

John T. McNaughton Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 11/14/1964
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

John T. McNaughton (1921-1967) was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs from 1961 to 1962 and the General Council for the Department of Defense from 1962 to 1964. This interview focuses on the Cuban Missile Crisis and the debate over establishing a multilateral force, among other topics.

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REVIEW BY THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

This is an interview recorded for the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library with John T. McNaughton, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. The date is 14 November 1964, the place is the Pentagon, and the interviewer is Larry McQuade.

Q. John, do you want to start?

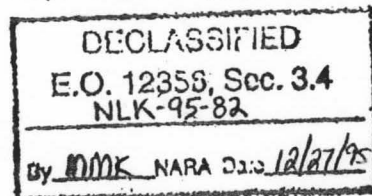
A. I believe the first thing you wanted, Larry, was a brief account of the first time I met the President. It was while he was campaigning in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He was at an affair in the Commander Hotel and as I was just one of the line going through, I did not have a chance to talk to him though I had hoped to.

Q. What did you think of him at that time?

A. He was campaigning, and he seemed to be a very attractive candidate. I was an Adlai Stevenson supporter at the time, but I think I was beginning to evolve in his direction. This was a while after he had been nominated, so he was THE Democratic candidate at the time. After I came down here in the spring of 1961 as Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, I recall having a number of meetings with the Committee of Principals. When the Committee of Principals, which dealt with arms control matters, met with the President, I would frequently accompany the Secretary or the Deputy Secretary, either in lieu of or along with Mr. Nitze, to these meetings. This was scarcely meeting the President because you are in a group of fifteen or twenty people, all of them discussing the matter, and I was there only to back up the Defense Department principal in each case. My most vivid recollection of these meetings is the time when both General Lemnitzer and Secretary McNamara had to be late to the meeting because the Shah of Iran was in town and I had to represent the Defense Department. There was an issue which had to do with a US Government position that would be taken in Geneva reducing weapons by a flat percentage -- or on one basis rather than another. The State Department, backed by the Arms Control Agency, had taken one position and the Defense Department another, the difference being primarily that ours was simpler and theirs was probably more equitable. I had to argue our side of the case, and the President ruled our way in this instance. There were a number of similar meetings of this kind.

Q. What did you think of him? Was he forceful? Did he dominate the meeting, or was he quiet and receptive? What was your personal impression of him as a man?

A. It appeared on these occasions that he took a personal interest in Arms Control. He had on his staff Mac Bundy, Carl Kaysen and Jerry Wiesner. These three men were all very interested in arms control matters in the broadest sense. I think they must have had private conversations about the issues outside the formal meetings because I always sensed that the



President came to these meetings prepared for the issues. I'm reasonably sure that my advocacy of the Defense position in the case to which I referred had little to do with the result. I suspect he had faced the issue in the privacy of his office earlier and had more or less resolved it, but was waiting to hear the final arguments. He made decisions. He didn't make them unnecessarily, but he was willing to make decisions. He joined in the debate around the table in the Cabinet Room at these meetings as if he were one of the debaters. Of course, there was never any lack of respect shown, though he tended to enter into the fray and argument a good deal.

The next moment I recall was the first time I became aware that he knew who I was. This was on May 15, 1962, apparently after Secretary McNamara had approached him about naming me General Counsel of the Department of Defense, to be effective in July. My wife and I had been invited to the annual White House reception for the Military. The President, instead of having a reception line, followed the practice of wandering himself throughout the crowd. The room we were in appeared to be the dining room. I predicted that he would come in one door and circle around to the other. My wife had never met him, so I planted her feet and mine firmly on the ground at a place I thought he inevitably would have to pass. Naturally, a beehive of people clustered around him and when this beehive bore down on us, the rule of inertia prevailed as well as the right to property. We had this piece of real estate staked out for ourselves, and so the beehive split and the President came to us. Instead of telling him who I was, I introduced my wife as Mrs. John McNaughton, which let him know. He stopped and said, "I didn't know that you were a Rhodes Scholar." And I replied, "Yes, it's true that I was." This was about the time that Elvis Stahr had decided to resign, so I mentioned that in the same transaction he was losing a Rhodes Scholar and gaining one -- because Elvis was leaving, Cy Vance was taking that job and I was taking Cy's.

Q. What did your wife say?

A. She said, "How do you do?"

Q. What did she think about the President?

A. Your attitude about a person cannot be quite the same when that person is the President. We both were Stevenson supporters prior to the convention. There's no question in my mind but that there was a gradual but inevitable shift of affection toward the President. It was really a very deep sort of thing which we felt and it took the event of November 22, 1963, to reveal just how deep it really was. He was an extraordinary person in his ability to communicate a feeling of excitement and reason for doing things, which was somewhat unusual.

Q. Can you tell us something about the Cuban crisis in 1962?

A. First, let me say that I was not on board that crisis on the very first evening. You recall that the pictures were developed and the information was flashed around at the key places in Washington on the 15th of October, 1962. It was that evening, in fact, that I believe there was a dinner party going on at the State Department and they had to call the Secretary out and tell him.

The first I heard of it was actually two days later. Let's see, the 15th was the day, the 17th was on a Wednesday. It was a Wednesday afternoon when Adam Yarmolinsky, who was Special Assistant to Mr. McNamara, came in to tell me about this.

Q. You were General Counsel.

A. I was then General Counsel in the Department of Defense. And this was the first I'd heard of it, and no action was laid on to me at that time. I was just informed that this had happened. This was then almost a day and a half, two days after the word -- in fact, it was one day after the President heard about it. He heard about it on a Tuesday morning.

I, that prior Sunday, had been down to Miami on a confidential mission relating to the use of Cuban refugees, ways of training them for possible use of some kind in some future contingency. And so on Wednesday when I heard about this, the work I'd been doing on the possible use of Cuban refugees considered, I thought it was relevant, it became relevant. No other action in particular crossed my mind at that time. And it was not until Friday, the 19th, when, as I recall, I think Gilpatric gave me the job of, as I recall, determining how we could call up some forces. Now, I have here something I wrote at the time which summarized what happened. Now let's see if I can find the right place to start this. I'm referring here to the New York Times rundown called "The First Fourteen Days", and I was alluding to it as I wrote this. I say, "That is, the story is probably fairly nearly right, but off just a little bit. The reference at the top of the column of Friday night" -- this Friday the 19th -- "is the trip I made over to the Justice Department with my friend Adam Yarmolinsky. That morning" -- this Friday morning -- "our Deputy Secretary" -- Gilpatric -- "had laid onto me the job of arranging the legal end of a troop call-up just in case it became necessary. I had been told to lay off" -- this lay off meaning not to work on -- "the blockade end of things."

