment we had there. I saw what that jungle looked like. I saw those South Vietnamese, or Viet Cong, sitting down there with those hats on, you know, with no letter sweaters telling you which team they were on. I came away and said so at Saigon airport upon leaving that I couldn't see this as anything but a long struggle. I just didn't see how you could get anywhere doing it with what we have over there at that

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time and getting it over in a short time. (Interruption) I thought there was an awful lot of over-optimism, and I felt that General LeMay had a lot on his side in urging that we get better equipment over there.

But as you recall, I testified before the [Senator John] Stennis Committee on the appropriateness of the equipment. There was nothing wrong with it for what we were using it for, but it was not the kind of equipment that was going to enable us to win the war. I don't know. I'm not qualified to judge on the basis of what I know, although I have my opinion as to the effectiveness of the role of air power in Vietnam. I disagreed with Secretary McNamara when he told us in 1962 that this wasn't an air war. Sure, it wasn't an air war because we didn't have the kind of airplanes over there to make it an air war. It's not an air war. It's an air-ground war. But without those airplanes, we wouldn't be there today. We wouldn't have the upper hand today. And I'm not talking about Air Force airplanes. I'm talking about Army airplanes, helicopters, whatever the heck you've got.

M: Did you conclude early--say since from your trip--that we were aiming for a military success there?

Z: I'm naive. I didn't know what we were aiming for. I thought we were aiming for a military success, but I felt that there were risks in trying to treat it as strictly a military situation along the lines of what I've said before. I have always felt that it is possible to win a military victory there. I know this is a feeling held by a

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very few, but what do I mean by a military victory? I mean to reduce the Viet Cong so that they are no longer an effective fighting force. But if you are taking what they have as a fighting force, I think that, with the kind of success that General [Creighton] Abrams has had, it is possible to win what I would call a military victory over there.

M: Did you feel that this was not everybody's opinion? That some people did consider that ultimately that it was going to be a political negotiation?

Z: I think they must have had the feeling, or else they wouldn't have gone up the way we did from military advisors to a small force, to a larger force, to a much larger force. My feeling as to where we were in 1965 I expressed in the meeting in President Johnson's office. I think one of the reasons of having us in the meeting, in contrast to what we had before, was because I was getting out, and I don't think President Johnson wanted to be surprised by what his ex-secretary of the air force said to the press in October when LBJ had an opportunity to find out in August. I expressed a view then that what we had been doing hadn't been successful, therefore, we had to do something of a degree different. I forget where we were. We were at around 125,000 in 1965, something around there, and the proposal was to go to 300,000, if I recall. I said, "You've got to do something or get out. You've got to make a bigger bet in order to stay in the ball game, and I think the bigger bet is worth it. Either that or if you don't think so, you've got to

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pull out, because you're not going to get anywhere this way."

M: What did you feel was the U.S. role in Vietnam or in Southeast Asia?

Z: In Southeast Asia? I know nobody in the world agrees with me, but I'm a great believer in momentum. I believe in 1961 the Chinese had the momentum going for them in Southeast Asia. Indonesia [and] the Philippines were shaky. This is not quite the domino theory, but I do believe that when a power is rolling--just as Hitler rolled until he came to the Channel--unless something is done to stop that momentum, that that power can keep rolling and become dominant. Unlike a lot of people, I accept--as essential in this shrunken world of today--that the Chinese shouldn't dominate the whole of Southeast Asia. I'm sure that, with this momentum unchecked in the 1961 period, that they would have. I think that the people on the sidelines--the Thais, the Filipinos, all those people down there--were watching to see whether or not the United States would keep its commitments. I think they were prepared to go with the winner if we didn't keep our commitments, because there was no place else to go. If that's the domino theory, I don't believe it would have happened that way. I think it would have been a gradual thing. But as long as that momentum remained unchecked, I think that the whole of Southeast Asia was in danger.

People say this is the wrong war at the wrong time at the wrong place. I want to know what would have been the right war. I just don't believe any war ever comes along. I believe that you

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find yourself in a set of circumstances where you have to do something. I believe that we were in that position in Vietnam. The bright people all say, "Well, you could have gotten out in 1961." Well, they've got an awful lot of hindsight on their side. I happen to believe that it's wise that we didn't get out in 1961.

See, the thing that concerns me--and this is why I think the President is going down in history as a great man--is because he did not cave on the really critical issues. Apparently the conception of leadership today is that so many people feel that you should do what's popular and feasible. I think that in the Vietnam situation, the President stood up to what was unpopular and seemingly unfeasible, but yet essential that it be done. It would be so easy to swing with the tide of public opinion, pull the troops out. I think that there are just some great issues where you have to stand up. I haven't seen Nixon pull the plug on Vietnam, despite what must be the great temptations to do so.

M: What was your assessment of the effectiveness and usefulness of bombing North Vietnam? I realize that this began just before you would be ready to leave.

Z: It began in February, 1965. From all I could see, it wasn't stopping the supplies, but it had to hurt. It had to hurt them badly. A power like North Vietnam, they can take the loss of a certain amount of blood. But from a military standpoint, I'm sure that bombing North Vietnam was effective, not totally effective, but helped, materially helped. Whether it was worth the political

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loss as far as around the world and domestically is concerned, I'll never know. But I'm sure that it reduced significantly the ability of the North Vietnamese to fight and to support themselves.

