

**Arthur Sylvester Oral History Interview—JFK #1, 8/16/1973**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Arthur Sylvester

**Interviewer:** Lawrence H. Suid

**Date of Interview:** August 16, 1973

**Length:** 17 pages

Arthur Sylvester (1901-1979) was the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs between 1961 and 1967. This interview focuses on Sylvester's changes to the relationship between the Department of Defense (DOD) and Hollywood, Congress' control over the Public Affairs department, and the profitability of war movies until the Vietnam War, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

with

ARTHUR SYLVESTER

August 16, 1973

By Lawrence H. Suid

For the John F. Kennedy Library

SUID: Much of what you did in changing the Department of Defense policies on cooperation seems to have begun with “Longest Day.”

SYLVESTER: No. “The Longest Day” was a proof to me of what I was doing that was right. It was another and rather flagrant example of what I already observed. Basically it was this: You are using public money for the benefit of private companies. The argument on behalf of that by the motion picture companies and the bemused Services was that it increased recruiting. That was the rationality. It was the great mover of recruiting. That was the rationality. It was the great mover of recruiting. Now what you come down to is that you spend public money and then the taxpayer, having spent that money for the benefit of a private company, has to then pay again to see the product of his own money. Number two: the only reason the movie companies went in for [war] movies was because they were profitable. You couldn’t get them to make one today. They’re not making them today. Why?

SUID: Because Vietnam has made war films unpopular.

SYLVESTER: All right. So the real reason always that made war movies was because they were profitable. It is true that during the war presumably it helped

sustain moral. Not provable by objective evidence, but let's grant that. What was the excuse after the war? Well, that excuse was that it was activated, sustained, and generated recruitment. But I had a check made of that and there wasn't one single recruitee that anybody could point to that had joined up because of those movies. I think they turned up one officer who said he had seen some pictures.

SUID: Are you referring to the returned Vietnam P.O.W. who was interviewed in the *New York Times* in March?

SYLVESTER: No, I'm thinking of the time frame we are talking about, the Sixties when I got into this. If they stopped the movies, they didn't change the recruiting one way or the other during the periods when they had them and when they didn't have them. So that was a phony argument. The basic argument was very simple. It saved the movie companies millions of dollars. It also took jobs away from musicians. And it put the government in competition with people seeing jobs, people who were paying taxes.

SUID: Issue of patriotism by movie companies during the war. How much pure patriotism and how much profit even then?

SYLVESTER: Of course there was profit. That doesn't necessarily make it bad. But let's call it profit. It doesn't necessarily nullify their wonderful [motive]. It's nice when you can make a profit and still be patriotic at the same time. But, I's not arguing with the period of four years of war. We're now down pretty close to twenty years later, aren't we, 1961?

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Furthermore, under the security review procedure, before you can make available any materials, they have to agree to review, I found that we had a very weak relationship so far as supervision, so far as liaison. A couple of officers who had been liaison officers on pictures told me that they were paid \$300 bucks a week, were provided a car and girls. And they said, for Christ's sake, this is really whore job. Now obviously, a colonel or a Lt. colonel or a commander, even a captain is not going to step in and to say, "No, you can't do that" when the admiral of the ship says it's alright to the producer.

Further, the amount of material that eventually became demanded once an agreement was made to cooperate on a film became astronomical. It just grew and grew. One of the things that I knew would slow that down was to make them identify before we agreed precisely what they wanted. Well, nobody wanted to do that. That's hard work. It's the same as planning a year ahead for business and they don't like to operate that way, you know, "Send me another battleship."

Always with the military people, and this is no derogation because I admire them greatly, but they all love to be in the movies and they all convince themselves that they were doing great things for their services and they were presenting their services in a marvelous light. Well, as long as there were romantic pictures which had no real relation to reality and



didn't degrade the military, it didn't hurt them any [to help filmmakers]. It certainly presented them in a phony light. But that's make-up. On the other hand, when some picture makers wanted to make rather realistic pictures, the military didn't want it. Obviously that was another complication.