Q. Had you been working on that?

A. I had not, not to mess with the blockade end of things, that, quote, "Justice is taking care of that", unquote, see? On Friday night, between 8 and 9 o'clock, Adam and I went over to see Nick -- that's [Nicholas DeB.] Nick Katzenbach, who was then [Robert F.] Bobby Kennedy's deputy -- to see what he might have to say about troop call-up. And we got there to find that he had practically no interest in the call-up. And we got to talking about the potential blockade. I asked him if he had his people working on it. He said, quote, "I am my people. I have no one working on it.", unquote. I suggested that we at DoD do it or at least get started at it. Adam and I then went back to the Pentagon and found Secretary McNamara and Deputy Secretary Gilpatric in McNamara's office trying to find someone to get going on the big job that this fell into. This was at 10 o'clock at night or so. McNamara had phoned me but found me out at the Justice Department. He said, "John, are you willing to go to work tonight?" And I said yes, this was about 10 o'clock. I reported what had transpired at the Justice Department. He said, "Well, then you do the proclamation or whatever it takes." He also laid on a couple of other chores, specifically

to check the orders that were being generated down the line in anticipation of the proclamation.

Q. Had it been clearly decided, then, at that time, that there was to be a quarantine?

A. No, it had not. It had been clearly stated that two options were open. But the Secretary told me to work on the blockade end of it. As I understood it from him -- and I was not sitting in the meetings with the President at this time -- the two options were open; but he wanted each of them flushed out, and I was to work on the blockade end. The reference at the bottom of column seven of the NEW YORK TIMES is to the work done in my office on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, when I was in charge of the sessions with Nick Katzenbach or his representative; Abe Chayes, who was the Legal Adviser to the State Department, or his representative; Navy personnel; and one or two others. It was at these sessions that the proclamation was hammered out.

I recall telephoning and trying to get Secretary McNamara's people lined up. Here's another account that I wrote about the same time. On Friday night, October 19th, after Adam Yarmolinsky and I returned from our meeting with Nick Katzenbach at the Justice Department, Bob McNamara was in Ros Gilpatric's office. They were trying to find people to get to work on this. The Navy apparently had started its work in a very restricted group, and nobody knew who or where the group was. Therefore, we were having trouble connecting with this group. In an effort to locate the lawyers working on the job, I finally called the Secretary of the Navy, Fred Korth, who was on the SEQUOIA filling in for Deputy Secretary Gilpatric who had been scheduled to entertain an industry group that day at a party on the SEQUOIA. In Gilpatric's office, McNamara, Gilpatric, Yarmolinsky and I surrounded Gilpatric's desk. Secretary McNamara had a pad of paper in his hand and he said, "All right, now, what documents do we need?" I remember his using the word "documents." We went through the chain of authority: The President to the Secretary of Defense to the Secretary of the Navy to the Chief of Naval Operations to the Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic, to the Commander of the Second Fleet. Then we recalled that the Secretary of the Navy was not in the chain of command, so he dropped out of it. And it turned out that orders to CINCLANT, that's Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic, must come from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but they, in cases like this, follow orders from the Secretary of Defense. The question was, "Did we need an executive order from the President, or was the proclamation that he issued enough? Must the Secretary of Defense send orders to the Chiefs and then to CINCLANT, or were orders drafted by the Chiefs, initialled by the Secretary of Defense, enough?"

These elementary things were being worked out that Friday night for this Cuba ad hoc arrangement. There had never been anything like it before. We got the actual orders in the works, including detailed orders as to how the fleet was to behave with respect to blocked ships. All

this, even though it was still four days' before the quarantine was to happen. I remember that later on during the night -- this is all from memory -- I telephoned Ben Forman of my General Counsel's office. I was unable to get hold of the Judge Advocate General of the Navy, Bill Mott. He was in Austin or Memphis giving a speech, but I did get hold of Bob Powers, who was the Deputy Judge Advocate General. He had written an article on a limited blockade and was very useful in this regard. You see, one of the greatest difficulties I had dealing with my lawyers was that they all said that what we were doing was illegal; that this is an act of war; that you had to do it in such and such a way, otherwise it didn't follow the rules of blockade. Bob Powers had the idea of a limited blockade of the kind which we adapted to this case. Powers and then Ben Forman came into my office. Adam Yarmolinsky was there, and we talked and worked over the idea.

Q. Did he select the term "quarantine"?

A. No, the word "quarantine" comes in on late Sunday or early Monday. I have here drafts number six, seven and eight of the Quarantine Proclamation. I'm not sure that the word "quarantine" or "blockade" for that matter appears in any of these drafts. We laid off the word "blockade" because it had legal and technical significance. The title of draft number six, for example, is "Interdiction of the Delivery of Offensive Weapons to Cuba." This is the title of drafts seven and eight, and also the title of the final one signed by the President.

Q. Was that a political decision, or did you fellows gin it up?

A. It was a political choice. The word "quarantine" wasn't perfect either, because where it had been used before, it was always applied to keeping things in, and we were concerned with keeping things out. The word "quarantine" didn't fit, but the word "blockade" was bad. Because it had a good flavor, the word "quarantine" was finally adopted. As I remember -- I hate to admit this -- but I think I came down against the word "quarantine" slightly when I gave my recommendation to Mac Bundy at the White House. But the word was chosen, and, in retrospect, we all think this was a great decision.

But going back to Saturday -- the whole day was spent working on the proclamation. My diary shows, for example, that at two o'clock in the afternoon on Saturday, the 20th, I was meeting with Abe Chayes, Nick Katzenbach, Adam Yarmolinsky, Admiral Bob Powers, Ben Forman, Jim Hendricks [phonetic], Solis Horwitz, Harold Reese [phonetic], and one other whose name I can't read here.

