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## The Decline and Fall of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

William A. Hamilton III  
*U.S. Army*

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*The relationship between the military and civilian sectors of American society and more particularly the role played by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington's policy formulation and execution became the focus of strident debate in the 1960's. The conflict surrounding the role of the JCS during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations can perhaps best be appreciated by first examining the military's own view of its proper function and then comparing this prescription with actual practice. While no formal definition of the JCS's proper function may satisfy everyone, effective strategic planning and coordinated use of power in support of political objectives cannot be achieved in the absence of some agreement between the President and his military advisers over the latter's position.*

## THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

A research paper prepared

by

Lieutenant Colonel William A. Hamilton III, U.S. Army

College of Naval Command and Staff

**Introduction.** Today the United States finds itself withdrawing its military forces from Indochina despite the fact that the outcome of the conflict in that region is still in doubt. This has never happened before in American history. It will be years before historians will be able to judge the correctness of the policies pursued by the United States in Southeast Asia, and, undoubtedly, that judgment will be tempered by the relative success of the venture. Even at this point in time, however, certain aspects of the war are already being debated. Inevitably some of the questions being raised center around the conduct of the war as a possible explanation for its excessive cost and duration. Was military force inappropriate to attain the national goals in this

instance? Was force improperly used? Was our strategy correct? Were our tactics sound?

By law "... the Joint Chiefs of Staff are the principal military advisers to the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense."<sup>1</sup> Did the JCS provide sound or unsound advice? Did the President listen to their advice?

The answer to the last two questions will be a long time coming. More Presidential papers will have to be made available, volumes of documents will have to be declassified, and a number of books and memoirs will have to be written before the answers can be found; however, it is possible to examine the environment in which the JCS operated during the Kennedy and

Johnson administrations in order to assess their collective influence upon the formulation of policy involving the use of the Armed Forces.

Before initiating an inquiry of this sort, a normative model describing the relationship between a Commander in Chief and the leaders of his Armed Forces must first be established in order to set a standard by which actual interactions between past Presidents and their military advisers can be measured.

The choice of a proper model is not difficult when so few exist. In this case the selection is small because whatever the differences between individual American military services over the years, they have uniformly supported the concept of civil control over the military. However, support of civil control was not held to mean that the military would give up its advisory function in the policymaking process.

While the literature in this area is uniform, it is also scarce. It is not clear whether this paucity is the result of oversight or the general unanimity of opinion in this regard.

The model chosen comes from a book first published by the U.S. Naval War College in 1936 called *Sound Military Decision*. The book was used for years to enlarge the viewpoint and broaden the basis of the professional judgment of officers. Based on an enormous body of literature which included all available and pertinent military writings, *Sound Military Decision* became a "bible" to students at the Naval War College prior to Pearl Harbor and throughout World War II.

What influence the following passage from *Sound Military Decision* had upon the drafters of the Act of Congress making the Joint Chiefs of Staff "the principal military advisers to the President, the National Security Council and the Secretary of Defense"<sup>2</sup> is unknown, but given its general acceptance among the military services, as well as the fact that it predates the National Security

Act of 1947, we may safely accept it as the model relationship.

### The Advisory Function

Understanding between the civil representatives of the State and the leaders of the Armed Forces is manifestly essential to the coordination of national policy with the power to enforce it. Therefore, if serious omissions and the adoption of ill-advised measures are to be avoided, it is necessary that wise professional counsel be available to the State. While military strategy may determine whether the aims of policy are possible of attainment, policy may, beforehand, determine largely the success or failure of military strategy. It behooves policy to ensure not only that military strategy pursue appropriate aims, but that the work of strategy be allotted adequate means and be undertaken under the most favorable conditions.<sup>3</sup>

Looking at the last decade (and particularly at the war in Southeast Asia) in light of the model relationship described above, one is moved to ask: What measure of understanding existed between the civil representatives of the State and the leaders of the Armed Forces? Was wise professional counsel available to the State? Were the policy aims of the United States such as to enhance the chance of success of the military strategy? Conversely, was the military strategy the correct one to accomplish the aims of policy? Were adequate means allotted to support the strategy, and was the strategy undertaken under favorable conditions?

While the temptation to address all these questions is strong, such an effort lies beyond the more limited constraints of time and space available here. Rather, the task of this paper is to examine only the degree of understanding or misunderstanding which existed between

the Commander in Chief and the JCS during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

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John Fitzgerald Kennedy became the 35th President of the United States on 20 January 1961. He brought to the Nation his considerable talents, certain preconceptions about the military, and his brilliant and aggressive Secretary of Defense, Robert Strange McNamara. Before the first 100 days of his administration were over, President Kennedy came to rely upon Mr. McNamara for military advice and profoundly changed the relationship between the office of the Commander in Chief and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.\*

John F. Kennedy was raised in a home which placed high value on public service. There can be no doubt that Kennedy was proud of his own military service. He was also proud of his oldest brother, Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr., who was killed in a tragic military accident during World War II.

Theodore Sorensen, President Kennedy's close friend and biographer, recounts the loss of the President's brother:

Joe volunteered for an experimental mission—flying a Liberator bomber loaded with explosives from which he would bail out once a control plane had directed it on target. With an earth-shaking blast that was never explained, his plane disintegrated in the air while still over England.<sup>4</sup>

Obviously something had gone wrong, and it would be difficult to escape the conclusion that those who planned the experiment had miscalcu-

lated. What effect this tragedy might have had upon John Kennedy's later attitudes about the military in general cannot be known, but one would have to be extremely charitable not to form at least a subconscious association between military bungling and the loss of a loved one.

His own experiences as a naval officer left him unawed by generals and admirals. In 1944, while he was recovering from the injuries he received during his courageous exploit as the skipper of PT 109, he wrote to a friend about the

... super-human ability of the Navy to screw up everything they touch... Even the simple delivery of a letter frequently overburdens this heaving puffing war machine of ours. God save this country of ours from those patriots whose war cry is, "what this country needs is to be run with military efficiency."<sup>5</sup>

Kennedy's personal view of the Military Establishment did not lessen his interest in military affairs, however. Once he indicated to Ted Sorensen that if he (Kennedy) were ever to be a Cabinet officer, the only two posts which he would consider were Secretary of State or Secretary of Defense.<sup>6</sup> Later, as President, he took great interest in his role as the Commander in Chief, frequently inspecting the Armed Forces, examining military equipment, and discussing concepts such as "flexible response" and "counterinsurgency."

