

Organizational History  
of the  
National Security Council  
during the  
Kennedy and Johnson  
Administrations  
by  
Bromley K. Smith

Monograph written  
for the National Security Council

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As Executive Secretary of the National Security Council during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, Bromley K. Smith assisted and observed two Presidents in management of some of the most important responsibilities of their office. His monograph on the organizational history of the NSC during this period contributes a unique, personal perspective to the body of scholarship on the making of the nation's foreign and defense policy. He completed the study just days before his untimely death in 1987. That it should be made available to the public is fitting as a tribute to a man of abundant wisdom, tact, and good humor. His example inspires still all those similarly privileged to serve the National Security Council — an institution that Bromley Smith, to the end, cared for deeply.

*Paul Schott Stevens*  
*Executive Secretary*  
*National Security Council*  
*September 1, 1988*

## PREFACE

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I am pleased to add a prefatory note to Bromley Smith's helpful account of the organization of national security affairs in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. Each president has, of course, managed this part of his business in his own style. And a description of how he went about the task tells us something useful about his presidency.

I would add on this occasion a word about Bromley Smith's role. He was a close and trusted colleague in both the 1961 year of transition and in 1966–1969 when I served as Special Assistant for National Security Affairs. He helped organize formal NSC meetings, and supervised the administrative substructure of the NSC staff with unobtrusive efficiency. After Tuesday lunch meetings I would brief him promptly on the decisions made. But I found him also a valued counselor. He knew how the government worked and had observed many crises. He combined wisdom with a quiet sense of humor. Above all, he was a dedicated, selfless public servant. His office was next to mine, and I often exploited his proximity to talk things out and to get his measured, acute response.

With respect to his account, I would add a rather interesting footnote to President Eisenhower's observations of November 1962 (p. 42). In his *Waging Peace, 1956–1961*, published in 1965, he included this "afterthought" (p. 634): "I came finally to believe that this (NSC) work could have been better done by a highly competent and trusted official with a small staff of his own . . ."

*W. W. Rostow*

## FOREWORD

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An organizational history of the National Security Council during the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations — 1961 to 1969 — can do little more than give a parochial, even a misleading picture of how two presidents arrived at and carried out their national security policies. The Council was merely one way the two presidents obtained recommendations on national security problems from cabinet-level advisers.

The NSC staff, however, was indispensable to both presidents. In fact, the NSC staff became a presidential staff directed by the president's special assistants for National Security Affairs.

The paper which follows is a continuation of a study done by the NSC staff in 1960 covering the organizational history of the Council from its creation by the Congress in 1947 to the end of the Eisenhower Administration. Both papers describe the organization and procedures of the Council and its subsidiary bodies. Substantive issues are cited only illustratively.

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# THE INHERITANCE

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President Kennedy inherited an elaborate and functioning national security policy-making organization. From 1953 to 1960, President Eisenhower had chaired a National Security Council which, in his words, was "a corporate body composed of individuals advising the president in their own right, rather than as representatives of their respective departments and agencies. Their function should be to seek, with their background of experience, the most statesmanlike solution to the problem of national security, rather than to reach solutions which represent merely a compromise of departmental positions."

During the last year of his Administration, President Eisenhower undertook two procedural initiatives. The first was to direct that a substantial portion of the time of the Council during 1960 be spent in discussing major national security problems facing the United States now and in the future. These discussions were normally based on discussion papers prepared and circulated in advance but did not necessarily attempt to arrive at firm recommendations.

Eight discussion papers or reports were prepared by the Council's Planning Board for the Council. Some of them were:

- Trends in the Power Positions of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. and of the Free World and the Sino-Soviet Bloc—1960-1970.
- U.S. and Allied Capabilities for Limited Military Operations to 1 July 1962.
- NATO in the '60s.
- Long-Range Military Assistance Plans.

The second instruction to the Council during the final Eisenhower year was to review and bring up to date all NSC policies so that a current "library of policy" could be turned over to the incoming President. Over 50 serially-numbered policies were available to the new President on January 20, 1961. The partial listing below gives an idea of their scope:

## *I. Basic Policies*

- A. Basic National Security Policy
- B. War Objectives

## *II. Area Policies*

- A. Sino-Soviet Bloc
  - 1. European Satellites, including Poland
  - 2. Defectors, Escapees, Refugees
  - 3. East-West Exchanges

- 4. Economic Defense
- 5. Civil Aviation Policy toward the Bloc
- B. Far East (nine country and regional papers)
- C. South Asia
- D. Middle East (three papers)
- E. Africa (five papers)
- F. Europe (eleven papers)
- G. Latin America
- H. Antarctica
- I. Canada

### *III. Functional Policies*

- A. Continental Defense
- B. Missile and Space Programs
- C. Internal Security
- D. Foreign Aid
- E. Atomic Energy

### *IV. Organizational Policies (four papers)*

In his account of a conversation with President-elect Kennedy on December 6, 1960, President Eisenhower wrote:

"The Senator was interested in the national security set up and its operations... I explained to him in detail the purposes and work habits of the Security Council, together with its two principal supporting agencies—the Planning Board and the Operations Coordinating Board. I said that the National Security Council had become the most important weekly meeting of the government; that we normally worked from an agenda, but that any member could present his frank opinion on any subject, even on those that were not on the formal agenda. I made clear to him that conferences in the White House are not conducted as committee meetings in the legislative branch. There is no voting by members, and each group has one purpose only—to advise the President on the facts of particular problems and to make to him such recommendations as each member may deem applicable.

"I described how 'splits' in Planning Board papers were handled. He, obviously, could not be expected to understand the operations of the Security Council from one short briefing, and I urged him to appoint, as soon as he possibly could, an individual that would want to take over the duties, after January 20, of Gordon Gray. [Mr. Gray was then Special Assistant to the President for National

Security Affairs.] I stated that if he would do this, Mr. Gray would make it his business to acquaint such an individual in detail with the operations of the National Security Council and with the general content of the files. I did urge him to avoid any reorganization until he himself could become well acquainted with the problem."

As to the urgency of appointing a Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, President-elect Kennedy got exactly the opposite advice from Professor Richard E. Neustadt who, in a memorandum to Senator Kennedy dated October 30, 1960, wrote that filling this post "should be avoided by all means until you have sized up your needs and get a feel for your new Secretaries of State and Defense."

It should be noted here that President Eisenhower in his last year in office named Mr. Gray, who already was chairing the NSC Planning Board, to replace the Under Secretary of State as chairman of the Operations Coordinating Board.



## THE CRITICISM

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The most prominent political critic of the Eisenhower national security organization was Senator Henry M. Jackson, a Democratic Party leader. On April 16, 1959, in a speech to the National War College entitled "How Shall We Forge a Strategy for Survival?," he concluded that "as it now functions, the National Security Council is a dangerously misleading facade."

In July 1959, in response to Senator Jackson's urging, the United States Senate established a Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery and directed it to make "a nonpartisan study of how well our Government is now organized to develop, coordinate and execute foreign and defense policy." At the initial public hearing of the Subcommittee, Senator Jackson, as chairman, said the Senate had asked: "How can a free society organize to outthink, outplan and outperform totalitarianism and achieve security in freedom?"