Q. Norb Schlei -- was he in it?

A. Norb would substitute for Nick. When Nick couldn't come, Norb Schlei would come. These meetings on Saturday, Sunday and Monday were invested in

producing the proclamation. You may remember that the President made his speech on Monday night, but he didn't sign the proclamation until Tuesday night, and it didn't go into effect "legally" until Wednesday morning. Even though his speech said we have done such and such, he put it in the past tense on Monday, so there was a period of thirty-six hours in which we hadn't really done it yet. But, going back to Sunday, and working all day on producing the Quarantine Proclamation --

Q. Did these documents ever go forward?

A. Oh, each one would go forward. What would happen is that we would draw up a draft and give it to Secretary McNamara or Gilpatric, and it would go to the Ball group working at the State Department to be hashed over. Then it would go to Mac Bundy and the White House. They would look at it and the President might or might not get a look at it. Then it would come back with various suggested changes. Now the key parts of it had to do with the "whereas" clauses and the aspects which were offensive. In other words, that which we were objecting to. The key "whereas" clause was the one with respect to the action taken by the American Republics. I think I can say in all frankness that we were ready to go with or without the approval of the American Republics. So we had one proclamation that was written as if we had the approval of the OAS, or at least of the organ of consultation of the American Republics, and we had another one that was ready to go if we did not get their approval.

Q. That's probably why the proclamation was delayed for a day or two, so you'd have the results of the OAS --

A. That is exactly right. Because of the secrecy involved, you could not consult more than a matter of minutes and hours before the speech. But, after the speech, Ed Martin, then Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, had 24 hours in which to do his getting in touch and arranging for the organization to meet and act upon the resolution. We thought that the western states would go with us, and therefore this was the one we expected to follow. But we were not sure of it, and therefore, we had, in effect, a bracketed paragraph, which either went or did not go as part of this. Now, the second thing had to do, as I say, with that which was prohibited -- offensive weapons -- and there was a whole list of things which were put in: - Whether you put in POL, whether you put in motor torpedo boats, or air defense missiles, and whether you put in MIG aircraft and so forth. Now there was a lot of debate on this. There was a good argument that you can tolerate "defensive" missiles as long as all other conduct is consistent with defensive behavior. But once they put in the IRBMs or the MRBMs, and they had these "defensive" missiles surrounding the IRBMs and the MRBMs, they became part of an offensive system, and the whole state of mind is different. This then led a substantial group to argue that that which had been defensive, or could have been defensive, became offensive.

Q. Did the lawyers get in on this debate?

A. Well, let me say that although I was General Counsel, I did not conceive of this as being a legal operation -- a legal assignment. What I was trying to do was to deal with all the forces that were at work to create a tolerable document which did what we wanted it to do and took account of the norms that exist in the world, including legal norms. Therefore, I was against expanding the list of prohibited articles to include things which earlier we had said were not prohibited, simply on the ground that it's unnecessarily complicating the problem -- to have to argue eight points instead of three. I wanted it simple: Just say, "We had said these things were o.k.; you went beyond, and everything beyond is not O.K." -- rather than saying that ab initio the earlier ones hereafter become tainted.

Q. Let me ask one more question here. Did the selection of the proscribed area -- is that coming up here or later?

A. That happened one week later, but maybe I'd better answer that now because I don't have any notes on this point later. In the early stages, we conceived of the proscribed area as being the area within which MIG-type aircraft from Cuba could effectively operate. So we wanted to have our ships outside that area, stopping their ships coming in.

Q. So no land-based aircraft could interfere with our operation?

A. That's right. The area ran to about seven hundred miles. We ended up the following Saturday, October 27th, with a five hundred mile circle. This was only because human beings are born with five fingers on their hands -- it was a good round number, five hundred -- and we happened to use miles rather than kilometers. Otherwise it would have been a thousand kilometers.

I wanted to tell you about a meeting at the White House on Sunday night, October 21st. I thought it was October 28th, after the missiles had been withdrawn or promised to withdraw. But my notes show it on the evening of October 21st. This is the time it must have been.

Secretary McNamara, on this Sunday afternoon, made an observation which should occur to any of us. And that was that during this moment of crisis -- and we'd been in it for five days then, though we hadn't yet made any speeches -- great changes in the world might be brought about. There are an inordinate number of things in the world in which we get ourselves encrusted into positions, where if you can just take advantage of a horrible situation like this to make these changes -- to make an initiative with the Soviet Union with respect to something quite different -- maybe to run some risks that you otherwise might not run I think Secretary McNamara must have called Bobby Kennedy about this, or vice versa. They wanted to have a group meet in the Situation Room at the White House to address this problem of what vistas are opened up by this crisis. At this

meeting were Bobby Kennedy, Mac Bundy, Abe Chayes, Walt Rostow, Paul Nitze and Harry Rowen from Defense, Nick Katzenbach, Don Wilson from USIA, Mike Forrestal, and myself. We discussed everything from Central Europe to Southeast Asia. About the only thing I recall as sticking with me is a lesson -- other than the one I already mentioned, that you try to seize such moments -- that almost everything that occurred to us was attractive only if you had started doing it some weeks or months before. You had to be up to the verge, ready to capitalize on the moment. Now, this turned out to be untrue, because I'm sure the test ban, which came seven or eight months later, followed from this crisis to a large extent.

Q. Can you give a typical example? In Berlin you would have?

A. I can't give you a typical example. It's just that when you've been through such a thing -- and to me, Alsop to the contrary notwithstanding, there was an approach to the brink in this crisis -- this is the time when you begin to think some of the little things you've been arguing about just don't seem worth it, and why don't you get them settled? It's like having a serious illness in the family, and you ask yourself whether this petty bickering that's been going on --

Q. The Averell Harriman genius, as I recall -- he sees that even in non-crisis times.

A. That's right, but it takes a crisis to pull you off. All Sunday was put in on the proclamation; all day Monday likewise. You mentioned the change of the word. I think the word "quarantine" was adopted either late Sunday or early Monday. The President's speech was given on Monday evening at seven o'clock, the 22nd of October. Looking back again, here are two observations. The first is that the operation was beginning to move to the Defense Department. You'd have thought that Nick Katzenbach would have been the center of the proclamation because he was the President's lawyer. On the other hand, this really didn't make sense and Nick realized that. Or, it might have been Abe Chayes in the State Department. But this was going to have to be so closely oriented to the military action that it became centered in my office. The second observation is that McNamara --

Q. How about the Navy General Counsel? No question of him having that responsibility?

A. Not the General Counsel because the Navy General Counsel deals only with commercial affairs. His function is much more limited by a charter. But on the other hand, the JAG was very much in on this, and I was not it by virtue of being General Counsel. I was it almost in direct staff to McNamara. This is the second point I wanted to make. That McNamara, Gilpatric, myself and Yarmolinsky did nothing else, for practical purposes, during this period. On Friday, the 19th, I have a note of having dinner with McNamara that evening. On Saturday, the 20th, I had dinner with McNamara and Gilpatric and we looked at the first draft of the President's speech.