One of the major thrusts of Kennedy's presidential campaign was that we were falling behind the Russians in usable military power and that our basic strategy of reliance upon "massive retaliation" was unrealistic, leaving the United States only two options: "world devastation or submission."<sup>7</sup> Under-scoring his concern for the state of national defense, he conducted an extensive talent hunt to find a man who would be a strong Secretary of Defense—a man who could unify the efforts of

\*See Lawrence J. Korb, "The Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Conflict in the Budgetary Process, 1947-1971," *Naval War College Review*, December 1971, p. 30-34.

the separate services and put an end to the bickering among the JCS. The search led to the newly elected president of the Ford Motor Company, Robert S. McNamara. Characterized by the military as a "civilian on horseback," McNamara's approach with the JCS was one of "divide and conquer."

Losing no time, the President-elect directed Mr. McNamara to conduct a survey of the Defense Establishment and to report his findings. Shortly after Kennedy's inauguration, Mr. McNamara reported to the President that he had found in the Pentagon:

... A strategic nuclear force vulnerable to surprise missile attack, a nonnuclear force weak in combat-ready divisions, in airlift capacity and in tactical air support, a counterinsurgency force for all practical purposes nonexistent, and a weapons inventory completely lacking in certain major elements but far oversupplied in others. . . . Too many automatic decisions made in advance instead of in the light of an actual emergency, and too few Pentagon-wide plans for each kind of emergency. The Army was relying on airlift the Air Force could not supply. The Air Force was stockpiling supplies for a war lasting a few days while the Army stockpiles assumed a war of two years.<sup>8</sup>

President Kennedy's worst suspicions were confirmed. Even if the new President stopped to consider that the JCS had been merely carrying out the Eisenhower-Dulles strategy, making do with a budget ceiling imposed by a Republican administration, it is doubtful that he was favorably impressed with those aspects of Mr. McNamara's report which evidenced a lack of coordination and cooperation between the military services.

Surveying the shakeup of the JCS, President Kennedy regarded them as

individuals "inherited" from the Eisenhower administration.<sup>9</sup> The Chiefs, however, had an apolitical institutional history and were equally loyal to Republicans and Democrats.\* Nevertheless, Kennedy longed to have his own appointees make up the JCS saying, "Any President should have the right to choose carefully his own military advisers."<sup>10</sup>

Prior to the Bay of Pigs, the President appeared content to allow normal attrition to change the membership of the JCS because he had already arranged an interim solution by the appointment of former U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor as his personal adviser on military affairs until the time came when he could make him Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>11</sup>

While it is not within the scope of this paper to recount all of the events surrounding the Bay of Pigs, this unfortunate event was a turning point in the newly developing relationship between the President and his chief military advisers. Having lost further confidence in the Chiefs as a consequence of the Cuban disaster, President Kennedy chose to substitute Secretary McNamara and a number of *ad hoc* advisers in place of the JCS. A common pattern of poor communications between the President and the JCS was evident before, during, and after the Bay of Pigs and played a significant part in the deterioration of civil-military relations at the highest levels.\*\*

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\*President Eisenhower, according to a report in *The New York Times* of 12 January 1961, was satisfied with the performance of the JCS.

\*\*In this examination a degree of reliance is placed on Mr. Schlesinger's and Mr. Sorensen's accounts as they shed some light upon President Kennedy's thoughts about the JCS; however, it should be kept in mind that Mr. Sorensen, and especially Mr. Schlesinger, are not generally regarded as objective reporters of events concerning President Kennedy and his administration.

From the early stages, the JCS were not happy about the CIA conducting large-scale military operations. The military Chiefs held the project at arm's length, only providing their comments on the military feasibility of the plan when required to do so. Accordingly, in January the JCS commented in writing that the CIA plan to land at Trinidad had a chance of initial military success and "... that ultimate success would depend upon either a sizable uprising inside the island or sizable support from outside."<sup>12</sup>

Mr. Schlesinger criticized the JCS for the indecisive stance they took in the early preinvasion deliberations. He noted that the JCS paper "without restating the alternative conditions for victory, ... concluded that the existing plan, if executed in time, stood a 'fair' chance of ultimate success."<sup>13</sup>

By March, however, the JCS noted that "... Cuban resistance was indispensable to success. They could see no other way short of United States intervention—by which an invasion force of a thousand Cubans, no matter how well trained and equipped nor how stout their morale, could conceivably overcome the 200,000 men of Castro's army and militia."<sup>14</sup>

As time went on, President Kennedy insisted that changes be made in the plan to reduce evidence of U.S. involvement. As a consequence, new landing sites were sought. The Joint Chiefs were asked to comment upon the Zapata area, the Bay of Pigs, and one other area. "The Joint Chiefs ... on 14 March, agreed that Zapata seemed the best ... but added softly that they still preferred Trinidad."<sup>15</sup> (Emphasis added.) On the other hand, Mr. Sorensen reports that the JCS failed to tell the President that they still preferred Trinidad.<sup>16\*</sup>

While the White House and the JCS felt that a revolt of the Cuban people was essential to the success of the operation, the CIA operatives in charge

of the operation were prepared to go ahead without an uprising. Here was a communications breakdown between the CIA and the rest of the administration. "... the invasion plan, as understood by the President and the Joint Chiefs, ... assume(d) that the successful occupation of an enlarged beachhead area would rather soon incite *organized* uprisings by *armed* members of the Cuban resistance."<sup>17</sup> But, after the disaster, Allen W. Dulles, the former CIA Director, stated in his book, *The Craft of Intelligence*, that "... I know of no estimate that a spontaneous uprising of the unarmed population of Cuba would be touched off by the landing."<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, the preparations for the operation moved inexorably onward as if the project possessed a life of its own. As Mr. Schlesinger describes it:

Our meetings were taking place in a curious atmosphere of assumed consensus. The CIA representatives dominated the discussion. The Joint Chiefs *seemed* to be going contentedly along. They met four times as a body after March 15th to review the Bay of Pigs project as it evolved; and while their preference for Trinidad was on the record and they never formally approved the new plan, they at no time opposed it. Their collaboration with the CIA in refining the scheme gave the White House the *impression* of their wholehearted support. (Emphasis added.)<sup>19</sup>

It is terrifying to think that a government could proceed on such a hazardous course on the basis of an assumed consensus or that the President could

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\*Mr. Schlesinger's hearing may have been better than Mr. Sorensen's. In any event, the actual landing site was later changed to the Bay of Pigs which was evidently the third choice of the JCS. It should be remembered that there was no uprising nor was any direct U.S. military support provided.

undertake to make such an important decision on the basis of an impression that his military advisers supported the plan and seemed to be content with it when the JCS had repeatedly gone on record stating their preconditions for success. The point at issue is not whether the JCS should be blamed or not for the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion, rather the question which must be answered is how such a state of affairs could come to pass. Could this situation have occurred if the National Security Council (NSC) machinery had been used as it was by President Eisenhower?

