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Matloff: This is an oral history interview with General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, held in the Pentagon in Gen. Lemnitzer's office on January 24, 1964. This is a continuation of an interview begun at our previous meeting on January 19. General, at this meeting we'll concentrate, if we may, on your period as SACEUR, in NATO, from 1963 to 1969. Before we begin on this, I was wondering, did you have a chance to brief your successor as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. Taylor, before you took over the SACEUR position? Was there a transition of some kind, or did you go directly from one post to the other without a chance to talk to your successor?

Lemnitzer: No, I asked, and it was agreed, that I remain in Washington for approximately a month. It was during that month that a great many things happened. The Cuban missile crisis developed. I was using my office as Chairman to complete quite a few papers that were under way and that I was involved in, but shortly after the 1st of October, 1961, the Cuban missile crisis came up. Some of our people in CIA in reading the intelligence found that Khrushchev was installing some nuclear missiles in Cuba. I stayed in the office of the Chairman and kept in close contact with General Taylor. I sat in on a good many of the meetings, including those with the President, to develop a procedure to tackle this Cuban missile problem.

Matloff: You were part of the EXCOMM at the time?

Lemnitzer: No, I was not a member of anything, except as a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff I had at my fingertips all of the wherewithal from which the intelligence was gained that these missiles were being installed. I attended meetings at the White House with Gen. Taylor, in which they were

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discussing ways and means to deal with this particular problem. During that month it was decided by the Atlantic Council that the changeover of SACEUR should be delayed. However, I pointed out that a good solution to the problem of transition would be for me to become CINCEUR about the first of November and not SACEUR, pending the working out of the arrangements on the Cuban missile crisis. That's what happened. I recall that I left Washington about three or four days before the end of October. I was installed as CINCEUR in Europe, which I had recommended. I did it for this reason: I felt that if I could get a period of concentration on CINCEUR's problems, then whenever the Council decided it would be appropriate for me to become SACEUR then I would have gotten the orientation on CINCEUR behind me.

Matloff: In other words, you were putting on your American hat first.

Lennitzer: That's correct. There was another very important reason for this. There was some discussion as to whether I, as a SACEUR, should visit Berlin. This question came up during the period of transition. I insisted that it was a general principle of mine that in taking over a new assignment, you visit the most remote areas of your responsibilities first. I considered Berlin the most important, and so I insisted that I be permitted to go to Berlin. There was some opposition to it, because I had been SACEUR designate. Those in opposition felt that this would create a problem with the Soviet Union on Berlin and there were lots of people who felt that this was a provocative idea. Nevertheless, we went through with it and it worked out extremely well.

Matloff: Do you recall, from whom did this opposition arise--American or foreign circles?

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Lennitzer: American, mostly. None of our allies expressed any great concern about it. But we'd been through this before, with regard to the SACEUR/CINCEUR hats, and the relationship with Berlin.

Matloff: You mentioned the Cuban missile crisis. I think that we ought to wind that one up. Apparently that crisis was handled better than the Bay of Pigs. At least most of the writing on these two crises seems to come down on the side of the handling of the second crisis more efficiently. Was that your impression?

Lennitzer: It was no longer a covert operation. That was one of the problems in dealing with the Bay of Pigs. It was a covert operation right up until the time it was gotten underway, I mean, the actual landing got underway. But this was a major national issue with the President, the Commander in Chief, involved. I recall one meeting at the White House, on a Saturday evening, after attending an Army/George Washington football game here in Washington. Gen. Taylor was there, and we were notified that, without attempting to rush out, but when the game was over, we should stop by the White House. We did it separately. When we got to the White House, we found a communication from Khrushchev which, in essence, said, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] That got me embroiled in a very furious argument at that meeting. Shortly after the message from Khrushchev had been read, one of the aides came in and told the President that there was an important call from Amb. Stevenson in New York City, and he left. After he left, Vice President Johnson looked around the table and said, "I think that Khrushchev has made a very valid and important point, and I think that we should accept it." That kind of shocked me, for the

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reason that we'd been through months and months of argument and discussion about the [REDACTED] So I pointed out

that this was not a U.S. problem, that this was a NATO problem; but he wouldn't agree with that. We had a rather furious argument. I tried to relate all the important decisions that [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] indeed,

but this was a major matter dealing with the entire Alliance. When the President came back, we discussed this somewhat, but the meeting ended up in sort of a hiatus, and no major decisions were taken as a result of it.

Matloff: Did you have the feeling that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had more input in the handling of this crisis than in the Bay of Pigs?

Lemnitzer: Very much so, because when we began looking for what would happen if Khrushchev didn't take his missiles out, I think that it was generally understood by everyone that participated, at least by those I contacted, that if he didn't take them out, we'd have to go in there and take them out ourselves.

Matloff: If I understand correctly, you stayed in Washington during the whole period of that crisis in October?

Lemnitzer: Not quite the whole period. I stayed there until the last week in October. By that time the crisis had settled down.

Matloff: We must be in 1962.

Lemnitzer: That's when it was, '62, yes.

Matloff: Because by '63 you were already in NATO.

Lemnitzer: This is right.

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Matloff: Let's come back to NATO now, and we'll focus on that more. Do you recall, did you receive any instructions, written or oral, before you went to the NATO assignment, given either by the President, or the Secretary of Defense? Did anyone instruct you as to any of the problems or positions that the United States might be taking that would guide or orient you in your new position?

Lennitzer: We had been discussing the relief of General Norstad between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Defense Department. Then, with the Cuban missile crisis coming along right behind it, there were no written instructions, but generally, emphasis on certain aspects of the policies that we were carrying on at that time.

Matloff: And so no special briefing by the President or by the Secretary of Defense?

Lennitzer: No, because I had many opportunities in my contacts with the President to discuss certain aspects with him. Now, one important aspect here was very deeply involved because Gen. Norstad had had during the summertime a mild heart attack, and he was very anxious to step out. I was coming up to mandatory retirement age, or close to it. I recall one day that the President was talking about how we should make the transition. He knew of my association with NATO from the days of Mr. Forrestal, when I represented the United States while we were drafting the NATO treaty. He considered that I had the best background and experience of NATO and that I should take that assignment, rather than any other. I pointed out to the President on this occasion--and this was never talked about very much until we got into pretty deep trouble from it--that I didn't think I should accept the nomination and the appointment of SACEUR, because I was coming up to

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mandatory retirement age. This upset him a bit. He didn't think that that was too important an issue. But I pointed out that for many many months, both as Chief of Staff of the Army and as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I was constantly confronted with questions about certain officers in the NATO alliance that I had known for various key positions--many of them French and British, not so many German. But there was a general tendency to be nominating retired people for key positions on SACEUR's staff. I told the President very frankly that on every occasion I recommended the turning down of an officer that was going to be retired and would be on the SHAPE staff. I recall my words, that there was a tendency in the Alliance in the late '50s and early '60s that made it look almost like a retirement club, and that in every case I had recommended against this. We had considerable discussions on this. To wind up what the status was when I went to SHAPE, the President had gone into the pay and the appropriateness of a retired officer, and I told him that I had definitely made up my mind that as a retired officer I would be the wrong person to take SACEUR. The President made this comment, "Don't worry about that. I'll take care of that." For years, I never knew how it was taken care of. Up until that time when the President was assassinated, I had received no word from him, but we had gone ahead, and I considered that I had not been retired.

Matloff: Were you briefed by your predecessor, Gen. Norstad, when you came over?

