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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: The Honorable Paul H. Nitze

Address of Interviewee: The Pentagon

Date: May 22, 1964

Interviewer: Dorothy Fosdick

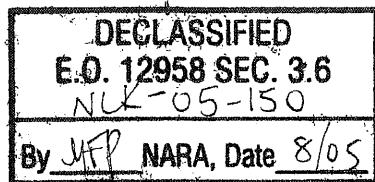
Others Present: Captain E. R. Zumwalt

Organization Interviewee Associated with:

Secretary of the Navy; formerly Assistant Secretary  
of Defense for International Security Affairs

Subject Matter Covered in Interview:

Early impressions of Senator Kennedy; role of interviewee  
during 1960 campaign as head of Kennedy Task Force on  
National Security Policy; circumstances of his appointment  
to defense post in Kennedy Administration.



INTERVIEW BETWEEN MISS DOROTHY FOSDICK AND MR. PAUL H. NITZE

SUBJECT: MR. NITZE'S IMPRESSIONS OF JOHN F. KENNEDY

Miss Fosdick: Mr. Secretary, I thought we might start the interview with a rather natural question. When did you first meet Senator Kennedy? What were your first impressions of him on that encounter?

Mr. Nitze: I first met Mr. Kennedy through Deidre Henderson. She worked on his staff, when he was Senator. He had assigned to her research work with respect to defense issues. She was working for him up in Boston, and she asked me whether I would consult with Senator Kennedy about a speech he was going to make in the Senate on the subject of defense. I had lunch with Senator Kennedy at the Senate and we had a long discussion of basic defense issues. I then supplied him with a memorandum, ideas from which were then incorporated in the speech he made at that time on the subject of defense.

Miss Fosdick: What was your impression of him in terms of grasping national security issues and using your advice and incorporating it in his speech? Was he quick to catch the point?

Mr. Nitze: I thought he was very quick. In fact, he had independently come to some of the ideas that seemed to me to be important. He was concerned about the massive retaliation doctrine. He was concerned that we were not putting enough emphasis upon defense options other than the strategic nuclear attack option. He was concerned about the military support which we were able to give in crisis spots in Africa, the Middle East and the Far East.

Miss Fosdick: Did he use the material which you gave him?

Mr. Nitze: It was included along with material obtained from others.

Miss Fosdick: You were appointed by the Senator, following his nomination as candidate for President, to head his National Security Policy Committee. I wondered how this came about. Did this come about through Senator Jackson? Senator Jackson at that time was Chairman of the Democratic National Committee and Senator Kennedy had asked him to arrange for a National Security "task force" as one among a number of task forces.

Mr. Nitze: That is correct. My recollection is that there were three factors involved in my selection: one was that, after having worked with Senator Kennedy on his defense speech, from time to time I would be asked for comments or advice on various other things that would come up in the Senatorial debates or in other speeches with reference to defense policy; secondly, I'd been responsible for the foreign policy-defense work in the Democratic Advisory Council; third, Senator Jackson had been asked by Senator Kennedy to make recommendations to him, as I remember it, on how to set up staff work which would deal with foreign policy-defense issues, this staff work to be ready before the new administration took office.

Miss Fosdick: This National Security Policy Committee or Task Force which you headed up, was one of a number of task forces operating during this period to supply preliminary advice to the President-elect. In starting you off on this committee, did he suggest that you get in touch with the other task forces, or did he indicate that he wanted you to go about your work independently? What I am interested in here is whether he emphasized collaboration with other groups or did he want your committee advice unadulterated by coordination or compromise, let's say, with the Symington Committee, or Clark Clifford's Committee, or one of the other groups?

Mr. Nitze: Well, the only other related committee was the Symington Committee which was working on problems of organization and Ros Gilpatric was a member both of the Symington Committee and my committee. The coordination was effected between the two committees by Ros. But I think the point you're getting at is what was the President's interest; the President's interest was in my committee's views, not compromises with anything else.

Miss Fosdick: If it's agreeable to you, I think we should attach to this interview the full text of the report of your National Security Policy Committee so that it will be in the permanent record. What were the main recommendations of your committee that particularly interested the President?

Mr. Nitze: What he did with this report was to give it to everyone of the cabinet appointees who dealt in this field. When he asked Mr. Rusk to take office, to be Secretary of State, one of the documents that he asked Mr. Rusk to read was this report. When he asked Mr. McNamara to become Secretary of Defense, this was the document he gave him to go over. This report was the starting position in this field that he had accepted. When I say accepted, he didn't put his "John Henry" on it, neither did he question the general thrust of the report. This was the report gotten up by the people he had confidence in; he had gone over it himself and felt that this should be the starting point for further analysis by the responsible cabinet members.

Miss Fosdick: I notice that in the development of the report there were consultations with some of the British and German leaders, both of the Adenauer group and of the Social Democratic group, and also with some of

the French leaders. Was this done on your initiative or was there some suggestion from the President-elect that the background for this document should extend to some analysis of the points of view of key foreigners?

Mr. Nitze: This was done really on my initiative, but Mr. Kennedy had also asked me to do two other things. One of them was to monitor for him the negotiations which were going on in NATO with respect to the Herter proposal which involved a NATO pool of strategic nuclear weapons--the idea which subsequently evolved into the MLF--which was under negotiation in Europe at that time. The Republican Administration wanted to get a commitment from Mr. Kennedy to the ideas as developed. Mr. Kennedy asked me to meet with Spaak and with the people from the State Department, primarily Mr. Herter and Douglas Dillon, who were conducting the negotiations for the United States. In connection with that, I talked to Spaak, the Germans, the British, the French, and brought up some of the policy issues which were under review in our committee at that time. Mr. Kennedy had also asked me to be the liaison man for him with the Treasury Department in connection with the gold flow or balance of payments problem. So, during this period I was trying to do all three of these things concurrently for Mr. Kennedy.

Miss Fosdick: Even at this early stage in the building of the Administration you were being looked at by the President-elect as something of a trouble shooter, I would say. Is that fair?

Mr. Nitze: I think that is fair in the field of things that affected the outside, the non-domestic U.S. issues, economic, balance of payments problems, diplomatic and defense.

Miss Fosdick: We'll get back to the report of the National Security Policy Committee, but I thought we might move on for a moment to how you got your job in the Administration. With this kind of background and having done this sort of work for the President-elect, you were obviously in a position to take on at his request a number of different posts. Why did he settle on the one he did for you? Could you throw any light on this?

Mr. Nitze: I think the first question in his mind was whom did he want as Secretary of State. He had Clark Clifford working for him on the question of helping him get the right people for the right cabinet posts, and Clark Clifford talked to me about it. I said that I would recommend Dean Rusk, whom I believe neither Clark Clifford nor the President knew. Clark Clifford suggested that I get in touch with Dean Rusk and see what Dean Rusk's view of it was, would he be willing to accept this post. So I talked to Dean Rusk and his first reaction was that he couldn't afford it, that he had no money other than his salary from the Rockefeller Foundation and that to move down to Washington to rent a house and to entertain the way one would have to as Secretary of State would be beyond his financial capability, and that

he must say no. So I passed this on to Clark Clifford. Then a few days later, Dean Rusk telephoned me and said that not at his request but on their initiative the Trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation had said they thought it would be regrettable if, just because of financial problems, he, Dean Rusk, were not to be available for the job of Secretary of State; that they thought he would be entitled to retirement pay if he left the Rockefeller Foundation for this purpose, and that he therefore was in a position to accept it. I passed this on to Clark Clifford and the next I knew about it, Dean Rusk was in Washington with the President.

The President then telephoned me and said he was with Rusk and that Mr. Rusk had accepted the job of Secretary of State and he wanted to ask me to be Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs--that the job of Under Secretary for Political Affairs would go to Chester Bowles. Then the President said that, before I answered he wanted me to know that he had other positions in mind for which he would want me. One of them was the National Security Council job of Assistant to the President for National Security Council matters, and the third was the Deputy Secretary of Defense. I asked the President how much time I had to make up my mind, and he said, "Well, three minutes." I said of the three jobs, I would prefer the job of Deputy Secretary of Defense. The reason for this was that I had already done the economic kind of work in the State Department and I was reluctant to get back into all the problems having to do with aid, trade policy, tariff negotiations--that part of the State Department's work. I said that it seemed to me the key issues were those which were outlined in our National Security Policy Committee's paper, and that the most crucial one was a more flexible military support for the conduct of foreign policy rather than the previous emphasis upon massive retaliation. I said, this also was the key to whether the National Security Council job could be well done, for unless the Pentagon really wanted to make the switch from the old policy to a new one, the National Security Council job would be almost an impossible one. It therefore seemed to me that the place to be in order to try to get done what I wanted to get done was in the Defense Department and not in either of the other two jobs. He said, "All right--that was what I wanted to know."

The next thing that happened was that the name of Mr. McNamara was then presented to him for the Secretary of Defense job. I believe that Adam Yarmolinsky recommended him either to Clark Clifford or the President directly. When the President talked to Mr. McNamara, I understand that he accepted, but he made one request and that was that he would be given full authority to select his own team.