M: I believe you were probably already out of office when we had our first bombing pause. Did you have any assessment of the. . .?

Z: This was probably December, 1965.

M: It was. So you would have already been out of office. You don't have to answer that if you don't want to.

Z: No, it's all right. I just have had a distaste for trying to second-guess the people who had the responsibility, because I know how difficult those responsibilities are.

M: Did we, do you think, sincerely pursue all the peace feelers that developed?

Z: I wouldn't know.

M: Do you think back in 1965, when we began to increase our commitment there that the cost of the Vietnam War was accurately assessed, both in terms of demands and materials?

Z: I don't think so. I don't think the strain of Vietnam was sufficiently assessed. I think sometimes there's a great--what shall I say--reluctance to face up to these problems for fear that if you face up to them on a cost basis, you're going to be licked before you start. This is one of the problems in the development of weapons systems. Senator [William] Proxmire and all those people over there now are talking about the cost of these systems and how much they exceeded

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the costs they were supposed to. I think if you ever let cost become the complete determinant, you don't do things because you get horrified by how much it's going to cost you.

Now, going back, I'll tell one on myself as far as the strain, the economic strain, or the strain on military resources. When you are trying to develop a budget for the service, you try to get what you think are the priority requirements. That sounds as if it came out of Genesis. One of the problems we had was the fact that Secretary McNamara and his staff wanted us to procure amounts of conventional weapons that seemed to us absolutely ridiculous. We could not imagine a conventional war in which you would use all the weapons they wanted us to buy, and when we had a huge stockpile of World War II bombs and Korean bombs I guess my people and I were the ones who persuaded McNamara that we could get along with less conventional ammunition than he wanted us to procure. Of course, that's what he caught all the hell for from Stennis and his committee: the fact that we hadn't bought the conventional ammunition. Nobody ever thought we would be dropping such quantities of conventional bombs in a situation like this--thirty-five tons an airplane for a B-52. At that rate, you could chew up even a World War II stockpile. This is just one small example of what happens to your resources.

The basic fact is that we were not geared for this kind of a

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struggle, and it's unfair to judge Secretary McNamara on the grounds that this transition of thinking and transition of structure of military forces that he tried to bring about couldn't be brought about during the time period in which it was required. Do I make myself clear?

M: Absolutely. You are talking right now about sort of the developments and sort of demands that have come out of Vietnam. Can you specifically relate to some of them that have been placed on the Air Force?

Z: Sure. Well, I'll give you the kind that you are least likely to think about. One is that we had to entirely restructure our concept of tactical units in order to provide a training base that we didn't have. We were geared to fighting a war which would be over within a finite period. We weren't geared to fighting a war where the people would serve in a theater only thirteen months or twelve months, and those twelve months would keep on reoccuring. This means an entirely different type of structure. And structure is one heck of a lot of dollars when you're talking about the restructuring of the tactical Air Force.

Of course, you had all sorts of hardware requirements that you didn't have before. You needed mobility. You needed detection equipment to find these little fellows running around the jungle. You needed nighttime equipment. You needed different kinds of communications. It just was something that nobody was prepared for. And the transition from a mostly retaliatory force to a tactically

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oriented Air Force, capable of fighting a gradually accelerating war and at the same time retaining your strategic capability, was just something you didn't have the time to bring about. It meant, of course, expenditures on a level that we hadn't contemplated.

[Take] just the problem of airlift, for example. The amount of emergency supplies we had to get over there produced a demand for airlift. We didn't have it within our own resources. We were able to get it from the civilians, but [it was] tremendously expensive. And all these things just accumulate.

M: While we are in this same area, let me ask you: what was the reasoning behind keeping the Thai bases undisclosed when they became fairly well publicized?

Z: I don't know. I never know what causes people to keep these things quiet. If I were guessing--and I am guessing--it was as much the wish of the Thais as it was our own feeling that this was a great secret. They're pretty sensitive to the kind of embarrassment that would come out from public admissions of the presence of these bases.

M: It's tempting to ask, there are so many different areas relating to Vietnam. I think you've probably commented particularly on the Air Force role now there and any associations you have regarding Vietnam and Mr. Johnson. Am I correct?

Z: That's about it.

M: Okay. I'd like to continue on and ask you another very big and broad problem concerning the Air Force and have you tell me about

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the development of the problems surrounding a manned bomber.

Z: This, of course, was primarily a problem in the Kennedy Administration. In the Johnson Administration I think we can get that over with pretty quickly. Secretary McNamara was able to stop any expenditures of magnitude that would move the program along towards reality. I mean, we picked at the fringes of the essential research and development that had to be done with the air frame and the avionics and the engine. In other words, to use a McNamara phrase, he kept the option open, but barely.

The principal problem came in the Kennedy time, and I think this is described fairly well in that article that I gave you on the role of the service secretary. When I came in, to summarize it briefly, the B-70 concept had been developed by LeMay. I listened to it, and I made a decision to support it. The Air Force fought a pretty vigorous battle for the plane. It was we who brought it about--I guess brought it about--by reason of the fact that we were able to convince the people in the Congress, and I think we did, at least at the top levels. You never can always control the people down below, but I think we did it within the rules of the game, and that is in testifying before the Congress. The people who were upset in the administration, the Secretary of Defense, they often didn't agree with us, but I think we played the game straight.