Research in this area has been hampered by an unwillingness of the military participants in this decision to openly discuss the subject.\* The Joint Chiefs side of the story can only be left to speculation. How could a group of dedicated and distinguished military officers and the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces so misread the intentions of the other? The President was convinced that the JCS would not let him plunge into an unwise military adventure, and yet he seemed deaf to their warnings that to succeed the plan would have to be bold and its execution forceful.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the JCS became convinced that it was the President who kept pushing the CIA's "covert" invasion project since it would not die a decent bureaucratic death even after all the preconditions and reservations raised by the Joint Chiefs. Or perhaps the JCS wanted to show the new President that they could get along with the CIA and were not just parochial nitpickers.

The CIA planners were so secretive in

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\*In February 1971, almost 10 years after the Bay of Pigs, the author, in a discussion with General Lemnitzer, tried to open the subject but was courteously refused any information other than the fact that the members of the JCS had great respect for President Kennedy's courage and, in keeping with their oath of office, the Chiefs had remained silent.

their approach that the JCS had to rely upon a patchwork of briefings "about" the invasion plans rather than receiving a formal operations plan which could have been subjected to minute scrutiny and to which the JCS could have appended formal comments. The changes urged by Kennedy's civilian advisers which canceled 40 of 48 planned airstrikes were unknown to the Joint Chiefs until the last moment. Attempts by the CIA and the military to restore the strikes were to no avail.<sup>21</sup> Dr. Mario Lazo, former leader of the anti-Castro underground inside Cuba, stated in his article, "Decision for Disaster," which appeared in the September 1964 issue of *The Reader's Digest*, that the plan which the JCS approved was changed at the insistence of President Kennedy's advisers without the knowledge of the JCS. "These changes doomed the invasion to disaster before it even got underway."

Lyman Kirkpatrick, former Deputy Director of the CIA and at the time of the Bay of Pigs episode the Inspector General of the CIA, found no fault with the JCS in his postmortem of the entire affair:

Throughout the rest of Washington, after the Bay of Pigs there was a general effort to try and move out of the hot seat and put somebody else in it. There were those that tried unjustly to blame the Defense Department and Joint Chiefs of Staff, whose participation had been limited.<sup>22</sup>

When it was all over and the President and the Nation had been humiliated, it was clear to the President that many mistakes had been made, and many people shared in the blame. Publicly, he took all of the blame upon his own shoulders. Privately, he expressed to his intimates great disappointment in the performance of his advisers and then slowly began to replace those whom he felt had failed him. For political reasons he could not move too fast, but even-

tually the errant (or thought to be errant) individuals were removed and/or their functions replaced by organs of his own design.

Despite President Kennedy's acceptance of responsibility for the invasion's failure, the controversy surrounding this ill-starred venture was just starting. Congress was the first to attack. Senator Gore wanted the JCS dismissed.<sup>23</sup> Senator Long wanted General Lemnitzer removed.<sup>24</sup> Secretary McNamara was painfully slow to defend the JCS, but President Kennedy had them pose with him in the rose garden for an official photograph which was accomplished with more than normal publicity.<sup>25</sup> Finally, in June, former President Eisenhower came to their defense,<sup>26</sup> for the most part ending the attacks coming from outside the administration.

Although the President made no public denunciation of his military and civilian advisers, he did, according to Schlesinger and Sorensen, make a number of comments about the JCS.\* The comments he allegedly made about the Joint Chiefs and the military bear repeating because they reflect an attitude that was to carry on throughout his administration. Schlesinger speaks for the President:

The President reserved his innermost thoughts and, in the end, blamed only himself. But he was a human being and not totally free of resentment. He would say at times, "My God, the bunch of advisers we inherited. . . can you imagine being President and leaving behind someone like all those people there?" My impression is

that, among these advisers, the Joint Chiefs had disappointed him most for their cursory review of the military plans.<sup>27</sup>

He felt that he now knew certain soft spots in his administration especially the CIA and the Joint Chiefs. He would never be overawed by professional military advice again.<sup>28</sup>

[But with the exception of General Shoup] the President was convinced after the Bay of Pigs that he needed military advice that neither Bundy's civilian staff nor the holdover Chiefs of Staff were able to give.<sup>29</sup>

A year and a half later, Mr. Sorensen reports the President as saying, "The advice of every member of the Executive Branch that was brought into advise was unanimous—and the advice was wrong." Then Mr. Sorensen goes on to say:

In fact, the advice was not so unanimous or so well considered as it seemed. The Chiefs of Staff, whose endorsement of the military feasibility of the plan particularly embittered him, gave it only limited piecemeal study as a body, and individually differed in their understanding of its features. Inasmuch as it was the responsibility of another agency and did not directly depend on their forces, they were not as close or critical in their examination as they might otherwise have been, and depended on the CIA's estimates of Castro's military and political strength. Moreover, they had originally approved the plan when it called for a landing at the city of Trinidad at the foot of the Escambray Mountains, and when Trinidad was ruled out as too conspicuous, they selected the Bay of Pigs as the best of the alternative sites offered without informing either Kennedy or

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\*The author's investigations reveal a most cordial and respectful relationship between the President and the JCS. Whether President Kennedy actually said or believed the things which Schlesinger and Sorensen say that he said about the Joint Chiefs is open to debate. Either way, the impact of such thoughts within the administration served to undermine the prestige and influence of the JCS.



McNamara that they still thought Trinidad preferable.<sup>30\*</sup>

The President and the White House staff felt that they had indeed learned some hard lessons and, according to Mr. Schlesinger the JCS learned also: "The Chiefs had their own way of reacting to the Cuban fiasco. It soon began to look to the White House as if they were taking care to build a record which would permit them to say that, whatever the President did, he acted against their advice."<sup>31</sup>

When the question of intervention in Laos came up later, Mr. Schlesinger had this opinion, "... the Joint Chiefs, chastened by the Bay of Pigs, declined to guarantee the success of the military operations. . . ." <sup>32\*\*</sup>

Thus, if understanding, mutual trust, and respect are essential to achieving the proper relationship between a President and his military advisers, the JCS as an institution was now defunct for all intents and purposes. Under such circumstances the Chiefs could hardly perform their proper advisory role as this last quote from Mr. Sorensen suggests:

... the Bay of Pigs fiasco had its influence. That operation had been recommended principally by the same set of advisers who favored intervention in Laos. But now the President was far more skeptical of the experts, their reputations, their recommendations, their promises, premises and facts. . . . "Thank God the Bay of Pigs happened when it did," he would say to me [Sorensen] in

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\*Mr. Schlesinger's account differs in that he says that the JCS "added softly" that they still preferred Trinidad. See footnote on page 40.