Miss Fosdick: That is, that McNamara be given full authority?

Mr. Nitze: That McNamara be given full authority to select his own team. I believe the President agreed to that request. I think the President then did say that he had considered me for the job of Deputy Secretary of Defense,

but I think others had recommended Ros Gilpatric. Mr. McNamara immediately got hold of Ros and got hold of me, and it was clear in his mind that the person he wanted as Deputy Secretary would be someone who could become his alter ego in everything that he did. What he wanted me to do was to work specifically on the matters of military policy and the interface between foreign policy and defense policy. This more appropriately could be done in ISA, International Security Affairs--the Assistant Secretaryship. Obviously, I was somewhat disappointed because I would have preferred the job of Deputy Secretary. I thought the best thing to do was to call Mr. Kennedy on the telephone, so I did. Or attempted to. I had his private number down at Palm Beach where he was. Mr. Kennedy found it wiser not to answer that particular telephone call. I got the clear message that he did intend to back up his agreement with Mr. McNamara, that Mr. McNamara should have the authority to choose his own team in the way he wanted to. And further, that Mr. Kennedy wanted me under those circumstances to do the Assistant Secretary job in ISA. So I did it.

Miss Fosdick: Was there any breach or shift in the agreement with regard to any of the personnel of the Defense Department, or did Secretary McNamara have carte blanche to take on whomever he wanted.

Mr. Nitze: I think he took on only those he wanted, with one possible exception. Mr. Fay was a close friend of the President and Mr. McNamara chose Fay for the job of Under Secretary of the Navy largely because of, if not entirely because of, his close relationship with Mr. Kennedy.

Miss Fosdick: From the very beginning of the Administration then there seems to have been the understanding by President Kennedy and Secretary McNamara that you were going to be very heavily involved in the substantive, critical, strategic defense issues. Granted that President Kennedy tended to put advisors or friends into certain compartments and categories and then handle them in those compartments and in those categories, would you perhaps comment on what category you really fitted into--in the beginning and then perhaps how that relationship with the President developed. For example, was it a social relationship--were you a social friend, too? Were you close personal friends? Did he consider you more of a trouble shooter to bring in on really critical issues? Did he rely on you heavily for substantive advice? Did he think of you as just ISA Assistant Secretary, or did he think of you in a really far broader role in terms of the problems that he had to face?

Mr. Nitze: To answer the first part of your questions, he did not consider me as being a social friend, although I had known him for some time. He considered me as a person to work on specific projects. I think he wanted to be able to get my judgment on any issue of foreign affairs, or defense affairs or the interface between foreign affairs and defense affairs. I think he would have preferred it if I had maintained a direct relationship

with him; in fact, I subsequently got some complaints from the White House staff that I didn't independently go to the White House to see him and gossip with him about a number of the issues as they came up so that he could get an independent person-to-person view of the way things were going in the Defense Department with respect to these issues.

Miss Fosdick: Why didn't you maintain that direct relationship. Was there some factor here that caused you to be reluctant to do this?

Mr. Nitze: Well, in part, I think it goes back to the problem over my initial appointment, whether I would get the Deputy Secretary of Defense post and whether I was really going to be working for Mr. McNamara. If I was really going to be working for Mr. McNamara, I was going to work for Mr. McNamara. You have to make these decisions early whenever one takes over a job as to what will be the chain of authority. It seemed to me that I would be in deep trouble with Mr. McNamara, and be ineffective, unless I was very careful always to talk to Mr. McNamara first before going to the President. When I went to see the President, Mr. McNamara always knew that I was not trying to undercut him.

Miss Fosdick: Did you ever have occasion to explain this relationship, this element in the picture, to the President in either a humorous or a direct way?

Mr. Nitze: He was a very sensitive and intelligent person, and he knew exactly what the story was. He understood perfectly why I was doing it this way and I think he came to the conclusion that he would not urge me to change it. And, frankly, I think it was the right answer. I think we did, during those early months of 1961, get adopted and established as defense policy all those things the President was really interested in. I think Mr. McNamara did accept these ideas as his own. Mr. McNamara was trying as hard as he could to work with Mr. Kennedy and get done what Mr. Kennedy wanted to get done. So this was far and away to my mind the best way of proceeding, and I think it was successful.

It was somewhat a counter situation to the way in which the State Department operated--in the State Department every Assistant Secretary and sometimes people much further down the line felt they were entitled to go directly to the President without first clearing the matter with Mr. Rusk or being sure that this was in conformity with what Mr. Rusk wanted to do. Often the problem was that the President was receiving five or six different types of views from the State Department, and it was almost impossible to tell which was which. It was sometimes difficult, even when necessary to do so, for Mr. Rusk to pull all these things together into a State Department position so at least the President would know what the considered view of the State Department as a Department was.

The considered view of the Pentagon as a Department was not always unanimous. Sometimes there were basic differences between individual members of the Joint Chiefs, and between them and me or Mr. McNamara. But I think the President always had a pretty clear idea of what the Department of Defense position was.

Miss Fosdick: Did the President dig deep into the Department when given a Department position to find out what your point of view was; what the Joint Chiefs had said; what, perhaps, people even further down were saying, or did he tend to take the considered Defense Department view and not question it, or ask for debate in front of him among various points of view?

Mr. Nitze: He welcome<sup>d</sup> debate in front of him, and he would specifically ask the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Lemnitzer at one time, and General Taylor later, do you agree with this? Do you personally agree with this? Do the Chiefs agree with it? Which ones of the Chiefs agree with it? Is that what Admiral so and so thinks? And from time to time he would ask the detailed working people to come and report to him directly, but he would always have Mr. McNamara, Ros, me or somebody else from his office there when these things happened. Then it didn't result in a confusion of the lines of authority within the Pentagon.

Miss Fosdick: That was not necessarily the case in handling the State Department, was it? The President did not always have the Secretary of State there, did he, when he had Assistant Secretaries or the Chairman of the Policy Planning Staff, or even all the Directors?

Mr. Nitze: This was in part due to the enormous burden on the Secretary of State in handling negotiations in Europe, the UN, here, there and the other place, working with Ambassadors, so he wasn't as readily available as Mr. McNamara or Ros Gilpatrick. Also the problems that you had to deal with in the State Department were the problems where you had to get down into finer detail more often. Mr. Kennedy was suspicious of generalized statements, generalized policy statements, that kind of deductive approach to a solution to problems. He was much more interested in finding the details of problems, finding out what were the relevant details, how did these all work together so he could understand the problems from the grass roots, and then make a decision on the basis of his somewhat intuitive feelings as a result of listening to the detail, having worked with the details, and having gotten right down to the bottom of the matter. In order to do this with respect to a problem like, well, the Congo, which was full of every kind of messy uncertainty, he would get everybody in and listen to them, read the material, read the teletypes. He knew it as well as the action officer of the State Department. You can't quite do this with respect to a given division, or a ship, or a task force--it isn't quite comparable.

Miss Fosdick: Perhaps this is a good point at which to comment on the President's attitude towards the advice that comes up through the military

channels, and how he either changed his attitude toward it or developed a particular point of view on how to handle the problem of obtaining military advice.

Mr. Nitze: I think he was always troubled with just this problem--how do you obtain military advice; how do you check into it; how do you have an independent view as to its accuracy and relevance; how do you know whether you really need sixteen divisions in this given situation, or whether ten would be enough or whether you need twelve? How do you know whether you need so and so many air squadrons or reconnaissance squadrons, or this or that or the other thing, to be kept in operation? How do you really know these things?

For instance, the military often used to come up with a preliminary estimate that before undertaking a given political-military action they should be authorized to use nuclear weapons in the event of necessity. If the question came up of taking a political action which could conceivably lead down a course which could result in hostilities with the Chinese Communists, then the military opinion would be you shouldn't do this unless you are prepared to authorize now the use of nuclear weapons in the event of the contingency evolving to the point where they are required. President Kennedy was skeptical as to whether the military had really looked at all the possibilities of holding off the use of nuclear weapons and still obtaining our political objective. How could he get down to having a solid judgment on it? He thought that these were problems which were his responsibility--not the Joint Chiefs of Staff responsibility--as to whether or not to make the transition from the use of conventional weapons to nuclear weapons. How could he obtain that capability--the capability to make a valid independent judgment? But I don't think he ever really satisfied himself that he had found a way to get the best possible military help on such matters.

He had great confidence in Mr. McNamara and I think he also had confidence in me in this area. I think that he felt he could listen to our advice and count on our advice. Yet it wasn't "advice" that he wanted; what he wanted really was the feeling that he personally was in a position to exercise the responsibility which was his and which was not delegatable--particularly on these matters of the use of nuclear weapons. He felt this was not a delegatable kind of thing, that he personally was responsible.

Miss Fosdick: When President Kennedy first came into office, did he understand, do you think, the full implication of nuclear power and the dangers involved, or did this grow upon him, manifesting itself in his interest in limitation of nuclear weapons, the test ban, the negotiations with the Russians--did the importance of this phase of his program develop early in the administration?