But [to summarize] the thrust of what I attempted to do was (a) to reduce the use of tax-supported materials by motion pictures and (b) to get a firmer grip on our part on what they wanted, when they wanted it, and how it was used, and to have a decent arms-length rational relationship. Without kidding ourselves, whether they never made a picture again, men would be coming into the services and the services would survive. "The Longest Day" did energize these views even more for this reason. Here, a battle group was brought out of Berlin and down to the beaches at a time when we were calling up National Guardsmen from Missouri. I remember several cases. One of a man who ran a store out there and his wife had to take it over (and they had two children) because he was called to the National Guard because we didn't have enough troops for the Berlin Crisis.

And yet, that chump, that Commander-In-Chief over there, that Air Force officer [Norstad], he brings down a battle group out of Berlin. Well, of course, the Congress went wild. And you could just see this thing coming. Now, I got burned on that

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one because I wrote my name approving it. I took office on the 25th of January, 1961. I wrote my name approving it, I don't know, the 5th or 6th of February, relying on. I might say, on people you've interviewed. And that woke me up to the fact that (a) they didn't know what the hell they were doing and (b) goddamn it, I wasn't signing my name to anymore of these things because this then was used as an excuse for bringing down the battle group that I had approved of.

SUID:               You are talking about "The Longest Day"?

SYLVESTER:       Yes, the one made by Zanuck. It was across the Normandy beaches [during] the Berlin Crisis in 1961. It was then that that picture was being made and it was then that Norstad authorized the removal of a battle group at the time when we were calling up the National Guard. This stunk up the works terribly. My name and Norstad's throwback to the authority was because I had approved cooperation. It is absolutely true. I did, I approved it before I knew what the hell I was doing, having been in that office [a very short time], and been assured by my predecessor that it was all according to Hoyle, that we had been doing that. Well, it didn't happen again. I'll tell you that. I made one error. But, I don't make the same error twice.

SUID:               It was like Kennedy learning from the Bay of Pigs.

SYLVESTER:       There, I'll be a little kinder, in the Bay of Pigs, to the guys who got nabbed. I accept responsibility for ["The Longest Day"]. I should have

said, "No, I don't know enough about it." But, if you do that, you'd stop the whole wheel. But I learned a lot. I learned the type of mind of the people who are authorizing this. If the motion picture people want it, they can have anything.

SUID: Had you in fact come into office with any prior ideas on cooperation?

SYLVESTER: No, I had not, except basically that government money and tax money should not be spent, generally speaking, for the support of this sort of private enterprise in which the people are then going to have to pay again to see what they've already paid for.

SUID: It was just a general view then?

SYLVESTER: Yes, I have that general view.

SUID: Was your view shared, altered, or given direction by Secretary of Defense McNamara, or did he just appoint you?

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SYLVESTER: Bob McNamara gave his assistants tremendous authority. [McNamara worked for a general in World War II who used to say that if a man was right 51% of the time, that was good enough for him.] Well, it wasn't good enough for McNamara. But, one of the great things he did for me as a newsman was that in the news business, they will always tell you on Monday what should have been in the paper on Sunday that they forgot to tell you on Friday or Saturday. They second guess is part of it. McNamara never second guessed you. He had good reasons. He never got in this at all. I never had any direction from him. I was on my own as head of that Department.

SUID: What was the Chain of Command?

SYLVESTER: You have the Secretary of Defense, a Deputy, and X number of assistants. It has varied. It runs about five or six. One of them is Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. His functions are stated in one of these directives. But, he is the chief right arm for the Secretary in advising and working for him in all fields of public affairs. He also has control over the public affairs of all the unified commands around the world. At that time, the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs was the only assistant secretary who could go directly to the unified and specified commands and give them orders, not on operational, but on the public affairs field. And that was why I was able to go directly to Norstad, who was the head of CINEUR or to any other [Command].

That Office is responsible for any sort of public affairs or impact of it throughout the world on the military. The Assistant Secretary cannot give direct orders to the Services domestically. I cannot direct the Army, Navy, or Air Force to do this or that. However,

through the Chiefs of Information, after it became evident that they couldn't go by me to the White House or McNamara, that we worked together, they got the message.

SUID: Mr. Baruch's office was under you?

