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Matloff: This is part II of an oral history interview with Dr. William Kaufmann, held in Washington, D.C., on July 23, 1986, at 2:00 p.m. Representing the OSD Historical Office is Dr. Maurice Matloff.

Dr. Kaufmann, at the end of our meeting on July 14, we had begun to discuss the role you played in connection with area problems and crises. We had spoken about NATO, and I'd like to resume now with the Berlin crisis of 1961-62. Did you play any role in connection with that crisis? I came across something in the records about your finding some intelligence data dealing with Soviet forces--does that ring a bell with you?

Kaufmann: No, that doesn't. What I remember most about the 1961 crisis is being involved with Paul Nitze and Seymour Weiss from the State Department and Dee Armstrong and Al Moody from the Army, and first starting to thrash out what kind of responses one might make to a variety of possible Soviet moves against Berlin. Then going on from there, with Moody and Armstrong doing the bulk of the legwork, they developed one of these enormous "horse blankets" and we narrowed that down to what was called a "poodle blanket," which had four basic sequential options. Those essentially were what were presented to the quadripartite meetings that Paul chaired in Washington in the fall of 1961. That is my most clear recollection of Berlin. Inevitably the work that Harry Rowen, Ed Rowney and I were doing on the non-nuclear balance undoubtedly entered in there. We were just beginning to get some sense of how deeply Khrushchev had cut, particularly into the Soviet ground forces. But that didn't really become a lot clearer until 1962.

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Matloff: What was your opinion of why the Russians backed off when they did?

Kaufmann: I probably shouldn't have had, but I had access to some of the so-called "iron bark data," if you're familiar with that--that's the Penkovsky material. I think that those who had any access to that material recognized that the Soviet Union, or at least its key military leaders, felt far weaker than was the general estimate in NATO or in the United States. They were not all that interested in a showdown. Yet the President's position, as we understood it at the time, was that we were not going to do another airlift operation, but that this was going to be flat-out confrontation. There were going to be tests along the Autobahn, if necessary, although the Allies, having signed off on three of the four sequential choices, wouldn't touch the fourth, which became nuclear, with a 40-foot pole.

Matloff: Were you asked for any specific recommendations or advice on your own?

Kaufmann: In connection with the studies, yes, I was very much involved. Then in November of 1962 a rather large group went up to Camp David. This was the first time we involved the Allies in one of the political-military games which Tom Schelling had set up, and we spent four days trying to play out some of these possibilities. Despite the despicable things that Tom as Director was doing on the Autobahn, nobody on the Allied side was ever willing to do anything.

Matloff: How about the Cuban missile crisis, were you in any way drawn in on that?

Kaufmann: Yes, very much so. I was not involved in the very tightly held discussions that preceded the President's announcement of the quarantine. I am not clear about the dates, as to whether Harry Rowen called me up before or after the President's speech, and said to come down. I think in all the time I was at MIT that was one of the two times I cut classes. I was in the Pentagon essentially for roughly a week, with relatively little sleep. Harry Rowen first asked me what I wanted to work on. I said that the position that seemed to be emerging from the administration, namely that this was a political issue, not a military one, was not a strong position, and that I wanted to look very specifically at the implications of the deployment of these missiles to Cuba. I sat up all night with one of my former Rand associates, Frank Trinkl, and we worked the calculations which demonstrated, at least to our satisfaction, that owing to the way in which SAC deployed on a generated alert, and that was still the critical component of the U.S. deterrent, they moved right down into the direction of the missiles in Cuba, because they had always assumed that the threat was going to come on the polar trajectory, and that the further south they got on their emergency deployments the better. It looked as though the missiles in Cuba could make a rather substantial military difference. From then on out, Harry Rowen, the key person at the Pentagon since McNamara was over in the EXCOMM, was mostly occupied with talking with McNamara or Nitze, who was also in the White House, and running back and forth with messages. Over the course of the week I assembled a group, and we became the rapid response group to questions that came from the EXCOMM, or on our own sent thoughts over via Harry.

Matloff: That would have been in the ISA office, right? How effectively did the national security apparatus seem to be working during that crisis? Basically the same people were operating at the top level as during the Bay of Pigs affair--did you get any impressions of how the system was working in this case?

Kaufmann: I have many very specific recollections. I was convinced at the time, although I really don't know the data all that well in retrospect, that one of the reasons, if not the key reason, that Kennedy did not order an air strike very early on was that there was a fundamental misunderstanding between General Sweeney, the TAC commander, and the President. [redacted] I sensed at the time that the Chiefs wanted to use this crisis as an opportunity to invade and get rid of Castro, so they were always talking about a very large target list. Kennedy and the others were talking about a very small target list. Sweeney would never give the kind of assurances that the President was looking for, and I think that made him decide that it was too risky. He wanted very high confidence, and since Sweeney was talking about a much larger target list, he couldn't offer the very high confidence. JS 3.3(b)(5)

Matloff: One of the sidelights that came out of our discussions with Rusk last week in connection with the Bay of Pigs was his great regret that he didn't ask the President to ask the JCS how much it would cost in American

forces to pull off the operation. The President would have then paused and looked at the Cuban brigade and thought that it was not going to work. Are there any other impressions about the apparatus and how it was working doing that period?

Kaufmann: I have only a mole's-eye view of the whole thing. I was sitting 18 to 20 hours a day in Harry Rowen's office with a rather fluctuating group of people.

Matloff: Were you working mostly with civil servants, or outside consultants?