Mr. Nitze: As I said earlier, I think he had already come to a realization or a preliminary conclusion that the preceding defense policy of primary reliance upon nuclear weapons was wrong from the political standpoint--from the standpoint of conducting the national policy of the United States. But I think there was a further development of his thought at the time that he was first briefed by the Net Evaluation Subcommittee of the National Security Council. The Subcommittee was responsible for making each year a net evaluation of the position of the United States versus the USSR in the event of a nuclear war, and I was present at the meeting in which he was first briefed by the Net Evaluation Committee. It was perfectly clear that it affected him deeply, the nature of the responsibilities he would be undertaking, that might have to make the decision to use nuclear weapons in a way which could lead to that kind of a situation. It was very hard for anybody to be in the position of realizing that some day he might be called upon to make that decision--in a real sense by himself.

Miss Fosdick: He apparently wanted to get tremendous detail, a variety of information and views on these critical problems. This, obviously, put a tremendous load on him personally as well as on his advisors. Have you any appropriate examples from the early period from your own personal experience that throw some light on this, on his need to get detailed information?

Mr. Nitze: Well, take Vietnam, for instance. He used to read all the telegrams that came in from Vietnam. There was one point when General Lansdale had written a memorandum about Vietnam. The President saw the memorandum. He immediately asked for Lansdale to come over and immediately went into a briefing and asked very penetrating questions about all the details, about specific people, about specific types of action, right down to the smallest detail. This was really the start of the story of the very keen interest in the Kennedy administration in South Vietnam's problems.

Miss Fosdick: To carry on a little further with this problem of the President's concern over nuclear weapons and their danger, would you comment on your own role in influencing his thinking in this area leading up to the test ban issue, for example? Is there some progression that you could trace in which you played a part?

Mr. Nitze: The central point of policy is really so simple--the central point of policy is whether one wants to put primary reliance upon the threat of the use--and perhaps the use--of nuclear weapons in support of foreign policy, or whether one wants to emphasize instead the other end of the spectrum. The other end is the support we give to people who are defending themselves against guerrilla warfare through helping them and aiding in guerilla warfare tactics. Is it wiser to make the effort to protect people in the lower edge of the full spectrum of political military danger, to try to really win the battle at the low edge of the spectrum, rather than be in a position where we are threatening to escalate or escalating to the higher end of the spectrum? On this I think he came to a policy decision while he was a Senator.

I don't believe that one can say that anybody had controlling influence over that basic policy decision--the real question was how should one go about converting that policy decision into appropriate action? This had myriad facets. One of the initial facets of the question was what should be done in the Pentagon to increase our limited war capability, and on this I did head the first study group trying to determine what our requirements were for limited war forces, what all the budgetary and other ramifications of this were. This developed into a much more elaborate analysis which was really the Program III phase in our Five-Year Force Level and Financial Plan structure. This was the initial effort of the Pentagon in 1961.

Another facet of it was the question of how do you help other countries in the sublimited war area, in the anti-guerrilla warfare and beyond that in a civil action kind of thing which may obviate the danger of a guerrilla warfare situation arising. In this field Bobby Kennedy and Max Taylor were the two who did the most work. This whole facet was developed in concrete detail.

Another facet of it was the question of how do you get command control over nuclear weapons by which you can be sure that they are not used contrary to Presidential decision. In this field, well, a number of us were concerned. I think the man who made the greatest contribution towards getting it done, creating ideas into actual hardware systems, was Marvin Stern in Dr. Brown's office, although before this got going, I had something to do with it; Harry Rowen had something to do with it; Dan Elsberg had something to do with it. It was quite a thing to get this worked up to programming and really translated from an idea into an action.

Miss Fosdick: You say that this whole range of approaches was very much on the President's mind--was he following up on it?

Mr. Nitze: Yes, he was following up on it. I think the other facet or the other place where he made the greatest contribution, where I may have played more of a role, was in how do you conduct foreign affairs differently by virtue of the changed capabilities. What do you do in Berlin by virtue of this approach rather than the preceding approach of just saying Berlin is so important that it may lead to thermonuclear war? How do you get away from that to something which is consistent with Mr. Kennedy's new approach which will in fact serve to safeguard Berlin against the very real thrust of the Russians' blockading of Berlin and the crisis of 1961-1962. That was the area which seemed to me to be the crucial area, and I think it seemed to him to be the crucial area. This obviously subsequently led to developing a policy with respect to the Cuban missile crisis which clearly was a demonstration of Mr. Kennedy's approach in a most crucial affair.

Miss Fosdick: Was there any tendency by the President as he looked down the road ahead to back off from the threat of nuclear weapons as one of the tools or elements in a foreign policy situation? Was this matter debated within the administration--as to whether one should even have the threat of nuclear weapons in the background, or whether this was even too dangerous and too risky?

Mr. Nitze: This wasn't debated in big meetings. It was my feeling, however, that Mr. Kennedy would have been much happier if it were possible, if it could have been possible, to conduct policy with zero reference to the threat of we ourselves escalating a crisis situation to the nuclear phase. He would have been happier, I think, if we could be in the position to say that we would not be the first to use nuclear weapons. He didn't feel that he could say that; because in the European scene when one looked at the danger of a massive Soviet conventional attack into Europe, it did not look as though one could hold that without the West initiating the use of nuclear weapons in support. And if one were to say that he would not initiate the use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances including that circumstance, this would have driven the Germans into the arms of the French and both of them out of the NATO Alliance and probably into a position of some compromise with the Soviet Union which would be tantamount to a neutralization of Europe which would then have left the United States alone to face the whole Communist problem. This, Mr. Kennedy felt, he could not do, therefore he had to maintain a position that there were circumstances under which he would be prepared to initiate the use of nuclear weapons, and he so said in the spring of 1961 and made such a statement. I think this was only after a great deal of thought as to whether it wouldn't be possible to move to the position where he would not have to rely on the threat of ourselves initiating the use of nuclear weapons.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: The Honorable Paul Nitze

Address of Interviewee: The Pentagon

Date: July 7, 1964

Interviewer: Dorothy Fosdick

Organization Interviewee Associated with:

Secretary of the Navy; formerly Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

Subject Matter Covered in Interview:

Origins and scope of basic changes and adjustments in defense policy during early period of Kennedy Administration; role of President Kennedy in these changes.

Miss Fosdick: During the two years preceding the election in 1960, Senator Kennedy spoke frequently about the danger of relying almost exclusively on nuclear strategy which in his view was a fault of the Eisenhower administration. Your task force report from the National Security Policy Committee generally supported this view and recommended greater reliance on conventional forces.

Mr. Secretary, I thought it might be useful to explore now in more detail your perspective on the President's role in establishing changes and adjustments in defense policy, especially during the early months of the Kennedy administration. You probably know this part of the story as well as anyone does. You may have some special insight on the moves to a more flexible support for the conduct of foreign policy - away from emphasis upon massive retaliation as the prime support for foreign policy.

Comments on your NSC 68 Report, written considerably prior to the Kennedy administration, would make a good prelude to this discussion. Do you want to start with a brief reference to NSC-68?

Mr. Nitze: The origin of NSC-68 was the Russian explosion of the nuclear device in the fall of 1949. This resulted in an intense reexamination of our policy to see how we would meet the fact of a Russian nuclear capability and obviously it would be a growing nuclear capability. Everybody had taken it for granted that at some time the Russians would develop a nuclear capability but it was uncertain in people's minds as to whether they would do it as promptly as 1949 - some people thought it would take them another five or another ten years. But to have them actually explode the device, this made an actuality of what had been looked at before as being merely a contingency.

George Kennan headed the group that was reexamining this in the first instance. It became related to the problem as to whether we should go forward with the experiments necessary to produce the hydrogen weapon and whether we should do this with full urgency or what degree of effort we should put into the production of the hydrogen weapon. It was finally the recommendation of the State Department that we go forward with urgency to develop a hydrogen device if it was possible. It was Oppenheimer's view that it was technologically not possible. We all hoped that it wouldn't be technologically possible but it was the feeling that if it was technologically possible it was important for us to know that technique and that technology prior to, and at least as early as, the Russians. The President finally decided in favor of the State Department position which was more or less in correspondence with the Defense position, but which was opposed by the AEC.

At the time of that decision by Mr. Truman, the Chairman of the AEC, David Lilienthal, made a strong argument that what he was really interested in was that we thoroughly review the whole range of our policy worldwide, and particularly vis-a-vis the USSR, and that this decision to go ahead with the H-Bomb could not be made just in the context of previous policy, but should really kick off a basic review of where we stood in the light of the actuality of a nuclear capability on the part of the Russians. Mr. Truman, therefore, directed that the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State conduct this basic review together, and I was asked to head the group and General Landon was the designee of Louis Johnson to work on the group.

At the very beginning of this study Mr. Acheson and I had a discussion as to the degree to which it was probably wise to strengthen our nuclear capability as a response to this fact of the Russian explosion and the degree to which other measures--including a build up of conventional forces--might be necessary in the long run. I can remember that about Christmas of 1949 Mr. Acheson himself at his farm dictated a memorandum which really pointed out clearly the defects of sole reliance upon nuclear weapons in a world where the Russians also had nuclear weapons. I think it was right at the beginning that this point was made clear.