This was the one in which the famous paragraph appeared which implied that the presence of the missiles in Cuba didn't make much military difference. Larry, we were talking about how closely this team was working together in the Pentagon. Don't misunderstand me; Admiral Anderson was the action officer for the actual squeeze in Cuba. But there was very close work going on with McNamara, Gilpatric, Yarmolinsky and myself doing a lot of the detailed double thinking about all the things that had to be done. I don't have a record of breakfasts, but I was sleeping-in here every other night during this period -- at least after the speech was made. I was sticking my head in at six-thirty or seven in the morning and often having breakfast with McNamara. But this Saturday evening at dinner with McNamara and Gilpatric, we talked about the President's speech. I referred to the controversial paragraph in that speech which implied that the missiles did not make a significant military difference. In effect, it said you can't go around treating the United States this way -- flouting what you have told us in my conversations with Gromyko, etc. But this first sentence was deleted or changed. It was changed beyond recognition before the speech came out. Then on Sunday the 21st, I have notes here of dinner with McNamara; and on Monday the 22nd, I'd already eaten, apparently, because I have myself sitting through dinner while McNamara was eating. This was after the speech was given; I vaguely recall watching the speech on his television set.

Q. Let me ask right here, who was worrying about the troop call-ups and so forth? Did you get at all involved in that?

A. No. That was what I was doing first and got called off of it. This was left almost exclusively to other people. It must have been done almost entirely through the military channels.

Q. McNamara was running to the Joint Chiefs and vice versa?

A. I have a recollection of the Reserve problems being dealt with by the various Secretaries of the Services and the military and the Joint Chiefs. But I was working completely on the proclamation. The speech was given at seven o'clock Monday night. Tuesday was the final day before the proclamation was issued. I have here what we thought would be the final draft of the proclamation. We took it over at roughly five o'clock in the afternoon to talk it over with Mac Bundy and his group before we gave it to the President. He'd called the press for seven o'clock. We worked the draft over and then we took it up to the President. As I recall, the people present at that meeting at six o'clock on Tuesday evening were the President, Secretary Rusk, Secretary McNamara, Gilpatric, General Taylor, George Ball, Mac Bundy, Abe Chayes, and Robert Kennedy.

I was more or less the technical spokesman because I had handled the drafting. I did have some qualms as far as presentation was concerned, in that the first item of prohibited materiel that we had in this proclamation was patrol craft, motor torpedo boats and other craft with armaments. I thought that this was a very weak way to start and the

President picked it up immediately. He said, "I'm not going to start my list out with PT boats. What I'm interested in is surface-to-surface missiles." So he deleted the first two lines.

Q. In his own hand, did he draw through it, or --?

A. I was taking notes on what he was saying. I don't have his copy here. I have mine which, by the way, is torn down the middle because I threw it away after it had been retyped. Then I thought that maybe two years later somebody would want to look at it. So I marked out the first three lines of the list and edited the next page. We had a double negative toward the end -- something about any vessel or craft which is believed to be enroute to Cuba and may be carrying prohibited materiel or may itself constitute such materiel shall, whenever possible, be directed to proceed to another destination of its own choice and shall not be taken into custody unless it fails. And the President said, "Wouldn't it be better to say, it shall be taken into custody if it fails?" So we made that minor change. He ended up making a change on three out of four pages. This was roughly at six-thirty and he had to sign it at seven. So this took us down to Mac Bundy's office, and his two girls -- who were excellent -- started typing these pages. It was a four page document and they finished it in fifteen minutes with fifteen minutes to spare. I started to walk it up to the President's office and noticed that page two repeated two words that appeared at the bottom of page one. Rapidly, I marked the two words out on the copy so if the President had to sign something at seven, he'd have something to sign. But then I had someone, I think it was Ben Forman, rush back down with that page and it was retyped. It was such a hurry-up job that it ended up a four page document in which pages two and three were not up to the standard that the girls liked. But nevertheless we had pages one, two, three and four ready for the President to sign at seven o'clock. Maybe two minutes to seven, we walked in. I gave it to the President. The President talked a little more with the people at his meeting, Secretary Rusk and others, then went into his oval office and sat down. He took a very long time to write his name because the camera men were taking pictures. I believe that he just used one pen. There was a large crowd there at the time. He finished signing and the press dispersed. Three or four minutes later two substitute pages two and three arrived from downstairs and they were clean copy. He had signed page four. I went into his office and, with the permission of his immediate staff, took out the messy pages two and three and inserted the clean pages which were identical in words. The two pages that you can see here are the two pages that were actually on his desk when he signed it. The two pages that are now in the middle sandwiched between pages one and four are cleaned up versions that appear in the Archives of the United States.

That was Tuesday night. The commencement of the quarantine was ten o'clock the next morning on Wednesday, the 24th. I recall having breakfast with McNamara that day because I remember the concept that he had of what the quarantine was supposed to be doing. And I think he thought this was

the President's view. You see, the debate had been resolved in favor of the quarantine as contrasted with an immediate strike to remove the weapons. If you project yourself ahead a little, I think the intelligence says that these weapons were, in fact, operational on Saturday, before the promise to remove them was given on Sunday. So what was the purpose of what we were doing? You couldn't get missiles out by way of a quarantine. All you can do is prevent things from going in. Mr. McNamara's view on this was that this was a signal -- a very meaningful signal -- a commitment and an ascending signal, the point being that you could go only so far with a quarantine. You could stop ships; you could add POL which would stop tankers; you could stop submarines. You could go about that far and you had gone the limit. Then it becomes apparent to the enemy that you're going to have to shift to another remedy. And that's exactly the message that was intended -- that you would milk the quarantine for all it had, and then you would have to do something else.

