

Roswell L. Gilpatric Oral History Interview – JFK#2, 5/27/1970
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Biographical Note

Roswell L. Gilpatric (1906-1996) was the Deputy Secretary of Defense from 1961 to 1964. This interview focuses on counterinsurgency measures in Vietnam and the Cuban Missile Crisis, among other topics.

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Roswell L. Gilpatric
Roswell L. Gilpatric

July 5, 1972
Date

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Roswell L. Gilpatric– JFK #2

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Second Oral History Interview

with

ROSWELL L. GILPATRIC

May 27, 1970
New York, New York

By Dennis J. O'Brien

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'BRIEN: Well, last time we left off with Vietnam, and I thought today would be a good place to begin with the role that you played in the development of the Counterinsurgency Group, counterinsurgency--CI Group it was called--and some of your reflections on that. First of all, when did you first become aware of the president's interest in this?

GILPATRIC: I think it was in the latter part of '61 that I began to notice the impatience on the part of the president and his brother with the lack of coordination between responses by Defense, CIA, AID, State to the problems that were evolving in Vietnam and as evidenced by his desire to set up this Counterinsurgency Group.

O'BRIEN: What was his major focus of interest in the counterinsurgency program? Was it a result of, perhaps, the development of the Cuban situation?

GILPATRIC: Well, he had been talking to people like Thompson, who had come through Washington at about that time for the first time in the Kennedy administration. He'd been down to visit marine encampments and to army training stations. He observed differences in training techniques and tactics. He read some piece in the marine publication that suggested to him that the army, at least, was not in step with what the marines were doing. And then he just found that in Defense and in AID and CIA we were following different tracks. And he wasn't satisfied that the way the army was going about having the major, dominant role was necessarily the right one.

O'BRIEN: In regard to General Lansdale, in our last interview you mentioned that Lansdale had taken it upon himself to talk to people about Vietnam. Was he talking about the general idea of counterinsurgency to people in the administration as well?

GILPATRIC: Not so much as the political aspect. Lansdale was fascinated by the political scene. That's one of the reasons that his activities and views raised the hackles in the State Department. And he didn't take the same degree of interest or concern in what his military colleagues were doing on the counterinsurgency training program and development of new techniques, equipment, weapons, and so forth for coping with guerrilla-type activities.

O'BRIEN: What is Secretary McNamara's reaction to the increased emphasis on questions of counterinsurgency?

GILPATRIC: Well, I think initially he, like myself--we were really agnostic in this area. We tended to take the lead from our direct military advisors, and they, on the other hand, weren't exactly forthcoming about laying any problems or matters in this area before the civilians. They felt this was within their province, and so we really got more stimulation from outside the Pentagon--principally from the White House--than we did from our own establishment, our own military organization.

O'BRIEN: At that time, as the Joint Chiefs were constituted, was there any one branch that picked it up before the others that you recall?

GILPATRIC: Well, the marines--certainly in terms of public relations--made the most noise, were most evident in their concern about this, and they were most insistent that they had more proficiency in this area than the army units. But the army soon made a countermove in the form of organizing a special unit, which was reflected in a special assistant to the Joint Chiefs in this area. And particularly after the president began to question the military, both directly or through McNamara and myself, there began to be a lot of activities. But the attitude, I think, of the president was that McNamara had plenty to do himself, and the president tended to talk to other people on this question rather than going to McNamara directly. I think the president sensed that this was not something that was McNamara's dish of tea. And so when this Counterinsurgency Group was set up, I was named as the Defense member along with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs--originally Lemnitzer and later Taylor--as well as the heads of the CIA, AID, and a representative, of course, from State

and the White House.

O'BRIEN: Do you see a person outside the Defense Department-- or persons, at this time--that seem to be more active in pushing the idea?

GILPATRIC: Yes. The attorney general, the president's brother, certainly took on himself the role of being the prime mover. He attended practically every meeting of this group. He had more to say. He did more prodding, and he did more in the way of critical analysis and obviously did a lot of homework in this area outside of just going to meetings. And I don't know just how this assignment came about, but it was almost a regular occurrence that after the meetings of the Group, which took place in the executive offices of the old State Department building, the attorney general would go across the street to the White House and report to his brother. So we were all--those of us who were on the group--were very conscious of the fact that this was an extremely high priority matter, due to the presence of the president's brother and this constant, direct reporting rather than through the normal, slow channels of communication.

O'BRIEN: I don't mean to get ahead, but the fact that Robert Kennedy was present during this and also during other--well, I'm thinking particularly in terms of the Cuban missile crisis--does this have any kind of an inhibiting effect on the rest of you that are in these meetings, the fact that there is that . . .

GILPATRIC: No, I think on the contrary. I think it had a very positive effect. For one thing, none of the principals ever missed meetings unless they were, you know, absolutely, physically out of the area; whereas many of interagency groups of this character were more often than not peopled by representatives of the principals, stand-ins, alternates. But we knew, members of the Group knew, that the attorney general was going to be there or there wouldn't be any meeting, and it tended to tone up everybody's performance. And we did a lot more in the way of personally preparing ourselves to be knowledgeable and being prepared to make decisions, rather than just relying on our staff for positions which we would put forward in a sort of a representative capacity, as is so often true of this kind of a task force mechanism.

O'BRIEN: Well, you mention in terms of the uniform services that the Marine Corps was most interested in counter-insurgency at this time. Does that continue after, I believe it's Commandant [Randolph McC.] Pate, goes out and General Shoup comes in as commandant? Is the interest as much?

GILPATRIC: Yes, because General Krulak, who was a marine officer, very early on--I don't recall the exact sequence of dates--but he became one of Max Taylor's principal assistants. And he brought to the deliberations of the CI Group, either through his own presence or through briefing General Taylor, all the input that the marines were capable of offering. General Shoup himself didn't attend these sessions, but he obviously was being wired in through Krulak.

O'BRIEN: How about the other Joint Chiefs? At this time, in the Air Force was [Thomas D.] White and then later General [Curtis E.] LeMay. Do they have an interest in this?

GILPATRIC: Only in a limited sort of a jurisdictional sense. But almost by definition, this kind of activity, counterinsurgency activity, ruled out massive air strikes, the use of sophisticated aircraft. The Air Force didn't have nearly as much interest in using World War II type of propeller-driven small planes. They were perfectly willing to leave that mission to others. So neither White nor LeMay had any--in fact, White wasn't there when this developed. LeMay never expressed any great interest. And the navy's role was also a more limited one. It was really the marines and the army who were the principal services.