When Senator Jackson first proposed this study (in a presidential election year), President Eisenhower privately opposed any cooperation by the Executive Branch. After considerable negotiation, Deputy Assistant to the President Bryce N. Harlow worked out with the subcommittee's staff detailed guidelines to be followed in the study. The Senator agreed that the study would not attempt, by legislation or otherwise, to infringe upon the constitutional privilege of the President to obtain advice through such organization and procedures as he deems appropriate. President Eisenhower agreed to allow officials of his Administration to testify; but, "it being my understanding that insofar as the National Security Council is concerned, your study is directed to procedures and machinery and not to substance."

The first staff study of the Jackson subcommittee was released to the press on November 22, 1960. It said that "there is widespread agreement that the Executive Branch of our Government is not now giving the President all the support he needs in meeting his responsibilities in foreign and defense affairs. ..." It opposed the appointment of a First Secretary of the Government as well as the proposal to assign to the Vice President the coordination of national security affairs. It rejected the suggestion that a super-staff for national security replace the existing NSC staff, the Council's Planning Board and the Operations Coordinating Board. It argued that such a super-staff could view national security problems "in the round," would not have its horizons "limited to the more parochial perspectives of the departments, and being free of day-to-day operating responsibilities," could presumably do a better job of long-term planning than its harassed counterparts within the departments. But such a super-staff would lack the perspectives and realism which comes from involvement in operations; would create a new layer of planning between the president and the departments; and would be a bureaucratic rival of the historic departments. "A president will, of course, need some assistants who concern themselves primarily with national security policy. But such assistants would act as extensions of the president's

eyes and ears in a confidential relationship, not as members of a large and highly institutionalized super-staff."

The subcommittee itself was highly critical of interdepartmental committees. In a report released to the press on February 5, 1961, the subcommittee said: "Both in its making and execution, foreign policy has become interdepartmental. This situation has provided fertile soil for the exuberant growth of interagency coordination committees. These include the complex committee substructure of the National Security Council and the multitude of formal coordinating groups operating outside the NSC system."

The subcommittee cited the testimony of former Secretary of Defense and former Under Secretary of State Robert Lovett, who said: "The idea seems to have got around that just because some decision may affect your activities, you automatically have a right to take part in making it. ..." He called such committee activity the "foulup factor."

"Coordinating committee mechanisms," the subcommittee concluded, "have proved to have severe limitations, and they have exacted a heavy price in terms of less individual responsibility, excessive compromise and general administrative sluggishness."

Shortly after the election, in December 1960, the Jackson staff recommended that President-elect Kennedy undertake a major overhaul of the National Security Council machinery. The staff asserted that committees in the NSC system had served to blur the edges and destroy the coherence of specific proposals to the point where they do the president a disservice. The staff recommended the abolition of the Operations Coordinating Board, adding that "if formal interagency machinery is found to be needed, it can be established later." The incoming president was urged to act quickly in modifying the Council "system" because the first meetings of the Council and its subsidiaries would set precedents that would make it subsequently easier or harder to reshape the system. Responsibility for implementation of policies cutting across departmental lines should whenever possible be assigned to a particular department or action officer, possibly assisted by an informal interdepartmental group.

In a final conclusion, after pointing out that the Council could be used by the president either as an "intimate forum to meet with his chief advisers in searching discussion and debate of a limited number of critical problems both long-range and immediate, or he could continue to use it as 'the apex of a comprehensive and highly institutionalized system for generating policy proposals and following through on presidentially approved decision,' the subcommittee favored deinstitutionalizing and humanizing the NSC process."

Another prominent critic of the Eisenhower national security policy machinery was Senator John F. Kennedy who, in a major foreign policy speech in mid-June, brought the National Security Council into the 1960 presidential campaign. Senator Kennedy said the real issue of American foreign policy was "the lack of long-range preparation, the lack of policy planning, the lack of coherent and purposeful national strategy backed by strength. ... To be sure, we have, in 1960, most of the formal tools of foreign policy; we have a defense establishment, a foreign aid program, a Western

alliance, a disarmament committee, an information service, an intelligence operation and a National Security Council. But (except for the brilliant legislative inquiry being conducted by the subcommittee of the Senator from Washington, Mr. Jackson), we have failed to appraise and re-evaluate these tools in the light of our changing world position. We have failed to adapt these tools to the formulation of a long-range, coordinated strategy to meet the determined Soviet program for world domination."

## TRANSITION

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As early as November 22, 1960, President-elect Kennedy indicated publicly that he would adapt the NSC machinery to meet his requirements. He made clear to the press that he would reduce the size of the White House staff and conduct his staff operations in a less hierarchical fashion.

The President-elect's thinking about how he would organize his presidential work was influenced by memoranda sent him by Professor Richard Neustadt. One, dated December 8, urged that the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs assume not only those duties assigned to that officer by President Eisenhower but also the responsibilities held by the NSC Executive Secretary, the Special Assistant for Foreign Economic Policy, the Special Assistant for Operations Coordination, and the OCB staff coordinator; that the Special Assistant be given no fixed role initially and the NSC structure, the NSC staff and the Special Assistant's eventual duties should be decided upon after the inauguration.

In announcing the appointment of McGeorge Bundy as Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, the incoming President on December 31, 1960 said: "I intend to consolidate under Mr. Bundy's direction the present National Security Council secretariat, the staff and functions of the Operations Coordinating Board and the continuing functions of special projects within the White House staff. I have asked Mr. Bundy to review with care existing staff organizations and arrangements and to simplify them wherever possible toward the end that we may have a single, small, but strongly organized staff unit to assist me in obtaining advice from, and coordinating the operations of, the government agencies concerned with national security affairs. Mr. Bundy will serve as my personal assistant on these matters and as director of whatever staff we find is needed for this purpose." In commenting to the press in Palm Beach, Florida, the President-elect said he hoped to use the Council's machinery more flexibly than in the past. He added that he had been much impressed with what he called the constructive criticism of past operations set forth in the report by the staff of the Senate subcommittee on National Policy Machinery.

A precise account of how Bundy was thinking at this time, January 1961, is contained in a memorandum he sent to President Kennedy one year later. Looking back on the Administration's earliest days, Bundy wrote: "When we came in, it was the very strong feeling of most of those connected with the new Administration that the Planning Board and the Operations Coordinating Board had both become rather rigid and paper-ridden organizations. Neither of them seemed likely to be responsive to a new Chief Executive and his principal cabinet officers. Your Secretaries of State and Defense argued strongly that a more streamlined organization would be better for your particular purposes, and the Secretary of State in particular believed that it was most important to emphasize the operational responsibility of his department as against the rather diffuse authority of staff committees without the power of decision. This impatience with much of the existing staff machinery was shared by a number of advisers who had had experience of it in the Eisenhower Administration—notably

Douglas Dillon and later John McCone. ... Under a strong president...there can be no final coordination except from the White House.”