SYLVESTER: He was one of the subdivisions in my office.

SUID: Was Mr. Hatch there also?

SYLVESTER: Norman and Baruch were both there.

SUID: You went through Hatch to Baruch?

SYLVESTER: Baruch at that time was senior to Hatch. They only had one man in charge of motion pictures at that point. Baruch was a very nice guy and well-meaning man. But, it was clear to me at least that there was something wrong with the office and my setup if the man in charge of it can close shop for a month and go off to Cannes to the Film Festival. What the hell to the office. That woke me up a little bit too. So, I did reorganize it

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I did reorganize it and I did change the authorities and pulled the film and the audio much closer and under the Director of Information.

SUID: So you tightened up the chain of command.

SYLVESTER: Very much. Very much.

SUID: Baruch now had to report more directly to you.

SYLVESTER: He had to. Exactly.

SUID: This brings up the origins and process of change in regulations from the 1954 Directive to the one you issued.

SYLVESTER: In 1964, we came out with a new directive which specified much more clearly when we would cooperate and on what basis.

SUID: What was your specific role in developing it?

SYLVESTER: I did not sit down and write it all out. We had a good number of meetings and brought in the Services of course. They talked to the motion picture

people who raised hell. They didn't want any part of it. The silly jerk who was then representing the *New York Times* in Los Angeles -- I could only conclude he was in the pockets of the motion picture people because he wrote without any check from us an outrageous attack on me without knowing what the hell he was talking about in behalf of the motion picture people and against what we were doing. In other words, a newspaper ought to have been with us on this because we were saying, we're watching the taxpayers' money, we're not letting people just make free with everything they want.

SUID: Discussion of when issued.

SYLVESTER: It didn't happen overnight. It took a long struggle because I didn't just walk in and tear everything apart and change it overnight. It took some time and it was worked out as we went along and then finally given formal and final expression.

SUID: Once the directive was issued, it was of course attacked and the industry expressed great anguish.

SYLVESTER: They expressed great anguish before the thing was finally put down in writing and we reached the final directive that we finally issued. As I said, we didn't just walk over them. They came in, Ken Clark came in, all the individual fellows from the various motion picture companies came in. We talked to them.

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Some acted one way. Some acted another. Some admitted that they understood what we were trying to do. But after all, they were responsible to people at home and they didn't want it. And they didn't want it for a simple reason. It was going to cost them money. That was the real reason.

SUID: Did they write letters or come in personally?

SYLVESTER: They did both.

[Discussion of sources, letters, news articles, company reps]

SUID: The directive was finally issued. What effect did it have? Baruch suggested no particular change in cooperation.

SYLVESTER: You have to look at it two ways. (A) Sure. I think that the motion picture people who wanted cooperation got cooperation. They got it on our terms and in a much tightened operation. So in that sense, I don't think it changed it. The motion picture people would say to you, it changed it. It was more work for them. That's right. It was. But it was also less ordering stuff all around and more precise

definition before hand of what cooperation involved. It was not a case in which we just went wish, come take anything you want.

(B) And of course you can write all the directives in the world you want. It goes to the people who administer them. Now, if Mr. Baruch or [whoever else you want to name] wants to close his eyes and let things go, he can. But if he wants to run a tight ship, he has the authority to do it. And that again will depend on who is the Assistant Secretary of Defense, how much he cares.

SUID: Would you say “Tora! Tora! Tora!” is an example of ignoring them?

SYLVESTER: Oh, outrageously. It is proof to my mind that what we did was right. Maybe not hard enough.

SUID: Did the filmmaker simply go over your head?

SYLVESTER: “Tora! Tora! Tora!” happened after I was there. It didn’t happen to me. That’s what I got a kick out of. It didn’t happen under me.

SUID: I thought the production may have started under your reign.

SYLVESTER: It happened after 1967. I went out in February, 1967. I was just commenting on it. Not being as hard as I could have been [in making the revisions]. It was exactly this sort of thing that was inevitable and inherent if you didn’t do what we were

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trying to do. Oh, that was an outrageous performance, an outrageous performance. But you see “Tora! Tora! Tora!” -- they got caught on it. They were bound to get caught on it sooner or later. But this was what had been going on.