Certainly NSC-68--which was the fuller paper that we worked out--involved a much broader approach than merely increasing our nuclear capability. It did call for greatly expanded expenditures upon our nuclear weapons and it had been preceded by the decision to go forward with all speed on the research necessary to produce the hydrogen weapon. But, in addition to that, many more things seemed to us to be required to support foreign policy in this context.

In 1954 when Mr. Dulles made his speech at the Council of Foreign Relations in New York, the table at which I sat, I remember, included a group which had worked on this type of problem and we were all immediately shocked by the extreme reliance that Mr. Dulles was proposing to put upon massive retaliation. I immediately sat down and wrote a paper on this and took it to Bob Bowie, who was then the Director of the Policy Planning Staff. He, in turn, took this up with Mr. Dulles, and Mr. Dulles himself was somewhat concerned about the extreme position he had taken in that 1954 speech, and subsequently wrote a piece in the Foreign Affairs Magazine which retracted somewhat from the extreme position of primary reliance on massive retaliation. But that never really caught up with the rest of the Eisenhower administration. Some of the people in the Defense Department continued to hold really to the '54 position, even though Mr. Dulles increasingly moved away from it. And certainly Mr. Herter moved very far away from it when he became Secretary of State. So that the position in 1960 wasn't really any longer the policy of the '54 statement that Mr. Dulles

had made. But in fact the capabilities we were developing were based upon that '54 statement. We were in fact relying almost entirely upon massive retaliation at the close of President Eisenhower's term. The dangers and the risks were manifest to the State Department, I believe to Mr. Eisenhower, to Mr. Dulles and to others, but somehow or other, it seemed to be impossible for them to really get the things done which were necessary to give us broader options than the sole option which we then had.

Miss Fosdick: When Secretary McNamara took office, how did he first get in touch with you on this? With this kind of background, with your long discussions with former Secretary of State Acheson on this type of problem, it seems to me you would have been in a position to help him out quickly. Coming in with his kind of experience, he obviously needed to talk over very quickly some of the basic philosophy or some of the basic history of this problem. Did you get in touch with him, or did he reach you on this?

Mr. Nitze: Well, my recollection is that we talked about this problem in our very first meeting to some extent, because I had explained to him why it was that I was particularly interested in working in the Defense Department, namely, that it seemed to me one of the preconditions to conducting a successful foreign policy was to lick this problem which the preceding Administration had not been able to lick, of having the military forces which would support our foreign policy - forces to supplement the sole tool of the threat of massive retaliation. We discussed this, I think, at our very first meeting.

In addition to that, Mr. Kennedy had distributed to all the principal members of the cabinet this paper that our group on National Security Policy had written. This was the first reading that each one of them had to do. I think it was the first paper given to Mr. Rusk. He read that report of our committee. Mr. McNamara read this report. There wasn't really any disagreement on the part of the new members of the National Security Council with the report, so that this was the starting point - the conclusions that we had come to in our group of three. These were accepted by Mr. Rusk and by Mr. McNamara and, I believe, by the President. So that the direction in which the new Administration wanted to go was clear.

The basic problem remained, how do you get there, what do you do concretely, how do you create the forces which will give you a broader option? I might also say that the situation had changed in '57, '58 and '59 by virtue of the Russian Sputnik, so that even the threat of massive retaliation was less useful because of the growing probability that the Russians would have a missile capability earlier than we, and the people thought that it would be in larger numbers than ours. As it turned out the Russians built their missile capability at a slower pace than in '57, '58 and '59 had been

thought possible for them. They also ran into technical difficulties in actually getting missiles, ICBMs, to work properly, so that they did not build as many and deploy them as rapidly as had been estimated. So when we came into office and found out what the facts really were as to numbers of Soviet ICBMs, we found this Russian missile gap threat was not quite as we had envisaged. But it still looked as though it would be wise to accelerate the POLARIS program and MINUTEMAN program to build secure retaliatory forces more rapidly than had been done before. But still we didn't feel under quite the same degree of urgency with respect to that as we had anticipated we would prior to the time that we had had access to all the intelligence.

Well in the very first days of the new Administration, Mr. McNamara discussed these matters with the President in connection with the State of the Union message which was being drafted and it was agreed that a reexamination should be made of the vulnerability of our nuclear deterrent, its dispersal, the size of the nuclear deterrent, and also of the mobility, size and capability of our non-nuclear forces. So that in the State of the Union message there was a reference to this, or if not in the State of the Union message, in one of the earlier messages - I forgot which one.

Mr. McNamara immediately created four Task Groups, one of the task groups looked solely to the nuclear deterrent question; the second one, which he asked me to head, looked to the question of limited war forces; the third looked to the field of research and development, and the fourth dealt with military installations. I might further point out that all this was in the context of the necessity to review the Eisenhower budget which had been submitted in December 1960 and, if we were going to get anything changed, we would have to get in our recommendations for additions or subtractions to the Eisenhower budget early in the year so that we would have the money to do these things that we wanted to do.

As I remember the report on the limited war capabilities, we looked at the contingency of being faced with two limited war situations concurrently, one comparable to Korea, then something else, perhaps Africa, Latin America, the Middle East. And when we worked out what the requirements were in order to meet concurrently two limited war contingencies, we came up with very large additions that would be necessary. As I remember, it was some six or seven billion dollars on top of the Eisenhower budget just for limited war forces. When Mr. McNamara reviewed this, he cut it way back because there were also requirements in connection with strengthening the nuclear forces and there were also requirements in connection with research and development, so that as I remember it, the final decision was to add three billion dollars of which maybe \$1.8 billion was for limited war forces as opposed to the \$6 billion which seemed to be the requirement if one were going to meet the full objective of being able to handle two limited war situations concurrently. But

at least we got a start right there within the initial months of the new Administration.

Miss Fosdick: Did the President himself talk to you about the results of the task force on limited war? Was this left largely to Secretary McNamara and to his department, or did the President discuss the issues directly with you?

Mr. Nitze: My recollection is that the President discussed these matters directly with Mr. McNamara and none of us, who were heading up the task forces, worked directly with the President. We worked with Mr. McNamara and he, in turn, had daily or semi-daily discussions with the President during this period because there was the problem of how much additional money he wanted to ask for.

Miss Fosdick: During this same period there must have been discussions on how you were going to help other countries in the area of sublimited war. This problem would be very closely related to that of increasing our own limited war capability.

Mr. Nitze: My recollection is that Mr. Khrushchev made a speech, I think it was in January 1961, in which he described the various categories of war; general war, which he ruled out; limited war, which he ruled out; and wars of liberation, to which he took a positive view. This speech of Mr. Khrushchev's made a very deep impression upon the President, and the President thought here was the real threat, this is the thing that Mr. Khrushchev is telling us he is going to do. He is going to do subversion, guerrilla warfare, sublimited warfare, and this is where we have been weak, this is where we really need help in supporting foreign policy. Mr. Kennedy and the Attorney General were the driving forces behind this effort.

Miss Fosdick: How did the Attorney General get into this?

Mr. Nitze: A special group was created, to deal specifically with this increasing sublimited war capability, of which the Attorney General was chairman.

Miss Fosdick: Was this before or after the Vienna Conference when the President had such a negative feeling about the chances of working directly with Khrushchev on these things?

Mr. Nitze: I don't remember clearly when these organizational steps were taken but the President's interest in this, I think, predated the Vienna discussions.

Miss Fosdick: Did you work on this problem continuously, the problem of developing the forces and the techniques of fighting counter-insurgency actions and limited wars?

Mr. Nitze: I did during the very early days of the Administration when our principal problem in the earliest days of January 1961 - the hottest problem - was that of Laos. I was a member of the task force working on the Laotian problem and this was a field in which many of these problems became concrete - what could you do to help a country like Laos defend itself against the type of aggression which was going on in Laos. Later on, when it became formalized this responsibility was transferred to Mr. Gilpatrick who took over the responsibility for this area in the Defense Department.

Miss Fosdick: I notice that you had some difficulty getting what you thought were adequate funds for the limited war categories in the early days. How did that develop in the course of the next year or so?

Mr. Nitze: The deciding factor here was Khrushchev's renewal of the threat of a Berlin Peace Treaty and potential blockade of Berlin, so that in the context of trying to meet the Berlin crisis, a lot of things developed. It became clear that certain forces were necessary which had not been clear at the time we were arguing for more than the \$1.8 billion initial revision of the Eisenhower budget.

Miss Fosdick: It is rather like the experience with NSC-68 when the actual invasion across the line proved the NSC-68 recommendations were needed and then President Truman signed the paper he had previously held off signing.