A second person who had much to do with revising the NSC system was Mr. Bundy's deputy, Walt W. Rostow, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor who had been helpful to Senator Kennedy on substantive issues during the campaign. Mr. Rostow wrote at that time that the organization of National Security Affairs:

- Lay in two quite distinct problems: first, how the President chose to receive advice on national security matters; second, how coordinated staff work should be generated among all the arms of national security policy at a time when diplomacy itself, in the old-fashioned sense, no longer suffices. Intelligence, foreign aid, information projected overseas, stockpiling at home and above all, military policy has to be woven together with conventional diplomacy. ...We concluded that both the NSC Planning Board and the Operations Coordination (sic) Board had become instruments for generating papers that did not, in fact, come to grips with the heart of the problems they addressed.
- We [Bundy and Rostow] knew Kennedy would wish our advice on how to reorganize or dispose of the machinery and staff we had inherited. We agreed we would probably recommend a simpler plan, but agreed, also, that we should study the situation on the spot rather than recommend action on the basis of our existing information and prejudice.
- I concluded that the problem of getting full cooperation from the Department of State was insurmountable, because a strong Secretary of State could, would and perhaps should keep out of large interdepartmental committees critical elements in the diplomatic equation. ...I therefore proposed that the task of interdepartmental coordination be passed on to the Secretary of State and a much smaller staff be built around Bundy to serve narrowly Presidential purposes. Interdepartmental coordination of the kind reflected in the papers I had read was an essential part of government; and such working-level papers should be available to the President. They represented raw materials which the President's senior advisers should have available; but they were not and could not be focused with sufficient precision on the issues the President would have to decide at a particular moment. Bundy had arrived at a similar conclusion. ...We took our plan to Kennedy, who approved.

Shortly after his inauguration, President Kennedy asked McGeorge Bundy to meet with two ranking State Department officials to discuss how to identify crisis problems and to arrange for effective leadership in dealing with them. Bundy's summary of these discussions, dated January 30, 1961, made these points:

- The identification of such [crisis] problems should be the responsibility of all interested parts of the government. Insofar as such problems are in the first instance political, special responsibility rests with the Department of State, but there is every reason to expect alarm bells to be rung by someone in CIA or Defense whenever there is a strong conviction in either place that we need to act promptly.

- Such alarm bells can be rung in any one of a number of ways. In the most urgent cases, the President himself will wish to be directly informed, but if there should be a regularly meeting group of senior officers of State, Defense, CIA and the President's office, such a committee might well be used for less urgent signals. And, of course, alarms may always be rung directly by a Secretary or to him. It did not seem to us that it was useful to establish a single tightly defined system here.
- Where we do think that system is needed is in the assignment of responsibility once a problem has been identified and marked for concerted action. Since we agree that the President and his Cabinet officers will all want such problems identified before they get big and troublesome, if possible, we need a plan which will work for both small problems and big ones. On the small ones, we believe it best that direct responsibility ordinarily be assigned to the Assistant Secretary of State for the region concerned. He may wish to make the matter his own urgent business, or he may wish to assign it to a deputy, but in either case he should have for this problem the same kind of authority and responsibility that we propose for a different individual in particularly urgent and large-scale problems.
- Our proposal is that in the case of an unusually urgent, difficult and complex problem, it will be desirable to center responsibility in a single fulltime officer under the Secretary of State. This officer might or might not be the Assistant Secretary for the region, but in any case he should be free of other responsibilities while he is handling this one. He should be the chairman of an executive committee of senior officers of the immediately interested agencies, but this executive committee should not be one in which everything is decided by vote, and still less a place in which unanimous concurrence is required for any action. It should be an instrument of cooperation and coordination but the man in charge should be the chairman, and his decisions would stand unless they are successfully challenged through appropriate channels to the Secretary of State or the President. This officer would have authority to coordinate all actions in the field, and he would be responsible for continuous reporting of his progress or lack of progress, his needs and his assessments to the President, the Secretary of State and other agency heads. He should be provided with explicit and continuous direction on the policy of the United States by the President and the Secretary.
- No task force commander can be given the illusion that he is free to go his own course. It should be possible to arrange a framework of continuous guidance which gives him a kind of ability to act which no committee system can provide. One particular device seemed to us a useful one in helping such task force commanders; it is that there should be regular weekly meetings of senior officers of State, Defense, CIA and the President's staff to keep in touch on day-to-day operating matters. Such a committee might be the one thing to keep from the old OCB and it might be a natural and easy place of regular review, short of the top level of your departmental efforts in support of a task force commander's work.

**This memorandum forecast most of the major changes made by the Kennedy Administration in the national security system. It included the concept of an**

"executive" committee chairman which was formally promulgated only late in the Johnson Administration.

As to the mission of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, the new President had a clear idea of what he wanted. According to Rostow, Kennedy explained the job:

"...in identical terms to Rusk, McNamara, Bundy and me. He did not wish us to substitute for the Secretaries of State and Defense. He was conscious of Franklin Roosevelt's technique of creating overlapping authorities and profiting from the friction, and he wanted no part of it. No decision in their fields would be taken without hearing the two secretaries and giving their advice heavy weight. On the other hand, he wanted to make sure that he had available all the possible options before making a decision. He was determined not to be imprisoned by the options the bureaucracies might generate and lay before him. It was the duty of the special assistant for national security affairs to assure that independent statement of the options. Many other functions emerged, but those were our instructions in January 1961."

As part of the concept of combining policy planning with operations, Kennedy chose to deal with one staff officer on national security and foreign policy matters. In the Eisenhower staff, General Andrew J. Goodpaster, as staff secretary, dealt with day-to-day national security matters, including current intelligence, while Gordon Gray, as special assistant for national security affairs, concentrated on NSC policy issues. In a transition discussion on January 11, 1961, Goodpaster, Gray and Bundy talked about the two roles. Gray reported at the time that Goodpaster described the nature of his duties and the general responsibilities of the special assistants, pointing out the spectrum which at one end had staff secretary functions and at the other end the work of the NSC. In between, he added, there was a gray area in which the interests began to merge, overlap and become confused.

At the insistence of the new president, Goodpaster worked with the new staff for several weeks but shortly after he left, the Goodpaster and Gray roles merged into one played by Bundy.

## **ABOLISHING THE OPERATIONS COORDINATING BOARD**

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Early on, the decision had been made to abolish the Operations Coordinating Board. In a directive signed February 19, President Kennedy outlined why and how he intended to do the work formerly assigned to the Board.