Kaufmann: It was a mixture. I remember Tom Schelling wandering in and then wandering out. Nathan Leites, from Rand, spent a fair amount of time. It was primarily a standard mixture of ISA, civilians, and military, with a lot of kibitzers standing around and watching what we were doing--from the Joint Staff, the CIA, and other places. We were scrambling around trying to answer questions or sending over our own thoughts as we developed data.

Matloff: Were you getting any of the thrust of the discussions going on in the EXCOMM?

Kaufmann: Yes, and toward the very end Paul Nitze came back very distressed at the thought that there was going to be this compromise solution to the crisis.

Matloff: Do you recall what he wanted?

Kaufmann: I wanted it, too. I felt as Dean Rusk did in his famous remark about their blinking. That was very evident on Wednesday of that particular week, that they were just not going to press this thing. I didn't see the need to make any concessions whatsoever, just to insist on their removing

the missiles and continuing to gear up for the forcible removal, if that became necessary. So I was very disturbed, as Paul was, at the notion that we would make a deal [redacted] My original sense was that they weren't even going to be separated in time. I worked very hard, mostly through that Saturday night and into Sunday morning, trying to figure out and provide Paul Nitze with a way of at least delaying this kind of decision. OSD 3.3(b)(3),(6)

Matloff: You would have preferred no deal with the [redacted]

Kaufmann: Right. I was actually working in his office on some drafts that Sunday morning when the news that Khrushchev had decided to withdraw the missiles came in.

Matloff: At the time, what might have been the decisive factor in Khrushchev's retreat?

Kaufmann: We spent Sunday afternoon in the best Kennedy-ite tradition in a post mortem with McNamara, and I was very much a fly on the wall. Gen. LeMay was saying that the generated alert by SAC and this formidable force ready to go really did the trick. Gen. Wheeler, Army Chief of Staff, was saying no, that it was the mobilization and deployment of forces in Georgia and Florida and the readiness to hit in the theater that was the decisive element. I don't particularly remember the Navy's position, because Admiral Anderson was so involved with McNamara in that awful episode.

Matloff: Were you aware of that episode at the time?

Kaufmann: I think that I was, but memory plays tricks.

Matloff: Anderson remembers it very well.

Kaufmann: In the early 70s I had a kind of funny supervisory role over NSA and the PFIAB of the NSC, and that was when Adm. Anderson was chairman of the PFIAB. I became very aware of his feelings.

Matloff: What might have made the Soviets retreat? Did you have any thoughts about that?

Kaufmann: First, although I don't think I knew at the time, Kennedy was putting the odds of a nuclear war as high as he did, 1 in 3, which struck me as ludicrously high. I must have known that he had made that kind of statement and I really felt that there was a great deal of distance between us and any kind of use of nuclear weapons. However, whether I was right or not, Kennedy had that very strong sense, and I certainly came to believe, as a result of the very emotional message that Khrushchev sent on the Friday evening, which they then tried to get rid of, that Khrushchev must have felt the same way. Both sides were trying to back away from this risk, at least, as fast as they could. I really don't think that one can say that Wheeler was right, or that Gen. LeMay was right, because it could have been an escalatory process that you couldn't really control.

Matloff: What was the impact of this crisis on your own strategic thinking?

Kaufmann: I don't think that it changed anything, but it certainly very strongly reinforced my view that presidents just want to keep as far away from nuclear weapons as they possibly can. So it reinforced my view that while it was absolutely essential to maintain a strong nuclear deterrent, the conventional buildup deserved first priority.

Matloff: Was this also reflected in the official doctrine?

Kaufmann: I don't recall any dramatic change. I argued at the time, why not try no first use, which Bob McNamara now, when he is out of office, very strongly favors. But he wouldn't consider it at the time.

Matloff: We're in the period of the mutual assured destruction doctrine, as I recall.

Kaufmann: I think that has been a serious misunderstanding of what was actually going on. I really think that whole situation has been misunderstood, in part, as a result of what McNamara himself was saying. But the SIOP never changed. The options remained in, and so on. My sense of what was going on was, first, that while McNamara intellectually bought all the arguments for options, emotionally he was really from the outset very opposed to nuclear weapons in any way, shape, or form. Second, I think that he became increasingly disillusioned with any public discussion of options from the force planning standpoint, because he saw that as an open invitation, particularly for the Air Force, to ask for more and more. So he kept looking for a way of trying to cut off these demands. For force planning purposes, he then introduced the assured destruction criterion. If you look at that criterion very carefully, in the way it was used, you will see that what he did was to make it sufficiently constraining so that they couldn't ask for 20,000 Minutemen or whatever, while making it generous enough so that there were, at least through his tenure, [redacted] When you add all that up and break it down into particular

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warheads, for its time that was far more, given one's expectation about survival rates, than you needed for the so-called assured destruction mission ~~initiative~~. I am very sympathetic to what he was trying to do, but it was kind of a white lie; he was using that as a basis for the force planning, to try and fend off the demands. On the other hand, he was really continuing to make sure that there were enough warheads so as to cover a comprehensive target list in the SIOP. It really wasn't until '73, when Schlesinger came to feel that the whole thing was not only intellectually dishonest and misleading but also that targets were changing in such a way that it was no longer an adequate sort of algorithm for arriving at force structure, that he began making statements that also were not quite accurate, but reflected the view that we should give up this kind of disguise.

Matloff: What was your attitude toward American involvement in Vietnam? What did you think was at stake for American security or national interest? Did you believe in the domino theory in the early days?