SUID: Question of carrying dissertation to later period in light of what has been done about “Tora! Tora! Tora!” Not scare Baruch.

SYLVESTER: Pay no attention to him. Between you and me, you are dealing with a weak fellow who wants to ride with everybody and has been in bed with the motion picture people. He didn’t like this stuff at all. He did everything he could to sabotage it and change it, because he had a good thing going and I don’t mean by that anything invidious, just personality status. He comes from a well-known family, he didn’t work very hard. He had a good Civil Service rating. As I said, a month every year in Cannes, and just close to the place up depending on what went off. What the hell went on? He was opposed to this.

SUID: To the changes you mean?

SYLVESTER: Oh, definitely. But not that I could take you and show you exactly here or there. It's the wonderful inertia, lethargy that a civil servant has to start with and he says, For God heaven, the worst that can happen to us with an appointee is he'll be eight years. Very few are here four and most go out in two. So they can always outsit you on that basis. Baruch is very good for knowing all about it. How much he will tell you how hard it is, I don't know.

SUID: I'm being careful.

SYLVESTER: I am in a sense prejudicing [you]. I am in a few words saying the same thing [to you as I said to him]. Many times I said it to him. He didn't like it at all. But that's understandable because he'd been for years with these people and he'd been their representative in the Pentagon, in effect, not the Pentagon's representative to them. And this is a very hard to change. And that's why we created an Audio-Visual [Department] and took it away from Baruch as a sole arbiter and put it under Norm Hatch and Bob Harvey in a larger division because this again was part of the means of communication to the people of the United States to learn about their Department of Defense through motion pictures, through television, through radio. Since my job had been run basically by newsmen, that is the written newsmen, and nobody really with experience in true communication fields today, that was hard to lift that up. So I got people in the electric side to come in and make recommendations about what we should do to build that whole thing up. Motion pictures was one of them, but not the only one.

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SUID: Did the new guidelines now speak at all to the type of films that would be given cooperation or did Mr. Baruch and his office still have the freedom to reject films like "Strangelove" and "Fail Safe"?

SYLVESTER: The Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense retained the right to cooperate or not cooperate. It always had that right. We exercised it a little more harshly maybe or a little more sharply. And you must also recall that aside from these guidelines, all cooperation whether in this line or any other had to go through our security review, which you probably caught on to. Then you get down presumably to questions of National Security or revelations of new weapons, intelligence techniques, etc., and pictures of material, of ship equipment, and which you don't want pictured. A commander will say, "Well everyone knows about that." Well, everyone may except country A, B, or C which is still spending money to try to find out about. In addition, you have another problem. Once you cooperate and the picture goes out with Department of Defense cooperation, if there is material in there that reflects in the eyes of various segments of society or more particularly the Congress, on the Services, on Defense, you are in a hell of a mess because you have authorized it, you have approved it. This is something that is very difficult to stop at that point. So therefore in reading a script, the main thing that really we

changed here, or tried to change (I can't tell you if they are still doing it. They probably aren't" before we agreed on cooperation, we read the scripts carefully and we passed them around. By that, I mean the people signed them and if there were parts that some had doubts about, they asked me about it.

SUID: Were you reading full scripts?

SYLVESTER: No! No! I didn't attempt to do that. But there were things on which somebody would say, "Look, you ought to see this. Do you want to really approve cooperation for this thing or the whole thrust of it?" I can't remember whether I read a whole script or not, maybe one or two because of the thrust of it.

On the other hand, Preminger, and quite rightly, argued that by God, nobody is going to change his pictures. I couldn't agree with him more. You can't be a creative artist. As I said to him, "God damn it, no, but then don't come ask me for help because if you put your head in this noose, it's going to be in there. I couldn't agree with you more. You're the creator. We shouldn't censor or do anything. But, if you're going to ask for our help, you're going to get us and our people. Then, buddy, you're in it."

SUID: This is what Baruch said. Assistance comes with strings, but the filmmaker doesn't have to ask for cooperation.

