

Fred Korth Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 01/27/1966
Administrative Information

Creator: Fred Korth
Interviewer: Joseph E. O'Connor
Date of Interview: January 27, 1966
Place of Interview: Washington D.C.
Length: 50 pages

Biographical Note

Fred Korth (1909-1998) was the Secretary of the Navy from 1961 to 1963. This interview focuses on the inner workings of the Department of Defense during the Kennedy administration, in particular the TFX contract and the ensuing McClellan Committee hearings, among other topics.

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Suggested Citation

Fred Korth, recorded interview by Joseph E. O'Connor, January 27, 1966 (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

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Fred Korth

Fred Korth

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Fred Korth– JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

FRED KORTH

January 27, 1966
Washington, D.C.

By Joseph E. O'Connor

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'CONNOR: Mr. Secretary, what contacts did you have with John Kennedy before 1961?

KORTH: I had no contact directly with President Kennedy prior to the time that. . . . Actually I had no personal contact with President Kennedy until about two weeks after I had been sworn in as Secretary of the Navy.

O'CONNOR: Would you like to discuss your appointment as Secretary of the Navy?

KORTH: Yes, I'll be happy to do so. Actually, to go back a little bit, in December of 1960 Mr. McNamara, Robert McNamara, the individual who had been designated as the Secretary of Defense, contacted me at my office in the Continental National Bank of Fort Worth and explored the possibility with me of my interest, or possible interest, in becoming Secretary of the Army. I did not indicate a desire or an interest to him at that time. The question, more or less, became moot within the next week or so, because the announcement had been made that John Connally of Fort Worth had been designated as Secretary of the Navy. It was of course thought inadvisable to

have the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Navy from the same town.

I gave no further thought to serving in the government or in the Kennedy Administration until December of 1961 at which time I was visiting at the home of some friends in San Angelo, Texas, and happened to be in the kitchen on a Saturday morning. The telephone rang several times and I took the responsibility of answering it. The voice on the other end indicated that there was a call for me from Secretary McNamara. When he came on the phone he said, "Fred, as you may recall, I talked to you some months ago about coming to Washington as Secretary of the Army." I said, "As a matter of fact, Mr. Secretary, it was almost exactly one year ago." He said, "Well, I now very much want you to serve as Secretary of the Navy." He said, "You may know that John Connally, it is rumored, is going to resign to run for governor of the state of Texas." I told him I had heard that rumor, and I was of course honored that he and [Roswell L.] Ros Gilpatric, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, whom I had known for some years, were considering me for this position. I told him that I would think it over and would be glad to get in touch with him.

I asked him what time I would have for this consideration. He said that actually the resignation was to be accepted by President Kennedy on the following Monday afternoon at 3 o'clock and that he would like to have a decision prior to that time on my part so the designation and the resignation could be made public at the same time. I then indicated that I didn't know whether I could operate quite that fast. He asked me if I could be in Washington the following day to talk with Mr. Gilpatric since he, Mr. McNamara, had to go to Paris for a NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] meeting on Sunday morning. I was of course somewhat surprised at the speed with which I was asked to act but I told him that I would be there the next day.

I arrived in Washington on Sunday, went directly to Mr. Gilpatric's office, discussed the appointment with him. He gave me an indication of what would be required of me, what the scope of my responsibilities and duties would be, which I already generally had in mind because I had previously, in the [Harry S] Truman Administration, served as Assistant Secretary of the Army at the time that Mr. Gilpatric was either Under Secretary or Assistant Secretary of the Air Force. I told Gilpatric that I would let him know sometime the next day, hopefully before the resignation of Connally was announced. Upon my return to Fort Worth which was about 2 or 3 a.m. Monday morning, getting a few hours sleep and discussing it with my family, I discussed my appointment with the chairman of the board of the bank as well as some of the key directors. They indicated to me that they would have no objection to my leaving and they hopefully would have a spot for me when I returned. I pondered the matter some time. I talked with the then Vice President, [Lyndon B.] Johnson, to ask his counsel and advice knowing full well that he had doubtless been consulted before I was even initially contacted. He urged the acceptance upon me. I called Gilpatric about an hour before the resignation of Connally was to be announced that I would accept so that, therefore, the announcement of the resignation and the appointment were made simultaneously.

I then came to Washington in the early part of January of 1962; as I recall, it was within the first two or three days of January. I was sworn in by Secretary McNamara as an interim appointee because the Congress was not then in session. It was not really until about two weeks after I had been sworn in and actually had been confirmed by the Senate that I had a call from the President asking me to come over and see him. I, of course, made the appointment as designated.

I was completely amazed at the depth of knowledge and understanding which the President had about my job. He had a much greater understanding than I did. He was quite interested, at this particular point, in guerrilla warfare and in the role which the Marine Corps, which was part of my responsibility, as well as the Navy would play in such guerrilla warfare. He discussed his high regard for General [David M.] Shoup, the Commandant of the Marine Corps. He likewise discussed with me generally his own associations with the Navy during World War II as well as he gave me a very strong indication of his strong feeling for the sea and for naval matters generally. It was a meeting which lasted for 45 minutes or thereabouts. He discussed with me the matter of the personnel of the Navy (that is, the top personnel), primarily inquiring as to my knowledge of certain individuals.

O'CONNOR: Did you ever hear of who recommended you for this appointment? How was this recommendation carried out?

KORTH: I would say that Ros Gilpatric is the one who recommended me because, as I indicated, I was under consideration for Secretary of the Army before President Kennedy took office. I failed to say this earlier, but I had actually made a trip to New York to see Mr. Gilpatric at his home there to discuss the matter of the designation as Army Secretary.

O'CONNOR: Prior to this you had been a civilian Aide-at-Large for the Secretary of the Army, had you not?

KORTH: That is correct. Actually I had been a civilian Aide-at-Large to the Secretary of the Army only for the year preceding my appointment as Secretary of the Navy. This was because Elvis Stahr, the Secretary of the Army, was a good friend of mine and actually served under me when I was an Assistant Secretary of the Army. He perhaps knew, although I never told him, that I might have been under consideration for his job. Because of his friendship he felt that he wanted to honor me by asking me to be a civilian Aide-at-Large for the Secretary.

O'CONNOR: We have reports from other interviews that there was some difficulties in getting men for the Department of the Army in 1961. Do you have any comments on that?

KORTH: Well, I would say there were difficulties but difficulties of getting the right men, perhaps. As I understand it, Mr. Thomas Watson of New York was likewise under consideration for this position, although I had the impression--though I did not know this, I had the impression that he was rejected by either the Secretary of Defense or Mr. Gilpatric. He had, as I understand it, a very strong desire to be the Secretary of the Army.

O'CONNOR: You don't know why he was rejected?

KORTH: I do not know.

O'CONNOR: Do you have any opinions regarding Secretary Stahr during the period that you knew him?

KORTH: Yes. I do. My opinions might be somewhat prejudiced because of my close friendship for him, but trying to look at it objectively, I think that Secretary Stahr did a very fine job for the Army. He was Secretary at a difficult time, a time of reorganization in the Army which reorganization was either prompted by Secretary McNamara or was perhaps already in the works. I'm not really knowledgeable in that field.

O'CONNOR: You mentioned the business of counterinsurgency. Did you come in contact with the discussion of counterinsurgency while you were connected with the Department of the Army in 1961?

KORTH: I did not. I did not other than general knowledge which I might have had. Actually the civilian--a civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army is a part-time job, you might say. It's to be of assistance to the Secretary in putting out brush fires in so far as public relations are concerned for the Army. It is to attend an orientation conference each year to become more familiar with the Army, and, in general, be helpful to the Army in the local areas where the Secretary feels that you might be the most help.