Q. These words "as a first step" appear in the President's speech?

A. I don't recall. But in order to give this crescendo message, Secretary McNamara in effect said, "This is what I want." He said, "What we want to do is first have a friendly ship, a Swedish or British ship, then we want an Iron Curtain but not a Soviet ship, and then we want a Soviet ship, and then maybe we might have a Soviet submarine." So you'd get closer and closer to the "eyeball to eyeball" stage, as it was said later. I was a little amused at this and I asked the Secretary if he'd ever spent much time at sea, because the chances of finding what you're looking for just aren't all that great. But he nevertheless gave out these orders. As I recall, they spent all day the first day looking for a ship that would meet the definition. Then, during the first day -- Wednesday the 24th -- there was a Greek ship, the SIRIUS, that was allowed to go through, and on the 25th, the tanker BUCHAREST was allowed to go through. A UK ship was allowed through on that day, too. So we hadn't stopped anything yet. It wasn't until the 26th that we boarded a Lebanese ship which we thought was going to start our crescendo, and it turned out the Lebanese ship was chartered to the Soviet Union, which was a peculiar twist. The ship was boarded by unarmed Americans who inspected the ship and then allowed it to go ahead. This is the way the scenario went.

This carries us through Friday, the 26th. Saturday was a very important day. There were negotiations going on in the UN in New York at this time. It was when Khrushchev told U Thant that he had instructed his shipmasters to stay outside the interception area that it occurred to us we had never communicated a boundary for our quarantine. Deputy Secretary Gilpatric telephoned me from the White House around noon on Saturday, the 27th. He told me to prepare immediately something to set the area's limits five hundred miles from Cuba. I asked, "From where in Cuba?" And he said, "You work it out." McNamara was then on the phone from the White House laying on another task, I've forgotten what. They wanted me to shoot the solution, in papers ready to go, over to the White House as soon as I could get them ready. They gave me less than an hour, in effect, to produce the circles -- and it turned out to be circles -- a way of communicating five hundred miles from Cuba.

I called in Admiral Arnie Schade, Adam Yarmolinsky and someone else. We considered bounds by latitude and longitude. That would not work because it might sound too complicated. We considered a line two hundred or three hundred miles off the line of the Bahamas. This would not work because some shipping comes up from the south through that area. One circle would not do it, so we hit on two circles -- one centered in Havana, the other at the easternmost tip of Cuba, which I then learned was Cape Maisi. I think it was Arnie Schade's idea to have the two circles. I phoned McNamara at the White House to see if there was still time to catch him there. There wasn't. I was in his office when he returned to the Pentagon. He read my special warning -- that we used to communicate this to ships at sea -- and my draft message to be transmitted to U Thant by Stevenson. We sent it to Stevenson to give to U Thant, who would give it to Zorin (or Kuznetsov), the Soviet representative. McNamara looked at the map we had prepared and off it went. U Thant received the message and showed it to the Soviet representatives. They read it carefully and returned it saying they refused to accept it.

This was on Saturday. Saturday was a crucial day. I remember going home that night. The two nights prior I'd been in the Pentagon all night, and my wife commented that things must have improved. I told her that that was not the case; that war, if it was going to start, was in the next two days, and that I just needed some rest in order to be ready.

As you will recall, the U-2 was shot down that Saturday morning, the 27th, around ten or eleven o'clock. The Cubans had fired at two of our low-level planes. A Russian ship called the GROSNIY was proceeding and had not stopped. We had moved an enormous amount of forces into Florida. With this momentum, I didn't know whether history and everything else dictated that when you had gone this far -- whether things could be stopped, and I had this very strange feeling. That night, I recall taking a look at our basement to see what we had down there in the way of --

Q. Canned goods?

A. Canned goods, bottled water, and the like. The next day, Sunday, the 28th, I was in early working on a submarine plan. We had to keep our plans for what we were going to do next ahead of where we were at any given time. For example, next we might want to add POL -- to make petroleum goods and fuel for offensive missiles or offensive aircraft a prohibited item. This would knock out the tankers. That one was in the works. We did issue a statement that the quarantine was construed to include fuel for offensive missiles. I don't recall whether it also included fuel for aircraft. But this took care of tankers.

The next thing we were working on was one which construed the proclamation to prohibit submarines in the area. I ought to mention here the procedure we had to go through on each of these. We had to get approval of the Secretary of Defense, and, within Government, we had it set up so that if Anderson of the Navy approved and Abe Chayes of the State Depart-

ment and Nick Katzenbach of Justice, this was enough internal clearance. Then McNamara would get the approval of the White House on any one of these. What I'm talking about are interpretations of the proclamation. The proclamation had in it an authority to the Secretary of Defense to issue regulations, but we decided not to use that technique, but rather to interpret the proclamation. The Secretary was to get the approval of the White House and then we'd prepare a final copy which would be initialed by the Secretary and the Chief of Naval Operations. Then we had to do several things. First, we had to dispatch this to the Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Command, so he'd know how to behave. Then we had to get messages to the USSR so that they would know what we were trying to do. Then we had to warn all ships at sea through the technique known as "notice to mariners." Then the State Department has a mailing list that goes all over the world, and then we had to inform the press. So all of these steps had to be taken. The question of whether it was published in the Federal Register would depend on whether we'd decided to do it by way of a regulation or not. The first interpretation was Special Warning Number 30: The President proclaimed the Quarantine. He signed a piece of paper, but how do you let people know? So we went through the procedure I just mentioned on proclaiming the Quarantine.

The next one was one in which he set out a procedure for surfacing unidentified submarines. This wasn't a case of treating them as hostile; it was merely a case of surfacing them. We had small harmless depth charges we would drop as a message. That means, "Come up, Buster, or you're in trouble." The Soviet submarines did surface.

Q. I know they did. But did they come up because they needed air, or because --?

A. They came up because they needed air, frankly -- not because of this technique. The next thing that went out said the proclamation covers missile propellants and chemical compounds capable of being used to power missiles.