- This Board was used in the last Administration for work which we now plan to do in other ways. This action is part of our program for strengthening the responsibility of the individual departments.
- First, we will center responsibility for much of the Board's work in the Secretary of State. He expects to rely particularly on the Assistant Secretaries in charge of regional bureaus, and they in turn will consult closely with other departments and agencies. This will be our ordinary rule for continuing coordination of our work in relation to a country or area.
- Second, insofar as the OCB was concerned with the impact of our actions on foreign opinion—our "image" abroad—we expect its work to be done in a number of ways: in my own office, in the State Department, under Mr. Murrow of the U.S. Information Agency, and by all who are concerned with the spirit and meaning of our actions in foreign policy. We believe that appropriate coordination can be assured here without extensive formal machinery.
- Third, insofar as the OCB served as an instrument for ensuring action at the President's direction, we plan to continue its work by maintaining direct communication with the responsible agencies, so that everyone will know what I have decided, while I in turn keep fully informed of the actions taken to carry out decisions. We, of course, expect that the policy of the White House will be the policy of the Executive Branch as a whole, and we shall take such steps as are needed to ensure this result.
- I expect that the senior officials who served as formal members of OCB will still keep in close and informal touch with each other on problems of common interest. ...The executive officer of the OCB will continue to work with my special assistant...in following up on White House decisions in the area of national security. In these varied ways, we intend that the net result shall be a strengthening of the process by which our policies are effectively coordinated and carried out, throughout the Executive Branch.

Within the next few weeks, the OCB staff of approximately 50 persons, including substantive officers and support personnel, was liquidated. The Board's 45 inter-departmental working groups were terminated, along with their operations plans.

By the end of March, the State Department reported to Bundy that it had already taken steps to carry forward the activities of those former OCB working groups which dealt with specific geographic regions or countries. In certain instances, State said, where it may appear desirable or necessary to re-establish interagency working



groups in connection with those activities, this will be done under the Department's leadership. The responsibilities of seven functional working groups were assigned to several different departments following a discussion between Bundy and Under Secretary of State Bowles.

The head of State's Policy Planning Council wrote to Bundy in June to inform him that work in preparing and coordinating country and regional policy guidelines was well underway and volunteering to send copies of these papers to him when they were circulated to other departments and agencies for formal comment. No such papers arrived for some months and in a memorandum of July 27, Bundy repeated an earlier request that he be sent copies of the guideline papers at the time each is circulated for comment and again when each is issued as an approved document.

A few months later in August, Secretary Rusk, in reply to a direct question from Senator Jackson as to why OCB had been abolished said: "The principal reason was to identify the responsibility of departments and within departments the responsibility of individuals, for following through on decisions of the President or, in our case, the Secretary of State."

- Now under the present situation we get policy guidance from the President on an agreed basis. Operational responsibility is assigned to a department, that department has the responsibility for keeping in touch with other departments and agencies that are interested, but not necessarily on a veto basis. If an important question does come up or if another department or agency raises a point to which it attaches great importance, then, of course, that point has to be brought up to the policy level for determination.
- We have also found that we must speed up the processing of papers among departments—that the action people have to be in a position to act promptly. Now we have to get ourselves in a position, so that once the policy is established, we can move. ...The decision to move operating responsibility to the Department away from the Operations Coordinating Board was in the interest of having a man who knew it was his job to see that things moved.

In addition to its "committee killing" exercise, the new Administration decided to discontinue the annual Status Reports on National Security Programs. This reporting system, monitored by the NSC staff, had been set up in 1951 to keep the President and other NSC members periodically informed on a comprehensive basis of the status of national security programs and to provide a basis for preliminary Council discussion of problems relating to national security budgets for the coming fiscal year, with a view to developing policy guidance for those budgets.

The Council itself made little use of the reports, but both Presidents Truman and Eisenhower relied on the reporting mechanism to bring appropriate matters to their attention. The reports covered internal security, foreign intelligence, USIA programs, atomic energy, civil defense and mobilization, military (e.g., readiness of forces), and mutual security. The Kennedy Administration decided that the value of these reports was less than the considerable time which was spent by the departments and agencies in preparing them.

## THE PRESS REVIEWS THE CHANGES

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As was to be expected, during the first days of the new Administration, the press paid considerable attention to the changes being made in the national security system. The news articles revealed indirectly how participants in the system thought it would work.

Charles L. Bartlett, Washington correspondent of the *Chattanooga Times* and a close personal friend of the new President, wrote a news story in early February saying that "the big job of a President is to make his decisions stick within his own Government, and an executive order is in the works which may create a veritable team of Harry Hopkinses." He predicted the abolition of the OCB, which he described as "a quiet mechanism created by Eisenhower lieutenants to coordinate the impact of presidential decisions in the cold war field, to press for their execution and to dredge lurking issues up for presidential judgments." He added:

"Mr. Kennedy's plan is a barometer of significant difference between him and his predecessor. The Eisenhower concept was that the bulging Federal Government could only be held in shape with a tight and precise organization at the top. Mr. Kennedy's emerging philosophy is that the gangling structure responds less to organization than to highly personalized leadership. He is moving therefore to substitute a team of Phi Beta Kappa'd Hopkinses, the cream of his academic harvest, for the OCB machinery. That body's interdepartmental committees, embracing all the cold war agencies, will give way to a handful of bright and probing men. They will work out of the Executive Office Building with the privilege of ready access to the President and the responsibility of absorption in the big foreign issues that are on his platter. Assigned to specific trouble spots, these new lieutenants are to burrow and bully their way to the hearts of the departments, unearth the problems that may lie hidden, negotiate the gaps between agencies and attain coordination by putting major decisions before their boss. The lesser coordination problems are being passed back to the country desk officers in the State Department."

Two weeks later, Raymond P. Brandt, Washington correspondent for the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, wrote a Sunday analysis piece headlined, "Kennedy Taking Over Personal Command of Making Foreign Policy, Carrying It Out; Reorganizing the National Security Council to Revitalize Planning and Operations Functions." In his article, Brandt said that President Kennedy "intends to supervise personally the major implementations of foreign policy. ...He will put responsibility for the execution of his directives on a single official instead of a group or committee. These advisers will not be—as has been reported—President Kennedy's Harry Hopkinses or Colonel Houses. Rather, they will work out programs which, when adopted by the NSC and the President, will be carried out through regular diplomatic channels and established executive departments and agencies. ...Bundy will be the President's representative in the preliminary policy planning and in the follow-up on operations."

Brandt listed some of these advisers: "former State Secretary Dean Acheson, who is heading a working group on NATO subjects; former Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle, who is doing a similar study on Latin American problems; John J. McCloy, disarmament; Arthur Dean, nuclear negotiations; former Defense Secretary Robert A. Lovett, highest level immediate problems."

Toward the end of February, Wallace Carroll, writing in the *New York Times*, began his article this way: "For the last month Washington has been watching a serial version of Jack and the Beanstalk, and no one is sure today whether it will be Jack or the Giant who will impose his will on the other. President Kennedy and his lieutenants have been coming to grips with the Federal bureaucracy, and neither side knows at this moment who will turn out to be master." He concluded his news story by reporting that Kennedy's lieutenants "frankly expect this to be a rather untidy Administration compared with its predecessor, but they still hope that in place of tidiness some of the new President's sense of urgency and adventure will be instilled in the Federal establishment."