O'BRIEN: Well, what's the response of men like Lemnitzer and Taylor to counterinsurgency?

GILPATRIC: Well, Lemnitzer had gone to NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] by the time that any real head of steam developed in this area. And Taylor was very much interested in it. He, from the beginning, really pressed the army on and didn't show any of the rigidity or resistance to new doctrines and new ideas that you often ran into with the classic graduate of Fort Sill or some other army career type. So it was fortunate that you had a man like Taylor as the top military man because he wasn't trying to, first of all, pull into the regular military line of command, this type of thing. He was perfectly willing to share with other agencies, and he was very open to new ideas, new innovation. And thirdly, he had the confidence of both the president and the attorney general, which had not been true prior to his advent.

O'BRIEN: Well, there's another committee that forms and sort of runs parallel, the so-called Mongoose Committee, as I understand, in regard to Cuba. Do you get any insight into the way that that one functions?

GILPATRIC: I don't recognize your characterization of it. The group that Mac Bundy chaired, which consisted of the under secretary of state--Alexis Johnson later-- and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the head of the CIA and myself, was principally concerned with what kinds of efforts could be undertaken, largely by the CIA, to undermine the Fidel Castro regime. And after the Bay of Pigs, every effort and activity by the agency was reviewed by this group and reported to the president. But that was a very limited kind of--maybe that's not the. . . .

O'BRIEN: I think it is. I think it is.

GILPATRIC: And occasionally, McNamara would come into those meetings because he never got off his conscience the Bay of Pigs. And whenever there was any major program under suggestion, I'd alert him, and he would come for meetings as well as the standing members of the group. And we got very detailed presentations by people like Desmond Des Fitzgerald on just exactly how many people and what mode of operation and what the risks were. And that group also took jurisdiction over the programs in other countries where CIA was putting in money or resources in support of at least a quasi-political objective. And that was run by, as I said, by Mac Bundy, and that was also an activity which was not delegated by the principals to subordinates. Either the principals were there, or we didn't have the meeting.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember some of the major countries outside of Cuba that they were monitoring at that point?

GILPATRIC: Italy, Brazil. There was a youth conference in Finland. Elections in countries like Guatemala. The Dominican Republic, which, of course, didn't reach its zenith until after I had left. But wherever there was the possibility of any major flak developing, any embarrassment to our government, this group had to review the program, and it had to be reported to the president with either a recommendation or--well, if it was turned down, it wouldn't get recorded, as a rule. But the ground rules were very clear as to what the agency could do, and it was much more limited after the Bay of Pigs, as a result of this discipline, than had been true before. You had a regular channel for proposal, review, and approval by higher authority.

O'BRIEN: What do you mean by ground rules? Were there some set principles that were applied?

GILPATRIC: Yes, that the director of Central Intelligence had, as I recall it, the right to spend up to some fixed

amount and to do certain prescribed types of activities that did not have to go through the group, everything else had to receive the approval of the group or of the president, following the group's review. And that was fixed in a memorandum, as I recall it, an NSC memorandum, that went to the principals of this group and were binding on the agency.

O'BRIEN: Well, early in 1961 there were some--it was done through the agency and through DOD--but there were some teams that were sent to Ecuador as well as the Central American countries to survey their ability to handle guerrilla problems and also the police and things of this sort. Now, was this done through CI, do you recall?

GILPATRIC: That was done through CI. And these groups, or representatives of them, would come back and report and be, of course, questioned. And this is a case where, again, the attorney general was very active in getting behind just the official, formal findings of the group, the actual report, to get to the individual reactions of the members, particularly where there was any division. And he was always alert to discovering where there'd been some compromise, some papering over of a difference between members of the group. And this question of training of police forces--not necessarily to counter subversion from outside the country, but from really revolutionary situations developing within the country--how far would it be appropriate for the United States to train and support, otherwise help, police type actions? Would it tend to suppress revolutionary efforts? Where do you draw the line.

O'BRIEN: Well, the big fear, I imagine, in everyone's mind is Castro, isn't it?

GILPATRIC: Yes. Extension of a Castro-type regime to the mainland countries in South America, the exporting of a Castro brand of revolution. And so there was, in effect, a split between what I would call the 54-12 group, the Mac Bundy group, and the CI group, with the former having jurisdiction over what was being done directly against Castro, and the other with what was being done to forestall Castro from infiltrating or having some impact on other countries.

O'BRIEN: Well, after the Bay of Pigs and up to the missile crisis, just what is the agency allowed to do in terms of Cuba and operations within Cuba?

GILPATRIC: Well, the agency was allowed to put agents into Cuba for purposes of sabotage, for purposes of trying to disrupt the strengthening of the regime's control over areas that were not wholly committed to Castro.

And the size of these efforts varied from teams of four or five individuals put in to sometimes several times that. And how they were put in, by air or by sea or by submarine or ship, and what the ground rules were and how to avoid the compromising, these things were all spelled out in great detail with just exactly the cost in terms of men and money, as well as the political consequences of a mission aborting, which they did many times. But there was, aside from the specific objective of destroying some installation or breaking some line of communication--taking a power plant out or something like that--there was the more general objective of keeping the Castro regime so off stride and unsettled that it couldn't concentrate its activities in harmful ends elsewhere. And so the agency, partly because they believed in these objectives and, I think, partly because they wanted to prove they could conduct this kind of activity effectively, was very aggressive in coming forward with schemes, some of which were really quite fantastic and never got off the ground. Others made a lot of sense, some of which did prove to be effective and successful.

O'BRIEN: Is Alpha-66 included at that point in some of the authorized activities?

GILPATRIC: I guess. I think I recall that as being one of those coming up for this review process.

O'BRIEN: Well, just in looking over at the CIA, what's happened in the CIA at this point as a result of the Bay of Pigs? Have they lost the degree of influence that they've had? Is there a morale problem?

GILPATRIC: Well, the agency personnel went through a period of, I guess, agonizing self-doubts and re-appraisal, and they had to adjust to a new boss. After all, the switch from Allen Dulles to John McCone was a major change in life for them. But it didn't take them long to adjust and close ranks, and they found that they had in McCone a very able, articulate advocate and a very strong-minded person, who, once he took over, made it his object in life to be sure that the role of the agency was not diminished. He wasn't in there to tread it down or shrink it back in any way. So it wasn't long before the morale rose perceptibly. So much so that when McCone wasn't there, when [Marshall S.] Pat Carter was in charge, we had a lot of squabbling and interagency differences that McCone and I could sit down and work out, such as who flew the U-2's over Cuba or who had the major role in developing the new equipment for overhead reconnaissance, satellite-based reconnaissance. But when he wasn't around, and when I wasn't directly involved, there tended to be a lot of bickering, particularly between the Air Force and the agency.