Lennitzer: Yes, I went over early, in September. I remember that I had been down in Fort Bragg for a demonstration with President Kennedy. We were establishing the Green Berets. While I was down there, I got a message that was relayed

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to me from General Norstad, saying that Gen. De Gaulle desired to take advantage of the opportunity to interview me before taking over. One aspect of this was that I knew General De Gaulle in World War II, when he took over the position that the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Roosevelt and Churchill had indicated that General Gireaud should take. I was at Casablanca during the meeting there [January 1943]. So I knew Gen. De Gaulle quite well, because we had many conferences during World War II. We had very disagreeable and acrimonious meetings where he was trying to equip an Algerian and a Moroccan division as a basis for going back into France. We didn't have enough equipment to equip our own divisions, and we were dealing with deficits. But when he indicated that he wanted to interview me, I readily accepted. I came over and spent a weekend and several days of the following week with General Norstad at SHAPE and I had about a two-hour interview with Gen. De Gaulle. It was one of the most valuable background experiences for this post that I ever had.

Matloff: Did you get any clue at that time that France might be going a more separate way?

Lennitzer: No, absolutely none. He asked many very sharp questions pertaining to my views on nuclear weapons, and for about an hour and a half, if I recall correctly, I was answering his questions. Then I recall that there was a period of silence, and he said, "Well now, General, you've been very frank with me. Now I'd like to be frank with you and tell you what the policy of the French government will be during the period when you take over as Supreme Allied Commander." That was a very valuable background for me, to deal with him personally and with the French government.

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Matloff: We'll come back to the French problems later on, if we may. Do you recall how long did you stay just with the CINCEUR hat, before you took over SHAPE?

Lennitzer: One month. That isn't quite right. Two months. We were scheduled to have both ceremonies the first of November. That's why I went over in the last week of October. It's interesting also, as a sidelight, that Dean Acheson left Washington the same day as I did, by different transportation, to appear before the NATO Council, and allay its concerns about the handling of the missile crisis. Leaping way ahead, because I can always remember Gen. De Gaulle's words to me repeatedly, he would say, "General, your President undertook major decisions during the missile crisis without any consultation whatsoever with the Allies on issues that could have resulted in a nuclear war." He repeated that, I guess at least ten times, during my tenure. But Dean Acheson did such a magnificent job of presenting the situation during the missile crisis in October, and the rapidity with which messages were flying back and forth, that he convinced the Council that indeed there was not time for consultation. When he left, the Council unanimously agreed that it had been handled very skillfully and very courageously by President Kennedy.

Matloff: Did General De Gaulle come back to the handling of this issue later on, or was that just at this point?

Lennitzer: Whenever we started talking about anything nuclear, he would bring it up. As a matter of fact, Gen. De Gaulle had a very interesting statement--not only with me, but with Chip Bohlen, and also with the United States Government--in which, when conversation started, or when he was informed or queried

about something, he would always say, "Am I being consulted, or am I being informed?"

Matloff: What was your initial conception of your role as SACEUR? What problems did you face when you took over and what priorities did you set for yourself, or were set for you by the President or the Secretary of Defense in handling your functions?

Lemnitzer: The problems were those that my predecessors and my successors faced. It was obvious that we had to put the main effort on building up NATO's conventional forces. As a result of the Athens guidelines, a meeting which I attended when the nuclear problem was first dealt with, the emphasis was put particularly on the Germans. But this was a problem with all of the NATO countries--Norway, Denmark, Canada, and the rest of them, trying to make commitments to meet the force goals that we had. Several incidental things happened which caused difficulty. Berlin, for example, caused problems repeatedly. There was difficulty and harassment on the Autobahns, and then in the air corridors. Repeatedly the Soviet Union would point out that it was going to conduct exercises, and for 48 hours it was not safe for any other planes to fly in the air corridors--just plain harassment.

Matloff: Did the change of administrations which took place while you were SACEUR, the change from Kennedy to Johnson in 1963, or the change later on in the Secretary of Defense's office from McNamara to Clifford in 1968, in any way affect your priorities or your conceptions of your role in SACEUR?

Lemnitzer: Yes indeed. As I told my audience at the Eisenhower memorial in Kansas, one of the first things I ran into was the Secretary of Defense and one of his

assistants coming over and asking me to come down to the embassy in Paris, which I thought a bit odd. Since they were coming to France, I felt they should come out to SHAPE. It was Mr. McNamara and Mr. Nitze, head of ISA. After we got into the so-called cage down in the embassy in Paris, where conferences took place within a room that was surrounded by steel, I was told that they had come to the conclusion that I should reorganize the SHAPE staff.

Matloff: This was early in your tenure as SACEUR?

Lennitzer: During the first couple of months. They were convinced that I should have my staff organized into nuclear and conventional sections. I had been through this proposition in a study during my chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and we came to the conclusion that it wasn't feasible or desirable, and that it couldn't function effectively.

Matloff: The allied staff?

Lennitzer: The allied staff. I pointed it out to them on this occasion--Walter Stoessel accompanied me on this visit, that you can't separate a tactical aircraft that can drop either a conventional or a nuclear weapon; you have artillery that can fire nuclear, or conventional weapons; and your intelligence wasn't separable by conventional and nuclear. I had a pretty good feel for this, due to my experience in the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and so I said, "No way." On the return to SHAPE, Mr. Stoessel was very concerned that it looked like I might be fired. I told the group that I would only start reorganization of my staff if I got the directive from the Council. But I also pointed out, if I got such a directive from the council, it would have to get another SACEUR.

Matloff: What was Stoessel's position at this time?

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Lennitzer: He was my adviser on international affairs, and on SHAPE's staff.

Matloff: He was the adviser to SACEUR.

Lennitzer: Yes.

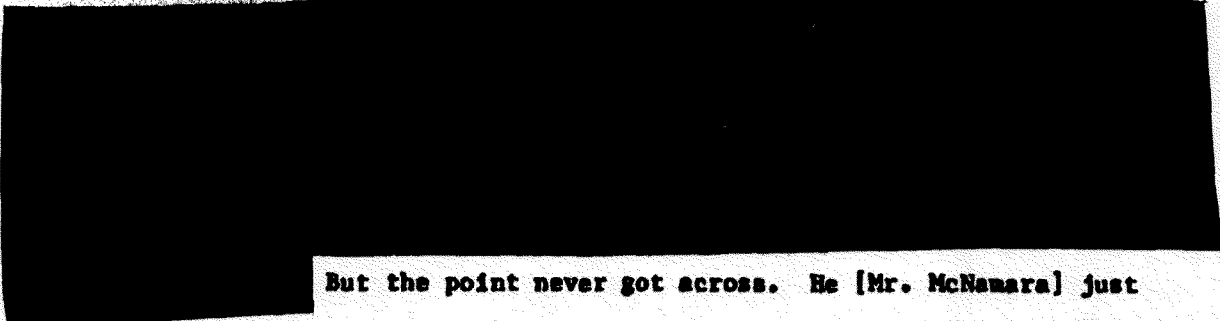
Matloff: That was getting off then to an interesting start with the Secretary of Defense.

Lennitzer: Indeed it was. But the following May I went to Athens with Secretary McNamara, and at that meeting the nuclear problem was discussed and commitments made for the use of United States weapons available to NATO. The Athens guidelines really put us in business in a nuclear way, because we didn't have the arrangements carefully worked out beforehand.

Matloff: Did you run into any other problems with Mr. McNamara in your capacity as SACEUR?