It was the congressional support that brought about the crisis between President Kennedy and Representative [Carl] Vinson, where

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they would vote the money, and then he wouldn't spend it. So when we finally lost this one--because, after all, the President, in my book, should have the power to decide what he's going to execute--then, we were really fighting from the bottom of the hill. The difficulty with the manned bomber really in the early days after the defeat of the B-70, was that we didn't quite know how to define what we wanted, therefore Secretary McNamara was able to pick us apart.

Tape 2 of 2

Z: I think the difficulty with the AMSA, Advanced Manned System, was three-fold. One was that after the B-70--and I think the B-70 would have been a mistake, and I've said so. I'm sorry I was for it. I wish I'd pressed for an advanced system back in 1961 and not be in a position where we're just going to start out at it in 1969, eight years later. Our difficulty was threefold. One was we didn't know quite what we wanted. We weren't able to define it so we could go to a sizeable research and development program. This was probably true until say 1964, 1965--maybe not quite that long. Right at the moment, I just wouldn't have a firm opinion.

The second thing was that we were never able to convince Secretary McNamara of how we would use it. This, to me, is one of the doubtful points of McNamara philosophy. I don't think you always know exactly how you are going to use something when you build it. We couldn't say that there wouldn't be circumstances when it would be all we could use against the Russians. I happened to think that the emergence of the Chinese as a limited thermonuclear

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power--limited, say, for the next fifteen years--meant that you had to have a weapon against the Chinese which would not have the same implications as intercontinental ballistic missiles, but would permit you to provide a real threat against them. Do I make myself clear? But we couldn't quantify that sufficiently for Secretary McNamara to make it sing.

The third thing was money. I'm convinced that a good part of difficulty to the AMSA is that it meant putting another ten billion dollars into the inventory. And a ten billion dollar system becomes a twelve-and-a-half billion dollar system, or a fourteen, or a fifteen billion dollar system, just because that's the facts of life. Those are the three problems I think they've had.

I still believe in the flexibility that a manned system gets you, particularly when you may have locked yourself into a position where you can't use intercontinental ballistic missiles because that might signify to your potential enemies that this is all-out war. A manned system wouldn't have that same indication. There are so many ways in which you could use it--a show of force, a few airplanes, something of this sort--that wouldn't have the connotation of a missile attack, even a limited missile attack.

M: I was going to say, even if it were nuclear-armed bombs?

Z: Yes. As I say, you're building now for ten or fifteen years out. I think you have to have flexibility, and I don't think you're in a position to say today exactly what flexibility is going to be.

M: Were you ever aware of what Mr. Johnson's feelings were in the

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continuation of a manned bomber program?

Z: No. I had a feeling, when he came in, that he would be much more sympathetic to it than President Kennedy was. President Kennedy was unalterably opposed. But I also got the feeling--and this could be wrong, and the only person that would tell you this would be the President--that he wasn't going to override McNamara on this issue.

M: Let me ask you--this is sort of hypothetical--but did you feel that Mr. Kennedy's position was--before he was assassinated--that he would not commit ground troops in Vietnam?

Z: We had ground troops in Vietnam.

M: In force.

Z: You know, one way to save a marriage is never answer hypothetical questions.

M: All right.

Z: But, I think he could have been led down this same chain of reasoning that the present administration was.

M: That happened to remind me. That's a little off our track here. Of course, the emphasis in the Air Force has been going to missiles and space. Could you tell me your activities that have been involved in this?

Z: One thing was the protest, the de-emphasis of the military role in space in the early days of the Kennedy Administration. The second was to get our people off the back of NASA and stop the internecine type of rivalry that was going on at the lower levels because of

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the people in the Air Force fearing that NASA would take over the whole space role; fighting for the MOL [Manned Orbital Laboratory]; fighting for the development of the Titan III, in which I encountered no opposition from Secretary McNamara.

Let's see, President Johnson was head of the Space Council, wasn't he, as vice president? I never came into contact with him there. My best access to Vice President Johnson in the Space Council was on General [Bernard A.] Schriever, because the President had a great deal of respect for Shriever. But my problems, as I say, were within the Air Force and with Defense and with President Kennedy..

M: What did you see as the Air Force role in space, yourself?

Z: I think we had the responsibility of exploring to the full the military implications of this new medium.. And the one word I have learned never to use is never. When people tell me that man in space will never be as good as sensors or unmanned satellites, I say that that's a very comfortable assumption, but one that I don't think we can afford to rest with. So I felt that it was up to us to determine what man could do in space, because if we didn't do it, somebody else was going to do it. I think the MOL, for example, will be a much more useful space laboratory than some unmanned thing. We just haven't found out. We just don't know yet what the ingenuity of man can do once you give them the ability. People said the same thing when Christopher Columbus sailed. "What's the good of sending people out over the edge of

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the horizon?" You have a resource; communication to it is easy; communication from it is easy. There are all sorts of things that excite you, and sometimes you have to listen to intuition about these things.