\*\*Ironically a political failure in Cuba, which was an area of vital interest to the United States, would later serve to undermine the credibility of the JCS which had consistently carried Indochina much further down on its list of priorities than Cuba and which was generally opposed to going ashore in Asia.

September, as we chatted about foreign policy in his New York hotel room. . . . "Otherwise, we'd be in Laos by now—and that would be a hundred times worse."<sup>33</sup>

Obviously the President of the United States cannot carry out his duties as Commander in Chief without professional military advice. President Kennedy recognized this. Having dismissed the advice of the JCS as unreliable, the President felt it necessary to search elsewhere for military counsel.

The President had long been an admirer of Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor. Taylor's credentials were impeccable. He had a fine combat record. He was urbane, sophisticated, skilled in languages, and was regarded by many as an intellectual.

Under President Eisenhower, General Taylor was unhappy with the Army's diminished role in the framework of the massive retaliation doctrine and hence retired as Army Chief of Staff to write a book called *The Uncertain Trumpet* which expounded the virtues of flexible response. Kennedy had been impressed by Taylor's thinking and even before the Bay of Pigs brought Taylor to the White House as his personal military adviser.<sup>34</sup>

This solution was only partially satisfactory because the President felt that he could effect the changes he wanted in the Defense Establishment faster if his own man was the Chairman of the JCS. Further, General Taylor had good relations with the Congress. Clearly, bringing General Taylor out of retirement, although unprecedented, would satisfy both the Congress and the Chief Executive.

In January 1961, Khrushchev made a speech which made a significant impact upon President Kennedy. In an 8-hour oration, Khrushchev outlined three kinds of conflict between East and West: nuclear wars, conventional wars, and wars of national liberation. Dis-

missing nuclear war as too dangerous and the second type as possibly leading to nuclear war, he said that he saw wars of national liberation as an acceptable means of pursuing world communism. Kennedy immediately began to assess the capability of the United States to counter this type of warfare.

He asked Rostow to check into what the Army was, in fact, doing about counter guerrilla training. He was soon informed that the Special Forces at Fort Bragg consisted of fewer than a thousand men. Looking at the field manuals and training literature, he tossed them aside as "meager" and inadequate. Reading Mao Tse-tung and Che Guevara himself on the subject, he told the Army to do likewise.<sup>35</sup>

After examining the available training literature and the field equipment available to the Army for counter guerrilla operations, President Kennedy decided that a major effort should be made to increase the Army's capability in this area.<sup>36</sup> The President called in the Army Chief of Staff, Gen. George H. Decker, and told him to expand the Special Forces and to change their mission from one of training to foster insurgencies behind enemy lines to one of putting down insurgencies within countries whose governments were friendly to the United States. Kennedy was convinced that counterinsurgency was the mirror image of insurgency, and since the Special Forces knew how to be insurgents by simply applying their expertise upside down and backwards, they should be best suited to lead the way to counterinsurgency.

There were those in the Army who were reluctant to see the mission and capabilities of Special Forces altered. They preferred to see the Army in general develop a counterinsurgency capability, leaving the Special Forces to practice its arcane skills unmolested. This faction felt that an expansion of

the Special Forces on the scale proposed by the President would soon degrade its proficiency—a fact which special headgear (like the Green Beret) would be unable to mask.

Some in the Army questioned the entire idea of counterinsurgency. Did the United States, the greatest revolutionary country in the world, really wish to line up on the side of the status quo and be classed by the Third World as the supporter of colonialism and imperialism?<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, if the Commander in Chief felt he needed a counterinsurgency capability to support national policy, the Army would provide it. General Decker, in order to give the President's idea emphasis, appointed a rising general officer to oversee the expansion of the Special Forces.

General Decker was delighted with President Kennedy's interest in the Army and the President's desire to increase the strength and capabilities of the Special Forces, but when the end of General Decker's first 2-year tour as the Army Chief of Staff came on 30 September 1962, General Decker made known his wish to retire. He was 60 years old, had served for 38 years, and his office was weighing upon the general and his family. General Decker's desires were accepted by the President who was, at the time, opposing pending legislation which would have established the terms of the Chiefs at 4 years.<sup>38</sup>

On 30 September 1962 General Decker retired. On that same day General Lemnitzer turned over the Chairmanship of the JCS to General Taylor and departed for Europe and NATO.

Now the President's own man was the Chairman of the JCS. Of the Chiefs inherited from Eisenhower, only Kennedy's favorite, General Shoup, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, remained.<sup>39\*</sup> With the Eisenhower Chiefs

\*General White retired on 30 June 1961 after serving two terms. Admiral Burke retired on 1 August 1961, having served three terms on the JCS.

gone, President Kennedy now had his own team of military advisers.

Gen. Curtis E. LeMay became the USAF Chief of Staff in June 1961. Adm. George W. Anderson, Jr., took over as Chief of Naval Operations in August 1961. Although neither of these officers was inherited from Eisenhower nor were they on the JCS during the Bay of Pigs, both of them were soon to run into trouble with Secretary McNamara.

With a slate of officers appointed by the incumbent President, the relationship between the Commander in Chief and principal military advisers would hopefully more closely approach the model set forth at the outset. Unfortunately, the events of the Cuban missile crisis did little, if anything, to improve the stature of the JCS.

The literature about the Cuban missile crisis is rich, for as President Kennedy later said, "Success has many fathers. . . ." <sup>40</sup> But even with the euphoria that one finds in this literature, the Joint Chiefs do not come out unscathed.

Early in his administration, President Kennedy admonished the JCS to "... base their advice not on narrow military considerations alone but on broad-gauged political and economic factors as well." <sup>41</sup> While our model recognizes the relationship between policy aims and military strategy, it does not license the military to attempt to determine national policy. Consequently, if the President were to ask the JCS about the propriety of the United States using force to accomplish its aims in Cuba, it would be improper for the military to answer.

Given the parameters of the model, the only questions the military chiefs could legitimately respond to would be: What military means does the United States have to terminate the missile threat? What military courses of action does the United States have? Which course of action will have the greatest

chance of success? What will each course of action cost in terms of lives and equipment? What military steps can be taken if the Russians intervene?

Perhaps the President's dictum to offer "broad-gauged" advice should not have been taken literally by the JCS. At the Bay of Pigs the JCS was condemned for not looking hard enough at, or not being vocal enough about, the pitfalls in the CIA plan, and later the JCS was criticized after the Cuban missile crisis for not considering the implications of their recommendations.