Kaufmann: I really don't remember on the domino theory. My view from the outset was that, while I could see no vital strategic or economic interest that we had in South Vietnam, we had invested a lot of prestige. In any event, to the extent that I had access to data, which increased with time, this was a North Vietnamese operation and was a lot more subtle, in part perhaps because of the terrain, than the North Korean operation against South Korea. Otherwise, frankly, I did not at the time see that there was all that great a difference. I am sure that there were just

as many discontented peasants in South Korea as there were in South Vietnam, but there were so many differences in geography, climate, and other things. While I can't say that I was ever a great enthusiast for the war, I never actively opposed it, and was perfectly willing to work on how one might deal with the problems.

Matloff: What role did you play in connection with Vietnam during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations?

Kaufmann: I played essentially no role during the Kennedy administration.

Matloff: Your advice was not sought?

Kaufmann: I really can't recall, if it was. I became involved very exclusively in it for about six months, starting in early 1964, and it was after I had taken leave from my relationship with the Pentagon in order to do this for the pot boiler on McNamara. I didn't think that it was appropriate to stay on the payroll. When I had finished with all of that, Harry Rowen called me up and said to come on back down, and I replied only on the condition that I could get involved with the Vietnam issue, which I thought was becoming ~~increasingly~~ increasingly prominent. I was very much involved for approximately six months, when I was told that I should stop and go back to working on NATO.

Matloff: Where did this order come from?

Kaufmann: It came from McNamara, as far as I know. What I was doing, essentially, in part to familiarize myself with the issues, was conducting interviews with returning officers and civilians. As I talked to them and began developing my own ideas, I, as usual, began writing memos, and

increasingly they began to suggest changes in operations. At that time, as I am sure others have said, there was an awful lot of tugging and hauling between McNamara and the Chiefs about division of labor. My understanding at the time, and Paul Nitze has more or less confirmed this to me since, was that essentially McNamara and the Chiefs struck a deal, although I don't think it held, namely that he would keep his people out of operational issues and the Chiefs would no longer fight the OSD staff involvement in the force planning issues.

Matloff: General force planning issues, or about Vietnam?

Kaufmann: In general. They had strongly resisted this intrusion in the force planning and with the whole development of the draft presidential memorandum process, originally presidential memorandum--I believe I was the cause of its being changed from PMs to DPMs--I must have been seen as breaking the deal and getting more and more into operational issues.

Matloff: And you were given no explanation when you were taken off this?

Kaufmann: No, I was told that I was needed back in NATO, or something of that sort.

Matloff: Did you have any impressions of what McNamara's objectives were toward Vietnam? also, Kennedy's and Johnson's? What do you think they were after? Was it defending Vietnamese freedom?

Kaufmann: It was a problem. My impression of DoD is that we always had a problem trying to define objectives, but to put it very simply, I would say that it was a combination of trying to pacify South Vietnam and preserve its independence and territorial integrity, in the good old words.

Matloff: Did you ever have a discussion with McNamara along those lines, about what he thought our policy and goal were in Vietnam?

Kaufmann: No, I don't recall it.

Matloff: Did you ever get back to Vietnam, after being pulled off?

Kaufmann: Yes, after Tet, I got drawn in. It was the period when everybody was throwing up his hands and trying to figure out ways, with Paul Warnke very much in the lead, of how we could gracefully disentangle ourselves from it. I assume that was the time when Clark Clifford also was undergoing the conversion that he has spoken of so eloquently. ISA had come up with a scheme for which Mort Halperin was largely responsible, and Larry Lynn, then in Systems Analysis, showed me this one day. I thought that it was militarily totally unrealistic. I got very heavily involved not only criticizing that but also suggesting alternative ways of trying to maintain a position, since it seemed to be agreed that there was to be a limitation on the U.S. commitment; how you could do that without exposing yourself militarily.

Matloff: Could you sense any disillusionment on McNamara's part?

Kaufmann: Yes. I became very sensitive to it in connection with the B-52 bombing. He seemed at that time to be relying very heavily on some Rand work which suggested that the B-52s were really having a devastating effect on Viet Cong morale, as well as on casualties. I was very skeptical about that, and had a graduate student at the time who was a very good statistician. I got him cleared and we spent quite a bit of time, because the data sample was rather small, demonstrating that the Leon Gouré and

other arguments that were being made at the time just could not be supported by careful statistical analysis of Viet Cong behavior.

Matloff: This was done before OSD?

Kaufmann: It was done more or less on our own, off my own bat. That was the advantage of being a consultant. Then I showed it to Adam Yarmolinsky, who was very interested and impressed by it, and he then showed it to McNamara. I think that it was Adam who reported back that this seemed to be the final straw as far as McNamara's willingness to support the bombing.

Matloff: There was a shift in position?

Kaufmann: Yes, but I'm not sure about the dates.

Matloff: I came across an interesting quote in your volume on The McNamara Strategy that I'd like to try out on you now: ". . . the future course of the war in South Vietnam remained uncertain in 1963. But McNamara continued to believe in the necessity of defending Vietnamese freedom. Whether the counterinsurgency program instituted for that purpose would do the job still could not be determined. As to whether or not the United States should be developing a major counterinsurgency capability there can hardly be any doubt at all. Khrushchev's declarations of support for wars of national liberation and the instabilities that exist in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America all indicate the vital importance of having this kind of capability. No doubt we have a great deal still to learn in this complicated area, and the problem is only partly military . . . . But where military action is required, there appears to be no adequate substitute for the types of capabilities that are committed to the campaign in South

Vietnam. The approach of multiple options surely stands up well on that score." Does that strike a familiar chord after these years?