O'CONNOR: There were some important questions that came up during this first year, and perhaps you may have had contact with them or heard something about them. One of the important questions or one of the important matters was the question of the use of nuclear weapons, the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff toward these nuclear weapons in, for instance, Laos or Vietnam. Do you have any opinions regarding this, or had you heard rumors regarding this?

KORTH: This did not reach me even in the rumor category.

O'CONNOR: All right, sir. You don't really know, then, who it was that recommended a shift in our military forces toward greater emphasis on counter-insurgency--whether it was the President or Secretary McNamara or the State Department?

KORTH: I don't really know although I am aware of the fact that Secretary McNamara was a very strong advocate. Now, whether it was his original thought or whether it was the President's, I do not know.

O'CONNOR: One problem you may have come in contact with was the problem of Major General Edwin A. Walker in 1961. Do you have any comments on how that was handled?

KORTH: I think it was handled properly. I was not consulted or counseled with in any fashion with reference to the handling, but I think it was well handled and handled as well as it could have been handled.

O'CONNOR: Before we move on the Navy Department, do you have any comments as to matters that you did come in contact with as civilian aide to Secretary Stahr.

KORTH: Well, I think that Secretary Stahr handled the administration of the Army in a very fine fashion from the information which I had available to me. He maintained a very good relationship with his chief of staff and with the Army personnel generally. The regard in which he was held is, I think, properly reflected in the fact that he is presently President of the Association of the United States Army and has just been nominated for reelection to a second term, so that this does indicate the high regard in which he is held.

O'CONNOR: All right now. Regarding your position as Secretary of the Navy, a service secretary has a very strange position. It's debated whether or not he is a representative of the Defense Secretary or a representative of the services. Would you care to comment on your feeling along this line?

KORTH: Yes, it is a difficult position to be in, but my own philosophy and my own appraisal of what my responsibilities were as Secretary of the Navy are these: I am working directly for the Secretary of Defense; he is my superior; and, of course, we are both working for the President of the United States because he is the Commander-in-Chief. However, I must properly present to the Secretary of Defense and, if necessary, to the President of the United States the views of the Navy and the Marine Corps. I must present these views as forcefully as I can after having properly, in my own mind, appraised and evaluated their own worth. Now, I am well aware of the comments which you just made that some secretaries are criticized for being pro-uniformed personnel and others are criticized as being only the tool or the handmaiden of the Secretary of Defense and of being only another arm of the Secretary to cram down the throats of the uniformed personnel the decisions of the Secretary of Defense.

O'CONNOR: Did the Secretary of Defense ever talk to you about his philosophy regarding your position?

KORTH: Yes, he did. I think we had a very good understanding, as outlined initially by me, that certainly he understood that I was representing the Navy insofar as the conferences which I had with him or in the Armed Forces Policy Council. But he likewise knew that once a decision was made by him that I was going to carry that decision out as well as see that the Navy carried out that decision.

O'CONNOR: What was your initial reaction as Secretary of the Navy to the "bright young men" (in quotes) brought into the Defense establishment by Secretary McNamara? I'm thinking particularly of Mr. [Charles J.] Hitch or others.

KORTH: Right. Well, I had a much different idea of their effectiveness and their worth to the Navy and to the Defense Department than did my uniformed personnel. There was not the difficulty, really, with Hitch but more with some of his "bright young men." I'm thinking specifically of Alain Enthoven. I recall quite well that Enthoven got the word to me that he had on some previous occasion been to see Admiral Pirie, Robert Pirie who was a vice chief of naval operations in charge of the air part of the Navy. He, Enthoven, cooled his heels in the outer office of Admiral Pirie with the door to the office being open and that there were disparaging remarks made about him and about his office by Admiral Pirie quite obviously intended to be heard by Enthoven.

Well, when I heard of this, I immediately got in touch with Pirie and took him to task for this. I, furthermore, personally began a campaign with Enthoven and with Hitch and the others in this area to be certain that we had the proper understanding of each other. I had Enthoven to lunch several times. I had Admiral [George W.] Anderson, the Chief of Naval Operations, into ~~lunch~~ with Enthoven as well as other individuals who would have contact with Enthoven. I think that by these means I was able to have a more effective and cooperative relationship with Enthoven, with Hitch's office and with the Secretary of Defense's office itself. My own philosophy was that, after all, these people were working likewise with Secretary McNamara and directly under him and that, to put it quite bluntly, they were the boys at city hall and we had to get along with city hall. We were never going to get some of the things we needed by constantly opposing them and opposing them for no good reason. We had to certainly have a good rapport with them; we had to be congenial with them so that we could present our views and have them accept these views as rational views rather than as arbitrary opinions on our part.

O'CONNOR: What was Admiral Anderson's feeling along this line?

KORTH: Well Admiral Anderson's feeling with reference to the "bright young men" of Hitch's office or of the Secretary of the Defense's office were these were people who had never fought a war; these were people who had never seen the battle line; never been to sea; never studied military strategy; and, therefore, their concepts, their ideas and their views were groundless and were without foundation and, therefore, should be immediately rejected, irrespective of how sound they might be.

O'CONNOR: How about the Marine Corps Commander, Shoup?

KORTH: Shoup.

O'CONNOR: Shoup.

KORTH: General Shoup did not express that same feeling. I think he held more the view that I had, that, after all, if he was going to get the effective Marine Corps that he needed, he was going to have to work with these people and he did so. Shoup and I had a complete understanding.

O'CONNOR: There have been some remarks about the new spirit that permeated the Pentagon under McNamara. Part of this was in regard to the new men that he brought in there. The probing, exploring alternatives and the analyzing that went on was supposedly something new and characteristic of the new spirit in the Pentagon. Do you have any comments on this?

KORTH: Well, I think the new spirit which McNamara brought to the Pentagon was exceptionally good for the military establishment. There had been attempts at this previously but never quite as effectively as was done under McNamara's administration. There was the

very incisive probing that these people persistently did to get to the facts to find out actually what the facts were and to prepare and present to the proper individuals the alternatives which existed for a course of action.

O'CONNOR: How about the emphasis on cost effectiveness? Do you go along with that or not?

KORTH: Yes. I think the cost effectiveness philosophy and ideas which were installed--I shouldn't say which were installed--which were emphasized by Secretary McNamara were exceptionally good. It resulted in tremendous saving to the government, and it did not affect the military posture.

O'CONNOR: It is sometimes said that McNamara was not basically concerned with human considerations in dealing with the people under him. Would you comment on this or comment on his handling of men in general under him?

KORTH: This statement is not completely true. McNamara, when you know him, and work closely with him, is a very human, a very fine individual. He has a great deal of humor, actually, which is not apparent to most people, but I have on a number of occasions--had breakfast with him once a week during my entire tenure. I had dinner with him on a number of occasions during the Cuban crisis. When he relaxes he is quite a humorous guy. He can tell a good story. He enjoys a good story. He, however, unfortunately, has one of these mechanical or computer-type minds which he has been accused of having. This, unfortunately, does not properly emphasize the human factor. He did get criticism, and I think properly so, for some of the handling of the personnel matters.

At the same time he has a very real understanding of the hardships of the military man. He, more than any one else, went to bat with Congress for proper living accommodations for our servicemen. He, more than any one else, went to bat for an increase in pay of the military man, not as much as was given them, but he realized that there was a disparity. With reference to personnel relations in his own office, for instance, I have seen him to tell an officer to take off a week because he's been working too hard. Well, of course, he had been working too hard, but McNamara did have an appreciation of what he was doing.

He put out a memo to the service secretaries that he had ascertained that none of us had properly taken a vacation and that without fail we would, during the year 1962, take a two-week vacation, which I don't think any of us got, but then he wrote the memo again in 1963 insisting that we take a vacation.

O'CONNOR: Did you get it that year?

KORTH: No, I really didn't. I took off a few days as I recall--one or two.