I cite this as indicative of the fact that the Agency people didn't stay very long in this sort of daunted state they were in in the spring and early summer of 1961.

O'BRIEN: In terms of the countries that were monitored by CI, you mentioned some other countries that were reviewed by the 54-11 or 54-12 Committee, whatever it is. Are they basically the same countries? I have a number of countries here that, as I understand, were monitored by Counterinsurgency: Iran, Guatemala, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, the Camerons, Cambodia and Burma, but primarily Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand.

GILPATRIC: That's right.

O'BRIEN: Now, what went into the selection of those countries, in terms of monitoring?

GILPATRIC: Well, usually either State or the agency or, once in a while, AID or Defense would come up with a program which some desk officer in that particular area had homed in on. It wasn't a very scientific process of selection. It wasn't done on the basis of any indices like a computer selection. It really reflected what was happening in the world at a particular time and what particular area offices were interested in. And I often felt that it was too sporadic and hit or miss. No one was sitting back trying to spot in some objective, comprehensive sense, problem areas before they erupted. It was not, let's say, a very well organized effort as far as identifying these areas. They just came up, and there was a reaction. The State Department was in the process of developing, on a country by country basis, sort of a little NSM, which under the prior administration, particularly the Eisenhower administration, had been covered by some overall, comprehensive book of policies. Well, as these papers emerged, got into channels of communication, they tended to focus the attention of groups like the CI Group on that particular country or some development--in Burma, U Nu gets thrown out or something--that would cause us to take notice.

O'BRIEN: I understand Kenneth Young, who was the ambassador to Thailand, made an appearance before. . . .

GILPATRIC: Yes, he did.

O'BRIEN: Does that have any particular significance for the Committee?

GILPATRIC: No, it was a fairly frequent practice for returning ambassadors, either at the conclusion of their tour

or when they were on home leave, so to speak, to come before this group and give us a firsthand impression. And it was extremely useful to be able to cross-examine directly the head of the mission, rather than just rely on what we got through the different departments, filtering up through the lines of communication from the field. So there must have been at least a half a dozen ambassadors, that I can recall, that appeared at one time or another.

Of course, Thailand was becoming of increasing importance in relation to Vietnam and Laos, so I imagine there was a higher priority on what Young had to say than what our ambassador from Peru had to say. I remember he was up here, at one stage, before the group.

O'BRIEN: In all the people who did come before it over the long period of time were there any particular things that stand out to mind or memory as influential or disastrous?

GILPATRIC: Well, I think one thing that evolved from this business is that our impression, impressions of them as a group, including the attorney general-- of particular ambassadors, their personalities and their characteristics, was much more strongly etched than it would have been on the basis of, you know, what we learned through their dispatches and cables and reports from the department. And I'm sure the attorney general had a kind of a rating system for these people, and some rated well and some didn't. And I'm sure that got back to the president much more quickly and effectively than would be true just from a passing impression that he'd have gained in traveling through a country on an official mission.

O'BRIEN: It's been suggested at various times that Vietnam was kind of a lab for some of the ideas of counter-insurgency. From your experiences with the Counter-insurgency Group, is that reasonable? Is this true?

GILPATRIC: Yes, I think any area of intensified military or paramilitary, quasi-military activity in the Cold War period tends to attract all the students and practitioners of any phase of the art. And there is no question that once it became plain that President Kennedy was going to allow a certain growth in our presence in Indochina that a lot of the more adventurous, innovative, imaginative types began to home in on that. We began to get requests from this area and that area to send out a group and to get funds. And a lot of it was done without any high level approval. I mean the different departments and agencies that had the funds and the

people would just send things out. So it has been accurately characterized as a sort of a proving ground for both ideas, tactics, and equipment.

O'BRIEN: Are you aware of any resistance in those--well, let's say, '61, '62 and around in '63, to what counterinsurgency stands for, the group, the idea, the concept, in either the department or in the uniformed services or outside, from the Hill, places like that?

GILPATRIC: Well, up until the time I left, the field was large enough and the numbers of people involved were small enough so that there weren't any head-on collisions, nor was there any one group or agency so heavily entrenched in the field as to resist the supposed encroachment by others. As I mentioned last time, there was a developing issue between the agency and the army over who should be training the Montagnards and the Home Guard and other military or paramilitary groups in Vietnam. But that came only after the army had sufficient people out there to take it on. Initially, the agency, I guess, had the largest staff of any of the U. S. element. I've never seen the exact figures, but they carried more clout than anybody else did, certainly, through the end of '61. I've forgotten when Richardson came back. There was an issue, of course, over Richardson that developed, but that was not until after Lodge went out.

O'BRIEN: Well, as you recall in the functioning of the committee--this is sort of a historiographical question, I guess--were records kept by the committee? Was there a separate. . . .

GILPATRIC: Well, not in any sense of formal minutes, but there was a record of actions taken by the committee, and there was a definite follow-up, reporting back, procedure. But we didn't go in for any NSC paperwork kind of operation. The way the committee acted was that when they'd heard a particular problem or something had gone wrong or something was needed, one member of the committee would undertake for his department to take responsibility for action. And then he had to report back. But we tried to keep the paperwork at a minimum so we wouldn't spend all our time just reading material.

O'BRIEN: So no permanent staff really develops at all.

GILPATRIC: No. Each principal had a staff assistant who would, before the meeting, check out on what was going to come up. And there was an agenda, but there was no NSC-type staff at all. I don't recall how--only one or two people. We had an office where we met. But it was

a very minimum staff.

O'BRIEN: Well, was Lansdale your assistant for this problem?

GILPATRIC: No. As I say, by '62 he had pretty much gotten out of being my staff assistant and was doing various jobs for the Air Force. And his role had been diminished somewhat because he was no longer sort of a unique property in this area. Because of the controversial aspect of his work, his role was more limited. So I had a military assistant, someone who I got from the Joint Staff, who worked with me, and I didn't use Lansdale any longer.

O'BRIEN: Who was that, if I may ask? Do you recall? Oh, we can. . . . No problem, we can find it.