Lennitzer: I can cite just one problem that I had with Mr. McNamara. I had great pressure on me to "streamline" the SHAPE staff and the allied forces--northern, central, southern Europe, and land forces southeast (Izmir). One of the most difficult problems that I had with Mr. McNamara was the fact that we were going to reorganize the staff at Izmir. Mostly Turkish and Greek forces were involved, minor allied forces. But the Sixth Allied Tactical Air Force was mostly American, and it also had their forces. In making an analysis for the streamlining of that particular staff, when we submitted our proposal, I got word from Washington--this was not a written directive--that there were too many Americans on that staff, and that there had to be an equivalent amount of Greeks, Turks, and Americans. I took violent issue with this. I recall my justification.

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But the point never got across. He [Mr. McNamara] just simply wouldn't agree with it. I don't think it was ever turned down, but we never resolved this particular issue satisfactorily.

Matloff: How often did you meet with the Secretary of Defense and other top officials? I'm asking now about the working relationships in the course of your long tenure as SACEUR.

Lennitzer: I attended a great many of the regular meetings. I remember that there was one in December each year, which was a very important one, where our State and Defense Secretaries and foreign ministers and defense ministers attended. Then I did a fair amount of contacting by my visits back here, to London, Bonn, and so on, to keep in touch with top military, foreign policy, and defense people. I would say that I made an attempt at least three times a year to come into contact with the top political elements of the Alliance.

Matloff: Did the change from McNamara to Clifford as Secretary of Defense toward the end of your tenure in 1968 effect your functions or role in any way?

Lennitzer: No, I didn't have too much contact with Mr. Clifford. When he made a visit, I think to Italy, I went down to see him. He was making another tour, but in order to make a personal contact with him, I left my headquarters to be where he was.

Matloff: Were you dealing mostly with OSD through the Secretary of Defense, or were there other officials in OSD that you came into contact with during your period as SACEUR?

Lennitzer: Mostly through the Secretary of Defense or his ISA people, who were very much involved.

Matloff: Was there much contact with the Deputy Secretaries of Defense?

Lennitzer: Not very often. Only if it happened that on a visit back when the Secretary was off on some particular trip and I wasn't available to meet him.

Matloff: How about meetings with the American Joint Chiefs of Staff or their Chairman, in your role as SACEUR? Did you come into frequent contact with them?

Lennitzer: Yes, General Taylor, and then General Wheeler.

Matloff: There were frequent meetings with them?

Lennitzer: Yes. I never came into Washington without a visit with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and most times, without getting to see the Secretary or the Deputy.

Matloff: How about the working relationships with our State Department and its Secretary?

Lennitzer: I had very little difficulty with that. I kept in close touch, since Chip Bohlen was a close friend of mine when I was SACEUR. We got along very well, indeed. As a matter of fact, I remember the letter I wrote to Chip Bohlen when he was relieved and was coming back to retire, that it was one of the best working relationships between the military and the State Department within U.S. circles that I could visualize.

Matloff: How about with the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk? Did you have many dealings with him in your capacity as SACEUR?

Lennitzer: Yes, at these meetings I always made it a point to meet with Dean Rusk, but not as often as I did with the Secretary of Defense.

Matloff: How about with the White House? Did you have direct access to the President in this capacity?

Lennitzer: Yes, I did, and I took advantage of it, to at least make a call, with President Kennedy and President Johnson, the two principal ones during my tenure.

Matloff: Did you notice any change in their priorities toward NATO, when there was a changeover from Kennedy to Johnson? Was there any difference?

Lennitzer: Yes, frankly, I didn't feel that President Johnson had the same grasp or understanding of NATO that President Kennedy did. There was no friction but I just felt that President Kennedy was keeping in much more close touch with what was happening in the NATO area.

Matloff: Did you go directly to these presidents when you wanted to get in touch with them, or did you have to go through the NSC assistant?

Lennitzer: No. The formula I used when I'd make a visit back here was to ask the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to make arrangements for a visit for me with the Secretary of Defense or with the Deputy Secretary, and so on. It was all arranged right through this SHAPE Liaison office.

Matloff: You went through the Pentagon, through the SHAPE Liaison Office?

Lennitzer: Yes.

Matloff: And they would get in contact with the National Security Assistant, to arrange a meeting with the president?

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Lennitzer: That's correct. I have a great interest in this office, because in Mr. Forrestal's day and Louis Johnson's day, before SHAPE got established in the hotel in Paris, we had a hell of a time conducting normal administrative business over the telephone. I came up with the idea that this was all wrong, that we had to have direct contact, and I recommended that this little office be established right here, and that there be a leased line between here and SHAPE. It's still working.

Matloff: How far back does this office go? We're speaking now about the SHAPE Liaison Office in the Pentagon.

Lennitzer: Way back to 1949-50.

Matloff: This has a long history in itself.

Lennitzer: Yes sir.

Matloff: How about your relationships with Congress? Were you often called back to testify?

Lennitzer: Yes, every year. I testified before the various committees on foreign relations and policy, particularly with regard to the military aid program.

Matloff: Did you find Congress rather sympathetic toward the NATO problem?

Lennitzer: I found great interest in a good many of the people in Congress. In other words, we had people in Congress that took great interest, others not so much interest, but we tried to keep in touch with them, particularly with Mr. Vinson, and the chairmen of a couple of the military committees.

Matloff: Was the thrust of the interest of Congress largely on the military aid program more than on other aspects of NATO?

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Lennitzer: Yes, primarily the aid programs and their indications that they'd like to see the forces in Europe build up faster, and that the United States carried too much of a load.

Matloff: How about the working relationships with the NATO Council? I gather that you were in frequent touch with the Council.

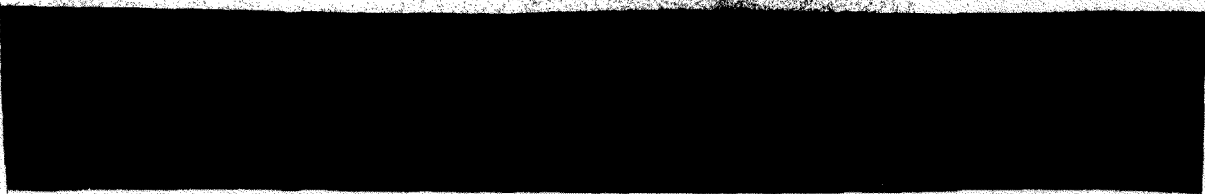
Lennitzer: No, not too much with the Council, but I'm glad that you mention it, because I maintained the closest contact with the Secretary General. I found that this was extremely important.

Matloff: Did you ever find that wearing your American hat sometimes got into conflict with the allied hat? Did the two ever give you problems?

Lennitzer: Not specifically, no. That was not the case. I use the example of my relations with General Sunay, who was later President of Turkey. When I was Chief of Staff of the Army, he was chief of staff. I maintained close contact with General Sunay for the reason that he was a very important figure there and we were doing our best to build up the Turkish forces.

Matloff: Let's concentrate a little bit now on NATO policies during your tenure. What policy decisions of NATO did you consider most important during your tenure?

Lennitzer: Strategy was one of the most difficult of all. The general strategy was massive retaliation, and before I left this building as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I was convinced that that was the wrong strategy. I found more and more people, military and civilian, agreeing with me. To make a long story short, this argument went on until 1968, when Gen. De Gaulle withdrew.



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Matloff: Did he withdraw over the issue of strategy?

Lennitzer: No, not at all. That wasn't even mentioned. He withdrew for his

[REDACTED]

Matloff: Let's talk strategy, since we've gotten off on the subject. You saw the major problem in NATO strategy, I take it, that the dominant thrust was on massive retaliation when you came into the post. Did any changes occur in the strategy while you were SACEUR?