He was very hard working. He was at the Pentagon just a little bit after I got there in the morning. I got there at about 7 o'clock, and he was there about 7:30. He was likewise there many times longer than I was--until 7 or 8 o'clock or even later--depending upon what commitments he had in evening. There was no question about the application of his energy.

O'CONNOR: The charge is sometimes leveled that Secretary McNamara did not really listen to the military men in the Defense Department. He paid attention to the civilian aides and not the military men. Do you have any comments on that?

KORTH: I don't think that's a fair criticism. He did listen to the military men. He quite often rejected their recommendation, but only after he'd heard them out. Likewise he heard out his civilian assistants. He made a judgment only after having heard the military man speak.

O'CONNOR: Did this frequent rejection build up irritation among the military people?

KORTH: Very definitely. Well, I shouldn't comment on all the military people, but it certainly did within the Navy. There was a very definite resentment of this on the part of Admiral Anderson, my Chief of Naval Operations. This came to the fore, really, in the Cuban crisis because, while Anderson was the agent for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, insofar as the handling of the Cuban crisis was concerned because the Navy had a larger role there in the blockade, he resented greatly McNamara looking over his shoulder constantly and meticulously examining messages which went from the CNO [Chief of Naval Operations] to the ships at sea which were performing the blockade. He disliked that. He disliked not being able to tell the Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic, Admiral [Robert L.] Dennison to implement broad, general policy leaving the details to him. McNamara, on the other hand--and this probably at the instruction of the President because the President realized the extreme delicacy of this operation--wanted to be certain that there was no misstep here which would involve us in World War III.

O'CONNOR: Was there any difference in policy that Admiral Anderson recommended compared to the policy that was actually carried out or that was recommended by Secretary McNamara?

KORTH: Well, all of the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, so far as I recall, were in favor of affirmative action with reference to Cuba rather than the blockade action which was instituted. In other words, they were all prepared for an invasion.

O'CONNOR: You met with Secretary McNamara, you said, at lunch a number of times in connection with this crisis.

KORTH: Well, yes. We were in rather constant contact. He was in constant contact with all the three service secretaries. We met with him daily and several times a day during this crisis. We were at the Pentagon around the clock actually. I mean we slept at the Pentagon as did Admiral Anderson. There was the constant contact, yes.

O'CONNOR: Do you have any reports or comments regarding this? For instance, I'm thinking of any comments McNamara may have made regarding the possibility of an invasion, a possibility that this might be carried out.

KORTH: Well, there was this possibility, but certainly he was asking upon the instructions of the President in implementing the policy. I don't know specifically how to answer your question. Certainly he was prepared to go forward in a more aggressive fashion had this been indicated, but he knew that the President did not desire that aggressive action. He knew that the President wanted to handle this on the basis that we would effectively get the missiles out of Cuba and would likewise, at the same time, not engage ourselves in such actions as would result in an escalation--into World War III.

O'CONNOR: Did you, as Secretary of the Navy, or Secretary McNamara have any role in recommending the specific policy that was carried out, the actual blockade?

KORTH: I did not. Secretary McNamara, I'm sure, did, but I did not.

O'CONNOR: Once again, in connection with the men you worked with, do you have any comments on the man who was under you, Paul Fay?

KORTH: Paul is a fine young man for whom I have the highest regard. When I first came in as Secretary, or actually before I took over as Secretary, I talked with my predecessor, John Connally, to get his appraisal of the top individuals who were working with him. He gave me such an appraisal and in that appraisal he indicated to me that Paul Fay was a fine man but that he had not used him in the capacity that the Under Secretary should be used: that is, as an executive vice president of the organization; that he did not have a sufficient amount of confidence in Paul in order to give him the responsibility which he should have; and that he, himself, had rather carefully watched his departures from Washington to be certain that there would be no major decisions which would have to be made by Mr. Fay.

O'CONNOR: Do you think Mr. Fay's appointment was essentially a political appointment?

KORTH: I wouldn't say political; I would say an appointment of friendship. You can perhaps classify that as political, but Paul was an old and dear and good friend of the President's and he was very disappointed, I might say, that he was not appointed as Secretary of the Navy when I was appointed. Perhaps the desire on the part of McNamara and Gilpatric that I accept the appointment as quickly as I did was because they wanted to avoid any pressure being built up for Paul Fay to be appointed as

Secretary. McNamara indicated to me his own appraisal which coincided with that of Connally's as to Fay.

I had several discussions after I had begun serving as Secretary with McNamara and on one occasion with the President--or one or more occasions with the President--concerning Paul Fay's performance of duty. McNamara asked me how he was doing. I told him that I was trying to utilize him as much as I could. Then, after I had an opportunity, some six months later, he again inquired and I told him that really I was bearing more of the burden and the load than I should bear; if I had a competent Under Secretary, I could share that load with him. The President asked me at that first meeting, which was some two weeks after I took office what my appraisal of Paul Fay was. I told him, "Very frankly, Mr. President, I've been there only two weeks. I haven't really had an opportunity to properly appraise him." He was aware of the fact that Connally did not have a high regard for him and told me if I had any further comments down the line to let him know. I did not let him know because I felt that I could handle the job as it was being handled without disturbing the setup.

O'CONNOR: Can you give us any specifics as to why Secretary Connally or yourself did not have such confidence in Mr. Fay?

KORTH: Yes. There were a number of instances, not major instances actually, but errors or lack of judgment on the part of Fay. He would take action or he would recommend action which did not indicate to me a proper maturity on his part. He would not think things out before he would recommend them. He would certainly carry forward on anything on which I had made a policy decision. He was loyal and completely in accord with whatever decision I made. At times, he, of course, stated his position, argued with me as to his position, but once the decision was made he was a good sailor and went right on down the line and carried it forward. I can't think really right now of any specific instance, but I know there were several instances in connection with trips to the Far East or situations where his recommendations were not mature. Therefore, I always had

a hesitancy in giving him additional responsibility, although I did initially give him more responsibility. I found out really that he couldn't handle it in the fashion that I wanted it handled. Now, maybe my standards were higher than they should have been; I don't know.

O'CONNOR: Did you ever have the feeling that he was going to the President with different recommendations or . . .

KORTH: I knew he was seeing the President frequently. As a matter of fact, I know that he arranged for the President's birthday party to be aboard the Sequoia, the Secretary of the Navy's yacht. I know that he made several trips with the President. I know that he went to Cape Cod with the President or to visit up there, and I was well aware of his close friendship with the President. He, at times, brought back valuable information to me. I say valuable information--he brought back information which was helpful to me in performing my job. I don't think he ever really downgraded me with the President. I think he was very loyal to me and I think he defended me if there was any need for me to be defended with the President.

O'CONNOR: All right.

KORTH: On some of these things now, I mean when I'm discussing Paul Fay here, it's not a matter of any military security, but I don't want to publish things like this.

O'CONNOR: You can feel free--you can feel at ease about that. This material will be restricted in any way you wish. I really wish to emphasize that, because we want . . .

KORTH: Otherwise I'd have to be guarded in my comments.

O'CONNOR: Yes, that's true. Well again, getting back to another man who was under you that we've already commented on, Admiral Anderson, I've heard one man specifically comment rather bitterly that Admiral Anderson really did not give you really any assistance, or any support particularly at the time of the [John L.] McClellan hearings regarding the . . .