Q. These were instructions to the fleet?

A. Instructions to everyone. You send it out to the fleet, you send it to Moscow, you send it to all ships at sea, you put it on the press wires, you use every technique to get this communicated. But back to Sunday, the 28th -- I was in the building working on a similar package of papers to take care of the case where you treat any submarine in the five hundred mile double circle as hostile. I took it in to show to Mr. McNamara around 9:00 a.m. While I was in talking to him the telephone rang. I think it was Nils Leonartson [of the Defense Department Public Affairs office], who reported something to the Secretary. The Secretary turned to me and said, "Nils says that there's something on the wire to the effect that the Russians are agreeable to dismantling the missiles and removing them from Cuba." There was a pause in our conversation, and then we said, "Well, back to the job." And so we talked some more about

the next step in the quarantine, and I went back to my office. According to other information, this news didn't come out until ten or eleven o'clock in the morning. My recollection is nine o'clock, but it was a little later.

Q. The press got it before we did.

A. In any event, I went back to my office and worked some more on my submarine package. I finished it and went back toward McNamara's office. I stopped on the way to show it to Gilpatric, but his door was locked. I then went down to McNamara's office and went in and showed it to him. Earlier, just before leaving my office, I had a telephone call from Henry Brandon asking about tennis tomorrow, Henry being a British correspondent in town. I told him he must be goofy, that there was a war going on. He said Mac Bundy and Walt Rostow were going to play tennis tomorrow morning, and I said, "Well, I'm sorry." I went in to McNamara, showed him the package and said, "What do you want to be done now?" He said, "Take the afternoon off." He said Gilpatric had gone down to the farm. I went back to my office, and I called up Henry Brandon, and we played tennis the next morning.

There was almost a month of semi-crisis trying to get inspection arrangements worked out, trying to get the IL28s out, and so forth. I'd had much indirect exposure to the President through his direction of his speech and his direction with respect to the proclamation, but the only direct exposure was his ruling on the proclamation itself, and, in effect, his decision to use this squeeze technique in Cuba.

Q. You mentioned before the correspondence

A. I was not privy to that. It had to do with a critical part of the arrangement. As you recall, despite some distortions of the story, the "deal" that was made in Cuba was made as a consequence of exchange of correspondence. There were two strange letters that came in on Friday. There was a letter which I think must have been written by Khrushchev himself, with his own hand, which was somewhat inconsistent with the letters that came in on Saturday morning, the 27th, in which the Soviets in effect were willing to trade the missiles in Cuba for the missiles in Turkey. This exchange, the way we saw it, was that we were willing to do two things if they would do two things. We would kill the blockade, or the quarantine, and we'd promise not to invade the island, if they would remove the offensive weapons and would permit effective inspection. The way it came out was that when Mikoyan came over to talk to Castro, he was unable to get the inspection. We, therefore, never made a promise not to invade. And this was where a number of people say we promised not to invade. We did not, because we didn't have the requisite assurances that we asked for. But, we did call off the quarantine, and they did take out the missiles and IL28s. This is what took so long to work out, because we were unwilling to call off the quarantine until we got the offensive missiles out. It was on the 20th of November, as I recall, that we called off the quarantine.

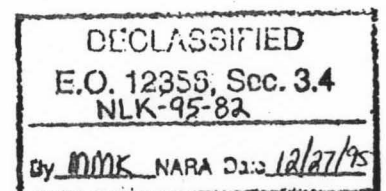
End of Tape One.

This is Tape 2 of an interview for the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library with John T. McNaughton, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. Larry McQuade is the interviewer. The date is 14 November 1964.

A. There were several points, Larry, that you raised while we were changing tapes. First, you asked about the legality of the quarantine and the case that we made to support it. My approach to this is that it's analogous to many things in private law where a certain amount of self-help is justified under certain circumstances. I would have put the legality argument on reasons of self-defense. The State Department's Abe Chayes, who articulated the Government position, put it on the Article in the UN Charter which permits regional arrangements and permits behavior consistent with actions taken by regional arrangements such as the American States; therefore, the action taken by the Organ of Consultation was critical to his argument. What casts doubt on this in my mind is that we were indeed prepared to go on with or without that legal base. This doesn't mean that something becomes illegal because you would have done it illegally. It does mean that the legal base was very important to us, but it would not have made the difference. I did not play a part in establishing the argument afterwards. I had trouble at the time, however, in getting forward movement in the work, because every new lawyer that came in would spend 15 or 20 minutes arguing the illegality of what we were doing. I would usually allot him that much time, but would say that time was of the essence to us and we couldn't afford to have that sort of conversation going on, because this action was going to be taken. It was our job to figure out the way to do it right, and to do it within the norms as much as possible.

The second point you raised had to do with the legality of our overflights. This again is one of the cases where necessity justifies what you're doing, because we hoped to get effective on-the-ground inspection. During the gruesome month following the standdown on the missiles, we offered to have all sorts of arrangements with UN overflights or UN ground inspection, but none of it worked out. Cuba would not let it happen. So the resort to continued overflights was done out of necessity. It was about the only way to terminate the crisis, and therefore it was legal in a sense because of the extraordinary circumstances. It's like having a person under restraint or under arrest because of his behavior. You can't turn him loose because you can't trust him.

The third point you asked about was the civilian-military relations in the Pentagon during the crisis. There was a strain at various points. To give one example, Yarmolinsky and I were working as the staff for McNamara and Gilpatric. This meant that it was very important for us to



see that the decisions made by the President were gotten out to the destroyer or the cruiser or the aircraft carrier in exactly the form that the President decided. If the President decides something, someone has to write it up. McNamara comes back after seeing the President and tells me to write up something, which is McNamara's version of what the President has decided. Usually the President doesn't focus on all the subparagraphs in his decisions. You have to fill in the flesh. McNamara, after consultation with the Joint Chiefs, will put this into words to go to the Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic. He then sends it down to the Second Fleet, and the Second Fleet sends it out to the destroyer. The chances that those instructions will reach the destroyer in a form which is not exactly what the President said are quite substantial. Take one example. The first day the quarantine was adopted, I, in my function of quadruple checker, checked the instructions that had been sent down to CINCLANT and found that they had left out a line. The words "surface-to-surface missiles" were followed by more language and then it said, "land-based surface-to-surface missiles." All the wording between the two statements, "surface-to-surface missiles," was dropped. It's a normal typographical mistake, but it meant that what they'd sent out was a quarantine which did not prevent the import of surface-to-surface land-based missiles, which was the very thing we were concerned about. This is just small potatoes, but this sort of thing -- the fact that we were reading over their shoulders -- and the fact that the President was calling these shots from the White House, ship by ship

I spent all of one night -- the night of the 26th -- when McNamara came in and said, "I want to know where every ship in the Atlantic is, if it's anywhere near or going to Cuba, what its nationality is, what its cargo is, when it can be expected to be where." We spent all that night trying to get the data pulled together.