Lennitzer: Yes, we changed over to a flexible response. I changed it in the last years.

Matloff: Do you recall your role in the NATO strategic planning? What was the emphasis that you gave it? Did you play an active role in the shift?

Lennitzer: Of course, I was exercising all the push and pressures that I could to get to a flexible response.

[REDACTED]

It didn't make any sense.

Matloff: When do you pinpoint the shift in the planning toward flexible response?

Lennitzer: It was all during my time, because when I was JCS Chairman, we felt this was the advisable strategy.

Matloff: I think that in most of the writing on NATO the year 1967 is usually given. Does that sound about right?

Lennitzer: '67, '68, yes.

Matloff: What was your attitude toward the buildup and use of nuclear weapons? How did you feel about that part of it, both strategic and tactical?

Lemnitzer: I thought it was extremely important. Here's where I reach back to when I was the Army Deputy Chief of Staff of Plans and Research. The nuclear weapons were coming along and we were changing our plans to keep them integrated. The question of the utilization of nuclear weapons was very high on the priority list to be sure that we knew what we were doing, where they were located, and those circumstances under which we felt that the use of nuclear weapons would be justified.

Matloff: How about your attitude toward nuclear versus conventional defense?

Lemnitzer: We were absolutely convinced that we didn't have the wherewithal to put up an effective conventional defense, due to the imbalance of forces.

Matloff: Then conventional forces had to be built up?

Lemnitzer: For six and a half years I was Supreme Commander in Europe and I realized that having the ambiguity of the use of nuclear weapons was the thing that gave us the deterrent that we needed. So this is a great disappointment I have these days when civilian people, and I don't know of any military ones, say that the nuclear weapon is useless. It has provided us 34-35 years now of protection in Europe with smaller conventional forces than the potential enemy has.

Matloff: Then you still feel that the use of the strategic deterrent is very important?

Lemnitzer: That's right.

Matloff: Did you encounter any differences, still speaking about strategy in NATO, in the United States' outlook versus that of the Allies in problems of strategy?

Lennitzer: We had all kinds of reactions transmitted to us. I remember a German Minister of Defense who was newly appointed. The first thing that he wanted, when he visited SHAPE, was to see the nuclear plans that would involve certain parts of Germany. That was his interest in it. We had representatives from the various countries, and the United States occasionally--for example, our representative on the Council--who would be very fearful of the use of nuclear weapons. But they simply couldn't avoid the conclusion that we didn't have the conventional forces to stop a major Soviet attack. It was the ambiguity of the nuclear weapon--would we use it or not--that gave us the deterrence, in my opinion, that has existed for 35 years.

Matloff: How closely did you work with the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs in getting the adoption in NATO of the flexible response strategy? Were they helpful in this regard? Did they give any push in this direction?

Lennitzer: People here felt the same way that I did when I went over there. The changeover didn't take place until 1968, after the French withdrew. I was at the Military Committee meeting in Oslo, after the French had decided to withdraw, and the major action that it took was to recommend to the Council the adoption of a tactical flexible response. That was the meeting in about September, and in December, as I recall, the recommendation was adopted, by the Defense ministers because there was no one opposed to it. De Gaulle had withdrawn.

Matloff: So that there was no serious opposition within NATO?

Lennitzer: No.

Matloff: How about the impact on NATO planning? I imagine there must have been a lot of activity going on after the adoption of the new strategy.

Lennitzer: As a matter of fact, not as much as you'd think, because even with the massive retaliation strategy, so many attitudes were inclining toward a flexible response that things were moving in that direction.

Matloff: How about the proposals for the MLF and the ANF? I believe those came up during your period?

Lennitzer: MLF--multilateral force, yes.

Matloff: What was your attitude toward the MLF and the ANF? How realistic were these proposals, in your opinion?

Lennitzer: They were proposed by people that thought that the concepts would work, for instance, that you would put missiles on ships, and so on, but when you thought the whole thing out, it was not feasible. Then there was the idea that we were going to have MLF, multilateral force, on submarines. That fell flat on its face immediately, because the idea of having a Polaris crew, for example, made up of Greeks, Turks, British, and Americans, living together and so forth, in the kind of an environment of 60 days in the ocean, was impossible.

Matloff: This was an effort, I gather, by those who were proposing these two plans to cut the Europeans in on the nuclear weaponry.

Lennitzer: That is absolutely correct.

Matloff: I take it in your view they were not realistic proposals?

Lennitzer: Yes, I would say that you're right on that. I felt that they were not realistic.

Matloff: I should have put it this way--why did they fail of adoption?

Lennitzer: Because of the personnel problems involved--food, pay, clothing, training, background. We finally came around--I did, before I got over to

SHAPE--that you've got to have units of certain nationalities. I think I was convinced of it in Korea, where we had a division that was American, but we had attached Ethiopians and Colombians, by battalion size, or by regimental size. Integrated units in the conduct of military operations would not work. I'll go back to the beginning of WWII, when I was convinced of this, And, in my talk at the Eisenhower monument at West Point, I cited the decision of General Eisenhower that you might have an integrated staff, but integrated forces of various nationalities at the lower levels was infeasible, undesirable, and ineffective.

Matloff: So you were opposed, then, to the MLF and the ANF?

Lemnitzer: Yes, as a concept, but they put the MLF primarily in dealing with the missiles and solely for the idea that you just mentioned. They wanted to give the Europeans a feeling that they were participating in the conduct of any nuclear operations that we had.

Matloff: The ANF, which would seem to be a pale sliver of the other plan, also, I take it was unrealistic?

Lemnitzer: This is right.

Matloff: What was the relationship between strategic planning and arms control? Did NATO get into this area while you were SACEUR?

Lemnitzer: Up until the time I left SHAPE in 1969 there were really not any very serious discussions about arms control. It wasn't until the Reykjavik meeting that they made the decision about mutual balanced force reduction, MBFR. That was the first case of any serious negotiations for reduction of forces. I think that one of the most important factors in this regard is that there was such a great imbalance between our forces and those of the Warsaw Pact.

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Matloff: Did you get in on those discussions at all?

Lemnitzer: No, not very much, only to point out that if there were any reductions, we couldn't make comparable reductions on both sides. Otherwise we would just continue, and make worse, the imbalance.

Matloff: That the balance favored the Warsaw Pact, particularly in the conventional side?

Lemnitzer: That's correct.

Matloff: How about in the early part of your tenure, did you get drawn in on the discussions over the limited test ban treaty in 1963?

Lemnitzer: No, I had sufficient knowledge about the nuclear weapon problems and I was heartily in favor of the test ban treaty. The Secretary of State came through SHAPE on his way back to the States, and he said, "You know, General, you'll be very interested to know that after he signed the test ban treaty Khrushchev got up and walked around the table rubbing his hands and said, 'Now let's trade Lemnitzer for Vorishevloff or somebody'."

Matloff: That's a good story. We mentioned Reykjavik, and this brings up a very important report, the Harmel Report, that took place during your tenure as SACEUR. Do you remember that? Did you have any input to it? This was a followup on the report of the three wise men back in the '50s. Now we're in 1967, right smack in the middle of your tenure, and this problem about dealing with the outside world came up again: what NATO's position should be on problems that arise outside its geographic area or what kinds of consultation should take place in the Alliance over such problems. Did you get drawn in on those discussions at all?

Lennitzer: Not very much, for the reason that the military problems were minimal, compared with some of the political problems that they were discussing.