KORTH: Oh, there's no question about that. We were diametrically opposed in our positions and, as a matter of fact, he failed to give me at least the support to which I was entitled. This doesn't mean that he could not have had a different view than I had, but on the McClellan hearings--this is on the TFX [Tactical Fighter Experimental] of course. Actually, there's no need to go into too much background on this because it's pretty well known, but just briefly stated: When I first came into office there was pending the evaluation of TFX proposals. There were two subsequent reevaluations with the final contenders being, as you know, the Boeing Corporation and General Dynamics. The final recommendation was, quite true, for the Boeing airplane, but when you review the comparison of these two proposals, there was very definitely a statement by Admiral Anderson as well as by the board that there was no significant difference between these two proposals. They, in effect, had selected Boeing only because they had a better feeling about Boeing as distinguished from General Dynamics. The Bureau of Naval Weapons personnel, specifically a man by the name of [L.E.] Spangler, as I recall his name, who is a technical man, had very strong feeling for Boeing versus General Dynamics. I had him in my office on several occasions--had Admiral Anderson in there also--and actually I can state that Admiral Anderson as well as Spangler misled me as well as failed to make the statements which they made to me in my conference room when they appeared on the stand for the McClellan committee. This was a major area of disagreement between Admiral Anderson and me.

O'CONNOR: Can you give us some of those statements? Can you give us, in general, what they said to you?

KORTH: Not really without doing a little reviewing here. I've sort of shut that door behind me here and have gone forward on other matters. It was the matter of the weight; it was the matter of the titanium used in the aircraft; there were a number of matters in which statements were made that there was no significant difference between the proposals of the two companies, while later, in testimony, statements were made that there was a significantly better proposal made by Boeing rather than by General Dynamics.

O'CONNOR: There's some dispute as to when the decision to award the contract to General Dynamics was made. Various stories have come out in the paper that the decision was known earlier than it was made public. Do you have any comments on this?

KORTH: Well, I'd have to check specifically on dates. It is quite true that the decision was made some days before it was announced. This was done primarily, I think, to permit a complete checking with everyone who might be concerned with the decision. The implication which you say has been made is that the decision was made some days before and why was it withheld. What is the implication there? What is the statement that was made to you?

O'CONNOR: The implication was that the decision was made earlier than was announced and was made known to interested parties before it was actually announced.

KORTH: This is not true. This is not true other than the fact that it was made known to both Boeing and General Dynamics within hours before the actual announcement was made. That's true, but it is not true that the decision was given to others--the implication being that they could buy stock? Well, this is absolutely not true. This is absolutely not true.

O'CONNOR: Would you describe the decision? Who was it made by, what role you might have played actually in the making of the decision?

KORTH: I was in rather constant contact with Secretary [Eugene M.] Zuckert. The Air Force was the responsible department to carry forward on not only the evaluation in which the Navy participated but they were the Department of Defense agency designated to enter into the negotiations and to take the action with reference to the plane. I, however, was in on numerous meetings with Secretary Zuckert over a period of almost a year. We had likewise a number of conferences with Secretary McNamara during that same period of time.

[At this point Secretary Korth had a visitor and the interview was interrupted briefly. During the interruption Mr. O'Connor referred to an article in the Fort Worth Press 10-24-62, predicting the contract award to General Dynamics. This article appeared one month before the contract award was actually awarded].

KORTH: With reference to the article by Seth Kantor of the Fort Worth Press, which some 30 days or so prior to the decision, I believe quoted a, quote, "authoritative sources" or "usually knowledgeable sources" or something like that as his source.

O'CONNOR: High echelon . . .

KORTH: This is absolutely and unqualifiedly a fabrication on his part because there could not have been that information out because the decision was not, at that time, made. He may well have talked to someone in authority, someone perhaps at the White House who said, "By gosh, General Dynamics is going to get this job." or "I think General Dynamics is going to get this job." But he could not have had the information at that time because the information was not available to me, to Zuckert or to McNamara. And, of course, he, in connection with the McClellan hearings refused to divulge these sources, as I understand it, and they did not press him any further.

O'CONNOR: Getting back to the decision making I asked you just before the tape was stopped the process by which the decision was made. You were commenting on meetings you had with Secretary Zuckert . . .

KORTH: Right. Secretary Zuckert, at the final go around before the final decision very exhaustively had his people go into the various specific details which resulted in the recommendation which was made by the board consisting of Air Force and naval officers. He likewise very carefully evaluated the points and there were weighted points given to each one of the various categories. There's no question but what General Dynamics came out ahead on the points themselves. It was after he had done this work that we again talked. I might add that before the final decision in this case I indicated to--and I have not testified to this because there was not question relating to this-- I went to see Bob McNamara and told Bob that I wondered whether I should participate in this decision, not because of my connection with the bank which was, of course, all out of proportion with the facts--I mean, there was no foundation for that accusation, but because of the fact that I was from Fort Worth which was where the General Dynamics plant was located that would do this work. I posed the question to him whether I should disqualify myself from engaging in this decision. He said absolutely not, that I should participate in the decision without any reservations as to my residence and as to the criticism which might be leveled

[Zuckert] really have no culpability in this." He said, "The fella that I am after is Bob McNamara." He said, "He thinks he's such a smart son of a bitch." These are the words he used, "And I'm going to show that bastard a thing or two." This is true. This is absolutely true. He says, "He thinks he's infallible, and I'm going to prove that he's not infallible."

O'CONNOR: Had he met with McNamara in connection with these upcoming hearings before then?

KORTH: I don't think so. I don't think so. I'm reasonably sure he had not.

O'CONNOR: It has been reported that he felt McNamara was arrogant when McNamara talked with him preliminary to the hearings.

KORTH: Well, this, I think, stems not from a meeting with him. You may recall historically, in connection with this decision, that once the decision was announced McClellan wrote a letter to McNamara asking him to hold up on the awarding of the contract until his committee could investigate it or until he could come up and give his side of the story. Gilpatric, as distinguished from McNamara because McNamara was either gone or McNamara asked Gilpatric to do it, I don't know which, wrote back to McClellan and said, "We have your letter. We appreciate your concern, but despite that concern and despite your request to hold up on this contract, this is of sufficient importance that we're going to go ahead and award the contract." In effect, the devil take the hindmost here.

O'CONNOR: What do you think of the role of Arthur Sylvester preliminary to the hearings or in the beginning of the hearings?

KORTH: Well, I think the rhubarb that Sylvester got into here was perhaps partly of his own making and likewise partly as a front man for Bob McNamara. I mean I think he was taking the blows for the Secretary.

O'CONNOR: Getting back to the question of military preference. Testimony was given that the Air Force military preferred Boeing. There was considerable question as to what the preference of the Navy military was.

KORTH: The Navy Chief of Naval Operations preferred the Boeing . . .

O'CONNOR: Did this . . .

KORTH: . . . but likewise stated that there was no significant difference between the two.

O'CONNOR: Do you know why they preferred the Boeing? It is sometimes stated that Boeing really had offered two planes, not one. Did this have anything to do with it?

KORTH: Well, there was certainly not the--and this is a word which is added to the English language as a result of these hearings--there was not the "commonality" in the Boeing proposals that there was in the General Dynamics proposals. Therefore, when you have two planes which are less common, you have more in two planes than you do in two that are more common. Do you see what I mean?

O'CONNOR: Yes. Had the Navy opposed the idea originally of having the unified plane?

KORTH: Oh, yes. Oh, there was no question about it. This is at the really rock bottom of the whole Naval establishment attitude on TFX, on the F-111.

O'CONNOR: That's what I wanted to ask you about.

KORTH: There's no question about it. The Navy did not want to go in with the Air Force on an airplane. They wanted their own airplane. To this day-- and I'm not speaking of Admiral [David L.] McDonald now, I'm speaking of people like Spangler and so on--to this day they are doing everything they can to keep this airplane from being completely acceptable to the Navy. In other words, they have the weight factor up so high now that it can be used only on the more modern carriers. They can get this weight down. There's no question in my mind. I'm not an engineer, but I know they can do this. I have seen records of where other airplanes have come out with a weight problem that if they were Navy planes they brought the weight down to where they were usable in the fashion they wanted. Spangler from the very beginning and the Bureau of Naval Weapons in the very beginning have opposed the idea of a joint bi-service aircraft, and they continue to oppose it to this day.