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SYLVESTER: That's right. They don't have to come to us. But, because of the political -- by political, I mean, I happen to think it is a good word, because I happen to believe it is the interaction of people in a cooperative operation like government -- because very strong political currents that you have to meet and properly as a public servant and answer to people, then you have got to foresee what will happen if you approve certain pictures with certain currents or themes in them. Let's assume that a picture has to do with the Navy and involves two or three abortions. You know as well as I do that it is going to bring down the Catholic organizations all over you, spending government money and giving government support. Now am I censoring you? No, I'm not. I'm sorry, I'm not going to cooperate. It's your problem. You don't have to come to me. I picked out a very dramatic one. But there were others too.

SUID: I get the feeling that when you rejected cooperation after 1961, it was a different problem than in the 1950's.

SYLVESTER: It could well be. We rejected, I think we rejected Preminger's ["In Harm's Way"], yes we did, because he went out and built his own boats and that was because in that case, they wanted so God Damn much stuff. "In Harm's Way", the one they took down to Latin America or Mexico, finally. They got somebody else to do it. It involved tremendous amount of material that they wanted to use. I don't remember turning anything down because of inherent material. You can usually discuss

that with them and make adjustments without hurting the picture. But in that case, where they requested material and where they refused to give any idea [of what they wanted], then we did.

SUID: In the 1950's, a few films were rejected for any reason.

SYLVESTER: Well, I think we would have rejected [films] in the 1950's under this operation. But there, you had [the country] coming out of the war. But the Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense is a Presidential appointment and confirmation [is] by the Senate. So far as militarily, he has four and a half stars which means he's got half a star more than any four-star officer in the non-military area. Now how strong he is means how strong the Secretary of Defense wants him to be and how strong he wants to be. I could have slid all past this. Any wise man would have let it go as it was. I just thought it was wrong and I got into it and got into a lot of hassle. But really in the long run it was something that should be done and should be continued in my book. SSo again, in the 1950's, you didn't have any Assistant Secretaries who were given the power to do it.

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SUID: Would you reject a realistic film such as "The Victors" which attempted to show realistic action that may not show the military in the best light [if a film script had been submitted]?

SYLVESTER: That's right. Off hand, without seeing the script and talking in a vacuum, I'd certainly raise very serious questions. In other words, there's a dichotomy here which is almost insoluble between cooperation and non-cooperation. Basically, we oughtn't cooperate at all.

SUID: You just don't think the military should cooperate at all?

SYLVESTER: Basically no. For a lot of reasons which we've talked about, but the one alone that you're censoring creative efforts. But a lot of them don't give a damn about creative efforts. They want to make money, they being the industry, which there's nothing wrong with. And so therefore with cooperation you never really got down to these hard tough problems there because the picture was always a happy picture.

SUID: Hollywood was never known to be particularly interested in artistic/creative pictures.

SYLVESTER: No, that's right. Of course not. They would say it was artistic, but in my book it isn't.

SUID: Then you're suggesting that those films in the 1960's that didn't request



cooperation may well have been more artistic?

SYLVESTER: They could well have been. The difference is that the fellows making the films and the people cooperating with them got the idea that in art you had to have an exact absolute reproduction to make it real. Whereas we know that tremendous impact in any artistic creation is not a photographic representation necessarily, but that type of creation which stimulates you in your imagination to fill in. It's the old contrast between Archalon and Greek sculpture.

SUID: Then you're suggesting that the Hollywood-Pentagon cooperation stifled the creativity of the motion picture art [as related to war movies].

SYLVESTER: I would think it would if I were the creator, if I were the producer and cared about that. It had to in a certain sense provided you were going to get into stuff, if you were going to do a truthful picture on war, it ain't going to be pretty. If you're going to do a truthful picture on World War II, are you going to cooperate with a Department of the government and taxpayers money to show Japanese prisoners [being] shot out

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of hand by our guys? Are you going to show that? [Are you going to be allowed to show that -- implied in tone.]

SUID: Of course not.