M: Did you have any particular activities with the White House regarding the military use in space or Air Force involvement?

Z: Just the President. I forget whether it was in 1961 or 1962. I think it was 1962. I had a breakfast with some of the Defense Department officials, and the breakfast conversation leaked out in Time magazine. I had been complaining about the de-emphasis of the military role in space, and the President wrote me a very sharp letter. So I wrote him back a letter in which I quoted all the things he'd said about the military in space. He replied that he didn't want to be reminded what he'd said in the past; he wanted a program for the future. So I wrote him a program, and actually, some of that program has come to pass.

M: And with the same question relating to Mr. Johnson?

Z: No, I never had any questions. The thing that I had to fight for was the MOL. The Titan III, surprisingly enough, I didn't have the opposition from the Defense Department. This was one time, I think, that Secretary McNamara--not one time, because he'd done it a lot--but one momentous decision where intuition [said] that we needed the resource. We had to have a booster that would preserve the option for a capability in space, if that should be important. The Titan III was that option, and Secretary McNamara

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supported it. It was the best run program we had, too.

M: I haven't asked you about your role in the decision on Skybolt. That goes back a little bit.

Z: That was a Kennedy problem. That was 1962.

M: Did you cover this in the other interview?

Z: Yes.

M: Well, let's pass on that.

Again, another fairly large area--I'd like to just let you talk on, more or less--is Mr. McNamara's reorganization of the Defense Department. I realize you quite thoroughly went into this in the article.

Z: I think you've got it in there.

M: I'd like to ask you a little bit of your sort of analysis ranging from all the way back, using more or less a comparison to your first time with Symington. I'm just wondering what your reaction is to the various levels of criticism, which range all the way from it being a highly successful and needed management reform to strong criticism of it being an over-emphasis on centralization and over-staffing at the OSD [Office of Secretary of Defense] level.

Z: I think these things tend to run in cycles. You reorganize every five years for the opposite of the reasons that you reorganized five years ago. I think that, with Secretary McNamara there, the organization worked pretty darn well. There were some difficulties, and I sketch them in that article. I don't believe most people can operate the way that Secretary McNamara has--something

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like Lyndon Johnson--the range that he has, the memory he has, the intimate familiarity with so many big problems. I do think that you tend to get the decision-making process too turgid. In an effort to develop an operation where decisions are made on more information, you tend not to make decisions. I think that has happened as a result of the kind of structure that you build up.

But on the other hand, I think the structure is so much better than what you had before, that you just don't have to tear it out by the roots. Secretary McNamara told me that--we were sitting around talking one day just before I quit--and he said, "One of my major objectives since I've been here is to try to increase the amount of essential information, of information essential to decision-making." He said, "I think that when I came in, that the percentage, on a rough basis, was maybe 20 per cent of what we needed. Now, I think we've got it up to 40." As a result of what's happened--techniques, perception, focus, approach to problems--everything has immensely improved, in my opinion. You just have to strip off some of the furniture that's been built around it.

The difficulty is that when you bring important decisions to the central level, a heck of a lot of unimportant decisions follow, too. I mean, what difference does it make if the three services have different belt buckles? You know, you get a lot of unessential . . . So we'll get a retreat from that now. But the department will never be, never again be what it was, because Secretary McNamara has

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introduced and implanted and made grow a degree of sophistication in the thinking about military problems and the development of weapons systems that was never there before. This to my mind is his great contribution.

If he had done nothing else but put in the five-year-ahead look and given us a coherent, articulated program. Sitting on the back of my desk in the Pentagon there was a book in which I could turn to and find every program for every service in the Defense Department for the next five years, and know that that was the program and it couldn't be changed until somebody got a piece of paper in there saying that it was no longer the program. This is one of the great contributions. Because in the old days, by contrast, nobody knew what the hell the program was. You know, the degree of service control over the programs was such that programs were only partially known by the other services and by the Defense Department.

In 1947, when Mr. [James] Forrestal came in, he had the wistful idea that by coordinating he could improve substantially the machinery of the Defense Department. We operated on a very informal basis. He had a small staff with able people like Secretary [W. J.] McNeil in the financial end. We had an incomplete, sort of way down at the bottom of the evolutionary scale, type of organization. We had the Joint Chiefs. I sometimes think that the Joint Chiefs in my time was the most terrible organization I ever observed. I used to think, when I went to the Atomic Energy Commission in 1952, "Aren't we fortunate that, through some dumb luck, the production of nuclear

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weapons were taken out of the military?" Because, if it had been under the military, and the chiefs had gotten hold of it, we wouldn't ever have produced, for example, the tactical nuclear weapons, because of the roles-and-missions types of fight.