GILPATRIC: I think it was Ed Black, Colonel Ed Black, now General Black. He was very active in this area. He happened to be my military assistant, but he'd spent an awful lot of time out there and was very knowing and very imaginative. But what I tried to do was to use on a particular problem the military who were active in that area rather than simply have one person. So I just used my own. I had three assistants, Air Force, navy, and army and I just put them on a particular problem if that involved their particular department. So largely it was on the army, and that's why Colonel Black was so active.

O'BRIEN: Well, Latin America has a kind of special importance, and I don't know whether it's during the Kennedy administration or whether it develops later, but as I understand it, there are teams which are developed to assist nations' police forces and armies in developing things in riot control and all. Is this in the workings during the Kennedy administration, or does it come about afterwards?

GILPATRIC: Yes, particularly after the Southern Command Southern Area Command was set up there in Panama. McNamara and I went down a couple of times. And the name of the general that was the first commander of this joint command--he did a great deal to bring home to us what was needed. He was very active in coming back to Washington and insisting on talking to the tops of--both on the military and the civilian side. He appeared before this CI Group a number of times because he had an academy down there, a school for training the effectives of these various countries, put them through. . . . And that was a joint operation. As a matter of fact, I think the funding was actually done under an AID program, so AID was in the act as well as the military and, of course, the State Department. And that stumbled around for

a while trying to get the army to give up facilities down there. And that was one of the cases where this Group, I think, was very useful because instead of having this kind of a thing kick around for months, back and forth, we just made a decision overnight. We were going to take a certain building and certain spaces from the army, and that was it. We'd get this academy going.

But my own connection with it came largely through the fact that I went down twice with McNamara. And we had this general who was of rather broad gauge: he sensed all the psychological, political, and other than military aspects of the thing and really got around Latin America much more than any other one man had done. Previously, you'd had your military attaches in Brazil and Argentina, and usually they were pretty much kept characters by the particular services. I mean, the Brazilian Air Force had an advocate in the form of our Air Force attache. And the navy go for what they wanted, whether it was another destroyer or some more aircraft. Through this Southern Command we began to pull the whole thing together and get some priorities instead of having it done on sort of a country by country basis and just between two military establishments.

O'BRIEN: Well, when the teams started going in, what were some of the countries they went into, do you recall, during the Kennedy administration?

GILPATRIC: I remember Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil particularly. And there may have been others, but those are the ones that stand out in my mind.

O'BRIEN: There was also, as I understand it, a Special Forces team sent into Saudi Arabia during the Yemen crisis in what they called hard service. Was this in any way related to that or to the CI Group at all?

GILPATRIC: When does your . . . When do you mean?

O'BRIEN: It would be in '63; late '62 and early '63.

GILPATRIC: Yes, I'm sure that would have. I'm sure that came. I don't recall the details on it.

O'BRIEN: Well, I think we can, perhaps, pass on to some things on Cuba. Last time you mentioned that you really came into the Bay of Pigs, or at least the details of the Bay of Pigs, at a very late stage. Do you happen to recall about when you first became aware of the Bay of Pigs or the Operation Zapata?

GILPATRIC: Well, I only could do it by sort of relating back. I would say three or four weeks before the event McNamara asked me to attend some of the presentations, appreciations really, by the military on the CIA planning. And we would get briefed on what the military's judgments were as to what the CIA was doing. It was a very limited kind of view of the thing because at that stage it would either be what was happening at a particular training base or whether they had enough of the right kind of particular equipment, whether it was aircraft or weapons or landing craft or so forth. And that was characteristic of my rather peripheral involvement in the thing. I didn't go to meetings, as I've said, in the White House or the State Department, and I never had an overview of the whole scheme. I just really went there because McNamara felt that somebody, besides himself, on the civilian side ought to be in on it.

It came to a head so quickly. As I say, this was all a matter of three or four weeks, so that there was a lot that happened before I was exposed to it. But my impression is that McNamara was rather lately introduced in it, too. He said he didn't know about it during the early months, January and February. My impression is it wasn't until March that we--he in particular and I to this lesser degree--had brought home to us that this operation was underway.

O'BRIEN: Do you have any idea when the president might have first learned about it?

GILPATRIC: No.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever have any insight into that?

GILPATRIC: I never. . . . I don't know.

O'BRIEN: Well, how was it explained to you, or how did you understand the nature of the plan when you first were introduced to it?

GILPATRIC: Well, it was a plan to unseat Castro by this combined operation. And my understanding was that this had been launched under the prior administration; it had had the approval of highest authorities during that time; and that Mr. Dulles was very confident, as was his deputy, Richard M., Jr. Dick Bissell, that the thing was properly set. Initially, the military didn't really question the viability of the thing. It was more from the standpoint of an interested bystander than a principal. It wasn't until, really, just the fortnight before the thing took off that people like Admiral Burke and General Lemnitzer became involved. [Interruption]

O'BRIEN: When are you first informed of the presence of the missiles in Cuba? [Interruption] Well, we left off, and you were discussing when and how you were first informed about the Cuban missile crisis.

GILPATRIC: It was evident to us at the very beginning that this was not an ambiguous signal; we were dealing with a very major, significant development, and the implications were evident from the start.

O'BRIEN: Do you recall some of the discussions that you had that evening with General Taylor and U. Alexis Johnson?

GILPATRIC: The only thing that stands out in my memory is our concern about the executive branch organizing itself and how to deal with this on a kind of a crash basis. And we felt then, although we weren't in direct communication with the White House on it, that there ought to be a small group immediately charged with doing nothing else but pursuing this particular matter. And I think Taylor was, if I recall it, emphasizing what he felt was the need for a military response. His thoughts ran in the line of, at that stage, taking out the weapons and being, really, a military operation. I didn't have any clear--I don't recall having any clear conclusions on that; I just felt it was obviously going to be a joint effort.

O'BRIEN: Did you talk to McNamara that night?

GILPATRIC: Yes. I called him when I got back to my quarters, but I don't recall that he saw the photographs until the next morning. When I came in around 7:30, he was already in, and he had [Joseph F.] Joe Carroll and his people up there with the pictures. And I joined them at that time, around 7:30.

O'BRIEN: What was his thinking at that point, or was he saying much?

GILPATRIC: He was very--I won't say shaken, but he was very grave and had that sort of taut look that I came to recognize when something came upon him that he just felt he couldn't, you know, handle, didn't have any immediate solution for. And we were still discussing the implications to be drawn from these pictures when the White House phone rang, and we had word to come over to the White House. If I recall, it was around 11 o'clock. And that's all we did that morning. I think Max Taylor came up, and we all went over together.