Kaufmann: No, not really. I follow the Satchel Page motto.

Matloff: Do you still agree with what you wrote, in the light of what happened later? Actually a lot of these things that you were saying are in line with what occurred. On the question of the need for a major counterinsurgency capability--you were not sure that the existing program was the right one along this line; perhaps that was still to be determined. At the very end you were talking about the multiple options approach standing up well so far. Was Vietnam a full valid test of the multiple options approach in wartime, as you look back on it now?

Kaufmann: I had originally called the thing "full options," and then McNamara or somebody else said that was going too far, back in '61, so we came up with "multiple options." I think what I was trying to suggest in that paragraph is that as part of those options one needed to have a major counterinsurgency capability. The issue, I guess in retrospect I would raise, without having a very good answer, is how much of a separate counterinsurgency capability do you need. I think it's the issue that the Army has wrestled with a great deal over the years--to what extent can you take regular units and strip out the heavy equipment and with a modest amount of indoctrination really turn them loose, particularly in this tremendously difficult terrain? I still don't have a good answer to that. One thing which I felt very strongly about--one of my former students, an Army major, just published his dissertation on the Army in Vietnam, and he and I fought back and forth over the dissertation--is that I never

felt at the time, and I still don't, that there was some decisive choice between pacification and search and destroy, if you will. The real issue there was not did you do one or the other, but how did you get the right sort of balance between the two. One could arguably say that the Army swung too far over toward search and destroy, but I don't think it ever was or ever could be an either/or proposition, and we were really trying to do both.

Matloff: Let me try a quote from Enthoven's book, How Much is Enough, written in 1971: "The Systems Analysis office did not have a prominent, much less a crucial, role in the Vietnam war. . . . In Vietnam, no one insisted on systematic efforts to understand, analyze, or interpret the war." How do you account for the fact that this "most complex of wars never got serious and systematic analysis?" In fact, elsewhere in the book he says that the problem in the conduct of the war from Washington was not "overmanagement," but "undermanagement." Given the McNamara administration's strong interest in effective management, how can one account for this development? Was Vietnam a full valid test for systems analysis, in your view?

Kaufmann: I would quarrel somewhat with Alain's interpretation. I think there was a big investment of staff within Systems Analysis. It became a very big staff, larger, I think, than the rest of the office combined. It was working on issues and, despite this alleged bargain, was getting very much into operational matters. I think perhaps what Alain might have said more specifically was that while they were working on a whole set of Vietnam-related issues, their advice may not have been taken,

whatever that advice may have been, and to the extent that I was familiar with it, it was not at all in consonance with what the President or the Chiefs were trying to do. So I think a more accurate and precise statement would be that they were working hard on a lot of these issues but whatever they had to say was not really being followed or recommended. One of the problems I always ran into in working with the people in Systems Analysis was that they very quickly become micro-analysts. That's where the operations research-type people feel most comfortable--defining problems pretty narrowly and fixing the constraints so they could make the problem manageable and make their tools work. There was a lot of that in systems analysis, so while I sympathize with what Alain was saying there, I'm not sure that they would have come up with any great vision about how to deal with this problem.

Matloff: In many accounts the war is described as "Mr. McNamara's war." Does that seem to be a fair appellation?

Kaufmann: I remember from the very outset of the administration that there was this trouble in Southeast Asia, and while I personally was not at all involved in it, people were already arguing about whether we should take action, and if so, what kind? There was the famous dispute between Gen. Lemnitzer and others about what it would take to hold and whether this would entail the use of nuclear weapons. I vaguely recall the view that whereas Laos and the Laotians were not very reliable, we could count on our stout South Vietnamese allies and that was where we should really take our stand. It was a hot topic, although I was not involved in it at

that time, right from the outset of the administration. To what extent McNamara was pushing it, I honestly don't know. There were an awful lot of misconceptions, including my own, that crazy Lin Piao speech that got everybody excited at the time, about the countryside against the city. God knows what he was really referring to, but that was interpreted to mean that this was a declaration of support by the Chinese for the guerrillas, which I doubt that it was, in retrospect.

Matloff: In your reflections since the war, do you regard Vietnam as a failure for the United States? If so, a failure of what--national policy, military policy, or both? and what is the significance of Vietnam for American strategic theory?

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Kaufmann: In 1965 Bill Bundy, by that time over at State, asked me to come over and look over the data of a White Paper that they were again going to issue about the North Vietnamese role. I, this time with all the appropriate clearances, went over the data, much of which one could not divulge because of the [redacted] It was very clear to me, as I think it was to Bill, that this was, as the war had escalated very much, a North Vietnamese operation. But you couldn't publish that without the backup, because people had grown so skeptical about administration statements, and you couldn't give the backup because of the nature of the sources. So I advised against a White Paper and wrote an informal draft to Congressman Evans, which then was circulated as a substitute for a White Paper. I do not believe that we were militarily defeated. I think the evidence is very clear, in fact, although I did not believe this at the time, that the Tet

offensive of 1968 was a very clear defeat--Gen. Westmoreland was right. In fact, it was the end of the VC, as far as I can tell, in retrospect. My own view is that thereafter the North Vietnamese were as lost in South Vietnam as the Americans were. And because they no longer had the VC to lead them around by the hand, they were engaging increasingly in conventional operations. As long as U.S. air power was in there and even without U.S. ground forces, as long as the RVN would form enough of a screen to let the air power do its work, in '72 and again in '73 we just wiped them out. They took a terrible beating, if I remember the dates correctly, but the moment we pulled out the air power that was the death warrant for the RVN. So militarily, I do not regard it as a defeat for the United States. We lived off equipment from Vietnam for years. I don't mean to say this critically, but I think that the real problem was the loss of national will.