SYLVESTER: All right. Now, as a creator, you want to show that, right? Because you have a point of view, you want to show what war is and you want to kill it. And maybe the way to kill war is television. Maybe Vietnam on television is the greatest thing toward peace by scaring the shit out of everybody so they don't want to go to war. But certainly the government and the taxpayers will not stand for their sons being pictured with their money, shooting prisoners out of hand.

SUID: You're not personally rejecting this as being artistic?

SYLVESTER: I'm not saying that. I'm trying to say to you that this is the free creator's right. But I do not believe that the Government can join in that. That's what I'm trying to say.

SUID: "Limbo" could not get help. The producer said this was okay since it helped creativity. But she objected to being told to change to script.

SYLVESTER: They would have told her to change the script if she wanted cooperation, only. Here again, it's almost on two different levels. The artistic creativity

level has no relation unfortunately to the fact that the Pentagon has got to answer not to the filmmaker but it has to answer to the Congress. It has to answer to Congress for its budget. The whole Public Affairs Department is always suspect in Congress. At one time in the Fifties they abolish it. They abolish money for any of it. You can get that over again. And God Damn it, you will get it [again] if you're going to cooperate on that type of picture. It just means that you're in that type of business that you have no business to be in, that's all.

SUID: Films through 1961 showed the military as infallible for all practical purposes.

SLYVESTER: Certainly.

SUID: Audience accepted this. So when you got into the 1960's and you got into Vietnam and Westmoreland says 100,000 more troops will win the war, there's no one to question him. No one has ever seen a general be wrong. Would you agree?

SYLVESTER: If I understand what you're saying, you're directing yourself to this basic problem and it's a problem faced by men reporting the Defense Department or any aspect of it. Generals can't be wrong. You cannot report on your admiral or your general and I

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can't report on you without bad after effects, the same way I can on a Senator because he's in a different business. He recognizes your right to call it as you see it and maybe unfavorably. Now, if he's a pinhead, he's going to try to take it out on you, he won't speak to you. But, if he's a wise and sensible politician, he'll throw it over his shoulder, that it's just part of the day's business, provided he recognizes you as honest. But you can't do that with a general because he can't be wrong under the system. It goes on his record. You don't write an efficiency report on a Senator. You only do it every six years in the elections. That's the efficiency report there and there, half the stuff is forgotten. But not with a brigadier, even a four-star. With a four-star you wind up with the hearings after Pearl Harbor. You can't be wrong that way. You can't be wrong, not having enough ammunition, not dropping enough bombs. You can be wrong doing it not enough and you can make mistakes. But if I report on you and show you up, I've closed you as an enemy. So there's that difference, very grave difference.

SUID: You're suggesting that filmmakers follow the same process because of the need for cooperation?

SYLVESTER: Certainly. Sure they do. You don't think for one second any admiral is going to let you on his aircraft carrier if you show him as a woman chaser

or anything else do you? Of course he's not.

SUID: I was thinking of story lines also.

SYLVESTER: All right. That's what I'm talking about, story lines. Again, a novelized idea that suggests the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific is this that or the other thing, do you think that they're going to cooperate with that?

SUID: I was thinking of "Seven Days in May."

SYLVESTER: That's right. Do you think they liked that? I don't think we cooperated on that.

SUID: No.

SYLVESTER: Of course not, you couldn't.

SUID: "Caine Mutiny." They did cooperate. Baruch said there was no problem once they sat down.

SYLVESTER: I don't know that story.

SUID: Did the Hollywood representatives deal with you directly or did they stay on Baruch's level?

SYLVESTER: Oh no. If they were good with their job, they did all three. They kept in close to Baruch and they came to see me. And if they did get us working at cross purposes, they naturally

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would. I'm sure Baruch would say to them, well this guy's crazy, you know. I'm trying to hold him down and I don't really like this stuff, but I've got to go along. That doesn't bother me. I'm not surprised at that. That's the way people are, not just Baruch, because he's a career fellow. But they came to see me.

SUID: Did you ever overrule Baruch?