O'BRIEN: Did you talk to McGeorge Bundy at all that evening or early that morning?

GILPATRIC: No, I didn't. Joe Carroll told me that he was going to get to Mac Bundy or Carl--I guess Carl Kaysen was there then--in the course of the evening and that those who should be in the know would be told before morning. I didn't talk to Mac Bundy until we got to the White House. McNamara talked to him on the phone after he--well, he got the first word.

O'BRIEN: Was there any particular reason why the air reconnaissance was taken at the time that it was? Did you have any hints that these missiles might have been developed from . . .

GILPATRIC: Well, several months before that we'd had up before this 54-12 group the frequency of flights over Cuba and the patterns of the flights. And we'd had a lot of argument and debate. And we'd had, as now recorded, a lot of frustrated missions because of weather. We'd been getting needled through Senator [Kenneth B.] Keating and others in the press, particularly the Florida press, that a lot of things were going on that the government didn't seem to take notice of. So there was a great deal of sensitivity, indeed tension, about what these flights would develop, what these reconnaissance flights would develop. Then we'd had a jurisdictional argument between CIA and the Air Force which finally had to be resolved by Mac Bundy. McCone was away. Carter and I argued back and forth. What's-his-name [William B.] Coolidge was in on the act, too. Finally, Mac Bundy decided that the Air Force should conduct the flights. I think this was in September. But there was a lot of preliminary buildup in terms of assorted activities which didn't come into focus, of course, until October.

O'BRIEN: Well, in all this prior period of conflict over that, did you ever make any attempt or did Senator Keating ever make any attempt to share his sources that he was getting his information from?

GILPATRIC: Yes. We had the military liaison people on the Hill go to see him repeatedly, and he never would divulge his sources and was obviously playing his own game. And I never did know, other than my suspecting that he had some Florida newspaper correspondents who were feeding him what he got.

O'BRIEN: Well, there's a rather interesting story that came out several weeks ago, which you may or may not have heard. Basically, it's this: that the assassinated German ambassador to Guatemala, [Karl] Von Spreti,

had been one of Keating's sources.

GILPATRIC: No, I didn't see that.

O'BRIEN: Well, you may want to read that. This is the news script that came out on him.

GILPATRIC: He was in Havana in late September of '62. Well, it wouldn't be surprising because a number of times when the agency didn't pay heed to this kind of intelligence, volunteered intelligence, it got to the press or it got to some congressman. And that wasn't limited to the agency; it was limited to things that were told to the military. We see them in Drew Pearson's column or Jack Anderson's. They pick up something that had been shopped around, in effect, and whose credence had been suspected or denied, and so the person went further.

O'BRIEN: What do you recall of the president's reactions in that initial meeting you had on the crisis?

GILPATRIC: Well, he was very clipped, very tense. I don't recall a time when I saw him more preoccupied and less given to any light touch at all. The atmosphere was unrelieved by any of the usual asides and change of pace that he was capable of. He seemed to me to believe that the Soviets meant business in the most real sense, and this was the biggest national crisis he'd faced.

So the feeling I had and the feeling that McNamara certainly had was that nothing else mattered, and this was the only thing that we should be thinking about. And when we'd adjourned that afternoon over to the State Department, we established this modus operandi of having our meetings there and without the presence of the president, but with Bobby Kennedy always present and in a passive but clearly recognized sense the president's alternate. That was to be the line of communication except for the few meetings we had with the president, particularly later in the week, when he returned from Chicago.

O'BRIEN: Any insight into why the president chose the people he did and set up the ExComm [Executive Committee of the National Security Council] in the manner in which he did?

GILPATRIC: No, except, it seemed to me, that the people he picked were those that he'd been increasingly, during the prior year and a half, turning to, with whom he was familiar. He developed the habit of not just confining himself to the head of a particular department or

And so knowing how. . . . At that stage we'd been in office twenty-one months, and we knew the navy to be pretty heavy-handed. They were still conducting themselves as sort of proconsuls in their own domain, and I and McNamara were both very apprehensive as to the kind of instructions that were going out. Presumably, they were all being done out of Norfolk, SACIANT [Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic], and we weren't being shown any of the actual messages.

And even when the chart room was set up to show the exact movements of the vessels that were approaching the quarantine, it was done in the navy, and we found several cases where they didn't portray actually on this board what we learned through DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency] was the case. There was some discrepancy. We just weren't sure that they were operating on the basis of the very latest information. They'd run off a position at 1800 hours and operate on that for the next six or eight or twelve hours rather than constantly keep adjusting to moment by moment developments, it would seem.

O'BRIEN: Did they offer any resistance to the revision of the line closer to the continental limits?

GILPATRIC: As I recall it, there was a running argument over every phase of it. And it wasn't so much that we had a different or a better idea, but they couldn't explain or justify what they were doing in any rational way. As we would probe and question and express doubts and ask for more information, they would keep changing. And so the notion came up in one's mind that they were improvising, and they didn't have any really good planning base for the way they were going about it.

O'BRIEN: Well, what happened when McNamara walked in the room?

GILPATRIC: Well, we'd been in the room, the chart room or whatever they call the room which had plotted the movements of the ships and so forth, and Admiral Anderson was not in the room. But one of the navy briefing officers wasn't able to respond to questions as to what one of our commanders would do if a Soviet ship approached, didn't respond to our signals, didn't stop, or fired when boarded, didn't cooperate--a whole series of possibilities. Got no answers at all. So McNamara asked that we talk to Admiral Anderson.

We went into his room, and he had a phalanx of fifteen or twenty, at least, navy brass all lined up around him. We were the two civilians. And Anderson was very high in color

agency, but picking people that he felt often, because of their seniority or place in the hierarchy, could contribute. But I never knew how he arrived at this particular list. It grew somewhat. For example, initially, Paul Nitze was not a member of the group from the Defense Department, but he joined the group, I think, in a day or so.

O'BRIEN: Did you and Nitze and Secretary McNamara ever try to work things out between you before going into the meetings, or were you pretty much free to. . . .

GILPATRIC: Well, McNamara and I, because we spent so much time together--we had breakfast and lunch together practically every day, particularly lunch--we did a lot of the war gaming. But to develop this cleavage between the two of us on the one hand and Paul on the other hand, he from the beginning was a hard-liner, a hawk. And he died rather hard on that. I don't know whether he really in his heart ever became convinced of the merits of the proposal that ultimately the president followed. But he didn't sit down with McNamara and me as much as the two of us did. And we didn't do it by design; it was just the way we operated over there, being cheek by jowl.