Mr. Nitze: I think these are analogous situations. I think that the point they illustrate is that when you meet a concrete fact it looks different than it did when you were merely doing advance planning with respect to that contingency. But if one does the advance planning first and indicates the lines of thought and considerations, then, when they are confirmed by an actual fact, everybody agrees that action must be taken. So that when we did confront this concrete threat of an East German Peace Treaty and a blockade and considered how we were going to cope with this sort of the threat of massive retaliation, it became clear that the only way in which we could demonstrate to the Russians that we really meant business in our commitment with respect to Berlin was by a buildup of conventional forces. In other words, we needed to buildup the capability to meet the threat in the air corridors and on the ground in Europe in a meaningful way - not necessarily in a way where we would be able to rescue Berlin and drive the Russian forces away from it - but in a way which would bring such pressure to bear on that front that the Russians couldn't handle it

without mobilization and the full application of their power, in which event they couldn't help but realize that nuclear war would be a great probability -- and it would be awfully hard for anybody to keep it from going to nuclear war. But this buildup of conventional capability - which would make it politically possible to take the action in support of our commitment to Berlin - the need for this was clear to everybody shortly after Mr. Khrushchev pointed to Berlin as the point of pressure.

It was then that we worked out a blue book which laid out a program, not only for the U. S. buildup in connection with the Berlin crisis but also what we wanted our allies to do and what we thought it was possible for them to do. This blue book constituted the basis for two things: one, for a second request to Congress for authority and money with respect to a further buildup of our conventional forces; and two, for our diplomatic negotiations with our allies to get them to take the actions which they should take in order to contribute to the overall program. In this way we could call up the additional Army divisions; we got the additional ammunition that was necessary for those divisions; we reconstituted the Army strategic reserve divisions here into real combat divisions - before they had really been training divisions; we got the fleet in a position where it could really do its job; we got tactical air forces in a position where they could do their job - and this is where we really made the big incision to produce the really credible non-nuclear forces to support our foreign policy.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: The Honorable Paul H. Nitze

Address of Interviewee: The Pentagon

Date: July 11, 1964

Interviewer: Dorothy Fosdick

Organization Interviewee Associated with:

Secretary of the Navy; former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

Subject Matter Covered in Interview:

President Kennedy's approach to determining the mix of general war capabilities; President Kennedy's views on proliferation of national nuclear capabilities, particularly the French problem; gold flow and dollar balance problems; NATO; MLF.

Miss Fosdick: Mr. Secretary, I notice in the report of the Kennedy Committee on National Security Policy which you headed it is stated that a general approach to the mix of general war capabilities should be determined by the President-elect as early as a full briefing by those who know about the subject could be arranged. I have the impression that the decisions by the President and the Administration on the mix of general war capabilities came out rather closely in line with the recommendations of your report. Would you comment on how this happened or what the significance of this might be?

Mr. Nitze: I think it did end up very close to the recommendations of our initial report to the President. The way in which this developed, however, was not quite as orderly and as rational an approach to it, as I assumed in the report that we might take.

The first question that faced the new Administration was the amount of additional dollars which Mr. Kennedy would ask for to add on to the Eisenhower budget; so that the first question would be addressed to the more essential points of how one could assure the United States of having a secure second strike retaliatory capability. This was the first thing that the Administration addressed itself to. We were all concerned about the vulnerability of the SAC bombers to the possibility of a surprise attack and we thought that it would be some time before we would have enough POLARIS missiles and really secure MINUTEMAN in order to give us an assured second strike capability - one which could not be eliminated by an initial surprise attack by the Soviet Union. So that the first decisions of the Administration were the acceleration of the POLARIS shipbuilding program from 29 boats each with sixteen missiles to a program of 41 boats each with sixteen. Mr. Kennedy asked for the money for the long lead items for the full 41-boat program, and the schedule then called for one POLARIS submarine a month being produced at the peak of the program which, as I remember it, was the year 1964 - this was the year in which we would reach our peak rate of production. He did everything he could in order to get this POLARIS system to the optimum size as fast as possible. This decision was made at the very outset of the Administration. Concurrently there was a discussion as to how much to accelerate the MINUTEMAN program, and this also was accelerated. My recollection is that a second production line was added to the first production line, and the money for that acceleration of the MINUTEMAN program was also in the first add-on to the Eisenhower budget.

Later in the Kennedy Administration the issue that I had referred to in our paper came up time and time again, as to the mix of systems in package one, the strategic package. How many additional MINUTEMEN

should we buy, should we buy the mobile MINUTEMAN on railroad cars, should we go forward with the SKYBOLT system, should we go for the RS-70 follow-on bombers, and furthermore should we buy the mobile medium range missile which General Norstad was saying he needed for European defense? Every year these issues were debated again and again and again in order to make the decisions as to what we would recommend to Mr. Kennedy.

Then discussions were carried on with Mr. Kennedy as to what he finally recommended to Congress in a way of a program in package one and what its composition should be. Over the years he stuck to the original decision on 41 POLARIS boats each with sixteen missiles. Eventually it was decided that the mobile railroad car based MINUTEMAN was less effective for the dollars which it would cost than additional hardened MINUTEMEN in solos spaced some distance apart. The Air Force felt that we should have a larger number of MINUTEMEN which Mr. Kennedy finally approved, and also felt we should have this follow-on bomber or that we should buy more B-52s. They also felt that we should go forward with the mobile medium range ballistic missile for the European theater.

Mr. Kennedy was very much concerned about the mobile medium range missile in Europe. He felt an issue would arise as to where one would locate these mobile missiles. The only European country which looked with favor upon having mobile medium range ballistic missiles on its territory was Germany. The French were prepared to see these mobile medium range ballistic missiles bought but they would not have any of them on French territory unless full control, not only over the launching system but also over the warheads, was given to the French. But this implied a multiplication of national nuclear deterrents and this then got into the realm of command and control, and how did one maintain centralized single command and control over the entire strategic system. If one had bits and pieces of it controlled absolutely by a number of NATO nations, then there was the great danger that one part would be used alone which would commit us really to go in with them, then the President would have lost control over the operations. We would be in the position that Germany was in in 1914, when their allies, the Austrians, really got them into war without their full consent. The President was not so concerned about the British having an independent nuclear deterrent because he felt that our relations with the British were strong enough so that it was highly unlikely that the British would be prepared to use their nuclear weapons apart from us - independently from us. He felt, however, that the Germans, because of their very great and deep interest in reunification, might use this threat, if they had control over their own nuclear weapons, to cause a crisis in the hope that we would back them up, and that we might be sucked into a general nuclear war not of our desire. He thought

that if the French had this they might eventually make some agreement with the Germans, or that the Germans might end up in control of the Franco-German bloc and therefore he was not desirous of the French having this. Thus, he was very leary of the mobile medium range ballistic missile. In fact, Mr. McNamara did not, until later in the game, recommend that we go forward with even the research and development work necessary to effect such a missile.

As to the B-52s, it was not felt by Mr. McNamara that they really contributed to our second strike capability. I think everybody was very hesitant about looking into the possibility of a win capability which involved the United States in striking first - kind of out of the blue. It was recognized that our policy and our strategy did contemplate the contingency under which we would initiate general nuclear war - that was an all-out conventional attack by the Soviet Union into Europe which could not be contained by the forces that we and the Europeans had in Europe. In that event, we would have to start the general nuclear phase, but it was felt that this was not the same thing as a surprise first strike with the objective of disarming the Soviet Union and putting them in a position where they couldn't respond in any way.

General Powers and General Page of the Air Force both felt it was important for us to have some kind of a first strike capability which would effectively disarm the U.S.S.R. It was Mr. McNamara's view, and my view, that if one could really do this it would be worth adding to the list of options which the President might have. But all the computations that we could make indicated that under the most favorable circumstances, one could not completely disarm the U.S.S.R., one could go perhaps 90% of the way, but the remaining capabilities left to the Soviet were estimated to cause casualties in the United States of somewhere in the order of 9 to 10 million. No one could really contemplate a war which resulted in 10 million casualties from nuclear weapons in the United States as a war which turned out politically to our interests. Therefore the decision was, as had been predicted in the paper we wrote after the election, it did not seem to be within the technological capability to really aspire to a win capability which would be a win in both the military and the political sense.

On the other hand, as had been suggested in the paper, I think everybody, including Mr. Kennedy, agreed that if we had only a minimum retaliatory capability - a capability which could only be used against Soviet centers of population - this would put us in a very dangerous position indeed; it would not be as credible a deterrent as the type of general war nuclear posture that we sought.

I in particular felt that the Russians in their own councils would consider a number of factors before they went down a course which they thought had a prospect of leading to general nuclear war. One of the factors was the factor of the damage which they might suffer to their civilian centers of population; another factor was their estimate of what might be the probable outcome of the initial phase of a nuclear exchange. If their generals told the high councils of the Kremlin that the initial phase of the nuclear war would end up with the United States having a residual capability considerably in excess of the remaining Soviet nuclear capability, that the Russians would come out by far second best and that the future of the world would then be, at least insofar as it was controlled by military considerations, dominated by the surviving people in the United States rather than by surviving people in the Kremlin; this consideration, I felt, would be a more absolute deterrent to the Soviets from going down this course than the risk that they might lose a certain number of citizens. This seemed to me to be particularly true if one considered the fact that the Russians might evacuate their cities. There were a number of things they could do to reduce the personnel casualties that they possibly might suffer, and they had really been rather brutal in World War II about suffering casualties and still going on to win. Therefore, it seemed to me that the strongest deterrent was the prospect of the Russians seeing, if this war came about even if they struck first, that after our retaliation they would be in very much a second best position.