The roles-and-missions type of fight and the sudden development of an almost combination quasi-legal, quasi-ecclesiastical organization of the Joint Chiefs really was a great weak point of the Defense Department. The chiefs were primarily instructed delegates. I'm talking 1947, 1948. You had real dumb fights over whether a missile was more--let's see, was it a bomb, in which case it belonged in ordnance, or was it more like an airplane because it flew and it might have little wings on it. This is honestly true. The chiefs are still a pretty bad organization, I mean in the sense of members being too parochial and having too clearly parochial interests and having a great deal of legal procedure. You develop JCS lawyer-specialists in the service staffs and an inability to come cleanly and precisely to grips with planning problems. But it's so much better than it was, and it's so much better than the alternative of having a joint staff which would be like the old German joint staff, that I'm encouraged. I don't expect great organizational improvements overnight. I think that what you see in the McNamara era has on the whole--with all the drawbacks and all the accretions that go on here; even some of the things I opposed--represented substantial improvement.

M: Are there some areas that you opposed that we haven't discussed?

Z: Oh, I was against the Defense Supply Agency. I was a little

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parochial myself back in 1961.

M: Has there been, to your way of thinking, much evidence of lack of communication between, say, the military services and the secretary of defense, OSD.

Z: I guess what you mean is: do you think that the secretary of defense doesn't get the benefit of military advice?

M: Yes.

Z: I don't think that this is a problem. I think, maybe, on occasions, the President hasn't gotten it, because McNamara was so close to the President that a lot of things were done fast, you know. I'm over-simplifying it, but I don't think the chiefs were able to get mobilized and get their views before the President to the extent to which some of the idealists might want.

M: Along with some of Mr. McNamara's changes and reorganizations were, of course, the base-closings. This, again, goes back, but it did occur and re-occur, periodically, through your appointment. Did you have any dealings, first . . .

Z: Never with the President on this.

M: Or with White House staff?

Z: We used to hear a lot of . . . No, I never had it with the White House staff. I never got a bit of interference. We used to sit and design these plans ourselves, and 90 per cent of them went through. We used to hear stories of "Gee, you can't close so-and-so, because the President will never let it be closed." You get that kind of, you know, self-generating concerns but I never

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had any real difficulty. McNamara would be the guy that would know. (Interruption)

We were talking about base-closings. As I say, I never got any static at all. We got the feeling, of course, that there were these self-generated rumors that we couldn't close this base or we couldn't close that base. But, if I remember, we closed Amarillo and we closed some more in Texas and this was always the burden of the thing. But Secretary McNamara, I think, had so much clout with the President that--and the necessity was there--so that I can't even conjecture what the conversations between them might have been. But I know that [in] our base-closing programs, although they affected plenty of the President's friends in the Congress and everything, we just didn't get any kind of static.

M: Was there much reluctance and resistance to this from the military?

Z: Yes. But on the other hand, I think this is one place where I was successful as secretary. I was able to convince them that it was important for us to cooperate, and that because of the pressure on expenditures, the only way I know to cut down on expenditures is to cut structure. So they went along. The Chief went along and, according to Secretary McNamara, the best cooperation came from the Air Force.

M: Were there many instances during your service as air force secretary that you and your chief of air force did not agree?

Z: Where the Chief and I didn't agree?

M: Yes.

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Z: Oh, sure, sure.

M: I mean are there specific instances that come to mind on a certain situation or assistance?

Z: Oh, a lot of times. For example, I would have to accept a decision from the Secretary of Defense with which the Chief didn't agree. You know, it would have to do with things like force structure. Go down there and argue with the secretary, and I'd come out with a deal--not a deal--but I'd come out with a result or make a recommendation different from that which the Chief had recommended to me.

We did have, of course, the problem in the TFX. But there, I've got to say for General LeMay--and I think I say in that article--that it was he who directed the air staff to give me every cooperation, and he meant it, so that I could prepare my testimony before the McClellan Committee, and without that I couldn't have done it. On the whole, even though I sometimes had a very difficult task of running between LeMay and McNamara, it wasn't all that bad.

M: Mr. Zuckert, you've had many occasions to testify on the Hill, and I think, also, this probably has stretched over a long period of time. How would you compare the Department of Defense relations in the past with the period of 1961 to 1965?

Z: Well, I think that you could have predicted what would happen. Secretary McNamara was so bright and so well-prepared and so able, for about two years he had those people eating out of his hands. But the trouble in this town is, of course, that there is a permanency

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about the Congress. You gradually begin to lose your credit, and I think that Secretary McNamara inevitably eroded considerable of his credit. I think he expected to. I don't think he expected to stay more than four years when he went in there. I think he tried to do the job in four years, and I think this resulted in the fact that in the last two years of his term, he had grave difficulties with the Congress. The issues just caught up with him. They began to be able to hit some of those pitches that he was throwing, which they couldn't at first.

Now, this was a different kind of relationship from my earlier experience. The relationships were a lot more informal, a lot easier in my times back in the old days. For example, one thing was, even as assistant secretary, I often had more individual autonomy in talking to the Congress than I did under a tight regime like Secretary McNamara's. Of course, one of the things that Congress resented, they resented both Secretary McNamara and me for working together in an organization where my degree of authority was limited in dealing with them. McNamara ran a tight-line ship. Now, in the old days, it was a lot more informal and a lot easier. Then we were only spending twenty billion instead of seventy-five.

M: Do you think that it handicapped the operation much of the Defense Department, to always be running this gamut with Congress?

Z: I'm sure it did. It makes it tougher, but there had been tough times before, and the Air Force had its troubles in 1949 when we had hearings on the B-36. Sure, when you get into difficulty,

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it does make a difference. On the TFX, I hardly did anything else from April until August 1963 except the TFX.