Matloff: How important did you regard that report?

Lennitzer: It wasn't very significant from my point of view and from the standpoint of my missions, assignments, and capabilities. There's where my attention was drawn to and I didn't see that the report changed things materially.

Matloff: Do you think that there was any possible connection with what happened at Reykjavik? Did it lead to Reykjavik, and foster a spirit of detente?

Lennitzer: That was the attitude at Reykjavik, when the MBFR agreement was made. It was an agreement to study the problem, but there were no agreements reached. I had no objection to that. I didn't think that we could lose if we kept in mind the disparity of conventional forces on both sides; that if any adjustments were going to be made, they had to be evaluated because you couldn't say it would draw so many divisions on the part of the Soviets and the same number of divisions on our part.

Matloff: Were you actually at Reykjavik?

Lennitzer: No, I didn't go. As far as I know, there were no major military people there.

Matloff: The question has arisen in the minds of some scholars whether the Harmel report was on the road toward the spirit of detente which comes in a little later.

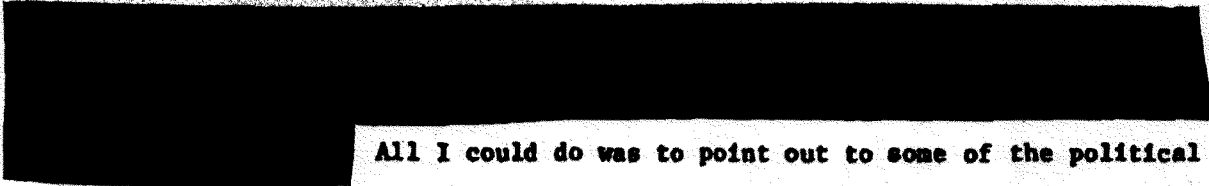
Lennitzer: I see. It could be so construed. It was going in that direction. Top political policy was being made.

Matloff: On the question of the allied problems that arose during your period as SACEUR, were there any problems over roles and missions of the different

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countries? over budget? over whether the allies were pulling their weight, and the like?

Lennitzer: Yes, lots of problems about allies pulling their weight. For



All I could do was to point out to some of the political authorities--and we used to have those meetings at least once a year--to indicate what we thought a country should be willing to commit. We were usually on the short side.

Matloff: Were there any important changes in roles and missions on the national level during the period of your tenure--any changes in what the functions of particular countries in the alliance should be?

Lennitzer: Yes, we had problems that we were discussing. I think that we did move ahead and get some pretty good agreements, particularly on antiaircraft and air defense.

Matloff: How about the budget? Did you get drawn in on the problems of setting the budgets?

Lennitzer: No, we didn't get into national budgets at all. The national contributions were made on the part of individual nations.

Matloff: Did the Secretary of Defense get in on the question of advising on roles and missions and force structure, in discussions with you? on what role different countries could play, possibly? Can you recall whether any of those questions came up?

Lennitzer: Not particularly by individual nations. But while we're talking about the subject here, we were always under pressure to do certain things with

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regard to personnel. If we were going to reorganize the staff, there was the question of what nationality goes here and there, and this was a constant problem. For example, I remember so well the great pressure to streamline my staff

[REDACTED]

Matloff: It was coming from more than just American sources?

Lennitzer: No, not from American sources.

[REDACTED]

Lennitzer: They screamed bloody murder. They were the ones that were pressuring to reduce the staff. I had the problem. In this particular process, which was about 1967, [REDACTED] I'll just say a word about this. One day I came into my office after the reduction notification got out to the nation, and the [REDACTED] was on the telephone, and wanted to talk to me right away. He wasn't going to accept it; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I said, "No one vets our senior officers in what they write." It just so happened that I had been in the SHAPE office on one of my visits when President Eisenhower was the SACEUR,

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and the same thing had happened. The British Minister of Defence started chewing Gen. Eisenhower out for not having anyone who writes a letter, or has a statement to make, obtaining approval of the supreme commander. General Eisenhower said, "That's not the way this headquarters works. On a national problem we do not take the responsibility. We presume that you are appointing self-reliant officers and that they can be depended upon to handle themselves correctly, and that if they can't, you have to move them."

Matloff: I wonder if I can direct your attention to the problem of the threat that NATO faced during the years that you were SACEUR. Did you encounter any differences in the perception of the threat between the United States on the one hand, and the allies on the other? Did all sides look at the Soviet threat in the same way?

Lennitzer: I can't remember any specific differences, except in minor details, because we were working on the problems as a group of people, on a political level and a military level. I don't recall any serious differences as to what the threat was.

Matloff: In terms, possibly, of the Germans, who were very much concerned with their front, so close to the borders of the Eastern Bloc, perhaps looking at the problem in a more parochial way; whereas the United States was facing the global threat, and having the responsibility for the nuclear deterrent, looking at the threat in a somewhat broader way. Did you encounter any of that, for example?

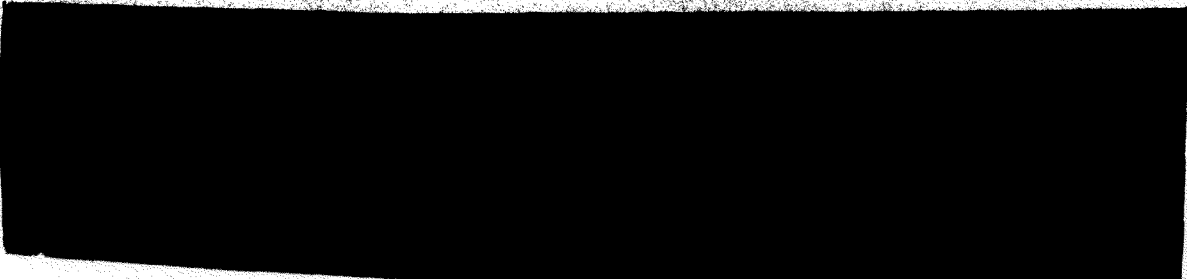
Lennitzer: I encountered that particular type of problem in connection with the general approach of NATO. It was: we defend as far forward as possible. That was the statement that got a hell of a lot of discussion. The Germans

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were very insistent that we try to gear our plans so that we could conduct an effective defense as far forward as possible. As far as the United States or Canada was concerned, that didn't make a hell of a lot of difference, except where their forces were involved. But we always had discussions, whether it was in Turkey, or in northern Norway, to defend as far forward as possible. I don't think you could argue about it: how far was as far forward as possible? But you're right about the fact that the Germans were most deeply involved in this particular aspect.

Matloff: Here's a good point to raise questions about the area problems within NATO and where the major European partners fitted in. How did you see the role, for example, of Britain? How did you view its position in the alliance? Was its effort to hold on to its own independent deterrent realistic? Why was it so insistent on holding on to the atomic bomb development?

Lennitzer: It wasn't only with Britain; it was with France, too. The French had the knowhow. I think Gen. De Gaulle put this in the plainest terms to me, when he said, "General, I don't believe that a nation can be a first class nation in the modern world without having the atomic bomb." That's why he persisted in going ahead with the nuclear one. This brings me back to one of your earlier questions. We had a row in the Joint Chiefs of Staff when I was Chairman. It started before my time, with General Twining.



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[REDACTED]

We worked on that, right up to the time when I was Chairman, and we just couldn't get our authorities here to agree to that.

[REDACTED]

Matloff: The administration turned this down?

Lemnitzer: Yes. This reminds me of something else that fits into this. I used to go to the NATO meetings and talk to the military representatives.

[REDACTED]

decided that we had to do better in bringing in our allies on nuclear matters.