It is interesting to note the impressions made by the Joint Chiefs on those who have written "inside" stories about what took place during the high-level deliberations. First the President's brother, Robert, recalls:

[The President] . . . was distressed with the [military] representatives with whom he met, with the notable exception of General Taylor, seemed to give so little considerations to the implications of steps they suggested. . . . President Kennedy was disturbed by this inability to look beyond the limited military field. When we talked about this later, he said we had to remember that they were trained to fight and to wage war—that was their life. . . . It was for these reasons, and many more, that President Kennedy regarded Secretary McNamara as the most valuable public servant in his Administration. . . . <sup>42</sup>

Mr. Schlesinger quotes the President as saying "... an invasion would have been a mistake—a wrong use of our power. But the military are mad. They wanted to do this. It's lucky for us that we have McNamara over there." <sup>43</sup> Mr. Sorensen recounts a conversation with the President on 19 October 1962 as follows: "The President called me in, a bit disgusted. He had just met with the

Joint Chiefs, who preferred an air strike or invasion. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

Historians will know someday whether or not it was correct to guarantee Cuba against invasion as the *quid pro quo* for the removal of the missiles.\* The possible existence of a Soviet missile submarine base at Cienfuegos in 1970 argues against the President's 1962 decision. Would an invasion have led to a nuclear exchange? Doubtful, but in all probability, it will never be known.

None of those who were there and who have written about the high-level conferences seemed disappointed with the performance of General Taylor who had just assumed the Chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs. Neither Robert Kennedy, Mr. Schlesinger, nor Mr. Sorensen reveal what General Taylor had to say, but, whatever it was, it satisfied the President. Most dramatic events must have villains as well as heroes. The press took Ambassador Stevenson to task for some of his conciliatory recommendations, but Robert Kennedy and Sorensen defended him. In a neat balance, the Joint Chiefs, except the Chairman, were criticized for being too belligerent.

The Chiefs were praised for the manner in which the quarantine was conducted and the rapid response of all ground and air forces. Ironically, it was during the conduct of the naval blockade by Admiral Anderson that he had an encounter with Secretary McNamara which was, to some degree at least, to lead to Anderson's premature retirement.

When Adm. George W. Anderson joined the JCS on 1 August 1961, he was the "new boy." Generals Lemnitzer, Decker, White, and Shoup had been on board for some time, with General LeMay coming to the JCS at the end of June 1961. Capable, ener-

getic, and outspoken, he developed a number of concerns which he wanted to discuss with Mr. McNamara and the JCS in executive session. The older members of the JCS had been having their problems with Mr. McNamara for some time, and they were quite content to let the newcomer "bell the cat." Clearing these subjects with the other Chiefs, as it was protocol to do, he was encouraged by them to speak out.

Admiral Anderson made an issue of three individuals on the staff of the Secretary of Defense who were apparently hostile to the uniformed services either in approach or attitude, or evidenced a lack of understanding. One of these civilians had boasted that he could make or break any general or flag officer in the Pentagon. To Secretary McNamara's astonishment, Admiral Anderson asked him if this was so. Turning to one of his advisers, Mr. McNamara asked if such a thing could be true. To which the adviser is reported to have said, "No, he's too smart to be caught saying anything like that."

Admiral Anderson found it difficult to disguise his lack of enthusiasm for "whiz kids" and other nonprofessional military advisers in the Pentagon, and his willingness to bring up the subject of civilian officials allegedly throwing their weight around served notice on the fast-growing Office of the Secretary of Defense that Admiral Anderson would bear watching.

As time went on it became clear that the basic problem between the Secretary and the Chief of Naval Operations was a personality clash. They were both able and strong-willed men, and neither one was intimidated by the other. Admiral Anderson did not hesitate to dissent when he felt it proper. Clearly the law stated that Mr. McNamara was Admiral Anderson's superior, and if the President had to choose between the two of them there could be little doubt as to which of them would have to seek other employment.

\*It should be noted that no physical inspection was ever made to insure that the missiles had actually been removed.

Admiral Anderson lasted two years, and his experience in the Cuban crisis of 1962 was perhaps the outstanding illustration of the low regard in which the Service Chiefs were held. First there was an incident on October 6. The Defense officials decided they wanted to send a squadron of Navy [carrier] fighters from Oceana, Virginia to Key West, Florida, and to put the squadron temporarily under Air Force control. Deputy Defense Secretary Gilpatric, without going through channels, ignored the Chief of Naval Operations, and called directly to Admiral Robert L. Dennison, the Commander in Chief, Atlantic, at Norfolk, Virginia, to give him the order. . . .

As the crisis grew worse, the United States undertook a naval quarantine of Cuba. Secretary McNamara began spending time in the Navy's Flag Plot, or operations center. This room, under Marine Guard, contains visual materials locating the position of every ship. It also has communications links with ship commanders. McNamara insisted upon making decisions on the spot. He wanted to call ship commanders directly on the voice-scrambling, single-side-band radios. Admiral Anderson tried to dissuade the civilian official. The Navy uses formal, stylized voice communications with coded names going through the chain of command. McNamara was inclined to ignore or belittle those techniques. He pointed to a symbol for one ship at sea and demanded of Admiral Anderson, "What's that ship doing there?" The Chief of Naval Operations replied, "I don't know, but I have faith in my officers."<sup>45</sup>

In fact, Admiral Anderson did know what the ship was doing in that loca-

tion. The ship, a U.S. destroyer, was sitting on top of a Russian submarine which had been detected by a highly classified means of detection. Present with Secretary McNamara were some of his civilian staff and with Admiral Anderson some of his own officers who were not cleared for this particular piece of highly sensitive information. Later, the CNO was able to get Mr. McNamara aside and explain the situation. This calmed the Secretary, but as Mr. McNamara and his entourage departed the Flag Plot, Admiral Anderson said jokingly, "Don't worry Mr. Secretary, we know what we are doing down here." Apparently, Mr. McNamara took no offense at the remark at the time but later chose to conclude that it meant that the CNO did not need any civilian help and had little time to answer questions—even from the Secretary of Defense.

The final break took place when Admiral Anderson refused to endorse the TFX project after McNamara insisted that he support the all-service fighter plane.\* Anderson may have been right, but he had crossed the Secretary too often as Mr. Sorensen relates:

Anderson had overstepped the bounds of dissent with Kennedy and McNamara on more than one issue, and the meaning of his departure was not lost on his fellow brass; but his many backers in the Congress were unable to make out a case of martyrdom when Kennedy put his considerable talents to use by naming him Ambassador to Portugal.<sup>46</sup>

Rocky as the relationship between Admiral Anderson and Secretary McNamara was, there is no evidence that Admiral Anderson and President Ken-

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\*The TFX is now the ill-fated F-111 fighter which the Navy could not use on carriers and which the Air Force found was better suited for use as a low-level SAC bomber.

nedey were ever at odds. Their relationship was always cordial and mutually respectful. Anderson never criticized President Kennedy and loyally carried out his wishes. The President and Admiral Anderson liked each other, but both were caught in a situation where the admiral had to do what he thought was right for his service and for the Armed Forces while the President had to back up his civilian secretary. And so Admiral Anderson became the second member of the JCS to retire after only one term. Later, President Kennedy would indicate his displeasure with General LeMay by extending him for only 1 year after his first 2-year term instead of the normal 2 years.<sup>47</sup> At the time of President Kennedy's assassination, only General Shoup of the original group of Chiefs remained as a member of the JCS.