Matloff: How about the matter of American public opinion in a protracted war, was this taken into account sufficiently by the theorists and by the policymakers?

Kaufmann: No. I think that I can honestly say that I did point out that even with Korea after a couple of years people began to lose patience with that dreadful stalemate, and that Eisenhower came in to a considerable extent on the promise that he was going to end that war. So in a much more clear-cut situation, i.e., of North Korean aggression, you saw this draining away of energy and will by the third year. It takes us about five years of R&R to recuperate--and the same process, although more gradually, occurred in Vietnam. Nobody could offer an end period.

Matloff: Looking back, do you see any significance of the meaning of this war for strategic theory? You refer to the limited war option. Does that experience have any impact for strategic theory in these terms?

Kaufmann: I don't think that it has had nearly enough. There has been much more of the attitude that you got after Korea--no more Koreas and no more Vietnams. People, to my knowledge, really have not looked very objectively--forget about the rights and wrongs of our involvement--at the operational side of it and asked, if we were called upon to do it again, what would we do differently? I'm not aware that that has really been done. I read this PhD dissertation by Andy Krepinovich, a very able fellow. He was going over the history in an effort to demonstrate that the Army doctrine was all wrong; another one of these attrition versus maneuver arguments. I think that is a dead horse that somehow or other keeps getting propped up on its feet, as though there were something to it. I think that the U.S. Army is one of the most maneuver-conscious armies in the world. It has more wheels than any other army.

Matloff: You mentioned China, before, in connection with that speech. Did you ever get drawn in on any of the discussions in OSD or in other official circles on the impact of the rise of Communist China on the conflicts of Southeast Asia, and what bearing that would have on our relations with the Soviet Union?

Kaufmann: That never really surfaced until the Nixon administration. To the best of my recollection, all through the Johnson administration China was still enemy number two, and the prospect that we would get this kind of change certainly never filtered down to me.

Matloff: Were you drawn in on any other questions of area problems or crises that we've been touching on?

Kaufmann: The '64 business in the Gulf of Tonkin--we set up the same apparatus that we set up for the Cuban missile crisis on the assumption that that might explode. We called back in some of the same people and sat up all night and then discovered that it was not going to turn into that kind of a confrontation.

Matloff: Was there good intelligence at the time as to what was going on?

Kaufmann: No. My principal recollection is just sitting there in Harry Rowen's office and arguing about what time it was in the Gulf of Tonkin.

Matloff: On the area of arms control and disarmament, what were your views? Did they differ in any way from those of Kennedy and McNamara on the one hand, and of Nixon and Schlesinger on the other? How did you stand, for example, on an ABM system, and on the limited test ban?

Kaufmann: It was a very gradually evolving business in the Kennedy/Johnson period. I really first became sensitized to it, I suspect, by 1964. McNamara had been at Camp David with the President. When he came back, whether by his initiative or by the President's initiative--he never discussed any dealings with the President--he was very hot for taking initiatives in the arms control area. That was after the limited test ban treaty, with which I had nothing to do, as I recall. I was very involved in setting up the Nuclear Planning Group for NATO, which was meant very deliberately to be a substitute for the MLF. I don't know if you would call that arms control, but it was associated with very strong feelings about non-proliferation.

Matloff: Were you in favor of MLF?

Kaufmann: No, very flatly opposed to it.

Matloff: On what grounds?

Kaufmann: I always called it the multilateral ~~forest~~ farce, because it was kind of a con job. To begin with, it was very evident from the outset that nobody understood how this thing would work, and it was very clear that neither President Kennedy nor President Johnson was going to turn the trigger over; at least they were going to maintain veto powers over the use of the thing.

Matloff: Where was the impetus coming from for the MLF?

Kaufmann: State.

Matloff: How about the Nuclear Planning Group? Was this being generated within your group, was it coming from McNamara?

Kaufmann: My recollection is that in 1961 I had written as my first involvement in the speechwriting business, which consumed a lot of my time, a draft--Roger Hilsman wanted McNamara to give a 15-minute speech on the occasion of Adenauer's visit in the spring. I drafted what amounted to about a 45 minute speech and McNamara told Roger that that was what he was going to do and that Adenauer wouldn't fall asleep, which was the big issue. McNamara kept him awake. So what was the followup going to be? As an alternative to MLF, Harry Rowen and I started working on how could we have a series of discussions with the Allies which would bring them into our confidence. We had told Adenauer things in this presentation that he had never been told before and he was, allegedly, enormously impressed by this candor, which had not previously been practiced. So, as an alternative to MLF, Harry

and I were working on what really became NPG. But when Kennedy seemed to lean more toward the MLF, McNamara, as the good soldier Schweik, said, "All right, we cut off the criticism of MLF." It wasn't until '64, when Erhard showed a lack of interest and LBJ was sick of the whole thing, that we were allowed to fire away at MLF and sink it. At that point the NPG became the substitute.

Matloff: Did you get drawn in on any of the background discussions relating to the SALT talks?

Kaufmann: I first became aware of what was going on when McNamara asked me to start giving John McNaughton a series of seminars on "strategic nuclear theory," as preparation for John's involvement in what were to become the SALT talks, in the spring of 1966. John was killed in the early summer of 1967. John really didn't want to sit still for what amounted to lectures. Ivan Selin took over the preparatory work and that was my only involvement in SALT.