It's now dealt with up at the Defense planning level. I set the Joint Chiefs to work on a project of preparing a two-hour, a four-hour, and a six-hour briefing. We worked for over a year on it, to produce nuclear information for our allies at the top level or down to lower level detail. It took a year to get that cleared for presentation to anyone in NATO who asked it.

Matloff: This is in the American circles?

Lennitzer: Through the American agency that controls the release of classified information. We worked for over a year on that, and we finally got approval. Then we took an airplane and put a crew aboard with briefing teams, and they traveled around. We did a lot of briefing and we broke the lock on nuclear material, but it wasn't until much later. It reminds me, later on Mr. McNamara saw this and realized that we weren't doing enough. He came over to SHAPE one day, and he came with an idea that we were going to form a nuclear committee at the political level. I asked, "What are you going to call it?" He explained that of the 15 nations in NATO, we'd have the five principal nations and then we'd rotate the smaller nations through it. He said, "We're going to call it the Select Committee." I responded, "Geez, I think that's a lousy name for it." He was kind of shaken, and he said, "What's wrong with the name 'Select Committee'?" I replied, "Look, you're talking to an organization of 15 nations. It's going to be easy to select five nations on the committee, but it's going to be damn hard to select ten of them off." So, he saw it, and he went back to the U.S. The next time I saw him, I said, "We've got a name for your committee." They were still working on this thing, and he asked, "What is it?" I said, "The McNamara Committee." He went straight up through the overhead and did not like it. But that committee has developed into the Nuclear Plans Group and is in effect today.

Matloff: You may recall some of the writings of Alastair Buchan. I don't know if you ever met up with him. He was a British writer, very much involved in the founding of the International Strategic Studies Institute in London. He wrote that the British bomb was aimed at Washington, and that the French bomb was aimed at both Washington and London, in order to have an impact on the United States. Would you go along with that?

Lennitzer: No.

Matloff: He was writing quite seriously, that this was their way of assuring themselves that their advice would be heard by the American power. But you wouldn't follow that notion?

Lennitzer: No.

Matloff: On the French side, how did you react when you saw that the French were moving to oust the headquarters and the allied bases?

Lennitzer: We didn't have any warning about it. We didn't detect that they were moving toward that. No one did in the area where I was located, and I was in Paris.

Matloff: It came as a surprise?

Lennitzer: Complete surprise. That's the only way I can express it. There was no indication, whatsoever, that came to us at SHAPE. There we were at Paris, in the political arena, and there was nothing in the communications that implied that De Gaulle was leaning this way, until at the end of February, I think it was, when he made the announcement. Bingo.

Matloff: How would you account for that position? You have already offered a few reasons. Nationalism, undoubtedly. Anything to do with his hangover from World War II days? Feelings about the coalition?

Lennitzer: To go back to Tom Gates, when he was Secretary of Defense. I had attended with Tom Gates the NATO meeting in Paris in December 1960, and he used to complain bitterly that Gen. De Gaulle was never happy with the assignments that the French officers had in the NATO structure. He got into a hell of an argument, not only with Gen. De Gaulle--I wasn't involved too much on that one--but with the Chief of Staff of the French forces, and others. That was coming from Gen. De Gaulle. I always tried to assist Tom Gates in answering him, and my answer to this particular plaint was this: Who is the Commander in Chief of the Allied Forces Central Europe? A Frenchman. What forces will he have under command? Canadian, British, American, German, Danish--the largest concentration, the greatest field command assignment in the alliance--of course, not SACEUR, but he would be in command of military operations in central Europe. There wasn't any more important command position. But it never satisfied Gen. De Gaulle.

Matloff: Was there anything specifically that had occurred, do you think, that made him take the French out of the military part of the alliance?

Lennitzer: It was the idea that the Soviet Union was not going to make any trouble for anybody.

Matloff: A different perception of the threat? Perhaps a change in the perception?

Lennitzer: That's correct. And one point I forgot before: many of my colleagues, civilian and military, felt that Gen. De Gaulle thought that he could be the honest broker between east and west and be instrumental in bringing the two of them together, without the need for an alliance. As a sequel to that, I knew Gen. De Gaulle's side, when he went to his retirement home in the east of

France, and he told me that Gen. De Gaulle felt that way when he pulled the forces out, and that his views in this regard were completely blown apart when the Russians went into Czechoslovakia in 1968. Gen. De Gaulle went down very rapidly, mentally and physically, after that. That was in August 1968.

Matloff: A fascinating addition to that story. How much of a loss was the French departure from the military part of the alliance?

Lennitzer: They had some of the key positions in the staff and they had two divisions down on the Bavarian front, on the right flank, in the center.

Matloff: What about the logistics of the alliance?

Lennitzer: Yes. We had spent over a billion dollars in establishing our line of communications across France, and we were going to have to give them up. There was no suitable, no comparable line of communications possible after that.

Matloff: We have talked about Britain, France, and Germany. You mentioned the German desire for defense as far forward as possible. How did you react toward the German move toward Ostpolitik, toward building bridges with east Europe? I don't know if that began while you were still SACEUR, but certainly by 1970 Willy Brandt was talking about building bridges, and instituting a policy of orientation toward the east.

Lennitzer: There was no indication of that in a substantial way up until I left in '69.

Matloff: No fear that the Germans might be going in both directions?

Lennitzer: No.

Matloff: During your tenure, did you see any changes in the original importance of the central front in NATO, vis-a-vis the northern and the southern

flanks? The great threat that was feared at the beginning of the alliance was the central front, that the Russians might move against it. As time went on, obviously, the threat became more diversified. Did you have a feeling that perhaps the threat was shifting to the north and to the south?

Lennitzer: No, I never had any illusions in that direction whatsoever, and there wasn't any necessity or pressure to have this kind of an attitude. There was not going to be any major transfer of troops from the center to the southern front, or to the northern front.

Matloff: Now about coming from the Russian side, perhaps trying to outflank the alliance?

Lennitzer: There wasn't any way to outflank it, either from the north, or from southern Europe.

Matloff: The French were writing, as I recall it, that the threat had shifted; that the communists were going to try to outflank the alliance through Africa; and that NATO would face its greatest threat from the south. This was right on the heels of the Algerian war period.

Lennitzer: No, one of the great threats was down through Austria and into Italy, but that was still the central front.

Matloff: In recent years, there's been much concern about the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and the oil problem, and the possible outflanking without even a direct military invasion.

Lennitzer: I'm still an ardent advocate of trying to do something for the Turks, to prevent the Soviets from attacking and isolating Turkey and getting the eastern Mediterranean, Middle East, and so forth. That's what I think is a considerable threat today.

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Matloff: You had touched before on the Czechoslovakian crisis in 1968. How did SHAPE react to that crisis?

Lemnitzer: It reacted sharply. We immediately put into effect all our contingency plans, in secret--nothing on the surface, because they weren't invading us. We put all our alert measures into effect in the center and our reconnaissance was intensified. But I got no instructions, no political guidance.

Matloff: Not from the Council?

Lemnitzer: Nothing.

Matloff: Nothing from the American president?