When Lyndon Johnson became the 36th President of the United States, his mental baggage included preconceptions of his own about the military. During the Johnson administration the JCS would be kept busy training and equipping troops and transporting them to Southeast Asia, but they would not be called upon to act as the President's principal military advisers. They would be called upon to carry out military and political decisions reached in the White House between the President and a small group of trusted civilian advisers.

Hugh Sidey, who covers the White House for *Time-Life*, provides insight into Johnson's ideas about military men in general in his book, *A Very Personal Presidency*:

His deep suspicions of the military went back to his first days in the Congress . . . he was given a seat on Carl Vinson's powerful Naval Affairs Committee. There he watched the high brass parade, and he was disturbed. He found that too many military men grew arrogant behind the ribbons they

wore on their chests. He found them contemptuous of new ideas, mean and thoughtless in dealing with those below them. He detected an alarming amount of sheer stupidity which was self-perpetuating because of the academy caste system. He found no companionship with military men. . . . In fact, the general level of competence which Johnson found among the admirals who came before the Naval Affairs Committee convinced him that the nation could not put its complete trust in the military in such hazardous times. How America met the threat had to be planned in detail, in Johnson's view, by the politicians.

This lack of confidence in the officer corps never really left Johnson . . . he felt that the military men almost always were too narrow in their appraisals of a given problem, often ignoring the political implications in the United States or the reaction abroad . . . Johnson could be merciless when he told about the generals. None got harsher treatment than the old bomber pilot Curt LeMay, chief of the Air Force under Kennedy and Johnson. LeMay was credited with having offered the advice for the air war in North Vietnam. "We ought to bomb them back into the stone age." . . . Johnson subscribed heartily to an axiom that Kennedy propounded before his death. One night in his office with friends, JFK said, "Once you decide to send the bombers, you want men like LeMay flying them. But you can't let them decide if they should go or not."<sup>48</sup>

Johnson's own military experience was limited to one tour as a lieutenant commander in the Navy during World War II.

... going into uniform as a Navy Lieutenant Commander on December 14, 1941. He had a desk job in San Francisco from then until May 6, [1942] when he went into the Pacific as President Roosevelt's personal emissary. He arrived in the war sector on May 14. One month and four days later his tour of duty was over; a fever kept him in Australia a few more days but he was back in the States and out of uniform by July 16, 1942.<sup>49</sup>

As President Johnson assumed office, he inherited a foreign policy formulating structure modified to meet the needs and desires of a predecessor keenly interested in foreign affairs and impatient with bureaucracy.

President Kennedy, acting on the advice of McGeorge Bundy and Walt Rostow, scrapped the entire structure of the National Security Council and chose to rely on small groups of flexible composition that were given responsibility for both policy formulation and execution with respect to particular countries, regions, or functional problems.<sup>50</sup>

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had similarly been written off by President Kennedy and eclipsed by the rising power of Secretary McNamara. This was a meager legacy for a new President who was passionately interested in domestic affairs and who had little interest in foreign and military affairs. As Townsend Hoopes points out:

President Johnson, a man of little background and much uncertainty in foreign affairs, had inherited an organization for their conduct that had been made deliberately loose and flexible by President Kennedy, a man of broad knowledge, intuitive grasp, and determined initiative in that field. This inheritance, which adversely affected both the scope of

deliberations on Vietnam policy and the quality of President Johnson's decisions from the fall of 1964 onwards, showed itself in the structural weakness of the National Security Council and in inadequate attention to longer-range policy planning. The principal results were fragmented debate, loose coordination, and an excessive concentration on problems of the moment.<sup>51</sup>

Early in his administration, Johnson could have conceivably changed U.S. policy in Vietnam. His administration was new, and in Vietnam President Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu were dead.\* During the next 18 months, 10 other South Vietnamese Governments were to rise and fall.

It was a time of great instability. Many speculate as to what President Kennedy would have done about Vietnam had he lived. Some think that he would have replaced Rusk and Rostow.<sup>53</sup> But given Johnson's lack of expertise in foreign affairs, he chose to keep Rusk and Rostow, with Rostow eventually replacing McGeorge Bundy in 1966 as the President's National Security Affairs adviser. Given the same set of advisers and his own uncertainty, there was not much chance that Johnson would set a different course in Vietnam. "Understandably, President Johnson's opening policy theme was "Let us continue"; and just as he inherited the Kennedy Policies, so also the presidential elections still loomed

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\*President Diem and his brother were deposed largely as the result of an uncoordinated message which President Kennedy released because he thought that Rusk and McNamara concurred with it. The message let it be known in South Vietnam that U.S. aid would continue even if President Diem were removed from office.<sup>52</sup> The death of Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu was not intended by the Vietnamese generals. They were killed by a South Vietnamese Army major who had a personal grudge against them.

rapidly would, at the very least, have materially impeded Hanoi's aid to the Vietcong and might have shaken the North Vietnamese hierarchy.<sup>61</sup>

Undoubtedly the bombing as conducted by President Johnson made life more difficult for the North Vietnamese,<sup>62</sup> but it had little effect on the infiltration of men and supplies into South Vietnam.<sup>63</sup> The long and drawn-out bombing episode provoked criticism of the United States both at home and abroad and was to prove to be a stumbling block rather than an inducement to negotiations.

The frustrations of the military became known to the Congress who tried to intercede with the President:

During a bombing pause [President Johnson] received a call from an influential Senator who offered some pointed military advice. "Mr. President," said the caller, "you've got to win this thing now. You've got to go for the jugular. I urge you to turn this war over to your military commanders. They are the men who know how to wage war, and they will win it." Johnson did not hesitate in his answer. "Not as long as I am President. As long as I sit here, the control will stay with the Commander-in-Chief." The Senator persisted: "We've got to win it. . . . That's why Roosevelt and Truman were so great. They let their military leaders do the job." Again Johnson had an answer. "I was around in those days," he said. "There were not many decisions made that Roosevelt did not know about. And Harry Truman watched everything closely. . . . I'm not going to let the hounds loose."<sup>64</sup>

Paradoxically, while the President exercised minute control over the bombing, he was generally content to allow his commander in the field, Gen.

William C. Westmoreland and later Gen. Creighton Abrams to conduct operations in South Vietnam without interference.<sup>65</sup> Unfortunately Johnson's strategy of "gradualism" was not compatible with the strategy of "attrition" being pursued by the U.S. Saigon Command.