SYLVESTER: Oh, yes. But not brutally. I'd talk with him first, yes. This whole directive is an overruling of Baruch. The whole stopping that month vacation at Cannes is an overruling. (Well he may have gone.) But the whole creation of the larger unit is an overruling. The taking away from him as a sole arbiter [was an overruling]. All of this was in his pocket at a private little operation which actually nobody was looking out for-- for the taxpayer in my judgment. And [there was the need] to sell the

military people [the reality that] “you’re not getting what you think you’re getting. And you’re really not. These uniforms are not character schemes. They’re something important and they’re not for sale.” [The military did not understand that.] They did not realize that they were being had.

SUID: This is one aspect of my study -- what the Pentagon thought they were getting out of cooperation. Publicity?

SYLVESTER: That’s right. A good image, supposedly.

SUID: What about selling Congress on the need for more aircraft carriers, for example? Were they doing some of that too?

SYLVESTER: The military?

SUID: Yes.

SYLVESTER: Oh sure, of course, but motion pictures were the least part of it. That’s the least part of it, I think. Where General Eisenhower really misled people [was] when he called it the military-industrial complex. He left out the third factor which made the other two possible, Congressional-Industrial-Complex. There can’t be the other two without this one, without the Congressional. All you have to do is recall when McNamara started to close down bases. Where the hell did the screams come from? From the people who were calling for reduced budgets, from Congress. Where did they come from? From the home districts. This is where it really comes from. This combination can be stopped in a minute by the third one, by Congress. But it isn’t going to because it is taking jobs out of their districts. [Discussion of Eisenhower and origin of term, Military-Industrial Complex.] It is this combination that’s the real heard of it. Congress is the heart of it.

SUID: “Task Force” and pitch for aircraft carriers.

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SYLVESTER: I’m sure that was worked in by the military and they may have thought that was a great pitch for it. I don’t know how much impact. It may have had an impact. As you say, it may have conditioned people to the idea. It certainly didn’t turn them against it that we needed more aircraft carriers. It certainly was a propaganda possibly there.

SUID: But you think that the basic reason...

SYLVESTER: ...is the daily relationship between the military and Congress.

SUID: Selling the military?

SYLVESTER: Certainly. Providing rides back home on planes, junkets for them, servicing, looking after them. One of the questions in McNamara's confirmation hearing, one of the most important questions: you're going to maintain, of course, Mr. Secretary, our fine relationship with our military people on the Hill? "Oh, yes." And the God Damn Hill was crawling with 150 to 200 military officers up there. He did cut it down, gradually, not the first year or the second or the third. But he began to cut it down.

As a matter of fact, if they don't like what the Secretary has done, they'll go up and squeal to a Chairman of a Committee, tip him off what's going on or not going on. I'm not saying the other doesn't have an impact. You're probably right. But I don't think it's a central [issue].

SUID: From the Hollywood side, you're saying cooperation is simply to save money and show a profit?

SYLVESTER: Of course.

SUID: Profitable in the sense that they're popular films?

SYLVESTER: Yes, but they'll save millions of dollars in cost production. IF they had to pay for what they're getting, if they had to build the things, or if they had to pay for actors and the length of time it would take them, it would cost them... we sat down and figured it out one day... it was several million dollars a film.

SUID: So you don't accept the good motives of Hollywood?

SYLVESTER: I accept the surface thing, but I think if you accept that alone, you're just looking at the kin and not the bones and heart of the matter. If [good motives are the heart of the matter] why aren't they making military pictures today?

SUID: To summarize, you don't think the film industry should ever get help because of the cost to the taxpayers and the loss of creativity?

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SYLVESTER: I think that any cooperative relationship has to be in the hands of the Defense Department under very strict and clear guidelines. What is the cooperation? What are you asking for? And the Defense Department must be very sure about the story that it is offering to cooperate on, not because I'm trying to tell you, Mr. Producer what you may produce. You may of course produce anything you want. But, Mr. Producer, you are not doing that, you are coming to me as a government official

responsible to the taxpayers and asking me to use their money to help you. And, their reactions to what you consider creative are not always as advanced, as artistically perceptive, as currently willing to accept advanced views as yours are. These are things I have to take into consideration, I being the Defense Department, in agreeing to go along with you.

SUID:               Should the Defense Department cooperate on a film about Vietnam today?