Lemnitzer: No. This is a real sore point with me. I took pains to tell General Rogers about this when the Polish issue came up. We had put into effect everything that we could do militarily. We even changed an exercise of a couple of German divisions, to move them away from the front, lest we give the Soviets the excuse that they move in to protect Czechoslovakia. So, I called up by phone a number of times. In the first place I called back here, to talk to Gen. Goodpaster. This was August 21, 1968. I asked the question, "What does the United States propose to do about this movement into Czechoslovakia?" Gen. Goodpaster wasn't there. No one else knew anything about it. It was all kind of low-key accepting what the Russians were doing. And I thought, My God, what are the Chiefs doing? The Chiefs were not doing anything. Two days went by, and I was getting critical comments from my senior military people, such as, "What are we supposed to do?" I said, "I'm trying to get political guidance. Have you got all your alert measures and everything in?" "Yes. Got them all." On the third day, this is in August, I sat down and wrote a note to Brosio [Secretary

General of NATO], pointing out that it was going on 72 hours now, that the Soviet Union was moving in and taking over Czechoslovakia, and I had not had any political guidance, and I wanted some quickly, because there are many things that we could do. But Brosio was in Italy. His deputy was the only one around; there wasn't a minister in sight. In August, everyone was on summer leave. I asked, "What the hell is the president thinking about?" And you know what answer I got out of probably this office or the Chairman's office? "We're going to stand by and see what our European allies decide to do." And I made the statement to my Chief of Staff and a couple of people in SHAPE, "That's a hell of a fine exhibition of leadership on the part of the United States and NATO. That's the worst I've seen since I've been over here."

Matloff: Do you feel free to speak on the subject of what you see as NATO's role in such circumstances? What NATO can do when you get a threat outside of its geographic area?

Lennitzer: We go on alert for various contingency plans. We've got contingency plans for almost everything. But what some of my senior officers, Germans and others, were thinking was to move a division up to the border and let the Soviets know that they're not going to come any further. The military wanted to know if there wasn't something they could do to offset this debacle.

Matloff: So you felt that both from the allied side, through the Council, and from the American presidential side, there was no adequate political guidance?

Lennitzer: None. When the Turks were going to invade Cyprus, I was awakened one morning, with Mr. McNamara and the President on one phone, and they no sooner got off than I got Brosio on the other. They all told me: "You get the hell down there

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to Turkey, to Istanbul, and get with the American Ambassador and with the Prime Minister and point out what a tragedy this would be, and so forth." I had two occasions like that, when we stopped the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. In other words, on the Czech crisis everyone took it sort of nonchalantly here in Washington, which infuriated me. You know where we got the best information? From Shirley Temple Black, who had been an Ambassador in Africa. She happened to be in Prague at the time of the takeover. She had developed a magnificent ability to remember things. We got Shirley Temple to stop by SHAPE. And she gave us the best information we had of how the Soviets did it, how they handled their tanks, and so on.

Matloff: On the impact of the Vietnam war on NATO, particularly on United States relations with its allies--did that war make your position more difficult? If so, in what way?

Leannitzer: Yes. It did, but I understood it. I just had to tell my people that were complaining that this was the way it was. We were at war in Vietnam, and as Chairman I had been through the beginning of it. The Germans complained that we were moving a lot of bombs and so forth out of Germany, which we were, because we were running out of bombs in Vietnam. I had to tell the Ministers of Defense and right up to the Prime Ministers, "Look, this is American equipment; the Americans are at war in Vietnam; and they're running out of this kind of equipment, so we're going to take it and move it over there to Vietnam." Then I had the same kind of complaints from American forces and personnel and from our other

allies. I said, "I understand your complaint, and it's a valid complaint, but the United States is at war in the Far East, and we've got to get our best people over there and get the material over there to win the war."

Matloff: Were you ever asked to put a request for direct help for the United States to the allies, and NATO, for assistance in Vietnam?

Lennitzer: No.

Matloff: This is an issue which has come up time and again in the history of the alliance. Do you remember when the French were in the Algerian war? They wanted help from NATO and they felt that that was a problem for NATO.

Lennitzer: Yes. The question has come up a number of times also in regard to the rapid deployment force. Shouldn't the British, or the Germans, or the French send some people down there?

Matloff: I guess that did not come up during your period.

Lennitzer: No.

Matloff: I'll ask a few general questions, if I may, on your perspectives on NATO organization and functions. As a result of your experience, how do you see the American role in NATO and its relations with Europe? Did you see the American commitment as a permanent one?

Lennitzer: No, I never accepted the word permanent, because I hoped that one day there would be a rapprochement of one kind or another with the Soviet Union and that the tension would go down. But when they isolated Berlin, and there was an actual iron curtain, I just didn't see it in my time.

Matloff: Do you recall, possibly in your original activities in connection with the NATO treaty, whether you had the impression at that time that the American

troop commitment was seen as permanent? Do you recall the Acheson testimony when he was called before the Senate Committees?

Lennitzer: No, I never considered it permanent, no.

Matloff: He was asked the question directly: "Is this a permanent commitment?" And he said point blank, "No."

Lennitzer: Yes, but later on President Eisenhower thought maybe that it wasn't permanent either.

Matloff: Later on Acheson waffled.

Lennitzer: I didn't know that.

Matloff: When you read his memoirs, he takes a somewhat more ambiguous view. Is it your feeling that American forces can or should be reduced?

Lennitzer: No, absolutely not. I base part of my judgment on this: we have a force of reasonable size in Europe, a force that has carried out a mission of deterrence. Our allies are building up. Of course, we have better forces there, far better, than the ones I had when I was there. I had only five American divisions; the British only a couple, and the Germans only a couple. Things are different now. So I just feel that if you take out a substantial number of Americans, the idea is going to go through every European mind that the United States is severing its connection. We've certainly got the ingredients or the amount of force there which has done the job for 35 years. To change it in any substantial way, in my opinion, will put the idea in minds that America has lost its interest in Europe, and you'll find the Soviets taking advantage of everything and doing its best to separate what we've been trying to do for 35 years.

Matloff: What do you see as NATO's relationship with external problems and areas—that is, external to its geographic area? Some people have proposed on occasion to extend the geographic area of the alliance. Others have looked for other ways of handling crises that arise outside that geographic area, for example, in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.

Lennitzer: I think over the years we've made one extension in the Atlantic. That's the limit of it, as far as I can see. North Africa was also considered a possibility. The idea of sending a German unit to reinforce our forces down in Iran and things like that in time of war has come up. I maintain that everything the Germans can produce we need to reinforce our position in central Europe. There's no way to send a regiment down there from Germany. It would create a lot of complicated logistical problems, and I'd much rather see them build up their forces there [in Europe] so that maybe we can take some forces out. But not vice versa.

Matloff: I take it that you would not favor extending the geographic boundaries of the alliance?

Lennitzer: No. I think that's why Turkey is so important. Turkey is a buffer on the southeastern front.

Matloff: There has been a trend in NATO, as you well know—for example, the report of "The Three Wise Men" and the Harmel report, to increase and improve consultation among the powers of the allies when political crises or military crises arise outside the alliance. Does that seem the right direction to go: to try to improve the consultation?

Lennitzer: I think that a certain amount of consultation goes on continually anyway. I can imagine that in the case of a major fuss in the area of Iran, for instance, a meeting might be called, and there would be a consultation, but I think a considerable degree of consultation is continuously going on.

Matloff: Do you see any possible changes in the alliance structure and function?

Lennitzer: By structure, do you mean organization?

Matloff: The organization.

Lennitzer: No, I think it's been tried, tested, modified over the years. I think that there's no reason why it shouldn't be continuously looked at, at SHAPE, which is being done.

Matloff: Anything more that can be done in handling the nuclear deterrent problem, as who's responsible for what?

Lennitzer: No, I think here the arrangements are pretty clear cut. United States forces are on the continent and the French and British have their own nuclear forces, which are for their internal defense.