And so really the members of ExComm were there as individuals. And after all, [C. Douglas] Doug Dillon didn't have any constituency; he was just there as an individual. And, of course, [Dean G.] Acheson was there briefly, and [Charles E.] Chip Bohlen until he left. There was some coming and going during the course of that period.

O'BRIEN: Well, I'm rather intrigued by this war gaming that you did with Secretary McNamara. Was it just a matter of talking in terms of what you would do, simulation in a sense?

GILPATRIC: Yes. We spent about two and a half hours one day at lunch, after lunch, arranging ourselves, he being the United States and I being the Soviet Union, and making a series of moves and countermoves and what our reaction would be. And it was during that session that McNamara became convinced that this limited form of blockade, quarantine, was the best move. It evolved from this back and forth gaming. Not in all of its details, but it was pretty much set in his mind. He never shifted from that ground from that point on.

O'BRIEN: Well, this gaming must have been based on some assumptions as to why the Soviet Union were doing, at that point, what they were doing. Now what

GILPATRIC: Well, at that stage, see, we had a number of appreciations, assessments, and position papers prepared by a series of people: Alexis Johnson, others in the State Department, General Taylor. I guess we'd all come up with some rather crude formulations, models, and so we had, even though they're all very closely held, we had a certain body of data, of, as you say, assumptions, hypotheses. And we had a lot of discussion. This wasn't until the latter part of that week. I would say it was about Thursday. Yeah, it must have been Thursday. And we had seen two full days of discussion and sleeping and eating and drinking the whole problem. So we'd explored every, you know, possible hypothesis as to what this meant.

But neither McNamara nor I agreed with the other view, that the Soviet Union was out to change the balance of power, because we were convinced that whether their missiles came from Cuba or whether they came from the heartland of Soviet Russia or whether they came from Europe. . . . They didn't in those days have any nuclear powered, polaris-type submarines, of course, but they had surface launched submarine war missiles. We felt that this was not the motivation of [Nikita S.] Khrushchev and that a limited response to a limited initiative was what was called for.

O'BRIEN: Well, then did you see it as basically an attempt to bolster Castro rather than any attempt to offset any missile gap--hate to use that term--but missile gap on their side?

GILPATRIC: Well, I think from the beginning it was clear to us that the Soviets wanted to force us to give up those Jupiter installations. And we felt some chagrin at not having dealt with that problem earlier because we knew how insecure they were and how unreliable as a true deterrent. And we knew the Soviets must realize that, and therefore they weren't; they were just straw men, really. We felt we were going to be asked, as we were ultimately, as a quid pro quo, to take those out, and that would have been a body blow to NATO, of course, and to our whole image. And we began thinking at a very early stage about, you know, alternatives to that. But we did one time--I remember I worked on this myself one evening in the second week, about Friday night, I guess, or maybe it was even Saturday night. No, I guess it was Friday night. We did develop a contingency plan for how we would take out those missiles and how we would communicate it and how we would present this to the world. And I remember working on a paper down in Mac Bundy's office while McNamara was drawing up the contingency plan for mobilizing and getting the forces ready to move into Cuba.

O'BRIEN: Well, as I understand it, Secretary McNamara has an early view that--and I wonder whether it's accurate--"a missile is a missile," is what's been quoted, that he's been quoted as saying. Is that a true indication that he doesn't see any great danger in them at that point, any more so than, let's say . . .

GILPATRIC: Well, he didn't have this apocalyptic view that some of the others had that the whole security equation had been changed overnight if these missiles were in there. He did see it as a very major setback to the grand alliance in general and to the United States in particular if Khrushchev could do this with impunity. But he regarded it more, I always felt, as a tactical move by Khrushchev rather than a grand strategy, an operation of grand strategy. And I think he believed that. I don't think it was just a question of equating his counterproposals to a limited form of action by Khrushchev. I think he started out with the latter and then moved to the former.

O'BRIEN: If I may draw an assumption here, then the foremost thing on his mind is the NATO alliance. Is that correct at this point?

GILPATRIC: Yes. That is the first: this risk that we would have to dismantle part of our then deterrent apparatus even though we'd written it off as obsolete in our own minds; and second, the freedom that this would appear to accord the Soviet Union to alter the spheres of influence in terms of moving into sort of the Monroe Doctrine area of our sphere. But he regarded that as a political rather than a military problem, getting back to the fact that the military threat had not basically changed.

O'BRIEN: I'm curious, do you see any hard intelligence, or do you have any good indications that this is what's on Khrushchev's mind at that point?

GILPATRIC: No.

O'BRIEN: Don't see anything?

GILPATRIC: No. Although this famous cable of his--that as far as I know has never been published, the one which is obviously a product of his own dictation because it was rambling, discursive, all kinds of crudities of humor and almost obscenity in it--did indicate to me that we were dealing with an opportunist, an adventurer, who was taking a big gamble. And it didn't seem part of a carefully

formulated mosaic of a plan at all. But that was in the final stages, and maybe, under tension, it didn't represent. . . . We never had any--even [Llewellyn E.] Tommy Thompson, who certainly was the most prescient of all the Kremlinologists (Chip Bohlen having left early in the game) and Thompson, of course, was always on the side of restrained, modulated moves; firm, but not raising the level of action or increasing the tension. But he was proceeding more or less from instinct and philosophy rather than from anything tangible in the way of knowledge.

O'BRIEN: Well, I was thinking in particular of the [Oleg V.] Penkovsky Papers, if they had given you any indication as to Soviet . . .

GILPATRIC: Not to my recollection.

O'BRIEN: Secretary Rusk's role, as I understand it, has always been somewhat of an enigma to the rest of the people on the ExComm. How did you see him?

GILPATRIC: By that time I'd become accustomed to the fact that, except in the presence of the president when Rusk always would speak directly to the president and not to the group as sort of the first minister, Rusk did not take the leadership, even though he was entitled to as the first minister, in either a parliamentary sense or in an ideological sense. He had a reticence about expressing himself in the ExComm meetings. He was not nearly as voluble or communicative as some of the others were. And I never was quite certain in my own mind where he stood. I mean, it didn't come through. The others, you could pretty much identify. And it seemed to me he was reserving, as I say he'd done in the past, his expression of his views until we came before the president. I think he was reluctant to put himself into a role of debating. He reached his own conclusions, his own mind, listened very attentively, made comments, but never did, as McNamara did or as Ball did, Johnson did, Mac Bundy, many others, sort of, you know, take the initiative and expound a point of view and try to carry others with him. He never, as I recall it, acted in that way.