M: Do you think that the congressional power in this has increased any over the years, or is it just that criticism grew?

Z: Well, I don't think it has. I think Carl Vinson, when he was chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, was equally as powerful as Chairman [Mendel] Rivers has been. I think that this thing tends to run a little bit--not in cycles--but it tends to fluctuate. When the power of the congressional committees was the lowest--I'd say the first two or three years of McNamara's term--then he was able to mystify them pretty much. Gradually, as I say, the resentments grew, and when he lost his infallibility, I think it became more difficult for us to operate with the same ease that he had before. He may have lost his infallibility first with the TFX.

M: You had discussed a couple of the occasions, several of the occasions, I should say, on which you've been on the Hill testifying, in particular with Senator McClellan's committee and Senator Stennis' committee. Are there any other occasions that come to mind that we haven't touched on where it was either pretty ferocious or pretty strong in your mind?

Z: [There was] the pay bill where the House Armed Services Committee felt that Secretary McNamara was not sympathetic to the plight, particularly, of the enlisted man and where they felt that I was acting as an instructed delegate. They kind of gave me rough handling, but this is the role a service secretary plays. I think

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that it's a perfectly understandable role. You either go along and hope that you're doing enough good, or else you get out.

The only reason I got out was . . . Nobody asked me to get out. This has been raised with me before. Nobody asked me to get out. The President never spoke to me about getting out. The Secretary of Defense never suggested I get out. It's just that I had determined to stay four years. I really believe what Secretary McNamara says: that your first four years is your great opportunity to be creative. And I'm not a particularly creative individual, but the first four years, I think you're the most effective. I think the pace was such that I could feel myself getting tired and the problems began to look deceptively similar to each other after a while. I think that you just need a change of faces every once in a while. But four years is about the right time.

M: I did have that in mind to ask you. Was there any consideration as to your successor, or did you recommend him?

Z: I was asked about my successor, and I recommended Secretary [Harold O.] Brown.

M: Did he have, by any chance, a closer communication with Mr. McNamara?

Z: Much closer. He'd been, as you know, head of DDR and E [Director of Defense Research and Engineering], and this was really, clinically, one of the reasons why I recommended him. I'm not saying they wouldn't have picked him anyhow. But one of the reasons I recommended him was [that] I felt that the Air Force needed a period where they had someone who was close to Secretary McNamara rather than

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someone who had been on the opposite side of so many different issues from him.

M: Did you feel that you occupied that position?

Z: I felt that a big part of the time I was fighting off bigger brass, not to the point where it ever got personal, because I've known Secretary McNamara since 1940. As I said, I consider him one of the ablest men I've ever met and one of my closest friends today.

M: I'd like to ask you some just general defense-type questions such as some of the more controversial ones. Where do you think the emphasis should be in our nuclear and non-nuclear capabilities?

Z: I think you need both. I think you need the strong mobile forces equipped with conventional weapons, because if you're not careful, you'll find yourself in the situation you were in 1961 where all you've got is a big right hand and you haven't got a left jab--if you've ever seen any boxing. There are times when you need to be able to fight without worrying about problems such as, for example, consequential damage.

In 1961, one of the problems, as far as Berlin was concerned, was we really had no plan for the use of nuclear weapons that would have been effective and kept the war down to an acceptable level. So I think you have to try to develop a diversified military establishment within the limits of what you can afford. I don't believe with Secretary McNamara that you can meet all the military requirements. I think that's a great thought, but it won't happen. I think you have to try to balance what you see as a threat and how you meet it

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with what it costs. I said before I thought cost shouldn't be the determinant. I still say that, but I say that you cannot disregard the cost either.

M: Would you think these would be guidelines in our responding to trouble spots as they developed all over the world?

Z: Well, that's a tough one right now. I don't know anymore what kind of trouble spot this country would respond to. I think you've got to be able to be a significant factor in the Middle East, whether or not it's going to be decided that you are going to go there.

M: What do you think is the desirability and practicality of an all-volunteer army?

Z: I don't think it's practical, and I don't think it's desirable. The trouble with being on the popular side of issues is that you always are in a position to point out all the disadvantages of the present set-up and advantages of the projected set-up without ever considering what the disadvantages of the projected set-up might be.

I think you buy a real tiger if you buy an all-volunteer force. You're buying an all-career force. To me--and I don't often argue this way--it's a dangerously undemocratic type of institution. Here you've got the same people yelping about the military-industrial complex talking about building up a permanent all-volunteer force. It's so inconsistent. It's all right to be against the military-industrial complex. It's all right to be against the inequities

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of the draft. But I just don't see coming out in the next breath and saying, really, the savior of this thing is an all-volunteer force. That, of course, doesn't tie in with the military-industrial complex. But I mean, you can't just be against what you've got today and think you are going to solve it by creating something else. It's just like centralization versus decentralization. Both have inherent advantages and disadvantages. But before you change from where you are, you better figure out the implications of what you are buying.

M: Did you ever do any study programs on this while you were secretary of the air force?