Matloff: So you don't see any need to change that around?

Lennitzer: No.

Matloff: How about giving more responsibility for conventional defense to European powers of the Alliance, do you see that as a possibility?

Lennitzer: They have the major responsibility now. There's a general formula which indicates that if war broke out in central Europe, 75% of the troops would be European, about 80% of the naval forces would be European, and about the same thing for the Air Forces.

Matloff: How about the question of military integration within the alliance:

do you think it can go further? Should it go further? Has it gone about as it can go?

Lennitzer: I think integrated staffs are as far as you should go. They've got air defense pretty worked out as an integral force. SHAPE worked that out, and they have a force now, but I think as far as land units, tactical units, and so forth are concerned--no way.

Matloff: Would you say that the significance of NATO to American national security has changed in any way from the beginning of the Alliance's establishment? Is it still very vital for American security or not?

Lennitzer: Yes, I think so. I maintain in my speeches and so forth that the best place to defend the United States is along the present Iron Curtain.

Matloff: No change, then, over the 35 years?

Lennitzer: Yes, no change.

Matloff: Let me ask you the kind of question I did when I asked you, toward the very close of the interview on the role as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to comment on some of the personalities. You've touched on some of them, but would you comment on the styles, personalities, and effectiveness of some of the officials with whom you dealt in your role as SACEUR, particularly on the American side? Do you want to say any more about Secretary McNamara than you've already said?

Lennitzer: My views regarding Mr. McNamara have been revised considerably because of his recent statement that the nuclear weapon has no military use whatsoever. He has revealed that he recommended to the President and the Secretary of Defense

that they should never utilize a nuclear weapon, which was a great disappointment to me.

Matloff: Clark Clifford.

Lennitzer: I had very little to do with Mr. Clifford. He didn't visit us over there. He had a short tenure.

Matloff: I'll mention some of the deputy secretaries of defense. Roswell Gilpatric was the first of the deputies under Kennedy.

Lennitzer: I thought he was one of the best of the deputy secretaries of defense, and I still do.

Matloff: Cyrus Vance, who succeeded him.

Lennitzer: I didn't have too much to do with Cyrus Vance during my particular tenure.

Matloff: Paul Nitze, who moved up from the ISA to become the Deputy Secretary of Defense, 1967-69.

Lennitzer: My association with Paul was with that incident in our meeting in Paris when he was with Mr. McNamara and insisted that we have a separate conventional staff and a separate nuclear staff in SHAPE.

Matloff: Some of the people who headed ISA during your tenure--how about William Bundy?

Lennitzer: Very little.

Matloff: John McNaughton? He served in that position from 1964 to '67.

Lennitzer: Wasn't he with that special group--what was the staff that Mr. McNamara set up? Systems analysis?

Matloff: It was really the Enthoven group that dealt with the systems analysis.

Lennitzer: John McNaughton rings a bell, but I can't remember very much about him.

Matloff: How about Paul Warnke? He served from '67 to '69 in the ISA position.

Lennitzer: No, I had very little contact with him.

Matloff: Two of the Joint Chiefs Chairmen who succeeded you, first Maxwell Taylor, and then General Earle Wheeler.

Lennitzer: We got good support from both of them on NATO problems. Both of them were very well informed and very helpful.

Matloff: How about on the effectiveness and the styles of the presidents? I think that you've already commented that Johnson didn't seem to display as great a grasp of the problems as did Kennedy, as time went on. Did you have any dealings at all with Nixon, the successor of Johnson?

Lennitzer: Yes, as a matter of fact I had a good meeting that I remember with Mr. Nixon. It was right after he took office, in January 1969. He came to Brussels with Kissinger and I've still got my little card on which I put notes to brief him. Nixon and Kissinger.

Matloff: Do you remember your impressions of them?

Lennitzer: Both deeply interested in NATO, and as far as I was concerned gave us fine support.

Matloff: Who among the foreign leaders in defense and foreign policy particularly impressed you during your tenure as SACEUR? You've mentioned some of them--you mentioned De Gaulle, and your dealings with him--and I think you mentioned some of those NATO secretary generals. Are there any other people?

Lennitzer: General Sunay of Turkey. I had a great many dealings and long friendship with him through the improvement and modernization of the Turkish forces.

Matloff: None of the defense ministers or foreign ministers particularly impressed you?

Lennitzer: No.

Matloff: The last question, the same one I asked you about your role as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs - what do you regard as your major achievements and successes during your tenure as SACEUR?

Lennitzer: Yes, the relocation, change of plans, almost every aspect of the whole thing that was accomplished as a result of the decision of General De Gaulle to remove all NATO and foreign military forces from France. I consider the major accomplishments of moving over a hundred thousand people, a billion dollar line of communications, with equipment and so forth, out of France; and the relocation in Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands; and the movement and relocation of the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Forces Central Europe and Allied Forces Central Europe. That period of two and one-half years, I think, involved a major accomplishment done with good relations with General De Gaulle and France. We worked out contingency plans--the contingency plans I made with General Ailleret, who was the French Chief of Defense staff, after the break. We both realized that if there was a war, France would no doubt be in it, and we started the development of contingency plans for the utilization of French forces. It has developed to the point now where I believe we have the best arrangements, short of command, that are possible to attain.

Matloff: How about the other side of the coin? Any disappointments, any uncompleted tasks, that you would have liked to have finished, in NATO?

Lennitzer: I'd like to add to the accomplishments the speed with which we were

able to get a change from massive retaliation as the general policy to flexible response in 1968.

Matloff: On the other side, anything that you would have liked to have completed?

Lennitzer: Really, I just don't know.

Matloff: There's no reason why you should have had disappointments, if you didn't.

Lennitzer: I feel pretty confident that I left a good, working organization after the hiatus of great changes due to General De Gaulle's decision.

Matloff: Thank you very much, Gen. Lennitzer, for your cooperation and willingness to share your recollections with us.

Lennitzer: I appreciate what you're doing. I'd like to contribute to getting this down on paper because some day we may have to do it again, and at least people would be able to look back and learn something from what we did. I must say that we had nothing to go on with the establishment of NATO. We never dreamed that such an event would ever take place. I think over the years I take the greatest pride in my association and the accomplishments of NATO to date, particularly 35 years of relative peace.

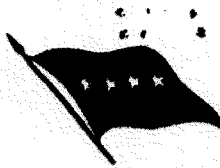
Matloff: Certainly your activities in connection with NATO to this day reflect your continued interest in this alliance.

Lennitzer: Yes, indeed.

Matloff: Thank you very much.

Lennitzer: I appreciate it, and if you run into some particular gap, don't hesitate to let me know.

Page determined to be Unclassified
Reviewed Chief, RDD, WHS
IAW E.O. 13526, Section 3.5
Date: SEP 30 2014



10 February 1982

Dear Mr. Goldberg,

Thank you for your letter of 26 January 1982 which explains the interview exchange system being established among the historical offices within the Department of Defense (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, JCS and OSD.)

Since under the established system it is not anticipated that the interviews will be available to anyone other than official historians attached to the above listed offices, I prefer that access to my interviews with you and your staff (on 21 March 1974 and 4 March 1976) be "open and without restrictions."

Sincerely,

L. L. LEMNITZER
General, United States Army (Ret.)

Dr. Alfred Goldberg
OSD Historian
Room 5C328, The Pentagon
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17 SEP 1994

No reply from Kennedy re mfts of July 14, 1994
re final exonerations & access. Dr. Trush
has another copy of these transcripts
(re Dr. Leonard Haydon's request)

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