## KENNEDY AND RUSK DESCRIBE THE NSC CHANGES

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In a chatty interview with National Broadcasting Company correspondent Ray Scherer (broadcast on April 11, 1961 before the Bay of Pigs debacle), President Kennedy explained why he was holding fewer National Security Council meetings than had President Eisenhower. He said he had averaged three or four meetings a week with the Secretaries of Defense and State, the head of the Central Intelligence Agency, Allen Dulles, the Vice President and McGeorge Bundy, "but formal meetings of the National Security Council which include a much wider group are not as effective and it is more difficult to decide matters involving high national security if there is a wider group present."

Describing his relationship to his staff members, President Kennedy referred to the staff organization as "a wheel and a series of spokes. I try to keep in contact with all these men individually. All matters of international security go through McGeorge Bundy. ...He is now my assistant on national security matters. ...On every meeting that we have with those dealing with problems such as Laos, Mr. Bundy is there. He then follows for me the implementation of our decisions here so that we don't decide something and then have it fall between departments."

Other members of the staff dealing with national security problems:

- Walt Rostow, a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology who has specialized in his academic career on the problems of economic growth, particularly of the underdeveloped world. He is assistant to McGeorge Bundy and concerns himself with his longtime interest, which is one of the great problems before the U.S. in the next ten years, whether these countries to the south of us can make their way economically, but he also concerns himself with the spectrum of national security matters.

In reply to the question of how Mr. Rostow came to his attention, President Kennedy said:

"I organized a committee in Massachusetts of academicians and those with special talents on international problems, national security, housing and all the rest and he served on that committee and was a great help to me before I came here and I asked him to come and help some more.

"Jerome Wiesner, a professor at M.I.T., is particularly active in disarmament but has a wide spectrum of information on all of the scientific problems. ...He helped organize, with Mr. McCloy, a committee under Dr. Fish who is at the Bell Laboratory who got a group of scientists together to go over our previous [disarmament] positions and set out any new ones which scientific advances might make necessary. When we are talking about about whether we should go ahead with certain problems in outer space, what we could do to improve

desalinization, what we should do about the various programs, Defense Department recommendations, I talk to Mr. Wiesner who organizes scientific panels to give us their scientific opinions.

"Arthur Schlesinger, a Harvard professor, has been working since he came to the White House particularly in Latin America. He has made a trip through Latin America of three weeks, made a report and has been working on a documentation of some of the problems to be faced in Cuba.

"Dick Goodwin, law clerk to Felix Frankfurter, has been working as an assistant and has been particularly concerned with Latin America. Our program on Latin America and its implementation now has fallen into Dick Goodwin's hands largely. He works on messages too."

A few days later, President Kennedy remarked, during an interview for British television (April 19, 1961), that "matters which involve national security and our national strength finally come to rest here. Our staff should serve only to make sure that these important matters are brought here in a way which permits a clear decision after alternatives have been presented. Occasionally, in the past, I think the staff has been used to getting a prearranged agreement which is only confirmed at the president's desk, and that I don't agree with."

By August 1961, Secretary Rusk, in reply to a question by Senator Jackson, said: "The NSC staff has on it a number of people of considerable competence. We have an interdepartmental task force on a particular problem, we ask one or another White House staff member to sit in on that task force, whether it is Mr. Rostow, Mr. Goodwin or whoever it might be."

Senator Jackson asked: "With the elimination of the Planning Board and the Operations Coordinating Board, what is left of the NSC institutionally, other than a convenient label for a meeting of people who would probably meet anyway?"

Secretary Rusk replied:

It has first a small NSC staff headed by Bundy, which provides excellent machinery for prompt and immediate liaison with the President or with any other member of the White House staff whose help is needed on a particular problem.

Also, the staff is in turn a valuable aid to the President. They meet with him...and they pass along to the departments requests for information on questions that might be raised by the President.

Secondly, this staff also helps in preparing the necessary papers and agenda that may be needed for meetings of the NSC or any group related to it. I consider that the meetings of the NSC are themselves important; however, this is only a part of the process by which the President consults with his chief advisers—frequently with various combinations of members who might ordinarily be at an NSC meeting. The staff is valuable in passing things over that we know the President will be interested in or that will need his attention. The staff pulls matters together for presentation to the President at the earliest

opportunity consistent with the President's own needs and his own schedules.  
We would be greatly crippled if that staff went out.

This testimony revealed that one of the reasons why ranking State Department officials cooperated with the NSC staff was that Secretary Rusk believed it performed a service valuable to him and the State Department.

## PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCES

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Committees had acquired such a bad reputation with the officials of the new administration that they preferred to use the term "task force." Secretary Rusk in testifying before the Jackson subcommittee in August 1961 referred to an important tool in the field of national security policy—the task force:

- A team selected to come up with the answers to particular problems, usually on a short-time basis. This is not a wholly new device, but has perhaps been used more widely in this Administration than previously. Its importance lies in the highly personalized and centralized basis of its assignment. Since the authority for the task force stems directly from the President or other high officials, there usually results added urgency and a more thorough consideration of the problems than would otherwise have been possible.
- In most cases, the head of a task force is the person, such as the Assistant Secretary of State in charge of the appropriate regional bureau, who would normally be responsible. Interdepartmental coordination is assured through the membership of representatives of other agencies involved. Task forces will continue to have a useful role; however, they can be costly in time and personnel and should not be used for ordinary operating problems.

In testimony before the Jackson subcommittee dealing with planning, the Secretary added:

- I think one of the most effective task force exercises was the practically one-man task force that Mr. John Foster Dulles constituted in getting the Japanese Peace Treaty. I think that had we tried to handle that problem on an interdepartmental committee basis, we could never had gotten that peace treaty negotiated and ratified. He simply took it on with a two page letter from the President [Truman], saying in effect, 'Dear Mr. Dulles: I want you to get a peace treaty of this sort with Japan.'
- On that basis he could cut away the stacks of materials that had been developed over the years in the executive departments. He concentrated on a simple treaty of reconciliation. My job, as then Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, was not only to support him but to block off interference from all the agencies over town. They knew that if they wanted to interfere, they had to go to the President and this was difficult to do. The task force technique provides the President and the Secretary with an instrument with which they can concentrate on a job and move in on it, without the unnecessary interference that might come from around the fringes.

Secretary Rusk sought to dispel any misunderstanding that the new task forces were casual and *ad hoc*. He said:

- I think we might draw a distinction between certain of the groups that were put together at the very beginning of the new Administration, and what I would call a task force as I discussed a little earlier. When the President took office there were certain things that had to be done straight away and with some urgency. For example, we had to meet a deadline on negotiations on nuclear test bans. We had to get a program up to the Congress fast on problems arising out of the Act of Bogotà — on the \$500 million social development plan. We had to get our foreign aid program whipped into shape. These matters were handled by special task forces, specifically drawn in to get a job done at a pace at which the normal machinery could not be expected to operate. Now the foreign aid task force has gone out of existence, the Latin American task force has been disbanded and the Assistant Secretary or his deputy will be placed in charge so responsibility will remain within the geographic bureau.