O'CONNOR: Did Admiral Anderson's role in this TFX or in previous questions where you and he disagreed have anything to do with the fact that his tenure as Chief of Naval Operations was not extended beyond the two years?

KORTH: Yes. It was because of Admiral Anderson's failure to support the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of Defense that quite directly led to the President's decision not to reappoint him as Chief of Naval Operations. As a matter of fact, I passed on to the Secretary of Defense and he in turn, I am sure, to the President, and I likewise to the President, passed on the information that Anderson was not really completely loyal to the President, to the Secretary of Defense or to the Secretary of the Navy. I passed along remarks which he had made. Now, let there be no misunderstanding. There is no question of loyalty to the United States involved. This is a matter of personal loyalty as distinguished from loyalty to the United States. I want no misunderstanding on that.

Really, when he was not reappointed, perhaps the thing to have done was not to have appointed him as Ambassador to Portugal. But the President had the feeling that he should appoint him to another position in the government only to keep the matter quiet rather than to have it boil over which it doubtless would have in the event there were no appointment because Anderson was very bitter with reference to his failure to be reappointed.

O'CONNOR: This disloyalty question, personal disloyalty, did this refer specifically to the TFX business or to things preceding that?

KORTH: To the TFX plus the matter of the Cuban crisis which I related to you earlier. He was very bitter about the minute detail to which McNamara involved himself in the Naval operation.

O'CONNOR: All right, now, did any congressmen or senators try to influence the decision talking to you, talking to Secretary Zuckert, talking to McNamara regarding the TFX?

KORTH: I must distinguish here from trying the influence and expressing the interest. I don't know where the dividing line is. I did not consider it as using influence. Zuckert, I know, did not consider it as using influence. But certainly we had contacts from congressmen and senators who were interested in one or the other company getting the contract. The senators from Kansas and the congressmen from Kansas approached me, ~~as~~ I'm sure they did Zuckert, expressing a strong interest in Boeing getting the contract for the Wichita plant. Likewise, by the same token, those who represented the Texas and Fort Worth areas expressed a similar interest, although I must say that I don't really believe that Congressman [James C.] Jim Wright who is the Congressman from Fort Worth personally contacted me although he didn't have to. I knew damn good and well what his interest was, of course. And he knew I ~~knew~~ his interest.

O'CONNOR: Secretary Zuckert has stated publicly that though men contacted him, there was no undue attempt to influence him.

KORTH: Nor was there to me.

O'CONNOR: I see. All right, fine.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

KORTH: With reference to the matter of influence, I did not consider any of the contacts which were made to me to be any undue influence. I was aware, of course, of the natural feeling of the Vice President, Lyndon Johnson, that the contract be awarded to Fort Worth to the General Dynamics plant there. I was aware also of Congressman's Jim Wright's strong interest in it being awarded there. But I knew also, because I had been contacted by representatives and senators of the interest that the contract be awarded to the Boeing plant in Kansas, in Wichita. I remember contacts that were made to me by Senator [Robert S.] Kerr who strongly urged upon me a decision for General Dynamics of Fort Worth, because, in this instance, the Douglas plant at Tulsa, it was indicated, would have some of the subcontracting work. He was anxious to see that they have some employment up there as a result of it. Kerr indicated to me at a party given out at the then-Vice President's home that he was going to talk with Secretary Zuckert to try to influence him to the same decision for the same reason. Now, I accept Secretary Zuckert's statement that he did not have undue influence. He certainly, I am sure, was contacted by the same people that I was and perhaps even other ones because, as I indicated, the Air Force was the larger user of the aircraft--more than the Navy. About a 2-to-1 larger user of the aircraft.

I think that's about it on the matter of influence. There was a time early in the discussions of the selection of a contractor when I felt that Zuckert was definitely leaning to Boeing. But he came around not because of any influence which I exercised upon him nor, so far as I know, that anyone else exercised upon him. Actually he was probably initially influenced to the Boeing view because it

I had a number of clashes with Senator McClellan because he was trying to get me to make certain statements. I was not about to make those statements because they were not accurate. I have seen him a number of times since then. I've been to social engagements with him and so on and we are friends as far as that's concerned. But if you listened to any of the testimony up there, you would think that we were the bitterest of enemies. And I must say that I didn't appreciate the tactics which were used by the counsel, [Jerome S.] Adlerman, in order to try to gain the points which he had in mind. But as I say, this is a part of our legislative process. It's something which a service secretary or anyone else, any witness, must subject himself to. It's unfortunate, however, that an individual who gives up a position in his home community and comes up to serve his government at a salary usually much less from that which he is making must be subjected to harrassment of this sort. The same facts can be ascertained in a much more deliberate fashion than is usually the case with a congressional investigating committee.

O'CONNOR: Some of these hearings were censored, were never published. I wonder if you would care to comment on some of the things that might have been cut out.

KORTH: Well, the only things that I know were cut out, and I haven't really reviewed it meticulously so I can't be certain, but the only things I really know were cut out were classified "security matters." I don't think that any of the exchanges were cut out. I don't really believe so.

O'CONNOR: Who did you have as support from the Department of the Navy to help you out?

KORTH: Who did I have?

O'CONNOR: Yes.

KORTH: Well, I had my own personal staff. I had Captain James Jenkins who was my Public Information Officer. I had Captain Andy Kerr who was a special counsel to me, a lawyer who was of invaluable assistance. I had one or two other naval officers plus my Assistant Secretary for Research and Development James Wakelin. Unfortunately, he is a very mild mannered kind of an individual who will at almost all costs avoid controversy. Therefore, I had to constantly kick him in order to keep his backbone straight on this matter. He's a very good friend of mine and I love the guy, but he was not the sort of technical support that I would have liked to have. He's competent technically. Don't misunderstand me. But he likes to get along with people. He is no longer Assistant Secretary, but not connected with this. He served for almost five years under four secretaries. He was ready to leave and wanted to leave and submitted his resignation of his own accord.

O'CONNOR: Was there anybody else in the Navy Department who was really on your side, who really gave you the support that you deserved as Secretary of the Navy?

KORTH: Yes. There were some, although they, by the same token, were limited in what they could do because their military boss, the Chief of Naval Operations, had taken a position which was different from mine. I understand quite well that they were not going to risk their naval careers in order to help me.

O'CONNOR: Have you anything to add to the conflict of interests charges that pertained to you, other than what has been already . . . This has been run over many, many times, of course.

KORTH: Well, it certainly has and the conflict of interests charges are completely groundless. The Department of Justice, the Attorney General reviewed fully all of my files and came to the very definite conclusion that there was no conflict of interest. I firmly maintain that there was no such conflict of interest. I, as a matter of fact, had counsel, also in anticipation of being recalled before the committee, in the person of Abe Fortas, a lawyer who is now a Justice of the Supreme Court, who was, likewise, special counsel, you might say, for the then Vice President. Gilpatric, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, was likewise involved in these same hearings, as you know. He consulted with Clark Clifford. He told me that he thought it would be advisable for me to have some outside counsel consult with me. I asked him for suggestions and he came up with the name of Abe Fortas. I went over to see Mr. Fortas, and it was obvious to me, although it was never stated to me, that the Vice President had asked Abe Fortas to present himself as counsel to me.

Bob McNamara, at the time I sought out Abe, told me that he wanted to be helpful to me in paying any legal fees which I might incur and that he had gone to Atlanta, Georgia, I believe, to give a lecture or presentation and was being offered an honorarium of \$1000 which he wanted to give me to pay whomever I selected. He never carried through on that, but I have no criticism of it because Mr. Fortas didn't charge me a fee so that I was not out anything. The only thing I can presume is that the then Vice President must have told Abe Fortas that he wanted Abe to help me out in any fashion possible.