Matloff: Did you see arms control primarily as a political, strategic, or technological problem?

Kaufmann: I am a very bad person to ask about this. While I am by no means opposed to arms control, I think that its utility has been wildly exaggerated. To put it this way--if you could assume perfectly rational actors on the Soviet and American sides, with perfect information about not only what the other side was up to at the present but what that other side would be doing ten years from now, and were then working that into their military planning and doing it in the most systematic way possible, that would be

the best arms control you could have. You wouldn't need any agreements. The difficulty comes from this ideal type not existing, and I still think that the best we can do in the way of systematic force planning is the best kind of arms control. Then arms control can contribute on the margin to helping toward rational force planning. So that's fine; but I think we swing between these really wildly polar views and we've done this all along. McNamara became an enthusiast initially, in my view, in part because of his frustration with getting the Chiefs to do what he thought was sensible, and because of the enormous demands that they kept making on him. Somehow or other he got the view that it would be easier to deal with the Russians. I don't think that he ever put it that way to himself, or that he thought of it in those terms, but, in effect, he was saying somehow or other that it would be easier to strike a deal with the Russians than with the Joint Chiefs, which I think is not self-evident. You get that kind of a swing, and then you get the swing in the other direction--that you can't deal with the Russians; let's really sit on our own bureaucracy. We've oscillated between those two and I don't think we've really ever asked ourselves seriously what we think we can get out of this process. The test ban is a perfect example. I think it was a good idea to go to underground testing, but nobody's ever said there is a price, and there is a price we've paid for ending the atmospheric testing. A comprehensive test ban wouldn't bother me, but I don't think it would make a particle of difference. It's sort of a doctor feel-good syndrome--people would somehow or other feel better.

Matloff: Some general questions about the Cold War policies--did you believe that containment was a realistic policy? that its assumptions were valid and that deterrence could be kept at a relatively stable level?

Kaufmann: I never believed that one could put a ring around the Soviet bloc and prevent them from wandering through it at various places, or that you could ever mobilize sufficient support for a policy of that sort to make it at all realistic. It was always going to be a selective matter.

Matloff: How about detente? Do you see it as another side of the same coin, something different, a more realistic policy?

Kaufmann: It's a very good question, to which I really don't have an answer, although I've puzzled over it a great deal in the sense that, though this may be changing somewhat in the Soviet Union, we really are dealing with a very paranoid belief that can't distinguish between offense and defense in a rather generic sense and is so paranoid that its defensive needs are almost infinite, and therefore are bound to become offensive from the standpoint of its neighbors. Therefore there is this very fine line that we have to try and walk, and for a society such as ours it's a very difficult one--showing them sufficient strength that they realize that they can't just keep pushing and yet not being so ferocious looking to them that we stir up the worst of their paranoia. It's a very difficult, delicate tightrope.

Matloff: How effective was military aid, on the basis of your studies and knowledge, as a tool for political leverage in the Cold War?

Kaufmann: I think that our most effective military assistance was to our European allies.

Matloff: Are formal alliances the most effective way of coupling American and foreign military power and implementing American strategic aims?

Kaufmann: I don't see any real alternative to the formal alliances. I've always had the problem in planning that we've always said we want the allies to do more. But when it came down to what was going to be the US input, we tended to say, "Here's the threat; here's the allied input as a given; and we're going to make up the difference." The US will be the variable in the equation. You could work it the other way around, and say, as used to be the case in many traditional alliances, "Here's what we have to offer; here are our/~~and~~ divisions, tactical air wings, etc.; now you design around us." Whereas, we work it the other way around, and still do. I think that we need more flexibility in that respect. NATO has been like this drunk on the precipice who manages never quite to fall over. I don't know how much longer we can keep it up. We'll all end up speaking Romanche--I was brought up partly in Switzerland.

Matloff: I don't ever remember reading about NATO when someone hasn't said that it's in disarray.

Kaufmann: Harry Rowen's successor had a stamp made saying, "In this critical time in the life of the alliance," which he could just stamp on any paper.

Matloff: What about your perspectives on OSD organization and management? Do you see the need for further changes in structure, working relations, or functions in OSD, or DoD?

Kaufmann: Quite frankly, I think that we're making a series of disastrous mistakes right now, based on the understandable frustration with the way things are being managed currently. I think that we're dealing with a

specific, when, a couple of years from now, if a very strong Secretary of Defense comes into office, he may very well find himself severely hamstrung by some of the institutional changes that are now taking place. I became very interested, even before becoming directly involved, in the way President Eisenhower was approaching these issues. I just started reading the Ambrose biography, and I think basically he had it right--that there was no substitute for a very strong Secretary of Defense. You can't guarantee that that will be the case, but I do genuinely believe that McNamara gave a demonstration. It had a lot of rough spots in it, because it was the first of its kind and generated an enormous amount of resistance, but he demonstrated how much you really can do with a strong, knowledgeable, and very courageous Secretary of Defense. So many of these wrinkles people keep suggesting, whether it's the Packard Commission or reforming the JCS, etc., are really skating around the central issues. I'm not that knowledgeable on the operational side, and if it makes sense to make the Chairman much more powerful as the operator and to deal directly with the theater commanders, etc., I have no views. It's really on the force planning side. There I think we're just making life potentially very difficult for a future Secretary of Defense in the things that are now being proposed.

Matloff: Do you have any strong feelings about unification of the services--whether it can or should go further?