Numerous task forces or working groups were set up by the president-elect in the pre-inaugural period. Some confusion resulted when these groups were merged into the Administration's national security machinery. One such case involved Cuban policy. On February 6, 1961, before the Bay of Pigs disaster, President Kennedy sent a minute (NSAM No. 10) to McGeorge Bundy, saying: "Has the policy for Cuba been coordinated between Defense, CIA, Mann and Berle? Have we determined what we are going to do about Cuba? What approaches are we going to make to the Latin-American governments on this matter?"

Most task forces dealt with policy towards areas, countries or cities such as Viet Nam, Cuba, Berlin, Iran, Laos and the Congo. One dealt with the Ryukyus, another with the Panama Canal. Still others dealt with nuclear testing. Some prepared reports for the National Security Council and were kept in existence. Others dealt with specific problems and were disbanded after the NSC considered their recommendations.

Management of this task force system fell largely to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs and the NSC staff.



## NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDA (NSAM)

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In the early days of the Kennedy Administration, a large amount of the president's national security business was carried on with the departments and agencies by means of memoranda or "minutes." These papers became institutionalized as National Security Action Memoranda (NSAM). The first six NSAMs were written by Bundy following the first National Security Council meeting. Reflecting presidential decisions, they supplemented and later replaced NSC Records of Action. During the eight years of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, there were 372 NSAMs — 272 in the years 1961–1963 and 100 in the years 1963–1969.

President Kennedy signed 94 NSAMs. In the beginning, he dictated "minutes" to his secretary who dispatched them directly to the secretaries or agency heads concerned. Copies were later retrieved from the recipients or from the president's secretary, given an NSAM number by the NSC staff and circulated to the original addressees and other offices as appropriate. A numbered follow-up system was thus gradually established.

The majority of NSAMs, however, were written and signed by Bundy, usually in the President's name after clearance with him. Most were classified.

NSAMs covered almost every aspect of national security business. Some were specific instructions to department and agency heads and in one case, to Bundy himself. Others requested that specific studies be undertaken. Some were presidential questions which required answers from the bureaucracy. Others created task forces or interdepartmental committees. Some asked for recommendations on revised or new programs and still others were presidential statements of national security policy.

In August 1961, Secretary Rusk explained to Senator Jackson that careful records were made of presidential decision.

- Our present practice is to put these matters in writing so the responsible departments will better be able to follow up on the action to be taken. But some care has to be taken not to let their action papers get imprisoned, because those very pieces of paper themselves need constant monitoring to be sure they continue to be relevant to the situation. ...Mr. Bundy, for example, after a meeting at the White House, circulates a note to make clear to everybody exactly what was decided. If there are differences of understanding as to what was decided, that is straightened out.

During the Johnson Administration, NSAMs became more limited. A footnote in President Johnson's autobiography reads: "A National Security Action Memorandum was a formal notification to the head of a department or other government agency informing him of a presidential decision in the field of national security affairs and generally requiring follow-up action by the department or agency addressed."

## NATIONAL SECURITY PLANNING

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The question of how to conduct national security planning was of early concern to the new administration. The agenda for the third NSC meeting scheduled for late February included the item "National Security Policies Requiring Urgent Attention."

The Eisenhower NSC Planning Board died when it was not called to meet by the new Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. It was not even necessary to rescind an existing Executive Order because the Board had been created by presidential administrative action.

The Kennedy White House staff view of national security planning was summarized in a note written to the new president for his background use in the February 1961 NSC meeting. In part, it reads:

- When we all had different responsibilities than those we now have, we often complained that the Executive Branch responded to crises rather than anticipated them or forestalled them. To make good on our old complaints we shall have to try to imbue those charged with day-to-day operations with the habit of looking forward.
- In addition, the planning community must try to isolate foreseeable problems and opportunities and work on them with the same intensity as we work on the obvious immediate crisis.
- Planning should be viewed as the process of learning how to begin to act now so as to improve our position in the months and years ahead. It does not consist in merely contingency planning for crises.
- Specifically, we need to develop a doctrine and a policy for the deterrence of guerrilla warfare and begin to apply it soon in concrete cases. ...Concentrated attention should be given to the future viability of Viet-Nam—political, economic and military—over a time period that looks beyond the present crisis.

A list of 19 planning tasks was approved by President Kennedy. The list was arranged under five headings, the fourth of which, according to Rostow, was Kennedy's own innovation:

- Problems of military force and policy; e.g., the deterrence of guerrilla warfare.
- Certain urgent situations; e.g., Berlin, Vietnam.
- Foreseeable problems on which planning and action should begin now in order to exploit the presently available but narrowing range of choice, e.g., reappraisal of our relations with Nasser.
- Potential points of strength where purposeful action might be effective in consolidating or improving our position, e.g., Turkey.

- Areas relating to possible future negotiation with the Soviet Union; e.g., scientific cooperation.

Assignments were made to named individuals, in an effort to avoid the anonymity and dilution of committee products, and target dates set for each report. The lists were revised with the flow of events, special task forces emerging, for example, on Berlin and South Korea. By the end of May, the list had been expanded to some fifty items with eleven subjects selected as high priority which might call for NSC treatment or some other form of presidential decision within two or three months.

In answer to Senator Jackson's direct question as to why the NSC Planning Board had been abolished, Secretary Rusk said:

- I think one of the reasons for abolishing it was to put stronger emphasis upon planning within each of the departments. ...There was a tendency to think that if there is a planning board over there, then they will be doing the planning and the rest of us need only consider the operational side. At the present time, the departments are responsible for assuring that there is a planning orientation of their own departments at all levels.
- Secondly, we felt that general planning was not of too great utility. It was important in terms of the education of those who were to make policy decisions, and for the background, alternatives and general orientation of policy. The most effective planning, however, is that focused rather particularly on a situation or on a developing crisis or any idea of foreign policy. We have used as a planning technique the task force arrangement by which, under the leadership of a known individual, people are drawn from the affected agencies to sit down and think in a concentrated fashion about one particular problem or set of problems.
- I think this applies not only to planning but to operations. But the interdepartmental task force is, I think, preferable in many instances to a professional interdepartmental planning board, because it can call upon those from each of the departments who have not only the deepest background of the group in the particular problem but also who will have a heavy responsibility for it when the planning is over.

Rostow, a strong proponent of planning, summed up by saying: "The general image of Kennedy's first days as president is sometimes projected as one of lighthearted improvisation until the sobering experience of the Bay of Pigs. For those engaged intimately with him in foreign affairs, it was a sober—even somber—time from the beginning, although confronted with a certain visceral good cheer. ...Some of the planning exercises launched then ran into the sand; others laid the foundations for major lines of action."

## **BASIC NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY (BNSP)**

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One of the first problems faced by the new president was how to deal with the existing national security policies of his predecessor.

The question came up in a transition conversation between Gordon Gray, the outgoing Special Assistant, and McGeorge Bundy, the incoming Special Assistant. A memorandum prepared by Gray of this January 11, 1961 meeting reads in part:

"Mr. Bundy indicated that his present thinking was that he would not proceed in the same manner as General Cutler [the first Special Assistant for National Security Affairs in the Eisenhower Administration] had proceeded in 1953. That is to say, he now sees no need for an urgent and massive review of all policy papers inherited by the new Administration. Mr. Bundy ventured the opinion that our policies are largely dictated by external events and that he didn't anticipate that there would be any significant policy shifts. He felt that his time and the time of the various elements of the NSC should be spent getting ahead with the immediate and pressing problems. I suggested to Mr. Bundy that at least he would wish to review the Basic National Security Policy paper."