Returning to the model relationship, it cautions:

. . . While military strategy may determine whether the aims of policy are possible of attainment, *policy may, beforehand, determine largely the success or failure of military strategy.* It behooves policy to ensure not only that military strategy pursue appropriate aims, but that the work of strategy be allotted adequate means and *be undertaken under the most favorable conditions.* (Emphasis added).<sup>66</sup>

Apparently, Johnson had great admiration for his top commanders in Vietnam.<sup>67</sup> He was willing to provide them with almost anything that they wanted in terms of troops, material, and funds.<sup>68</sup> But he was not willing, despite repeated pleas by the JCS, to call up the Reserves whose combat support and combat service support units were badly needed. As a result, the support structure for the war came "out of the hide" of the active forces. The mobilization of the Reserves might have gotten the Nation involved in the war and perhaps behind the war effort, but Johnson's rule was "guns and butter." Thus the war was fought by a small professional cadre of officers and noncommissioned officers leading a force of conscripts who, as time went on, became increasingly aware of the inequity of the Nation's being involved in a major war while it was business as usual on Main Street. Johnson was willing to provide free mail service, ice cream, post exchanges—anything to make life in Southeast Asia more bearable—but he did not provide what was really needed



—a war policy which would permit his commanders to achieve the national aims.

Having dwelt upon Presidents Kennedy and Johnson up to this point in our discussion of civil-military relations in the Government, we now turn to the role played by Robert S. McNamara who, as the eighth Secretary of Defense, served longer in this capacity than any other man in history. During his tenure the military power of the United States rose to its highest point since World War II while the influence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff sank to an all-time low.

Mr. McNamara, prior to his brief stint in the military during World War II, spent most of his adult life in school either as a teacher or a student. After World War II he went to the Ford Motor Company and in 14 years worked his way up to the presidency.<sup>69</sup>

Although McNamara's energy, dedication, and methods were impressive enough to result in his selection as the first non-Ford-family president in the history of the company, his reliance on numbers and measures sometimes led him astray.

... Many Ford men became dubious of the whole statistical analysis approach when the company halted production of an Edsel automobile. "It was killed," insisted one executive, "not because of its repulsive front grill or because we were slow building a strong sales team but because McNamara's charts showed there was no more market for a medium-priced car—something General Motors promptly disproved. "Those charts," the executive dryly noted, "give you funny answers sometimes."<sup>70</sup>

While Mr. McNamara was working his way to the top of the Ford Motor Company, a number of changes were being made in the Pentagon which would someday allow Mr. McNamara to dominate the JCS just as he had his staff

at the Ford Motor Company.

Paradoxically, the high-water mark of JCS influence occurred during World War II when the JCS did not officially exist. President Roosevelt reposed such trust and confidence in the Chiefs that "... he refused to issue a formal definition of JCS duties and functions, arguing that a written charter might hamper the Joint Chiefs of Staff in extending their activities as necessary to meet the requirements of the war."<sup>71</sup>

Beginning with the National Security Act of 1947, the role of the JCS began to be prescribed and circumscribed. As the threat posed by the expansionist policies of the Soviet Union grew, there were serious and honest disagreements among the armed services over the best method of containing the threat. This controversy was naturally reflected in the JCS as the Chiefs attempted to define the best military strategy. Fairly or unfairly, these deep concerns earned a bad image for the JCS, and it was said around Washington that "... The Congress debates, the Supreme Court deliberates but the Joint Chiefs bicker." In an effort to minimize the effect of this bickering on defense policy, the Congress and the Executive took a number of actions which greatly increased the authority and control of the Secretary of Defense over the service components.

In 1953 the JCS were taken out of the chain of command so that it ran from the President to the Secretary of Defense through the civilian service secretaries to the commanders in the field. In 1958 the service secretaries were taken out of the chain of command, and the JCS were given operational responsibility for the unified and specified commands but were specifically forbidden any executive authority. The scope of the Chairman's duties was increased, giving him more influence over his fellow members, but at the same time a formal restraint was placed on easy communication between the JCS and the Congress. Free communi-

cation with the President was, of course, inhibited by the chain of command.<sup>72</sup>

By 1960 the stage was set for Robert McNamara. Seizing the initiative and armed with the requisite legal authority and the unqualified backing of President Kennedy, Secretary McNamara began to bring all activities in the Defense Department under his own control. Central to this effort was Mr. McNamara's conviction that, "... the direction of the Department of Defense demands not only a strong, responsible civilian control, but a Secretary's role that consists of active, imaginative and decisive leadership of the establishment at large, and not the passive practice of simply refereeing the disputes of traditional and partisan factions."<sup>73</sup>

The first step was to change the rules by which decisions about military strategy and procurement were made. To do this McNamara brought into his office a staff of systems analysts. McNamara and his staff felt that the generals and admirals relied too much on their judgment and experience as a basis for decisions. The generals and admirals felt that some things just could not be quantified and had to be decided on the basis of judgment and experience. Over the McNamara years the battle centered on just where this fine line lay.

The outcome of this struggle was vital to the future roles the generals and admirals were to play. For the systems analysts the contest was not as crucial. Systems analysis had proven itself to be a useful management tool, and its future was assured. The future was not so certain for senior military officers because if almost everything could be quantified and rationalized mathematically, then generals and admirals were simply anachronisms in every regard except for holding command in the field. If intuitive judgment and professional experience were to be relegated to a minor role in the decisionmaking process, then general and flag officers

are not needed anymore at the highest levels of the Defense Establishment because it is primarily for their judgment and experience that they hold positions in the defense staff.

Traumatic as the McNamara experience was, it was certainly not without benefit to the military. "... Probably McNamara's most significant contribution to military strength," said one veteran, was that "he forced the Services to get at the heart of their own basic logic on why they want things."<sup>74</sup>

It took the military services a while to adapt to the new rules in the Pentagon, and a number of new faces were brought in to cope with McNamara's "whiz kids." It was not long before each military service formed its own staff of systems analysts who were just as knowledgeable and bright as the ones from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). The benefit of subjecting service originated plans and proposals to systems analysis had become obvious. At the same time the services learned that by using certain assumptions one could make the answer come out most any way that was desired.<sup>75</sup> The manipulation of these assumptions became, in fact, the basis for the fundamental disagreement between OSD and the services. Reports of this practice on the part of OSD began to circulate, and McNamara's honeymoon with the ever-watchful Congress began to end. Nowhere was this and the struggle for existence by the generals and admirals more clearly demonstrated than in the controversy over the TFX.