O'BRIEN: Well, over the period of the meetings of the ExComm, there's a good deal of strain, as I understand it, on all of you. Who holds up well?

GILPATRIC: Well, I don't recall anybody that showed up badly in the sense of completely losing their cool or responding irrationally or in anger or in contempt or derision. There were some overstatements. Some people--

Paul Nitze felt very strongly, he had a very strong emotional bias for military action. And, of course, Mac Bundy was a very cool, dispassionate dissector, layer-out of his ideas. He wasn't trying to carry anybody by his persuasion, force of position. My recollection of the whole occasion was that, in spite of the stresses and strains and in spite of these very deep differences, no one got into the kind of swinging arguments or antagonism I've seen so often in groups.

And again, I think it was the disciplinary presence of the attorney general. It was perfectly evident that he was keeping notes as to where everybody stood. I never knew what happened to those notes. I used to see he had initials of people and put after the initials some comments. He didn't keep detailed notes of everything that was said, but he was keeping some kind of a score sheet, a rating card. And it was perfectly evident that. . . . And then you have [Theodore C.] Ted Sorensen, who had very little to say, but who obviously had assimilated very quickly. Otherwise, he never could have overnight produced the president's talk or the basic format of it, as he did. I think having two people close to the president there tended to keep a certain order and, as I say, discipline.

And then you had people who themselves are very disciplined: McNamara, Doug Dillon, even George Ball. He writes much more strongly than he talks. When he makes a strong statement, he does it with a smile and sort of easy way. And the kinds of sessions we'd had, as I described last time, I guess it was, between Harriman and Nolting didn't take place at all, where people really took out after each other. I don't recall that.

O'BRIEN: Well, initially, you have probably more of a group or at least a larger number of people or at least a more concerted group in favor of the air strike, and then this, well, shift later towards the blockade. Why does that take place? Is it because of the arguments, because of the information that's pouring in?

GILPATRIC: I think it was a question of reflection, of an exchange of reasons and views. I think the fact that a man as articulate in exposition as McNamara is was consistent throughout couldn't help but have a convincing effect on a person like Doug Dillon or Mac Bundy, who shifted ground there. And for a non-lawyer, I don't know of any more effective advocate than McNamara is. He never changed his position. He never indicated that he had reservations about it, and I think that tended to pull people back from some of the extreme positions--opposite positions they'd taken.

O'BRIEN: Well, how about Bundy, you know, Bundy's changing

of position? Do you have a clear understanding of what was on Bundy's mind that week?

GILPATRIC: No, but I have to relate this to my observation of Mac generally. He tends to light initially on an absolute proposition. He thinks he should immediately see things in black and white terms, and he's very intolerant of obfuscation and ambiguity and uncertainty. And I think he just grasped at this initial concept of an air strike, and then he formulated arguments in support of it. And I think there was a case of reflection and sort of second-guessing himself, plus his respect for McNamara. Well, those are the only elements I can account for his change.

O'BRIEN: It's been suggested, too, that Robert Kennedy was instrumental in turning the decision in the direction of a blockade. Do you have any reflections on that?

GILPATRIC: Well, he certainly was extremely effective against the air strike. As I recall it, though, in the initial discussions, the first couple of days, he did more listening than talking, and it wasn't till the lines had been drawn for everybody else that he came down. So I think that some of those who later came around didn't have the benefit of his thinking at the time they expressed themselves initially. But certainly, when it came to the final nose count, he, along with McNamara, was--I couldn't judge as to what went on in others' minds, know which of the two had the most effect, but certainly his eloquence about destroying the civilian population of Cuba. . . . He, by that time, was very skeptical of this claim by the military of precision bombing and "surgical operations."

O'BRIEN: Well, when did you become firm in your commitment towards the blockade?

GILPATRIC: Well, I started out with the feeling--which I had going back during the Kennedy administration--that we had passed a point in arms technology and in history where military force provided solutions except in the strictly deterrent sense. So I started out with the idea of avoiding any military action at all if we could. What other sanctions could we bring to bear? What countermoves politically, economically? And I chose this blockade, this limited quarantine kind of thing, as the minimum military action. I did favor the movement of forces, which I knew would be known to the Russians, to bring aircraft into the Florida bases and the East Coast bases, and shifting army units over from Fort Hood for an embarkation on the East Coast, just purely to telegraph some punches. I

don't recall some of the variations of the blockade theme, but I was, from the beginning, against any major military effort as the way to deal with the problem.

O'BRIEN: Well, you become involved in some of the Defense Department's efforts to survey some of the possible repercussions in Latin America, as I understand. Was Edwin M. Ed Martin involved with you in that--part of it?

GILPATRIC: Yes, although I'm not clear in my mind, at the moment, just the exact juxtaposition of dates.

O'BRIEN: There were a number of decisions that had to be reached along the line before the actual decision, and one of those, of course, was what to do in regard to Andrei A. Gromyko and Gromyko's meeting with the president. How did you feel about that? Did you feel he should be confronted?

GILPATRIC: I wasn't consulted on that. That was not discussed in ExComm as a group. Some smaller groups were. . . . I don't know who the president talked to about that.

O'BRIEN: What's your greatest concern during the development of the crisis?

GILPATRIC: That it would set back what I felt was a trend, the beginnings of a trend, toward a series of reciprocal actions, parallel moves, toward defusing the arms race. I was very much involved throughout this period, beginning with the formation of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, with getting the military to think positively about arms limitation, either a total test ban or banning tests in the atmosphere. I was trying to get the military away from formulating absolutely impossible conditions. And I was instrumental in getting military types over working under William C. Bill Foster, not only for the effect they would have there, but for the play-back in the Pentagon. But what I didn't want to see happen as a result of this Cuban missiles situation was a complete setback to what seemed to me was the chance that we could at various stages in the world have some pullbacks or some decelerated moves.

O'BRIEN: Are you satisfied with the intelligence that's coming in during the missile crisis, intelligence you're getting within the committee and within the department?