However, a memorandum to the President written by Bundy dated January 30, 1961, entitled "Policies previously approved in NSC which need review" reads:

- The most urgent need is for a review of basic military policy. What is our view of the kind of strategic force we need, the kinds of limited-war forces, the kind of defense for the continental U.S., and the strategy of NATO? What should be your thinking about the great decisions, at crisis moments, on levels of U.S. military action? The urgency of these matters arises from existing papers which in the view of nearly all your civilian advisers place a debatable emphasis (1) on strategic as against limited-war forces, (2) on 'first-strike' or 'counter-force' strategic planning, as against a 'deterrent' or 'second-strike' posture, and (3) on decisions-in-advance, as against decisions in the light of all the circumstances. Moreover, a review of this sort should include at all stages the relevant political questions, and it should go along with the whole spectrum from thermonuclear weapons system to guerrilla action and political infiltration. Our current troubles in Laos and other places seem to arise at least in part from too narrow and conventional thinking about 'military' as opposed to 'political' problems.
- Our first problem is to decide how to get these matters studied out so that you personally can make the necessary decisions in the light of your own assessment of the complex issues involved. In the past these matters have generally been settled in the light of pressure and argument mainly from interested parties—the Air Force especially, but others too. All of us are agreed that a better way must be found.

- My own preference is for an NSC staff study under your own direction, in steady consultation with Jerry Wiesner, and with selected advisors from outside. But I think Bob McNamara wants to do this job in the Defense Department (*not* in the JCS, but in his own office). There is a good deal to be said, from your standpoint, in having two studies, especially if those in charge of them keep each other in full touch as they go along. The matter is of literally life-and-death importance, and it also has plenty of political dynamite in it, so that the more advice you get, the better off you will be.
- Whatever method you choose, it will be essential (and new) that your men-in-charge have full and candid information about existing plans and thinking in the armed services, and instruction to this effect could usefully be given by you to McNamara and Lemnitzer [Chairman of the JCS] at the first NSC. (Both of these, as individuals, are in favor of such communication, as far as I know.) And while in my judgment the initial studies should not be made by JCS, there should be full consultation with the military at all stages and a fully military comment to you before you decide anything.
- While the largest and hardest questions in this can of worms are judgment questions, with a combined military-political-diplomatic meaning, there are also some technical issues which can be attacked best by Wiesner through special studies by qualified scientific leaders.
- There are other policies currently active that need examination, but none is as important as the basic military-political policy.

The document to be revised or rescinded was the Basic National Security Policy (BNSP). It contained in its 33 pages a classified national security strategy adopted by Eisenhower in the first year of his administration and revised each year. It served as the foundation for all other national security policies.

At the second meeting of the NSC in the new administration, on February 9, 1961, President Kennedy approved a recommendation that the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, in consultation with planning representatives of the Departments of State and Defense, the CIA and as appropriate other agencies, initiate a thorough analysis and reappraisal of basic national security policy as previously reflected in the existing policy papers, making appropriate reports to the Council for consideration.

Work on a new draft proceeded very slowly. A civil-military group was set up under George McGhee, Chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council. By June, however, it was generally acknowledged that work on an overall paper should be delayed while an effort would be made to draft a paper dealing with military problems only.

Bundy agreed that parts of the BNSP had a certain value—primarily the military paragraphs. He did not think the rest of the paper was of value because it didn't tell people very much. He believed policy had to be stated in other ways and cited presidential speeches, news conferences, speeches and news conferences of principal members of the Administration. "I think that has always been historically the way by

which the country and the Government found out what was cooking and understood the general direction in which any Administration was trying to move.”

Defense Secretary McNamara, as Bundy had learned, did not want to take on the task of obtaining Pentagon agreement at this early date for changes he planned to make in the U.S. defense posture. He did not want to undertake a revision of the military parts of the BNSP, especially Paragraph 15 dealing with the composition of military forces. He felt there were more important things to do than to get into a 'theological' argument over general concepts precisely worded.

Critics of the BNSP had often stated that its usefulness as guidance was limited for two reasons. Its generalizations were so broad that almost any program could be considered as authorized by it and second, if it was specific, it would be difficult to change to meet changed circumstances. Additionally, it was criticized because it was not closely tied to budgetary decisions which were being made outside the Council. Thus, it was said to be merely exhortation—what should be done rather than what would be done. One military critic, General Maxwell D. Taylor, wrote in 1959: “It is so broad in nature and so general in language as to provide limited guidance in practical applications. The BNSP document means all things to all people and settles nothing, for example, how defense dollars should be spent.”

A partial review of basic policy was undertaken in July 1962 but it resulted in no new policy statement. Following a discussion in the Council of the U.S. Intelligence Board's estimate of Soviet long-range attack capabilities, the President asked that a study be made of the effect on the conduct of Soviet foreign policy of the Soviet military posture summarized in the estimate. The study was to include military implications of the estimate for the U.S. A special committee chaired by the State Department representative and including representatives of the Defense Department, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the CIA, and the White House was established to report to the President within six weeks. The White House representative was General Taylor.

The report, signed by the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Director of CIA, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, concluded that the new estimate of Soviet capabilities required no basic revisions or changes either in foreign policy or in current defense policy.

In November 1962, when Rostow left the White House staff to become head of State's Planning Council, he continued work on a draft BNSP. However, the draft never got as far as to be considered by the Council. The military parts of the basic paper, including nuclear strategy, came to be included in substance in the Draft Presidential Memoranda prepared by McNamara, and presented to the President by him.

In January 1963, the President authorized the rescission of the old BNSP. Holders of the basic paper were told that “for the present, current policy guidance is to be found in existing major policy statements of the President and Cabinet officers, both classified and unclassified.”

## **FIRST NSC MEETING CHAIRED BY KENNEDY**

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The initial National Security Council meeting of the Kennedy Administration was held on February 1, 1961—the first of 45 such meetings.

Statutory Council members present were:

President Kennedy, Presiding  
Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson  
Secretary of State, Dean Rusk  
Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara  
Director Designate of the Office of Civil and  
Defense Mobilization, Frank B. Ellis

Statutory advisers present were:

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff,  
General Lyman L. Lemnitzer  
Director of Central Intelligence Agency,  
Allen W. Dulles

The President noted that he had invited certain officials other than the statutory members and statutory advisers to attend the initial meeting. In the future, the list of those requested to attend an NSC meeting, other than the statutory members and advisers, would be drawn up in the light of the business he wanted to discuss at each meeting. He emphasized his eagerness to keep such officers as the Director-designate of the U.S. Information Agency, Edward R. Murrow, fully informed of major issues.