Both the Navy and the Air Force were badly in need of a new attack aircraft, a new air-superiority aircraft, a new interceptor, and new reconnaissance aircraft. It seemed logical to McNamara that one airplane could be built to do all or most of these missions and that one airplane could be made suitable for use by both services. However, there were three obstacles to prevent the accomplishment of this

worthy goal. First, the Navy and the Air Force operated from entirely different environments. The Navy airplane would have to be launched by catapult from the deck of an aircraft carrier and recovered by slamming into the carrier's deck and catching its tailhook on a wire. The Air Force aircraft would have to operate from the ground and be subjected to dust and debris not found at sea. Secondly, the state of the art was not such to permit the combination of all the desired capabilities into one airframe that anyone could maintain. Third, and perhaps most serious, no Secretary of Defense had ever before told the services that they must combine everything into one airplane, told them how it was to be used, told them that they must all use the same aircraft, and told them just which aircraft manufacturer was going to produce it.

Before it was all over, the TFX issue became complicated by charges of intellectual corruption on the part of the analysts in OSD as well as under political manipulation of the procedure whereby the contract was awarded to General Dynamics over Boeing. In the final analysis, however, the military view was vindicated when it turned out that the TFX could not do what OSD and General Dynamics said that it would do and when it cost more than twice what OSD said that it would.<sup>76</sup> The Navy found that the TFX (or F-111 as it came to be called) was too heavy to land on carrier decks. The Air Force Tactical Air Command found that the F-111's performance was no match for what was known about Russian fighters already in mass production. Ironically, it was the Air Force Strategic Air Command that was made to take the F-111 as the FB-111 and put it in the inventory for a role not originally envisioned by McNamara—as a low-level nuclear bomber.<sup>77</sup>

If the TFX issue was a microcosm of the struggle for supremacy in the Pentagon, then its failure was an example of

the consequences of ignoring the advice of the professional military. There was little solace in the TFX episode for anyone, and if it was a victory for the JCS it was clearly Pyrrhic.

McNamara and the JCS would continue to struggle, but in almost every case the Secretary would be the winner as long as he enjoyed the strong backing of the President. "Never before had a Defense Secretary enjoyed such rapport with and unqualified backing from the White House. 'I couldn't accomplish anything over here without Presidential support,' he had once said. 'It is absolutely fundamental. I wouldn't and couldn't stay here one minute without it.'"<sup>78</sup>

When White House aides pointed the finger at the JCS after the Bay of Pigs, McNamara waited a week before he bothered to issue a halfhearted rebuttal. When General Lemnitzer pointed out that OSD had not given the JCS time to consider McNamara's directive on how developments in space would be pursued, he was ignored.<sup>79</sup> When McNamara and Admiral Anderson clashed, Anderson was sent to Portugal.

Despite difficulties, disagreements, and almost open warfare between the OSD staff and the JCS and service staffs, Mr. McNamara continued to meet with the JCS at almost every Monday afternoon meeting. As time went on the discussions became less and the silences grew longer until, toward the end of McNamara's reign, Mr. McNamara and the Chiefs just sat around the table and looked at each other across a silent chasm that had grown too wide for any of them to bridge.

Mr. McNamara was and is a sincere and dedicated patriot. Much of what he did for the Defense Establishment was beneficial, but the reality is that his abrupt managerial methods, his lack of understanding of the values prized so highly by his military subordinates, and his chilling personality prevented him from accomplishing all that he could

have, and thus many of his changes failed to outlive his own tenure.

The lack of "understanding between the civil representatives of the State and the leaders of the Armed Forces" was manifestly evident from 1961 to 1968. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, though different in many ways, shared a certain distrust of the views offered by the JCS. The McNamara secretaryship challenged the military on their home ground and placed them on the defensive.

Unfortunately this serious internal conflict took place at a time when decisions were made that pitted the might and prestige of the United States in a new and, in many ways, frustrating environment. While the intentions of the men involved were clearly the best, the result of the adversarial relationship which developed between the civilian and military leaderships of this country (particularly when viewed in light of the Vietnam experience) has had a most grievous effect on national security.

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If genuine civil control over the military is the ideal, as most observers suggest, then the President and the Congress not only are obliged to define the role of the military, but also to protect the role of the military. The military can defend the Nation, but it may not be able to defend itself.

The military will most likely play whatever role is allotted to it by civil authority regardless of how it sees its own role; however, when invited to enter the political arena, it becomes difficult for senior military officers to resist the siren call to become "soldier-statesmen."

There is little in the background of the average American President to prepare him for the awesome task of becoming the Nation's grand strategist. The wise President seeks the counsel of his military leaders. He is not compelled

to accept their advice, but it would seem that wisdom would dictate that he at least listen, and, further, wisdom would dictate that he insist that the military observe the precepts of their profession and offer "purely" military advice.

The civil-military environment in which the JCS operated during the Kennedy-Johnson era was marked by degrees of prejudice, pride, arrogance, and dilettantism. The attitudes and actions of both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson were affected by their prejudices regarding the military. The frictions that grew between Secretary McNamara and the Joint Chiefs found their roots in the seedbed of McNamara's enormous pride and intellectual arrogance. Dilettantism was practiced by all three men.

In the end it is the President and the Congress who should determine the role of force in each situation, but the military can best define the capability of that force to achieve the given policy objective. If it is the duty of the civil authorities not to misapply military power, then it is the duty of the

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## BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Lt. Col. William A. Hamilton, U.S. Army, did his undergraduate work at the University of Oklahoma in government, attended the School of Law at Oklahoma, and has earned a master's degree in international

affairs from The George Washington University. His primary operational experience has been with infantry where in Vietnam he served as G-3 Operations Officer for the Headquarters of the 1st Air Cavalry Division and held the similar position with the 2d Battalion of the 5th Cavalry. Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton is a graduate of the College of Naval Command and Staff and is currently serving as Commanding Officer of the 2d Battalion of the 509th Infantry.

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military not to overstate the capabilities of its forces and to make it abundantly clear in a given situation just what the forces can and cannot be expected to accomplish.

Unfortunately, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations saw neither the need for, nor the virtue of independent, professional military advice on policy

matters which were fundamentally military in nature.

There are exceptions to all rules, and there are times when it is better to operate outside the proven and traditional parameters; however, improvisation over the long term will eventually exact its price, and the price in the 1960's might well be called—Vietnam.

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77. *Ibid.*, p. 285 and 291.
78. Borklund, p. 224.
79. Jack Raymond, *Power at the Pentagon* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 283.

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I suggest that great care be exercised lest the Office of the Secretary of Defense, instead of being a small and efficient unit which determines the policies of the Military Establishment and controls and directs the Departments, feeding on its own growth, becomes a separate empire.

*Ferdinant Eberstadt: To the Senate Armed Services  
Committee, 1949*