Q. Was the Navy confused over whether this was a political instead of a military operation?

A. I don't think so. It was just one of the growing pains of the world today in which communications are so fast and in which the risks, if you escalate, are so great that (a) it's possible to run these things to some extent by remote control, and (b) it's absolutely essential that the political aspect govern. It was impossible to give an instruction that said in effect, "Don't let any ships come through. Use your own judgment as to whether to board the vessel and what force to use." It was impossible under the circumstances. This means that the military man in the area is left very little discretion, and this is not a complimentary position to be in. This did cause some trouble and is not going to be uncommon in the future. The new military generation is becoming more expert at political problems because military action is more and more political action.

I believe you asked about the Jupiters, Larry. I mentioned the letter that arrived on Saturday, October 27th, from Khrushchev to the President which talked in terms of trading off the missiles in Cuba for the Jupiters in Turkey. So far as I know there was no deal whatsoever to get the Jupiters out of Turkey. On the other hand, in early 1963, I was given the responsibility of getting the Jupiters out of Turkey. I do recall that one of the first things we addressed during the Cuban crisis, and I'm sure the President was very concerned about this, was what Russia would do to save face under these circumstances. It looked very likely that there'd be one of two places where Russia would act. One was Berlin, the other was Turkey. Turkey was more attractive in a sense because it looked as if it were a mirror image of Cuba. Those Jupiter missiles were not protected and their survivability was very low, with three of them close to each other sitting above the ground. They would be prime targets and would have to be hit very fast. They were like lightning rods. So, there was a good deal of concern that if war came very close the Soviet Union would feel obliged to hit the missiles. This was not as a trade-off, particularly. There are two concepts here. One is the idea that Turkey looks like Cuba, therefore they'd do something to Turkey if we do something to Cuba. The other is that if war gets ready to happen then these vulnerable missiles have to be taken out fast. We just didn't want to have something like that around.

Q. Cuba focused attention and once you looked at the problem you saw that you didn't want to have this danger continue?

A. That's right. And this could have been anywhere in the world. These missiles are good only if they shoot quick and therefore they are hair-trigger type weapons, and we just didn't want that. So I was given the job of substituting Polaris submarines in the Mediterranean for these missiles. So I don't think there was any connection between Cuba and Turkey in the deal.

Now, the point you raised about Panama. The only relevance of Panama here was that we did not want the Quarantine to taint the Panama Canal and the rights to go through the Canal, and therefore when you look at the map, the five hundred mile circles that were drawn were carefully drawn so as not to include the Panama Canal. They permitted access to it.

Q. I'd be interested to know of the willingness of the political decision-makers to bend their course of action in order to come within an acceptable legal framework.

A. Taking the President's approach at that time, I think that there is a great effort to put yourself on a sound juridical base. The juridical base in international law is analogous to labor law or politics in domestic thinking. It has a certain wildness, but it has an intuitive right and wrongness. In this case the President had stated in September that he would sit still for surface-to-air missiles which are purely

defensive. He'd made his statements about the MIGs, I believe -- that he'd sit still for that. He'd even addressed the question of certain types of missiles to be used against shipping from the coast of Cuba. He'd more or less drawn the line. This has to do with how much he was willing to take. Having put everyone on warning, it acquired a character which is different from just an argument of whether Castro has a right to put anything he wants on his own real estate. I wonder if the analogy is in the law of nuisance; it's really more serious than that. He's not allowed to have that sort of thing. It's almost like an imposed zoning ordinance. The idea is that it does appeal to one's sense of what's right. There's a time question here, too. Cuba might have become Communist, as it did, and evolved into a bastion for Russia, over 20 years without our being able to notice it or react to it. But to do this so dramatically, at a time right after the President had put his reputation on it, at a time after Gromyko had told him it wasn't so, at a time when there was so much pressure to do something about Cuba anyway, with the difficulties in Latin America, and an election on the way with politicians making wild claims on both sides -- this was something you could not expect the President to take.

Q. This is one last question which I have on Cuba. I'd be interested in how you assess the difference in the attitude of the leaders in Defense and the State Department in the way they attack problems afterwards as against before Cuba? About the same? Or is there some difference?

A. Now, two years later, we're facing problems elsewhere in the world including the Congo, Cyprus, and Southeast Asia in both South Vietnam and Laos. But every time something like this happens you learn from it. One thing that happens is that your threshold for excitement is changed. You don't get flustered by the little things after something like this has happened. One of the most interesting things about this experience was the strange character of the consensus that was produced and how it was produced. I was not in on this group in which the consensus was formed, but I've been in on groups since in which consensus of this type is produced. You have people with different points of view who get in a room and hammer their heads together. There are two things that happen when this occurs. One is that all the facts and opinions and true beliefs, especially in executive sessions, are put on the table. This tends, as a substantive matter, to change peoples' minds. The second thing that begins to happen is that ideas that are way out in left field get eliminated. People begin to realize that nobody is going along with that and they get shaved off. So you're left with a large center of points of view. It may be two centers, as in the case of Cuba. One ended up being the quarantine and the other being a strike of a certain kind. You keep hammering and there becomes a tacit understanding that you're going to come out with one decision, and that everybody is going to be

behind that one decision -- because you've certainly had your hearing. You've had it to the point where you're sick of the subject. Then you find the group singing in harmony even though they've been overruled.

You cannot do this by calling busy men into the room, laying a paper in front of them and having them read it and vote. This doesn't work. You've got to have them together for hours. It's the process of debating, arguing, and finally coming to a consensus which is partly substantive, and partly a gentleman's agreement if you've been overruled. And these two mix to some extent, because if you ask the person, very frequently what has happened to him is that he has decided to get on board. He just decides to do it and he does. This is a very general statement, but this happens now in critical matters. The first thing you do after you've done your staff work is to get the decision makers -- the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the White House representative -- the three critical people -- and maybe the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs -- to get their heads together and go through this process, and a course of action emerges.