Kaufmann: I think it's a waste of time, myself. Again, I think that that, to a large extent, has to be one of the functions of the Secretary of Defense. We want a certain amount of competition; it's the source of

ideas. Even if we put everybody in the famous purple suit, you'd still have the engineers fighting with the artillery men, the tankers and the submariners, etc., because the divisions within the services are just as great, if not greater, than divisions among the services. The Canadians have not made a great success out of it, to my knowledge.

Matloff: From your perspective, coming in and out of the department, do you have any sense of whether strategic analysis has been effectively institutionalized in the defense establishment?

Kaufmann: I think that at least within the services the quality of the work has probably improved. Whether it gets out is another issue. On the OSD side, again there is much too much of a propensity to work the micro instead of the macro side of the problem, which is fuzzier and not nearly as amenable to the quantitative techniques. It doesn't preclude them, but there are many more judgments that have to be made. I think that's what the Secretary needs far more. He can't avoid decisions like, "Will I buy F-16s or F-15s?" But mostly he needs help and wants help on the very large issues of how many things should he buy.

Matloff: How would you characterize the styles, personalities, and effectiveness of the Secretaries of Defense and other top officials in OSD with whom you may have worked or served? Just a thumbnail reaction, if you will. You've already mentioned McNamara. Is there anything more that occurs to you about his style of management, decision-making, or his regard or disregard for military advice; his use of consultants? And then people like Schlesinger, or other Secretaries of Defense--how effective were they?

Kaufmann: In a formal sense, I worked for six. Four of them are really all that I count. Clifford was there such a short time, and so was Elliot Richardson. I had the most dealings with McNamara, Schlesinger, Rumsfeld, and Brown. Those four are very different people. I would still rank McNamara as the first among those four, even though he caused an enormous amount of animosity. What I'm still not clear about in my own mind is the extent to which, even had there not been this enormous sense that he was poaching on service territory, the animosities would have been there. Not only he, but also his subordinates, with very few exceptions, were a pretty arrogant bunch. No question about it, they were not diplomatic. There would have been this figurative blood on the floor anyway, given the way that the territorial lines had been drawn in the '50s, and McNamara was really changing those lines very dramatically. There would have been fights even with the most diplomatic kind of operations. But I don't think that it had to be as abrasive as in fact it was. I was really much closer to Schlesinger than to any of the others. I probably did more work for Brown than for the other three, but just in point of time--I was there to the point where they were docking my salary at MIT. Schlesinger was a very critical student of McNamara, in a negative sense. An article he wrote once was titled "Two Cheers for McNamara," or something of that sort. Jim is a very complicated personality also, but I think he attempted to put into effect a system of trying to strike deals with the services. He viewed McNamara, and with some justification, as much too authoritarian in his relationships with the services and much too focused on centralization

and not willing to delegate, and trying to control everything. In fact, McNamara tried to create an information system that would tell him what was going on out there, because he would discover periodically that he just didn't know what was happening. He might give an order and then three thousand miles away something would be happening that bore no relation to the order. While Jim's basic analysis had to be pretty much the same, it was probably a better modus operandi. He did strike a very good deal with Abrams; he struck a very good deal with the Air Force. He never could get a deal with the Navy. That independent sovereign state just could not be really worked on. I think that was one of Jim's great frustrations, aside from Henry [Kissinger] and all his battles with him. He had a very good personal relationship with both Abrams and Dave Jones, and could sit down with them and deal. He was able to say, "All right, we're going to have to live within a manpower constraint in the Army, but if you can get 16 divisions out of that manpower constraint, you can have them. I'm not going to hold you to some arbitrarily dictated limit." Both he and I agreed that the Army ought to have at least 16 divisions. Similarly with Dave Jones--he was able to work out a deal on the number of wings and the high-low mixture of 15s and 16s; but with the Navy, never.

Matloff: Any impressions of Brown?

Kaufmann: In IQ terms, I suspect Harold was by far the brightest of the bunch. I suspect that even McNamara might admit that. I never understood Harold. He was a very reclusive person, and not an easy person to talk with. We communicated far more in writing than in personal conversation.

He was an omnivorous reader. I would sit down and just write things, and then he'd comment on them. That was mostly the way we operated. He was an extremely cautious person. I remember once asking Adam Yarmolinsky, "Is that the way Harold was in the McNamara years? I didn't have that impression." And Adam said, "Oh, yes, he was then." But he had a great deal to be cautious about in the Carter administration, because that was a very difficult environment. I quit after the third year, in part just out of sheer burnout. I was teaching a full time load at MIT and spending 240 days or something like that in the Pentagon. Charles Duncan took me over for a lot of his activities, so I was doing work for both Brown and Duncan, and drafting the annual defense report, and it just got to be too much.

Matloff: Did you do the same in the Ford period?

Kaufmann: I started really doing it for Schlesinger, as a favor. I worked in the brief period that Clifford was secretary, mostly with Paul Nitze, who was his deputy, and had been the deputy in the last few months of the McNamara period. Paul and I dated back to the mid-50s, so it was a very easy relationship, personally. I never got to know Clifford until after he left office. I got called in by Jonathan Moore, who worked very closely with Richardson at a variety of places, and was his special assistant at OSD for that brief period. Jonathan wanted me to work on the posture statement that Laird had left them. I did that, and then I was told subsequently that Henry [Kissinger] found out that I was getting involved and told Bill Clements to stop that. Henry and I have a very ancient and difficult relationship. I then went to CIA with Schlesinger and next came with him to DoD. Rumsfeld and I had a rather awkward relationship, too.