Z: Yes, we did some study of the volunteer force. I'm pretty sure, We tried to figure out what you'd have to pay people to enter and all-volunteer force. Of course, in the Air Force we have an all-volunteer force now, but it's different from what I conceive of, which would be a permanent force where you'd pay these people enough to keep them on a permanent basis. We lose--what?--40 per cent of our people after the first four years, something like that. I don't know what the figure is anymore.

M: Was there any directive for studies of this emanating from the White House?

Z: Not in my time.

M: What do you think the U.S. posture should be on the deployment of ABM systems? Let me say: what did you think, and what do you think?

Z: I have never been enthusiastic about an ABM system because even its supporters agree that you can't save enough lives to make

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to make the difference. The other thing that bothers me--and this is perhaps intuitive. You know, you never can tell whether it's intuition or indigestion, but I think this is intuition--and that is [that] I am concerned about the ability to keep defensive systems viable in the environment in which they have to live. They're so much more inflexible, and they can get outmoded so quickly with the kinds of opportunities that are open to the offense. So I'd hate to see myself in the position of spending ten, twenty, forty billion dollars for a system which will be outmoded, maybe, even before it gets deployed or maybe even ten years afterward.

M: But, of course, they say that they can update these consistent with the technological developments.

Z: How do they know? If they really think they can project twenty years ahead as to what the offensive potentialities are, then they are right. My bet is that they can't. But I'll go for a limited system only on the basis that it's now become so important, apparently, that it may be looked on, truly, by the Russians as an indication of our resolve.

I don't believe these people--possibly because of the 1949 experience with thermonuclear weapons--who can get up and testify of their own knowledge what the Russians are going to consider as a deterrent, or what the Russians are going to consider will escalate the conflict. What the Russians are going to consider will escalate the conflict is what the Russians are going to think will escalate the level of armaments. I believe you have to be able to say,

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"What is it that I need?" And, sure, if there's a possibility of delaying the deployment of the ABM and delaying the deployment will get the Russians to do something, all right, let's delay it. On the other hand, don't let's conclude, flat out, that to do this would have undesirable consequences because then the Russians will say so-and-so-and-so. I hate analogies, but does anybody really think that the Russians wouldn't have gone ahead with the development of thermonuclear weapons if we had decided not to in 1949?

M: A good question. Mr. Zuckert, have we covered your various travels that you may have taken during your service in office?

Z: I think I went to Europe twice, Turkey, Libya and Morocco, and Vietnam once--Vietnam and the whole of Southeast Asia--and Japan, Taiwan. Mr. McNamara was not one to encourage travel by his service secretaries. I did a lot of traveling within the U.S. I think I knew the Air Force pretty well here but I didn't travel, perhaps, maybe not as much as I should have, but if you look at this sheet that I showed you this afternoon of the important developments, you could see that I was doing a lot of catching during those five years.

M: Has your long association with the Air Force led you to have a pretty close or strong rapport with the Air Force career officers?

Z: Oh, yes. Some of them are among my closest friends. Some of them are not, too.

M: Has the up-and-down sort of build-up of the attention on the Air Force, the decline and the build-up again, in relating to its dominance as service role in the Defense Department--have you heard

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much talk of this within the service?

Z: Oh, yes. And you get great pessimism from time to time, and you get smug optimism when they're riding high. I'm a great believer in competition among the services. Sure, it leads to duplication, and you get, "waste and duplication," and the people who want to eliminate, "waste and duplication", would also eliminate competition. I happen to be a strong believer in competition.

Just take the subject you were talking about before we started recording, the army mobility. I encourage the army mobility. From the standpoint of the Air Force, I was maybe even a traitor. I was delighted when Secretary McNamara directed them back in 1962, whenever it was, to get on with this question of mobility, development of new techniques, and the like. And they were able, as a result of that, to bring into focus a lot of things that had been going on in the levels of the Army where they couldn't get attention. When we had a serious issue between the Army and the Air Force with respect to helicopters, Secretary [Cyrus] Vance and I reached an understanding very quickly, because I want to see the Army try new techniques and constantly be pushing the limits of its expertise. I want that for all the services. If you get these roles and missions stratified, then you develop frictions and lags that could be fatal.

M: Well, the attachment, so to speak, of the Air Force regarding missiles--although this is quite diversified among the services --also space, do you think it will increase the dominance or the

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role of the Air Force among the services.

Z: I don't know. I can't tell where space will go. I think all of the services have a role. I used to think that the division between land, sea, and air didn't make any sense. Now, on reflection, I think it makes a lot of sense. In view of all that technology is doing, in view of the kinds of requirements you get, I don't see any service becoming so dominant that the other services atrophy.

Just take the problem of guerrilla warfare. The Army is always going to have to deal with the problem of guerrilla warfare. To do this, they are going to have to do a lot of research and development, some of which they are doing now, of course. The Navy--the problem of sea--the importance goes up, and it goes down. The [Admiral Hyman] Rickover effort in the nuclear submarines has brought about the resurgence of the Navy, which it's unlikely they expected themselves. So you want to encourage all three of these services to be pushing out to try to find better ways to operate within the environment in which they're supposed to operate.

M: Sir, from your very long experience in the Defense Department, are there any changes or suggestions that you would recommend now in hindsight, or things that you would do differently or think should have been done differently?