Q. Did Cuba make for a better, more sophisticated government thereafter?

A. It certainly did.

Q. Did it make for a change in the hierarchy among the people who make the decisions?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Let's talk for a minute about the multilateral force.

A. All right, Larry, let's shift to the MLF. Let me explain first that I came into this fairly late because the MLF was proposed, I believe, by Christian Herter before President Kennedy was elected. It became an aspect of the Nassau meetings in December, 1962. There were about four or five things that came out of the Nassau meetings. I inherited all of them because Paul Nitze, who accompanied the President, had a vacation coming and he went to Aspen, Colorado, to ski. I inherited the implementation as General Counsel, for no logical reason. The first action that was laid on had to do with selling missiles to the British for their Polaris submarines; the second was to offer a similar deal to the French. That fell through within a month because of General de Gaulle. The third action had to do with creating an inter-allied nuclear force using existing nuclear capabilities. I had the range on this until the middle of 1963, at which point Paul Nitze took it over again and saw it through the Ottawa arrangements that were worked out. The fourth thing that came from the Nassau meetings was the MLF.

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There was a little difference of opinion between us and the British as to just what was decided there with respect to the multilateral force, but we construed Nassau to mean that the British agreed to go along with us on a mixed-manned or a multilateral force. I might say two things here. The first is that from the conversation everyone assumed that this would be a submarine fleet. The second thing was a remark made by the President at one of the meetings at the White House on the multilateral force during February, March and April, 1963. The President was walking out of the room after a meeting in the Cabinet Room. He turned to Mac Bundy who was standing next to him near the door and said, "If Macmillan and I had known what we were signing we might not have signed it." This was said in jest.

But with respect to the MLF, it was assumed it would be submarines -- until we got back here and found such great resistance to the use of submarines. There are many reasons why surface ships are good for the Europeans. You can mix-man them a lot easier, they are less expensive, you can build them in Europe, etc. But the dominant thing as far as our point was concerned was that there was great objection in Congress and in the Navy to a number of European countries having access to the secrets involved in these submarines. The secrets may have to do with atomic propulsion or with the engineering of the subs or with their practices for navigation, all of which go toward the safety of the remainder of our fleet. I'm the one that had to do the White Papers that made the shift to the surface fleet for the MLF. The second point was that after we'd made the shift, the Germans were not too happy with the shift in the beginning. The Germans were also concerned about the question of control -- who could push the button? President Kennedy had made it absolutely clear that he was going to have a veto -- you could call it what you want, but he was going to have a veto -- over the firing of this force.

Q. Were you at that session?

A. Yes, at least three, and it came up every time -- that he was not about to talk in terms of giving up the U.S. veto. At the request of Minister von Hassel, Minister of Defense for the German Government, Admiral Ricketts, who was then Vice Chief of Naval Operations, and I went over to talk to them on two subjects. One was the survivability of the surface fleet -- whether it could survive an attempt by the Russians to knock it out. The second point had to do with the question of veto and whether we would be willing to relinquish the veto.

On the point of survivability, the Germans wanted an open-end arrangement so that they could shift to submarines at some point. Admiral Ricketts and I met with the President in his office on April 10, 1963. He gave us our instructions, which were that we were going to have a veto, but in the future we'd look at this again; second, with respect to submarines, that we were going to have surface ships, but in the future we'd

look at this again. These were our two instructions. There were no anecdotes associated with that point but the anecdotes that I do recall had to do with two things.

One was with respect to the transfer of U.S. nuclear weapons to this multilateral force, the multilateral force being in a sense a corporation owned by a bunch of countries. It's one thing to say that we have a veto because the board of directors can't overrule us; it's quite another thing to be sure that the corporation down the line is going to behave completely consistent with our veto. There is also a question that if we have our nuclear weapons in these ships, it's conceivable that someone could compromise the design information. I saw this happen twice: after the decision had been taken that despite these problems we would in effect sell the warheads to this corporation, reserving to ourselves the right to be the sole repairman so that we would have the only access to the design, and reserving to ourselves the veto over the firing, the President would come to a meeting on the MLF and would say something like, "We shouldn't worry about this because of course we'll still own the warheads," and someone would squirm in his chair and say, "Mr. President, the decision you took three weeks ago was that we would sell the warheads to the corporation." There would be a pause while he'd think how he could have made such a decision, then they'd go through the argumentation of how you could protect design information, how you could avoid the unauthorized firing by way of international custodial units, and maybe even protective devices, PALS and the like. This happened twice. On each occasion he thought that we were still going to own the warheads.

Q. That's the problem. The incidence of ownership. Only some of them passed, right?

A. That's right. He just couldn't conceive of himself as letting these nuclear weapons go to this force. The second point is the question in his own mind as to what the purpose was. He would say, "What are we trying to do?" He says, "If I were a German, I wouldn't be interested in this. What are you giving me that I haven't already got?" He says, "You're giving me something that I can't fire without the Americans firing it with me. I've already got an American force backing me up." Then he would say, "What is the purpose?" And someone would say to him, "The purpose is to give us a vehicle for bringing Europe together. Also, it's a way of sublimating the German urge for nuclear weapons." He says, "As far as that's concerned, why don't we just tell them they can't have them?" He was not really taken by the multilateral force, although I've heard it said that at some later point he actually wrote himself some of the paragraphs to either Adenauer or Erhard making a solid pitch for the MLF. But this was a hot and cold item for him.

Q. Here I would like to pin down, if possible, the impression that Henry Owen and Company were very enthusiastic for this, but the instructions from the President were that if the Europeans wanted it, then he was prepared to do it. And that the enthusiasts left out that "willing to be receptive" attitude.

A. I've been as guilty of this as anyone else. It's true that the President, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense always say that this is something that we're willing to do if the Europeans want it. But the fact is, at least now, that there's a positive interest in the U.S. in something to act as a vehicle for allied unity and this is a candidate for that. But it is true that the President would say, "If they want it, I'm willing to do it." Then you'd find people on the American team in effect peddling it, though they'd deny this. So your implication is true.

Q. Are there any other points you want to make?

A. I don't recall anything else on either of these two subjects.

Q. This is the end of the second half of the interview with John McNaughton in the Pentagon.