I think this was persuasive to the President; it seemed to me to be a perfectly clear argument; I think that Mr. McNamara felt it was a perfectly clear argument, and this was the basis for our policy to try to develop forces which would be so strong and so survivable that even if the Russians struck first, we would be able to make the second strike stronger than they had, and still have in reserve sufficient weapons so that we would still be in the stronger position with those weapons we hadn't used than the Russians would be, and so that we would be left dominating this miserable battlefield. From the standpoint of deterrence, this would be much stronger than the minimum of retaliation capability.

Miss Fosdick: You say that the President came to this conclusion. How were the arguments presented to him, by memorandum or were there continual discussions with him over a period of time?

Mr. Nitze: Over a period this was very much on his mind and very much on Mr. McNamara's mind and I believe that Mr. McNamara discussed these issues with Mr. Kennedy as often as two or three times a week. Of course, during the Berlin crisis this was no longer a theoretical kind of discussion.

This was a very real discussion, a discussion devoted to real contingencies which you could see coming before you - not just possibilities but probabilities that you would be faced with this decision and that decision and the other decision each of which did involve the chain of general war. It was the only way in which we could possibly defend Berlin - to make it clear that in Russia they were going down a course which we would respond to in a way which they would then have to respond to in a series of escalations which would bring us very close to a general nuclear war. We couldn't save Berlin except through such a chain. The President was determined to save Berlin so he knew that it was probable he would have to make decisions which were getting much closer to the ultimate decision of having to finally press that button.

Miss Fosdick: Did you talk to him personally about these problems now and then, or was it a matter mainly of your persuading, arguing or discussing with Secretary McNamara and then having him, in whatever contact he had with the President, convey these thoughts? To what extent did the President get into the detail of this the way he did in so many foreign policy questions - and enter into argument and back and forth exchange.

Mr. Nitze: He got into this very much in detail, but he got in it largely with Mr. McNamara and in part with the Joint Chiefs, in part with the National Security Council briefings of the Net Evaluation Group. At many of these I was present. But I never discussed these matters with Mr. Kennedy apart from Mr. McNamara.

Miss Fosdick: This was part of your general principle of operation?

Mr. Nitze: I felt that I would destroy my usefulness to the President if I were to short circuit Mr. McNamara and go directly to the President.

I have a further comment that I would like to make about this question of how much do you need for retaliation, how much do you need in order to be certain that the Russians know that even if they were to strike first, we could still end up the initial phases of a nuclear war in the dominating nuclear position. There was a further element that came into this discussion in the latter days of Mr. Kennedy's Administration and this was the question of damage limitation.

The purpose of a second strike would be to reduce the remaining Soviet strategic nuclear capability to a very small amount, not just in order to be able thereafter to dominate the nuclear equations between the Soviet Union and ourselves but also to limit damage to the United States from those remaining weapons. Now this concept of limiting damage to the United States was a very difficult concept for all of us to work through to its ultimate logic. In the event the United States were to

strike first on the contingency, say, that Europe were invaded first and we initiated general war, then one would find the situation where none of the Soviet forces had been as yet shot off and our strike would find all those missiles still on the ground - many of the planes still on the ground - and let's say we destroyed 90% of it, then only the remaining 10% could damage the United States. But after all, what we were talking about was not an initial first strike against the Soviet Union except in this one contingency. Our main strategy was that even if the Russians struck first, then our second strike would be so heavy that we could take out their remaining facilities and still have a greater reserve than they; but, if the Russians had struck first, then all those missiles would have hit their targets, a lot of the facilities they would be destroying would be empty holes - the missiles would have gone, the planes would have gone. We would just be seeing to it that they had no remaining capability; we would have already absorbed much of the damage. Under those circumstances, was it really worthwhile to hit all these empty holes: We would have suffered such damage from the initial strike that it would be hard to conceive of the United States going on as a political entity.

Were there any other things that one could do in order to limit damage? This got us into considerations of the anti-ICBM, the Civil Defense Program, and the anti-Soviet submarine launched ballistic missile system. It was only if we could intercept these missiles, or if we could devise a program so that we would have a combination Civil Defense, plus AICBMs, plus weapons which would control their submarines. As it turned out the requirements for damage limitations, in other words the forces that we needed in the United States in order to give us some shot at reducing the damage from an initial Soviet strike to manageable proportions, these requirements for U.S. forces were greater than those you would need in order to assure yourself of a military win capability.

So the arguments switched over a period of time from the one which I had presented to Mr. Kennedy in this initial task force paper as to the relationship between a win capability and a retaliatory capability. The arguments switched to one between damage limitations, which is a more difficult target, and an assured retaliatory capability - and that's where it is today. This is the only additional comment I have. I think it is an important point.

Miss Fosdick: You referred to President Kennedy's concern about the proliferation of national nuclear capabilities, particularly the French situation, perhaps you'd like to say something more about that.

Mr. Nitze: I accompanied Mr. Kennedy on his trip to Vienna where he discussed matter with Mr. Khrushchev. On the way back from Vienna, we

stopped in Paris and saw Mr. DeGaulle. The discussions with President DeGaulle were, at least to me, extremely interesting. General DeGaulle said that in his view nuclear strategy, nuclear warfare, was nonsense. The whole thing made no sense whatsoever. It was a question of mutual destruction, and wasn't military strategy. Mr. Kennedy very much wanted to repair United States relations with General DeGaulle and with France. France was, after all, the key to a successful and solvent strategic posture for Europe. We had all felt that to carry out Mr. Kennedy's directive - to have a choice other than ignominous retreat or general nuclear war - the European countries plus ourselves could build an appropriate structure provided that we got full French cooperation. At one time the French had committed themselves to contributing sixteen divisions to NATO - this was at the time the Germans originally committed themselves to twelve. The French wanted to be sure that they had stronger forces in Europe than the Germans did because they were worried about a predominant German military capability on the continent. After that time the French cut this pledge back from sixteen to ten to six, and finally withdrew their commitment almost entirely from NATO. I think they have now restored it to two, with a possibility of three.

But when one looked to the requirement for some thirty to thirty-two good divisions in the central front of Europe plus a mobilization capability of an additional twenty-eight or thirty divisions, where could one see the possibility for this? The main place was France. Therefore, Mr. Kennedy went to the greatest lengths to see whether he couldn't work out some modus vivendi, some way to get over the misunderstandings or the differences of viewpoint between General DeGaulle and himself.

Originally at that session in Paris, Mr. Kennedy thought that what General DeGaulle really wanted was the triumvirate, the NATO directorate, of the U.K., France and the U.S., and he asked me to get up a paper there for him in Paris which would outline what we could in fact do in order to meet General DeGaulle's presumed desires for such a directorate. I did get up for the President in Paris such a paper, which went somewhat further than I think the other participants in NSC discussions had thought was right. Before that time the President made it perfectly clear to me he wanted to see the boldest proposition down this line that I could come up with. I had only an hour to do this. I came up with such a paper and he immediately used this in his discussions with General DeGaulle. The point was that he did agree that we would do this to the extent that he wanted to implement it and we could find ways to implement it. The upshot of this discussion was that Mr. Rusk, on behalf of the United States, and Couve de Murville, on behalf of the French, were to have subsequent discussions to see how we could set up a system of consultations which would involve the British, the French and ourselves, on a worldwide basis, with

periodic meetings at the political level, and periodic and related meetings at the military level to discuss problems of political-military strategy worldwide. This Mr. Kennedy agreed to, or suggested that he thought this is what DeGaulle wanted.

Miss Fosdick: Was this the essence of your paper?

Mr. Nitze: This was the essence of my paper. As it turned out, General DeGaulle would never authorize Couve de Murville to follow up on the discussions. This wasn't really what DeGaulle wanted. It then became clear that what he wanted was collaboration from the United States in assisting the French to develop a nuclear capability of their own. This was really what he wanted. He didn't really want the political directorate that he had discussed earlier. There were very strong reasons for not helping France to do this. On the other hand, there continued to be very strong reasons to try to bring France back in the fold. The upshot of this was that I did do some work on a paper to try to test the French out to see whether there was any negotiating position which we could eventually arrive at with the French which would make it possible for us to give the French assistance in their nuclear program. It seemed to me that if the French really were to commit themselves to NATO in quite a different sense than the sense in which they were then behaving in NATO - if they were really to become part of NATO the way we were and the way the Germans were, if they were to view their defense as being part of the NATO defense - then it would be possible for us to give them assistance in developing their own nuclear capability. But the forces should not only then be earmarked but assigned to NATO, so that the plans would all be NATO plans and the authority to use these forces would all be NATO authority. Granted that if NATO broke up the French would still have a national nuclear capability, still if they would demonstrate to us their seriousness in making NATO really work, maybe the payoff would be enough so that we could take the disadvantages and the risk that the French would end up with a capability of their own; particularly, in light of the fact that it looked to me as though they were going to go down the road to getting their own nuclear capability in any case. I think time has demonstrated that this was correct, and therefore it would seem to have been to our interest to help them get a nuclear capability which they were going to get anyway provided we could get them really to be part of NATO.