SYLVESTER:       Well again, you're asking me a question in a vacuum. I know what you're trying to say. You're the Assistant Secretary. You have to say to yourself: this country's been torn apart by Vietnam. Are we going to say that war was wrong, etc, etc? Well if we don't, we have large vocal elements, groups who are going to say, "God Damn it. You're spending my money to support something that I and my sons have left the country because they're opposed to."

                  All right, now you say, well, we're supporting a picture that says it was wrong. Well, you're going to get someone who'll say, "Well, God Damn it. My husband was seven years in one of those God Damn camps up there and he'll never recover and you're spending my money to tell me that all he did was wrong."

                  What are you going to say? You're going to look at that picture pretty damn well. At least I would hope you will.

SUID:               Let's be more specific, how about "Goldfinger"?

SYLVESTER:       I don't remember.

SUID:               I wanted to know from Mr. Baruch why they would cooperate on a non-military film. Obviously it saved the filmmaker a lot of money.

SYLVESTER:       Did Defense cooperate?

SUID:               Yes.

SYLVESTER:       When was it made?

SUID:               1965.

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SYLVESTER:       Well, it was certainly the time I was there and I'm sorry that I have no recollection. I don't know why we would either.

SUID:               I think the answer was that there was no reason not to.

SYLVESTER:       That sounds like him.

SUID: "Thunderball". I raised the question of recruitment and he didn't think that was the reason either. As you said, recruiting was not a major factor according to Baruch.

SYLVESTER: It was the major argument presented by the Industry, by the Services, and by all those who felt that all were doing should be untouched and be continued in its past form. Recruiting was one of their big arguments. He [Baruch] will probably today say no because the fact was when I asked all three Services to come up with figures in support of that, they couldn't produce a God Damn figure.

SUID: "Pawnbroker". Again, I could not understand why or where cooperation -- 1965.

SYLVESTER: I can't understand either. If it is true, you're simply saying I was not on the ball because there would be no reason in the world for us to cooperate on those. I don't know.

SUID: Could I throw out names when I send the transcript of non-military films which received cooperation?

SYLVESTER: The Fifties I can understand. They cooperated on anything. Well, that is a very broad statement and you could then say, well, if that is so, document it. All I know is that at the time when we got into this, I knew by looking back and asking that they did not cooperate then on a lot of stuff that under the new directives would be out.

SUID: They would cooperate apparently on anything as long as it didn't hurt the image of the military.

SYLVESTER: Oh, I haven't any doubt. I'm sure that's correct. Then we tightened it up.

SUID: Problem of documents.

SYLVESTER: [Suggestions of whom to see, etc.] At the time we got into this the Services had an office, and I have forgotten this, whether each Service had a separate office and whether we finally put them all together in one office in Hollywood.

SUID: Right. Apparently under you they combined them.

SYLVESTER: That's right.

SUID: And then they went back.

SYLVESTER: I'm sure it went back as soon as I got out.

SUID: Baruch said it was combined for a very short time.

SYLVESTER: Oh, they didn't want it at all, you see. But, just look at it. They got it back right? So then they got competition, each one trying to sell promotional movies to the Industry. Well, you're using more manpower than you need, for one. Number two, you're spending more money than you need. Number three, you're competing for something you don't need.

SYID: I wonder what Baruch does now?

SYLVESTER: You're absolutely right. I'm sure. And frankly even when Don was there and did it alone, I said, he packed up for a month and closed the joint up. I know what the hell he was doing. He was okaying anything and he was being Mr. Big with the motion picture people. He was the Pentagon. You had to see Don Baruch.

SUID: It's nice to be powerful.

SYLVESTER: That's right. Except that he didn't have any power anyway except by default.

SUID: Could you say that he had power because the military people wanted what he was doing?

SYLVESTER: That's right. Sure. Exactly. And he never denied them anything that I know of.

SUID: Did he know he was being used?

SYLVESTER: I doubt it. I doubt it very much. No, I don't think Don did. I don't think he's that acute. I don't think he realized it. I think that Don thought they liked him for himself. And if he didn't have this, they wouldn't give him the time of day, or you, or me.

[END OF INTERVIEW]