He never really got into the guts of the business. I think he spent more time worrying about the corridors than he did about the planning. Quite candidly, he used to drive me crazy with his absolutely insane nitpicking about speeches and things. Fortunately, he had a first class principal military assistant, a Navy admiral, so I was always able to work with him, but I really had serious run-ins with Rumsfeld.

Matloff: You would place McNamara as number one among those that you had contact with? Would this be in terms of effectiveness and impact?

Kaufmann: Yes.

Matloff: You would put Schlesinger second?

Kaufmann: Yes, out of the six. With Rumsfeld in a sense it's unfair, because he was there only 16 months or less and he came in less prepared than just about any of the others.

Matloff: How about other officials, Deputy SecDefs, Assistant Secretaries, or Joint Chiefs? Were there any who particularly impressed you over the years?

Kaufmann: Of the Chiefs, despite everything, I was always impressed by LeMay. I knew John Wickham very well before, because he was Schlesinger's number one military assistant, and I had a great deal to do with John. I thought well of Dave Jones.

Matloff: How about people like Enthoven, Hitch?

Kaufmann: They were old Rand associates. Hitch, Rowen, Enthoven--they were personal friends. I had, and continue to have, very high regard for them. I really need to look at lists of names to refresh my memory, but there were some absolutely first class military people with whom I enjoyed

working. I thought the world of Admiral Holcomb and regretted that he was not CNO. He would have been an absolutely superlative one. He succeeded Wickham as military assistant.

Matloff: In the general business of the role of the consultant in government, in relation to the Defense Department, how do you see the role of the consultant? What can he contribute to the bureaucracy? What qualities should he possess ideally, and at what point in the planning and decision-making process is it most effective to introduce him? Are there advantages or disadvantages in the consultant business? Yours has been a long experience.

Kaufmann: It was a long one, and my guess is, because of a series of accidents and associations, probably a unique one. It might happen again, but it really required a very special set of conditions. I think that, unless consultants are really willing to get in and work very closely with the staffs, for the most part they're not all that useful. That was certainly my experience while I was still at Rand, doing the counter-force study. It was just not feasible anymore, if it ever really had been, to sit in Santa Monica for three years and write and then go present results. Maybe events were slower in the early and mid-50s and you could do a three-year study in isolation. But certainly by the time I got heavily involved I found that it had to be a rolling kind of operation that dealt continually and on increasingly confidential terms with staff. Unless you were really willing to get your hands dirty in their problems, you probably were not going to

be very useful or have a great deal of influence on decisions. I think the notion that you can wander in once a week, or for a day or once a month, is probably wrong. You really have to plunge in.

Matloff: Here's one you may not want to tackle. What do you estimate was the overall impact of Rand in the various administrations that you served, going from Eisenhower to Nixon, say?

Kaufmann: I would say, as far as I could tell, that there was a lot of bread and butter work, particularly on the logistical side, that Rand did for the Air Force, that wasn't at all glamorous, but was extremely useful. It was refining mostly Air Force ideas and making them more efficient and so on. I think that was very valuable. There may have been three or four of these big studies that paid off. I think what ended up happening, to Rand's dismay, is that it became a very useful recruiting ground for staffing DoD, and still is. It is very hard in academia to replicate that intermediate kind of experience that you get at Rand, that isn't quite the hands-on thing that you have to worry about in government, but still is dealing fairly operationally with issues.

Matloff: What do you regard as your major contributions and achievements in the field of national security and strategic analysis during your service in or for OSD, particularly in their impact on the defense establishment--or anything in which you take particular pride or satisfaction, looking back on your service?

Kaufmann: I've really never thought about that. I don't know whether pride is quite the right word, but, quite frankly, I'm glad I had a funny

combination of what started off very much as a liberal arts and history background, which I think is a much better discipline than international relations, even though that was my formal ticket. And that I had really what amounted to a second education at Rand, which involved me much more in the more quantitative areas of this line of work. And that I had the satisfaction, if you will, of exercising both of those skills, such as they are, in an unusual environment. Particularly, I guess the greatest satisfaction was the first couple of years of the Kennedy administration. Kennedy and I had been in prep school together, and it was a very special kind of time. That was the most satisfying period. We really felt like we were on the frontier in the early '60s; after that, a lot of the fun went out of it, and it was more of a duty. It was remarkable how much one kept replaying the same themes. I used to be amused by the stories which would come out saying that Harold Brown had really struck a fresh note, when it was maybe a slightly different writeup of something that had been said 20 years before.

Matloff: What was your greatest frustration or disappointment that you had in dealing with the Department of Defense as a consultant?

Kaufmann: I guess that it was a gradual sense of what I, to this day, believe were sensible reforms, instituted by McNamara, being gradually eroded, to the point where I think, frankly, under Secretary Weinberger we are right back in the '50s again in management. Weinberger is presiding over the department; and you have the Chiefs, who are really back at the old stand. Since there has been plenty of money until recently, you have

not seen the fights break out. It is going to be very interesting, over the next couple of years, to see how they are going to manage a presumably more Spartan diet. I've already had indications from various old friends that internecine warfare is likely to break out, if it hasn't already begun. I just don't think Weinberger knows how to manage that situation.

Matloff: Do you want to add anything to this list of questions?

Kaufmann: No, you're the boss.

Matloff: I want to thank you for your cooperation and for sharing your recollections and insights with us.

Kaufmann: I enjoyed it.