O'CONNOR: Did you have any other contacts or any contacts with the Vice President during these hearings?

KORTH: I did not. I tried to get in touch with him on one or two occasions. He was out at the time, but he got the word back to me to talk to Abe about it.

O'CONNOR: Yes, I see. Do you have anything to add about John F. Kennedy's attitude toward this whole question? Did this disturb him or not?

KORTH: The hearings disturbed him, certainly. On one or two occasions I was over at the White House and talked to him about the hearings. He used some rather explosive and descriptive language in commenting on both Senator [Karl E.] Mundt and Senator McClellan.

O'CONNOR: John F. Kennedy said at a press conference that you and he had exchanged some letters regarding this TFX affair.

KORTH: That's right.

O'CONNOR: Do you care to discuss what these letters were about?

KORTH: Well, my letter to him was a letter of resignation in which I told him I did not want to further embarrass the Administration. I had for some time, and when I first came up as Secretary of the Navy, the full intention of not serving in excess of two years. I didn't feel I could leave my civilian occupation for a period longer than that. I felt that the press of my own personal affairs was such that I wanted to submit my resignation to him. I received back from him--I just happen to have it over here somewhere, the letter which he wrote me on October 12th which was, I think, a very nice communication from him.

O'CONNOR: If you don't mind this or perhaps a copy of this. . . . I don't mean that, actually, but a copy of it or a copy of any other correspondence you had with the President, we'd appreciate.

KORTH: Right. Well, I don't have any other on this particular subject. But this, I'll have my secretary make a copy of it.

O'CONNOR: We'd appreciate that very much.

KORTH: I might add one other word with reference to this resignation and the timing there. I don't recall the precise day that the resignation was effective. It was effective on November 1st but I don't remember the day of the week it was. I think it was on a Friday. That next day, Saturday, I went downtown to do some shopping which I hadn't been able to do for some time previously. As was my practice, certainly when I was Secretary, to keep in touch, I called my home and found out that the President had called me. I called the White House. He came on the phone, and he said, "Fred, I just want you to know that I already miss you in the Administration. I want to tell you again how much I appreciate everything that you have done for me." He said, "I'm going to Texas on a trip and when I return I want you to be certain to call me that next week so that we can have lunch together." He said, "I want to continue my contacts with you and continue to keep alert to what you're doing and what you're planning to do."

With reference to the reports in the October 19th issue of the New York Times, ~~that~~ the President had asked me to resign, this is not true. The President did not ask me to resign. I submitted my resignation for the reasons that I stated in my letter of transmittal to him. There was likewise the comment that the word "regret" was omitted from the letter that he wrote me on October 12th. I did not consider that a significant omission because I think the letter was most complimentary and further, by the fact as I have stated just a little bit earlier, that the President expressed to me on the day following my effective date of service the fact that he already missed me which, of course, made me feel good--likewise the fact that he wanted me to have lunch with him upon his return from the trip to Texas, coupled with his statement that he wanted to keep in touch with me and to maintain contact.

O'CONNOR: Was this the only contact by letter you had with the President during this period?

KORTH: Yes.

O'CONNOR: Do you have any comments about Secretary McNamara's attitude during this affair? What did he feel about this?

KORTH: Well, Secretary McNamara had a strong feeling of support for me, certainly so stated as I've indicated by wanting to help me on legal fees and so on, although he has not really carried forward in maintaining active contact with me. I have seen him on several occasions since then. He is very affable, very nice. I certainly have the very best of relations, as far as I know, with him. I have not contacted him. I have contacted Cyrus Vance, his Deputy, who was the former Secretary of the Army. He's been most helpful to me on a number of occasions.

O'CONNOR: You later criticized Secretary McNamara or at least the policy of the Pentagon with regard to the question of atomic carriers.

KORTH: Right.

O'CONNOR: This was subsequent to the major part of the TFX investigation.

KORTH: That's correct. I felt very strongly about the atomic-powered carrier. I so testified before the Joint Atomic Energy Committee. I, in response to questions by reporters, stated disagreement with McNamara with reference to the nuclear-powered carrier. This, however, should not be taken as an evidence of personal disagreement with McNamara at all; it was a disagreement with him on policy. But, however, it was not the reasons for my resignation. Certainly, that phase might perhaps have been out of proportion in the newspaper accounts.

O'CONNOR: Probably because it came at that time.

KORTH: That's right. That's right.

O'CONNOR: Then this dispute over the carrier, nor the dispute over the question of conflict of interests nor anything else involved in the TFX affair affected your relationship with Secretary McNamara.

KORTH: It did not. I think, of course, that he was disappointed that there had been the furor and the rhubarb and so on with reference to the conflict of interest situation. Certainly any administrator would rather things would go along peacefully rather than otherwise.

O'CONNOR: There also came up at this time a question of your using letters. You made these letters public so there was no question about this with the Navy stationery. Do you have any comments to make about this?

KORTH: Yes, I do have some comments to make on those. In the first place the letters were really trivia. They were not of any significant importance, certainly had no connection whatsoever with the TFX. A review of those letters would indicate that where someone had asked me to intercede in behalf of a client or a constituent that I would invariably refer the inquiry or the request to the appropriate bureau or the appropriate individual within the Navy for their handling, only perhaps stating that I know that these people are good people and do what is the proper thing to be done with reference to the situation. Never even any scintilla of evidence that there was any influence used by me to get any particular decision.

Now, with reference specifically to those letters which were written, I, of course, confess that I signed these letters. I made them available. I must, however, criticize my secretary really for this error. I had printed at my own expense, when I first came up as Secretary, personal letterheads which said only "Fred Korth" with the room number of the Pentagon building. There was no reference whatsoever to the office which I held. She should have put these letters on that stationery rather than on the Navy stationery. I likewise meticulously observed the franking privilege. Those letters all had United States postage stamps on them that I paid for. I mean I thought I was being quite careful. I wasn't careful enough to look at the letterheads when they went out.

You have a full day where you work from 7 o'clock in the morning to 7 o'clock in the evening. Your secretary brings you a half a dozen letters in which you dictated at some odd moments during the day. You want to get home or get to a dinner that you have accepted an invitation to. You sign the letters, depending upon your secretary to see that they are not only properly written but written on the right stationery.

Actually, from the very beginning of the time that I served as Secretary and by reference to the testimony before the Armed Services Committee, which considered my nomination as Secretary, you can well see that I made a complete disclosure of any interests which I had. There was no question but what I owned stock in the Continental National Bank of Fort Worth. It was so stated in the testimony. I divested myself of interests, although I had no great interest, but the small interests that I had in airline companies and railway companies, because I did not even want the suspicion that I might be helping the Braniff Airways Company at which I had a little stock. I don't know of any way the Secretary of the Navy could have, but I just didn't want anybody to say that I had a stock in which I might have had some material gain as a result of anything that I did as Secretary. Certainly, there was not that opinion with reference to stock that I had in the bank. And as I say, I made a full disclosure.

Actually, Senator [Milward L.] Simpson of Wyoming who is since deceased, in looking at the biographical sketch and statement that I gave, noted that I was Treasurer of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers' Association which is an organization as the name indicates. He asked me whether I was going to continue being the treasurer of that organization. I said, "Well, certainly for a time I would like to. It's more or less an honorary position." He said, "Well, do you think you can be quite impartial in buying meat for the Navy if you represent the local cattlemen as distinguished from buying meat from Argentina?" And I said, "Well, Senator, in the first place I don't buy any meat. The Defense Supply Agency is the one that buys that meat." He said, "Well, don't you feel really that there might be a conflict of interests there?" I said,

"Senator, if you have even a shadow of a doubt about this thing, I'll be glad to submit my resignation from that organization"--which I did. But this is only to illustrate that I was bending over backwards in every fashion that I could in order to keep my skirts clear.