Z: You know, that's a fine question. There are a lot of things I probably could think of, but I just don't feel it does any good to suddenly get all-wise. For almost three-and-a-half years now, I've had the policy of just not trying to develop this twenty-twenty

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hindsight to even further acuity, and so I don't. Sure, there are some things I'd change, but I still think the structure is basically sound. It's a question of how it's operated.

M: Have you had any contact with Mr. Johnson since you left office?

Z: No, but I plan to write him and ask him--someday, when the first rush of visitors gets over--if I can come down and talk to him.

M: Would you like to comment on what you are going to talk to him about?

Z: No.

M: All right. I'm sure, in your position, you did have a lot of interviews, and probably, there was a lot of publicity. You mentioned several occasions, and I just wanted to give you an opportunity, if there were any others where you were sort of misquoted or something was taken out of context in any capacity.

Z: No. You know, I was misquoted a couple of times, but not seriously. (Interruption)

M: Mr. Zuckert, how do you think history will view and rate Mr. Johnson and his administration?

Z: My personal view is--and of course, this is, by no means, unique to me--that Mr. Johnson will go down in history as a great president both because of his domestic accomplishments, and it's my feeling--and I admit I am biased--that eventually the virtue of having stuck to our guns in Vietnam is going to be recognized. The complaints, at least most of the complaints I heard about President Johnson, really go to techniques and timing and sometimes various personality complaints.

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Just take, for example, budget expenditures. I don't know what I'm talking about, because I didn't operate on the civilian side of the house. If President Johnson hadn't moved in and gotten the legislation that he got--the domestic legislation on civil rights and education, and all those in 1964--I will bet it would have taken five, six, seven years to get them under a more leisurely type of administration. I will bet you also, though, that there was an unwritten rule that nobody should say what they were going to cost after five years, because if they had, they wouldn't have been enacted.

It goes back to what we talked about in this weapons systems business. I believe that progress is made in great spurts. Now we're listening to Mr. Nixon's program. We must listen; we must cool things down. Maybe this is right for the times, but I think it is fortunate that Johnson did take those bold steps. Maybe the administration did operate on too much of a pressure-tension basis, but that was his style. I think that the record of accomplishment, the attempt to attune this country to its demands both at home and abroad . . . I think the magnitude, just the range of the pressures that he responded to and the way in which he responded, I think, are magnificent.

M: Did you see any reason for, or did you have any explanation to yourself for what was charged as being the credibility gap between Mr. Johnson . . . ?

Z: I think there are some things that President Johnson didn't do well.

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I think he probably tended to handle press relations the way he handled them when he was a Senate leader. I think, too, that when things are going bad, everything goes worse. I think there was a lot of this. And the other thing is, you can't operate effectively, no matter what people say, in the goldfish bowl. This is one of those ideals. President Nixon is going to find it out. I don't know that he will. But I think nobody can walk in there with a lollipop in his mouth and deal on a basis of complete disclosure when the enemies of the moment will take to their advantage things that he says when he's trying to get things somewhat formed before he comes out and talks about them definitively. If you have to operate that way, I'm afraid that the job of president of the United States becomes even more serious. As to whether or not the credibility gap was more serious than I've made it, I don't know. But I say if things had been going well, if we hadn't had all the serious problems he would not have been scrutinized with a higher power microscope than he would have if things had been different. He had the most impossible job in the world, and I doubt that it's going to become any easier.

M: I didn't cover any area regarding Air Force One? Did you deal with that yourself?

Z: Yes, I sure did. (Interruption) Air Force One. That was a Kennedy production. Secretary McNamara came in with great prejudices against these VIP aircraft, but he overcame them. Well, you have to;

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it's just like big corporations. These days you just gear to them, and Secretary McNamara learned how to work with them, too.

When Air Force One came around, they decided we ought to have a new plane for the President. He gave me the job, so I gave it to Secretary [Joseph S.] Imirie, who was my assistant secretary for installations and logistics. I gave him only one rule, "Don't bother me with your problems." Air Force One finally came out, although everybody complained about the expense and all that. But I think everybody even up on the Hill--they were sniping at us, sniping at me--everybody in their heart realized we had to have a plane worthy of the chief executive of the first nation. And I think we got one. I think it's worked out pretty well.

M: Did any problems occur regarding Air Force One while Mr. Johnson was president and you were in office?

Z: No. I think the only problem I remember about Air Force One was when, one time, we had too many people out there to meet him at Andrews Air Force Base. It made a bad impression to have all those people meeting him, so we cut down on the number of people out there. As you know, he was a very personal administrator. He was right about a lot of these seemingly little things. The only amazing thing was that he didn't get so abstracted by the big issues that he couldn't devote himself to these relatively petty things.

M: Did you ever have any telephone calls directly from the President? This is just a sideline.

Z: Not President Johnson. I had many from President Kennedy, but not

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from President Johnson.

M: I just throw that in since it's well known--his habit of using the phone. Sir, I don't have any further questions and just want to be sure that we have covered everything, even if only superficially, that might come up.

Z: Well, we would never cover everything, but I'm sure that I'll be distressed by some of my answers, but I think that's it.

M: Thank you very much.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I]

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