Miss Fosdick: What was the fate of this paper, or this proposal?

Mr. Nitze: It met violent opposition from the State Department. I guess it was the Standing Group of the NSC which considered this paper. Mr. Kennedy

finally did authorize me to explore these ideas with General Lavaud, who had been sent over by the French to negotiate with us a balance of payments cost equalization proposition which we had made to the French with respect to our dollar gold drain situation in France. We were spending about \$300 million a year in France which added to our gold drain and we had asked the French to see whether they couldn't work out a program with us for radically reducing or, in fact, equalizing this \$300 million account. General Lavaud was on his way over to talk to me about that, and I knew that Lavaud was going to make one of the preconditions for this balancing out of our gold and dollar drain sale by us to them of some of the things they needed for their nuclear programs. This seemed to be the time to go forward with this exploration. The President did authorize me to make this exploration with Lavaud, and I did do exactly what the President authorized me to do. As it turned out, Lavaud said that the various things that I was raising were beyond his instructions, that he was instructed merely to negotiate this purchase of military supplies from the United States, and he was not authorized to negotiate with me with respect to France's role in NATO. But we finally developed an agreed minute of the negotiations which made it perfectly clear that if the French were prepared to make radical commitments of their support to NATO including the number of divisions they would supply and various other things that would include permitting us to have our planes with nuclear weapons in France, then we would consider assisting them in their nuclear program.

Miss Fosdick: What was the fate of this minute?

Mr. Nitze: The minute had an evil fate. Shortly thereafter Mr. Kennedy was asked in a press conference whether we would assist the French in developing an independent nuclear capability and Mr. Kennedy replied that he thought it would be inimicable to the interests of the allies for us to assist the French to develop an independent nuclear capability. The President's reply was not inconsistent with what in fact he had authorized me to negotiate, but it appeared to be and it got the French so mad that the negotiations ceased right there. Subsequently Ambassador Alphand raised with McGeorge Bundy and me the importance of rebuilding a bridge with General DeGaulle. McGeorge Bundy and I followed this up with a series of discussions, saying that we would be prepared to reopen the negotiations of the type that I had initiated with General Lavaud and that we would do it in any way that they wanted to do it; that it would be our view, however, that it would be unfortunate to have no preliminary negotiations prior to a discussion between General DeGaulle and Mr. Kennedy. One was too apt to have a misunderstanding if there were no preliminary work. Our suggestion would be that if General DeGaulle would appoint somebody, in any capacity, to speak for him and try to work out some of the ground rules which should be explored first, before a high level meeting,

this would be useful. Ambassador Alphand agreed with our position after a prolonged series of discussions and said that he was going back to Paris, he would see General DeGaulle and he would advance these arguments to him and hoped that he would have some success in getting somebody appointed. I think that Ambassador Alphand hoped that he personally would be the man selected by General DeGaulle. But, as it turned out, General DeGaulle was not interested in doing this at all. At least we never got any reply to this initiative. This initiative was some months, even perhaps weeks, prior to the sessions in London with respect to Skybolt which led to Nassau.

Miss Fosdick: After Nassau there was less chance.

Mr. Nitze: Then at Nassau we tried again to open up this possibility with the French and immediately after the Nassau Agreement (Mr. Bohlen was with us at Nassau), Mr. Bohlen was given orders by the President to go immediately back to France and see General DeGaulle and make it clear to General DeGaulle what we were prepared to do with the French not only what we had agreed to do with the British in respect to the Nassau Agreement, but, in view of the different circumstances in France of their not having nuclear weapons of their own, we would be prepared to go forward further in order to make this a meaningful offer. I think that General DeGaulle was faced with a very grave issue as to whether or not to accept this offer which did, however, still involve the French commitment to NATO, or whether to kick this offer in the teeth the way he did in that January press conference, and go down the line of trying to split the NATO as a precondition to negotiations thereafter with respect to NATO.

Miss Fosdick: I am rather struck with the fact that President Kennedy authorized you to negotiate with Lavaud when others, including the State Department, seemed to be reluctant and were advising a rather different line. Do you want to comment further on this departure from the normal channels of officialdom?

Mr. Nitze: President Kennedy was very much interested at this time in the gold and dollar balance problem which we all faced. He felt that this was one of the most important things that had to be controlled; that if we didn't control this gold outflow, there could be a run on the dollar and this could be a disaster, forcing us to currency control and all kinds of things which were unattractive. He was very practically interested in the prospect of being able to improve our gold and dollar balance of payments position by an amount as large as \$300 million per year. So despite the objections of the State Department to this, he felt he did not want to forego the chance of getting this \$300 million just because of those things and, therefore, authorized me to conduct these negotiations.

Miss Fosdick: I presume your own interest in addition to the gold and balance of payments problem was your own concern to do what you possibly could here to save NATO and to improve the French cooperation with the plans for the development of NATO.

Mr. Nitze: This is correct. All of us that worked on these matters in the Pentagon - McNamara, General Taylor and I - were very much interested in licking this strategic problem in NATO. This seemed to be a chance to do it and this was our main interest - we were also interested in the gold and balance of payments problem. Our main interest in trying to work this out was to meet the NATO strategic position - to weld NATO together once more.

I should have pointed out earlier that I did show this paper of mine to Mr. McNamara before I took it up with Mr. Kennedy and the NSC subgroup and he authorize me to do that. He didn't say he approved, but he authorized me to do this.

Miss Fosdick: What was the main line in the State Department in objecting to this?

Mr. Nitze: The main line of the State Department objections to it was (a) that the proliferation of national nuclear capabilities was a bad thing and that one couldn't guarantee that if we helped the French at some time or other, they wouldn't renege on their obligations to NATO and end up with a national capability; and (b) at least a part of the State Department - George Ball, Bob Schaezel and some of the people in EUR - were dedicated to the proposition of the multilateral force as being the solution to both the strategic problems of Europe and to European unification. They felt that this approach to the French would undermine the prospect of the multilateral force, and, I think, that this was perhaps their strongest objection. The President was always somewhat leary of what he conceived to be almost a fanaticism of the strong proponents of the MLF - not that he wasn't for the MLF, but he felt that it engendered almost fanatical support on the part of some people and he was always skeptical when he saw that.

Miss Fosdick: Is this perhaps an illustration of the fact that the President wouldn't let a program like the Multilateral Force - which was still in the paper stage and, as you say, the concept of a group of very enthusiastic people - stand in the way of certain very practical gains, such as progress in the handling of the balance of payments problem or progress in tying the French more directly into NATO? He wouldn't let that sort of gimmick, if I may use the word, stand in the way of concrete steps forward?

Mr. Nitze: This is quite right, but I think the point is even stronger than that and that is when Mr. Kennedy wanted to get something done, he wanted to get it done and he didn't easily tolerate opposition to what he thought was necessary to get it done, no matter where it came from. When he really had the bit in his teeth to go forward with a program, he would unilaterally, singlehandedly, push on the thing and drive forward on it.

Miss Fosdick: And overrule Department recommendations and other points of view if he felt they stood in the way of something he was pretty sure about.

Mr. Nitze: That's right. He thought this was an inherent responsibility of the President to drive forward on the things which he felt necessary to do. His responsibility was different from that of any one of his cabinet members. He had the final responsibility. When he saw clearly that he wanted to do something, he would drive right ahead and you could see him kind of change countenance and get very stern and tough about it.

73-25  
Riggle  
Wise Committee

REPORT OF SENATOR KENNEDY'S  
NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY COMMITTEE

1. Whom has the Committee consulted:
  - a. We have sought the views of a large number of those senior Americans well informed on national security matters regardless of party affiliation. Without exception we have found them anxious to cooperate. Those consulted include:

Robert Lovett  
Arthur Dean  
John C. McCloy.  
Henry Alexander  
William C. Foster  
Dean Rusk  
General William Draper  
James Conant  
Robert Bowie  
Dean Acheson  
Moorhead Patterson  
Joseph Johnson  
Stacy May  
Colonel George C. Lincoln

- b. We have tapped the views of those within the Administration who have been prepared to give advice, including:

State: Bohlen, Henderson, Gullion, MacArthur, etc.

Defense: Gen. Bonesteel, Gen. Parrish, Adm. Hooper, W.S.E.G., Marvin Stern, etc.

Treasury: Graydon Upton

Budget: Elmer Staats

C.I.A.: Richard Bissell

c. We have sought the views of some of the research institutions, including:

RAND  
Stanford Research  
Institute of Defense Analyses  
Foreign Policy Research Institute, Penn.  
Washington Center of Foreign Policy Research

d. We have consulted with certain knowledgeable foreigners, including:

British: Watkinson, British Minister of Defense  
Rozier, British, Chiefs of Staff  
O'Neil, Parliamentary Secretary of State for Disarmament  
Members of the Labor Shadow Cabinet

Representatives of Mr. Adenauer and of the German Social Democratic Party

Canadians, including George Ignatiev, Amb. Heeney, Dana Wielgress

2. What has the Committee attempted to do?

It has attempted to isolate the principal national security issues which the President-elect is likely to face during the transition period and to sort out those on which the Committee feels reasonably firm recommendations can be made and those requiring further guidance from the President-elect.