But there were these letters. There's no question about that; letters that shouldn't have been written, or certainly shouldn't have been written on Navy stationery. It was not of any significance as far as TFX is concerned, which is where they were brought out--none whatsoever.

There was likewise the criticism--although I don't know that they got into it; maybe they indicated that they were going to get into it--that was on the use of the Navy yacht, Sequoia. They asked me whether I had a log book on who was present. I told them that I would be glad to submit that log book because looking at the members of the committee, they had all been my guests on the Sequoia as had the then-President who succeeded Kennedy. They never got into that log book.

O'CONNOR: Do you have any comments on why the hearings weren't continued? They were intended to have been continued.

KORTH: I don't really know other than that--they may yet may be continued as far as that's concerned. There was the threat and the statement that they were going to see how General Dynamics did on this airplane, and later reevaluate it and perhaps open the hearings again in order to bring them up to date, and, hopefully, to show how General Dynamics had fallen down on the job, then by hindsight say that if the contract had been given to Boeing they wouldn't have had these difficulties--which, of course, no one could say, whether they would or whether they wouldn't. I don't know whether a report will ever be made.

I don't know whether they will be started again. I have had no indication in those infrequent contacts that I have had socially with Senator McClellan that anything is about to occur with reference to it.

O'CONNOR: There is some speculation that the name of Lyndon B. Johnson might come up again if the hearings were opened again, and that this was one of the reasons why they were not. Do you have any comments on that?

KORTH: No, I don't have any comments on it because I haven't heard that, in the first place. I can't comment on the accuracy or the inaccuracy of the statements. I just don't know.

O'CONNOR: All right. I have here a list of appointments that you had with President Kennedy. I got them from the President's appointment book from January 1962 to October 11, 1963. Over here is occasionally listed some of the people who were also present: Captain Tazewell Shepard, Admiral [Ralph K.] James, [Justice Arthur J.] Goldberg and Shepard again. I wonder if you'd have any comments, or if this would bring back to your mind any connections that you might have had with the late President.

KORTH: I don't recall what the . . . Well, the January 16, 1962, meeting I've already referred to. That was my first meeting with the President. I don't recall the nature of the July 3rd meeting. The August 14th meeting, 1962, was with reference to the shipbuilding program--that is, the allocation of ships between Navy shipyards (that is, public shipyards) and private shipyards and how we were going to attempt to allocate the work between the government shipyards and the private shipyards.

O'CONNOR: There was a fuss made in regard to that question by several members of Congress. Do you have any comments on that?

KORTH: Yes. The fuss basically was this: It was in 1962 that there was legislation enacted on the Appropriations Bill, as I recall, requiring that the Navy give 40 percent of its . . .

O'CONNOR: 35 percent.

KORTH: 65-35, that's right--35 percent of its work to the private yards and 65 percent to the public yards. This I don't believe--well, yes, it probably was discussed on this August 14th, '62, meeting. I objected to the inclusion of a restriction or a limitation on my authority to divide the work only because I thought that I needed the flexibility depending upon what the situation was at the time to determine whether it was to be private or public. Historically, it had been about this percentage anyhow, but the private shipbuilding companies wanted some further limitation on what I could do and that they could be certain to get a percentage of the shipbuilding work.

O'CONNOR: Again, there was no or was there. . . . I'll phrase my question that way. Was there any influence or any attempt to peddle influence by some of the members of Congress in regard to this question?

KORTH: In regard to the shipbuilding program? Well, I can't say that there was any particular influence used, although certainly the congressmen from Massachusetts who were in the Boston or the Quincy area up there were quite interested in the Bethlehem Steel Company, the shipbuilding company, the Quincy yards there, in doing Naval work. They had not, as I recall, competitively been able to get a contract from the Navy since 1952. They had been awarded a number of ships. As a matter of fact, the Long Beach and the Bainbridge were both built by the Quincy yards. But they were awarded to them on a negotiated basis rather than on a competitive bid basis.

Yes, I did have pressures exerted on me, although I don't think undue pressures, by Speaker [John W.] McCormack, by the congressman from that area there. Likewise, there was interest expressed on the part of Senator [John] Stennis on the Pascagoula, Mississippi, Ingalls Shipbuilding Company which is a subsidiary of Litton Industries. This is natural; this is normal; this is to be expected. As a matter of fact, if the congressmen or the senators from the areas that had private shipbuilding yards, if they hadn't expressed an interest, I would have thought they weren't doing their job properly.

Of course, there were those who represented where the public yards were, who felt just the opposite. Porter Hardy from Virginia and the other congressmen from that area down there quite naturally were interested in the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, but they had interests in the Norfolk Naval Shipyards. They, more or less, remained quiet, you might say, because they had two conflicting interests there. Take Congressman Mendel Rivers, who is now Chairman of the Armed Services Committee. He has the Charleston Naval Shipyard there. He could care less about whether a private yard ever gets any business as long as his public yard is occupied. Chairman [Carl] Vinson of the Armed Services Committee felt very strongly about there being the continuing capabilities of the public yards. As a matter of fact, he spoke very strongly against the 65-35 limitation which had been brought before the House of Representatives. He took the floor to try to knock that down but was unsuccessful in so doing.

O'CONNOR: All right. Any comments on these other meetings?

KORTH: With reference to the other meetings, I think that perhaps the meeting on September 10th, 1962, was with reference to the U.S. flag vessels, those ships which are--or foreign vessels, I should say, those ships owned by the United States citizens but flying foreign flags. The desire by the Maritime unions, the labor unions, to impose upon those ship U.S. labor standards and U.S. wage standards. A long discussion took place between the Labor Department and the Solicitor General and the State Department and the Navy, as representative of the Defense Department, our objection being that we did not want those standards imposed upon those ships. We wanted to continue to maintain the hold which we had and which we have, to call those ships into active duty of the United States Navy in time of emergency rather than running them off to truly foreign ownership as distinguished from United States ownership.

These other meetings I cannot give you any specific description of what happened. I tried to make it a practice of every once in a while going over to see the President. I had very good and very close relations with his naval aide, Captain Shepard, Tazewell Shepard. As a matter of fact, he had breakfast with me once a week. I think it was each Tuesday. We were in rather constant, almost daily, contact with each other on naval matters in which the President was or might be interested. The last meeting, the October 11th meeting, was the meeting when I submitted my resignation.

O'CONNOR: One other thing I meant to bring up. At the time you criticized, to a certain extent, the Pentagon's policy regarding atomic carriers, you also mentioned that there might be in this one respect too much emphasis on cost effectiveness.

KORTH: Well, I did make that statement, and I feel that very strongly even today. Now, I endorsed the overall concept of cost effectiveness. I think it has been a very beneficial thing for the Defense Department and for the government as a whole. But, I do think that there are times when you must look beyond cost effectiveness in order to see the result which will be obtained. For instance, on the nuclear carrier, it was my very strong feeling that to build a carrier in the mid-1960's which would doubtless still be in use at the beginning of the 21st century, that it made no sense to me to have a conventional means of power on that. Doubtless at that time in 1999 or the year 2000 you would be having certainly a great deal of nuclear power and, perhaps, largely converted to nuclear power all of the ships which we had. It would not make sense to me to have conventional power on a ship that you might have to or want to later convert into nuclear power. It would be a waste of money and therefore would not, really, further the principles of cost effectiveness. What was done by Enthoven or Hitch or whoever did it in McNamara's shop was to figure it on a strictly cost effectiveness basis. You can, without question, build a carrier of the same size with conventional power for at least 125 million dollars less than you can build one with nuclear power. But when you consider the flexibility which you have with a nuclear carrier as distinguished from conventional, when you consider the fact that you can go around the world without refueling--you don't have to worry about oilers and tankers and so on keeping up with you for the power for the carrier itself; you, of course, have to have it for the aircraft which you're using--it just didn't make sense to me that we build a conventionally powered carrier.