GILPATRIC: Well, I never was satisfied with what we got--intelligence--out of Cuba as such, leaving aside

ELINT and leaving aside aerial reconnaissance. The inability of our intelligence mechanisms to penetrate in any way, shape, or form into this island sitting thirty miles across from us always frustrated and alarmed me. I just didn't see how it could be we couldn't get more out of that. We knew more about Soviet Russia than we did about what was going on in Cuba.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any problem with secrecy or security in DOD, with your staff or anyone else, in regard to the leakage of this?

GILPATRIC: No, not that I'm aware of. I think it was really remarkable that up until just before the president went on the air so few people were aware of what was going on, certainly in the areas that I'm familiar with.

O'BRIEN: Well, actually, after the president gets on the air and this all becomes public, from that point on, are you optimistic that it's going to end without a major confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union in terms of war.

GILPATRIC: Well, our hopes went up and--I mean my feelings went up and down as the week went by. I suppose the low point was when Major Rudolf, Jr. Anderson was shot down. And then, of course, we had a plane penetrating the Soviet air spaces in Siberia, I guess it was. And I must say that during Friday and Saturday of that last week it was very hard to be optimistic because we didn't see any response, and the maneuvers, the actions, of the vessels that approached didn't set any clear pattern. We couldn't see what kind of instructions those skippers were operating under. And also, we knew of submarine activity in the area. We didn't know whether it was just purely for observation or whether some counteraction was planned against our ships.

O'BRIEN: There was one moment of panic, as I understand it, or at least great concern, when the Soviet Union attempted to fly an airplane into Cuba, wasn't it? Do you recall that?

GILPATRIC: Yes, when the airplane came down from Canada?

O'BRIEN: Yeah.

GILPATRIC: Yes. No one had any explanation for that, and all kinds of inferences and possibilities were suggested. I think that was a time when--in distinction to the control evidenced by the principals during the ExComm meetings prior to the presidential announcement--I do think it began to

tell on people, the strain did, in the sense that there was less control. This was a situation where we were in constant session with the president there. People were rushing in and rushing out. [I remember I went out and dictated a press release, and I said, "I'll dictate it to Miss [Evelyn N.] Lincoln." And the president said, "For God's sake, don't give it to her, she can't take dictation."] Several people were talking at once. This was nearly two weeks, you see, and there was an effect on people's physical stamina and composure.

O'BRIEN: Well, this is about ready to run out. I wonder if I could put another one on, and we could go for about five or ten minutes.

GILPATRIC: All right. Sure.

O'BRIEN: Will that be all right? [Interruption]
Well, how about when the telegram and the letter finally come from Khrushchev? What is your feelings at that point as to how they should be handled?

GILPATRIC: Well, I don't recall who first broached the notion that we would reply to one and not to the other. And at that stage the modus operandi was for two or three people to spin off and go off into another room and draft something. As I said, I was detached at one point, McNamara at another point, and we were constantly breaking up and re-forming throughout the afternoon and the evening, going down and having a meal in the White House Mess or having sandwiches or something. And it was almost continuous session. And we weren't operating entirely as one single group. And the work of drafting the responses was not part of my detail--I was working on these military contingency plans--so that I just know that there was a general agreement with this course of action, and it went through. Everybody'd sit around and mark up things, and then somebody would go off and come in with a clean copy. And at some stage, the president would just simply say, "Well, that's it; sign it off."

O'BRIEN: Did you have any great concern about the actual implementation of a blockade by the navy before the encounter between Admiral Anderson and Secretary McNamara?

GILPATRIC: Yes, because we couldn't get enough details of how the navy was going to carry out this operation. The reason we went over to Admiral Anderson's office that evening was because we weren't being told anything; we were just being assured that this overall type of action was being implemented, and the navy would take care of everything.

and obviously very, very angry about the whole, what he regarded, intrusion. And he listened to a whole series of questions from McNamara that he hadn't got answers to. And then Anderson just sort of exploded. And I don't know whether he said goddamn it, but he used some very strong expletive to the effect that, "This is none of your goddamn business. This is what we're here to do. We know how to do this. We're doing this ever since the days of John Paul Jones, and if you'll just go back to your quarters, Mr. Secretary, we'll take care of this." And during this tirade I could see the color rising in McNamara's countenance, and I didn't know whether he was going to reply in kind or whether he was going to, as he did do, just get up and say good night, which we did.

And then, in about half an hour, as I recall it, an emissary from the CNO [Chief of Naval Operations] came over and wanted to get the questions in more detail, and gradually, the cooler heads and wiser counsel prevailed in that part of the Pentagon. From that point on, they were submitting, asking approvals. As I recall it, about every three hours, we'd have a session. But for the most part, unless he'd want to go over and see the graphic portrayal of the ship movements, it was all done in the secretary's office from then on.

O'BRIEN: Well, McNamara really accomplished what he wanted then.

GILPATRIC: He really accomplished what he wanted, and he didn't cause, at that stage, Admiral Anderson to lose face, which I think was wise because it wouldn't have helped matters to have had a confrontation between the civilian control and the military command.

O'BRIEN: What's his private feelings at that point?

GILPATRIC: Well, he told me on the way back: "That's the end of Anderson. I'll never. . . . He won't be reappointed, and we've got to find a replacement for him. As far as I'm concerned, he's lost my confidence."

And of course, it wasn't until the end of that year, I guess it was December--and I was the one that was delegated to tell Anderson. I'd previously suggested to Kennedy to make him an ambassador, and since Portugal had this maritime tradition from the days of Henry the Navigator, that'd be a good place for Anderson. When I went to see him, I had Fred Korth with me. We went to the CNO's quarters. And Anderson flew into a rage, accused Korth of undermining him, didn't take out after me, but he did scornfully reject the idea that he would take on an ambassadorship. But he called

me up two days later and wanted to know if the offer was still open. And of course, he did take it, and in my opinion, he did a very good job on duty there.

O'BRIEN: Was the president as concerned as McNamara about the actual implementation of the blockade? Were the questions coming from the president that McNamara was asking?

GILPATRIC: No, no. McNamara pretty much kept the initiative on that. And once the operation was under way, that was one case where we kept ahead of inquiries from Mac Bundy and others and the president.

O'BRIEN: Anyone on the rest of the committee that was concerned about the implementation of the blockade in an informal way.

GILPATRIC: I don't believe so. As I recall it, the cockpit of controversy was right within the Pentagon.

O'BRIEN: Well, we've covered a number of things, and I suppose that right now is the best place to break off. Well, thank you, Mr. Gilpatric, for a very informative interview.