3. What major issues emerged from the Committee's consultation?

a. Defense Policy

b. Disarmament Policy in Relation to Defense Policy

- c. The Gold Drain and U.S. Balance of Payments
- d. The Organization of the State Department
- e. U.S. Representation to the United Nations
- f. Berlin, NATO, the problem of deGaulle, the 6 and the 7

Brief memoranda on each of these issues are attached.

- 4. The Committee, or one or more of its members, would welcome an opportunity to discuss these issues with the President-elect as soon after November 9th as may suit his convenience. In any case the Committee would welcome guidance as to any further work Senator Kennedy may want it to undertake.

## A. Six Areas for Consideration in The Defense Field

The following six areas are all interconnected. What is decided in one area will radically affect what is possible and can and should be decided in the others. Perhaps the most fundamental interaction is between defense requirements and the politico-economic feasibility of the gross defense budget implied by an acceptance of those requirements. Even though the six areas are necessarily listed *seriatim*, the actual judgments and decisions must be arrived at more or less concurrently as parts of an integrated program.

1. Basic Strategic Judgments: For the new defense program to get under way with evidence of purpose and direction, the newly elected President should early arrive at a judgment on the two or three basic strategic issues which the Eisenhower Administration has tended to compromise about, sweep under the rug and permit to remain as the subjects of internecine warfare between and within the Services. These are not easy judgments to arrive at. The initial decisions may have to be tentative. They should not, however, be ignored or indefinitely compromised.

a. The most basic issue is between attempting to achieve a politically meaningful "win" capability in general nuclear war versus the creation of a secure retaliatory capability.

Weapons systems and programs necessary for a "win" capability may differ quite radically from those required for a secure retaliatory capability.

A true "win" capability would require accurate and powerful attack systems, first class target acquisition systems, elaborate active and passive defense systems, forces for the prosecution of the second and third phases of a general war and a good recuperation program. It is doubtful whether such a capability is possible within presently foreseeable technology. In any case it would be immensely expensive both economically and politically to make an all out drive toward achieving such a capability. It would also probably require a first or preemptive strike by our side to capitalize on its "win" possibilities. Furthermore, such a capability would probably be destabilizing -- in other words would increase the danger of nuclear war.

On the other hand there are very great political and military dangers in having merely a punitive retaliatory capability with no possibility of a "win". If deterrence were to fail, or threaten to fail, we would be left with no option for military action other than a self-defeating punitive attack.

A pure retaliatory capability therefore undermines the credibility of the deterrent and gives little or no support to the political aspects of our policy.

It would therefore seem that in addition to a secure deterrent posture, some admixture of possible "win" capabilities is called for.

A general approach to the "mix" of general war capabilities to be striven for should be determined by the President-elect, as early as full briefing by those knowledgeable in the subject can be arranged.

b. The last Administration has never clearly faced up to the issue of the degree to which we should rely on nuclear weapons in limited wars. In essence they have said we will do what we can with conventional weapons; what can't be handled by conventional weapons must be handled by nuclear weapons.

Budgetary pressures and the pressures for greater general war capabilities have caused a continuous squeeze on our non-nuclear capabilities.

The President-elect, in the campaign came out clearly for a strengthening and modernization of our limited war capabilities and particularly the non-nuclear component of these capabilities.

To have capabilities which would meet all contingencies will be a tremendous undertaking. An early Presidential decision, after appropriate briefing, of the speed and scope of the approach to this problem, will be needed.

## B. Disarmament Policy in Relation to Defense Policy

The Committee is impressed by two circumstances: the first is the very real international psychological pressure for disarmament; the second is the unreality, unworkability, and lack of serious substance to most of the disarmament proposals which have been advanced.

The U.S. has gotten trapped in a position where general and complete disarmament has received the sanction of the United Nations as a goal.

The U.S. has also been forced to agreement with the principle of parity (equality between Westerners and Communists) in the form of negotiation. The parity principle then gets itself extended to any organization or control mechanism connected with disarmament or control and regulation. This can only result in Communist power to veto or control in view of their superior discipline.

We believe that the most feasible intermediate term objective is not complete and total disarmament but a more stable nuclear relationship between the two blocs.

The most feasible and practicable route to such a relationship lies through reciprocal action and counter-action between the two blocs.

In the meantime, however, the political psychological problem must be dealt with, and successfully dealt with. Even in England there seems to be a gap between the understanding of those professionals seized of the disarmament problem and both public opinion and the British Cabinet.

A substantial strengthening of U.S. talent working on disarmament is called for. This applies not only to technical talent but most importantly to political and psychological talent.

### C. The Gold Drain and U.S. Balance of Payments

All those whom we consulted in the New York business community, and most of the foreigners we have consulted, have put at the top of their list of national security problems the question of the persistent imbalance in our balance of payments and increasing concern for the stability of the dollar.

Two basic lines of approach appear possible. The first is to restore confidence in the dollar (a) by indications of firm policy and (b) by firm and effective policies to increase U.S. productivity and bring our balance of payments into equilibrium. The other would be to take emergency measures.

We hope that the positions taken by the President-elect during the campaign will have relieved the immediate symptoms of uncertainty. Should, however, uncertainty continue we see no short term device which would be as effective as the prompt appointment of a Secretary of the Treasury who enjoys high respect and confidence in the international financial world.

If the President-elect desires them, we have specific names to propose.

D. The Organization of the State Department

Two members of your Committee, and a substantial number of

those we were instructed to consult, attended a three day meeting

at Arden House on State Department Organization.

We think the report of that meeting can well be used as a

basis for the new administration's approach to the problem. The

The Committee has more detailed suggestions both as to organi-

zation and as to personnel should the President-elect desire to

receive them.

## E. U.S. Representation to the United Nations

The experience at this falls meeting at the United Nations has demonstrated the gross inadequacy of our present organization to deal with the problems that now arise there.

The stature of our permanent representative is inadequate.

The U.S. delegation was relatively unknown and ineffective.

The staff was inadequate, overworked, and dispirited.

The non-partisan U.S. policy orientation of the operation which had been developed in Senator Austin's day had disintegrated.

Your Committee believes that the U.N. job is now of such a magnitude that it would warrant the appointment of a three-man team to handle the Permanent Representative work; one would be the Permanent Representative and concentrate on policy, one would concentrate on the debate within the Assembly and its committees, the third would concentrate on liaison with the other delegations.

The U.S. delegation should be of higher level and should restore an effective non-partisan approach.

An enlarged and more competent staff could be attracted if the first two steps were done.

F. Berlin, NATO, deGaulle, the 6 and the 7

) 1. A renewal of pressure on Berlin to force a summit conference will clearly be one of Khrushchev's gambits which must be promptly dealt with by the new Administration.

Adenauer sent over a personal representative, Mr. Erik Blumenfeld, to urge that the candidate make a pledge during the campaign to go to Berlin, among other places, at some early date after the election. This seemed too much of a copy of Eisenhower's "I will go to Korea" to be much use in the campaign.

Macmillan clearly favors an early summit meeting in order to forestall immediate pressure on Berlin.

) deGaulle's position appears to be closer to Adenauer's than Macmillan's.

It is probable that Khrushchev prefers to threaten Berlin to pressure us in directions he wants on other issues rather than actually to pull the string of final action. The possibility of a renewed blockade cannot, however, be ignored.

A common position with the British, French and Germans must promptly be developed. Such a position must include a negotiating position with respect to Berlin itself, a solution we could live with and which would not have a specific time limit, a negotiating position with respect to renewed summit discussions, and agreement on a contingency plan to cover a renewal of a blockade.

If the President-elect does not wish to go to Europe at an early date, he may wish to set an early meeting with Macmillan, Adenauer and deGaulle in the United States.

2. NATO: Immediately after the election, someone should be authorized by the President-elect to request access to the Bowie report on NATO. This is understood to be a carefully thought through report which is receiving careful consideration both in State and the Pentagon. Unless prompt action is taken to gain control of the situation, positions may crystalize, particularly in the Services which may be hard later to overcome.

3. The most crucial political problem facing us in our relations with our European allies is that of how to handle deGaulle. It appears unlikely that he can either be appeased, or beaten down by frontal attack. The best strategy would seem to be to rebuild our relations with the British, Italians and others and bring the Germans around to cooperating with us in restricting deGaulle's freedom to disrupt the Western coalition. Progress should then be possible on individual segments of the European problem. In the long run deGaulle will be succeeded by someone else.

4. The conflict between the Common Market Six and the Outer Seven should be more firmly grasped by the new Administration. Our

) weight should be put behind getting England and its associates and  
to some extent ourselves, into the ambit of the Six. We should work  
against exclusivity and inward turning on the part of the Six.