Now, as you know, from reports at least that we've seen, in the budget now they are programming a nuclear carrier. The cost effectiveness argument is just as valid today as it was 3 years ago, I would think.

O'CONNOR: All right. We're running just about to the end of the questions, which is fine. One other thing that occurred to me there was also the question regarding the ship Savannah in 1962. There was a strike on the ship Savannah, I believe.

KORTH: That's right.

O'CONNOR: Representative [Herbert C.] Bonner made the statement that this ship should be turned over to the U.S. Navy.

KORTH: Yes, sir.

O'CONNOR: Do you have any comments to make on that?

KORTH: We didn't want it. The reason we didn't want it is because we knew that it would be a burden to us. It would not be effective in our own inventory of ships. We felt very strongly that it was not-- and I say we, I'm not reflecting really what Admiral [Hyman G.] Rickover's views are, and I have the highest regard for him. He felt that the ship was not properly constructed. I don't mean it was dangerous to use it. Don't misunderstand me. The method of construction of the atomic power plant was such that it was going to be very expensive to operate and would not really come within the measure of cost effectiveness, certainly as far as the Navy was concerned. I told Secretary [Luther H.] Hodges that we didn't want it. That was his baby and let him work it out rather than for us to.

O'CONNOR: Was the Navy involved during 1962 or 1963 in the question of civil rights with regard to naval installation?

KORTH: Yes, indeed, it was quite involved. As a matter of fact, I brought within my own immediate office a young man that I assigned almost full time to the matter of civil rights to be certain that not only were we properly demanding of naval contractors that they integrate their establishments, but likewise to be certain that our own naval personnel and naval stations were properly integrated within themselves and likewise maintained their proper relations within the communities.

O'CONNOR: Could you tell me the name of that man who was right in your office?

KORTH: [David M.] Clinard. He is still assigned to that office--the office of Secretary of the Navy--but I believe that he has been given a year's leave of absence to attend either the National War College or the Naval War College. I don't know which, but you can find out over at the Secretary of the Navy's office.

O'CONNOR: Yes, we may want to talk to him about the problem of civil rights.

KORTH: Right. Well, I can elaborate a little bit further on the matter of civil rights. In connection with the relations with the community, I had some resistance from some of commanding officers of the naval stations in the South with reference to this particular problem. I'm thinking specifically of Pensacola now. The admiral in charge down there, Admiral Fitzhugh Lee, resisted my efforts only, I can properly say, to the extent that he felt that it was a matter which would have to take time in developing. He was not willing to disturb or to accelerate that timing which, as I say, was not acceptable to me. It was not acceptable to the President's committee. We had a rather good record insofar as our industrial contractors were concerned. I sat upon the committee. I made it a point to personally go to these committee meetings in which the then-Vice President, Johnson, was the chairman,

because I felt it was important. I resolved the matter down in Pensacola, I think, in a satisfactory fashion, however, even though I had a complaint from Congressman [Robert L.F.] Sikes, who represents that area, telling me that he was going to take the floor and denounce me for my activities in this regard. He did not do so but he expressed dissatisfaction with my trying to get racial equality down in the area. He was reflecting his constituents' view.

O'CONNOR: Did you ever have any other instances of undue resistance on the part of naval officers to the civil rights program of the Navy?

KORTH: Well, not really. The Navy was the last, really, to accept integration within its uniformed personnel. I think it's pretty well done so now. We have two naval officers who have gotten up to the grade of commander. One of them is a commander of a destroyer, as I recall. He's doing a good job. I brought in as one of the assistant general counsel of the Navy, a Negro from Wisconsin. I had some resistance from the Counsel's office on this. They didn't know whether it would sit right with the other boys, but he's apparently worked out very well. His name is Stanley P. Hebert. You might want to talk with him. I think it's worked really very well.

O'CONNOR: All right. You worked in the Truman Administration the last two years in the Secretary of the Army's office.

KORTH: Yes, that's right. I was Deputy Counsel and then Assistant Secretary of the Army.

O'CONNOR: Do you have any comments or as to contrasts in the Defense Department or the Department of the Army, I should say?

KORTH: I can compare the two occasions. I think that while Robert Lovett, the Secretary of Defense, was an able administrator and a very fine man, I don't think there's any question but what Bob McNamara has given more administrative direction to the Department than has ever been given before. I think he has really made a more effective department out of the Defense Department than has ever been done before.

O'CONNOR: Do you see any disadvantages or any complaints to the centralization of the Department that has gone on under McNamara?

KORTH: Yes, I do. I oppose complete unification of the forces. I continue to maintain that it is better to have a separate Army, Navy, and Air Force than to have them all in a certain color uniform under a certain type of administrative arrangement. I likewise very strongly feel that the departments, the civilian heads of the departments, should have more direction and more authority than they have today. The way it is now going, the Secretary of Defense, he, in effect, has a deputy in his own immediate office. And then he has, the next rung down, three assistants, who are in charge of Army, Navy, and Air Force affairs rather than departments. I think this is bad. Now, there should be coordination between departments. This is what the Secretary of Defense can do. There should be that overall supervision which prevents useless and needless duplication, but there likewise should be competition between the services so that even though they're working on something which is almost the same, it can be, because of competition. . . . The successful one can be better than it would have been if it had been only one trying to achieve that same goal with the Secretary of Defense there to stop that one which is not accomplishing its end and continue with the one which is.

O'CONNOR: Two other brief matters that I think you might mention if there is time, any connections or any relationship that you might have had, or the military men under you might have had with the NATO forces? Any opinions they might have stated with regard to the strength of NATO, the naval NATO?

KORTH: Not really anything significant. The Navy has a minor role in this regard insofar as the overall NATO command is concerned, although we do maintain good relationships with the French and British which are the two principal naval forces involved.

O'CONNOR: All right, and the other question dealt with the possibility of an Indian Ocean fleet. I think this question came up during your . . .

KORTH: That's correct. I was in favor of it, as was the Navy, but we were handicapped by the number of ships which we had. We just couldn't form an Indian Ocean fleet with what we had other than by lowering the efficiency of the other fleets. I would not want to go into an Indian Ocean fleet operation but for the fact that the British are pulling out and are creating a vacuum there.

O'CONNOR: The question revolved around the appointment of commander, I believe, in the Middle East and Far East from other services removing naval men.

KORTH: Yes.

O'CONNOR: I wonder if you had any comments to make about that.

KORTH: Well, I had a disagreement with Admiral Anderson actually. He wanted Admiral [Charles D.] Griffin, who is now down at Naples. He wanted him as the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet. I, on the other hand, wanted Admiral [U.S. Grant] Sharp, who is now the Commander out there, but I wanted him really not only because I thought he was able and capable and equally as capable as Griffin, but quite frankly, because I knew that Bob McNamara liked Admiral Sharp. I knew that if I didn't give him a man that he was really sold on, he might well say that he was going to appoint an Air Force officer as a Commander in Chief of the Pacific.

I finally convinced Anderson that he'd better get smart here and learn how to play a little politics on this situation. He did. He finally agreed with me and we recommended Sharp. I built him up very nicely to McNamara and he accepted it. I really feel very strongly that if we had taken Griffin, who McNamara did not get along with and whom he did not have any confidence in, if we had submitted his name, he would have rejected him and would have appointed an Air Force officer as Commander in Chief of the Pacific. I think, as did Anderson, very strongly that Commander in Chief of the Pacific should be a naval officer as distinguished from either a ground officer--an Army officer--or an Air Force officer.