Others invited to this first meeting were:

Secretary of the Treasury, C. Douglas Dillon  
Director of the Bureau of the Budget, David E. Bell  
Undersecretary of State, Chester Bowles  
Counselor-designate of the State Department, George McGhee  
Assistant Secretary of Defense, Paul Nitze  
Deputy Director of CIA, Robert Amory  
Special Assistant to the President for Science and  
Technology, Jerome B. Wiesner  
Special Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs, McGeorge Bundy  
Military Aide to the President, General Chester V. Clifton

In all, there were 17 officials present. The effort to keep attendance at NSC meetings to a minimum got off to a slow start.

The meeting opened with an oral briefing on significant world developments affecting U.S. security given by the Deputy Director of Intelligence of the CIA.

A major substantive issue was brought up by the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, who reported that the past system of preparing military budgets had the following weaknesses:

- A lack of correspondence between military plans and the military budget which resulted in military plans larger than could be implemented by the budgets.
- A lack of common assumptions and doctrines among the three military departments, resulting in differing strategic doctrines and appraisals of the threat, which were not adequately understood or taken into account in the budget process.
- Military budgets were organized by departments and by inputs (such as personnel, procurement, etc.) but not by outputs (such as strategic deterrence, limited war capabilities, etc.), making it difficult to determine what objectives were being fulfilled.
- The perspective of the military budgets has been generally short-range, rather than being decided on the basis of five-year or longer-range objectives.

The Secretary of Defense noted several actions which were being taken with reference to the FY 1961 and FY 1962 military budgets including a complete reappraisal of the FY 1962 budget to be completed about March 1, 1961. Four groups, each headed by a senior official in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, had been set up to study strategic weapons, requirements for limited war, selected weapons research and development programs, and base and installation requirements.

The President requested the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with other interested agencies, to examine means for placing more emphasis on the development of counter-guerrilla forces.

Thus was launched the long and detailed revision of the military paragraphs of the inherited Basic National Security Policy. The result was a series of Draft Memoranda to the President from the Secretary of Defense—not a revised NSC policy paper.

At the end of this initial meeting, the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs explained to the Council that "in response to the President's desire, a different organization and procedures would henceforth be used in the work of the NSC, involving fewer and smaller staff groups composed of more senior personnel. Policy recommendations would be brought to the NSC without being obscured by interagency processing but with adequate previous consultation and presentation of counter-proposals. The preparation of such recommendations would require the full cooperation of all agencies in providing access to essential information."

Following the meeting, Bundy drafted several memoranda summarizing each Council action and sent them, after approval by the President, to appropriate Department or Agency heads for coordination and implementation. As explained elsewhere, these memoranda eventually became part of the National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) series.



## **FOLLOW-ON NATIONAL SECURITY MEETINGS**

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Although a second Council meeting was held on February 9, there was a lapse of six weeks before the third NSC meeting was called. In between there were numerous group meetings with the president on national security matters but none were formal Council meetings. For example, a meeting on Southeast Asia was held in the Cabinet Room on March 9. Several important decisions made by the President which were to be implemented by the Defense Department and the Central Intelligence Agency were recorded in NSAMs. Another national security meeting held on March 11 resulted in several presidential decisions with respect to Cuba to be implemented by the State Department and CIA.

Scheduled for February 24 but postponed until March 29, the third NSC meeting reviewed North Atlantic problems. There was a presentation and discussion of a report to the president prepared by former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, assisted by a working group which included Ambassador Finletter and representatives of the Departments of State, Defense and Treasury, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs. The Council discussed and revised a proposed policy directive regarding NATO and the Atlantic nations. The president decided to consider the draft directive in the light of the discussion at the meeting and after consultation with the Secretary of State.

The next Council meeting, the fourth, was held on April 22 following the Bay of Pigs disaster. The record of action of the meeting noted the "president's view that there should be no further discussion outside the Government of the meaning of recent landings in Cuba, since the object now is to move forward."

For the first time, Attorney General Robert Kennedy attended a Council meeting. Also present were the Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force.

The president announced that he was appointing General Maxwell Taylor, a former Army Chief of Staff, to advise him with respect to ways and means of improving U.S. efforts in para-military, guerrilla and counter-guerrilla activities.

During the meeting, the president said he had requested the vice president to make a prompt report on ways and means of accelerating the U.S. space program.

At the fifth NSC meeting on April 27, after a discussion of several substantive issues, the president called attention to his directive that discussions in the Council must be kept privileged and emphasized the importance he attached to keeping the substance of such discussions from becoming public.

Following a discussion of U.S. policy toward Cuba, the president requested Assistant Secretary of Defense Nitze to coordinate proposals with respect to broad aspects of the Cuban problem. This Cuban Task Force reported to the Council on May 5 and was continued under the temporary chairmanship of a White House staff member, Richard Goodwin.

## THE BAY OF PIGS DISASTER

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Before a new national security system could be put in place, President Kennedy confronted the Cuban problem which soon turned into the disaster at the Bay of Pigs. The landing in Cuba of Cuban exiles trained by United States officers had been planned during the Eisenhower Administration by the NSC committee responsible for covert activities.

Six days after he became President, Kennedy convened a group to discuss the plan including the Secretaries of State and Defense, CIA Director Allan Dulles, JCS Chairman General Lemnitzer and Attorney General Robert Kennedy. The plan was very closely held, and few officials were party to the discussions. Although the plan was not discussed in a formal National Security Council meeting, the *ad hoc* group chaired by the President included most Council members.

Toward the end of March, meetings of the *ad hoc* group were taking place every three or four days. One meeting, on April 4, took place in the State Department. In addition to the regular members, including the President, Senator Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, attended.

Lack of a formal national security system had little to do with the President's decision to go ahead with the Cuban plan. "Transitionitis"—a new President and a new staff—has been blamed. One staff participant in the meetings, McGeorge Bundy, laid the cause of the failure "to unfamiliarity of the *dramatis personae* one with another and the uncertainty with which people, I suspect, feel at best in the process of communicating their counsel to the Commander-in-Chief, and the diffidence which they may feel doubly when they don't know him well and he doesn't know them well and the processes of communication are not established on familiar terms."

Another staff participant, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., a presidential assistant then concerned with Latin American Affairs, acknowledged that "one's impulse to blow the whistle on this nonsense was simply undone by the circumstances of the discussion. ...It is one thing for a special assistant to talk frankly in private to a president at his request, and another for a college professor, fresh to the government, to interpose his unassisted judgment in open meeting against that of such august figures as the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, each speaking with the full weight of his institution behind him. The members of the White House staff who sat in the Cabinet Room failed in their job of protecting the President."

Schlesinger, in explaining the President's action, wrote: "The decision resulted from the fact that he had been in office only 77 days. He had not had the time or opportunity to test the inherited instrumentalities of government. He could not know which of his advisers were competent and which were not. For their part, they did not know him or each other well enough to raise hard questions with force and candor."

Several organizational changes followed the Bay of Pigs disaster. The President's expressed requirement for full and current national security information was met by developing the Situation Room in the White House basement. Bundy's office in the Old Executive Office Building adjoining the NSC staff offices was moved across the street to the White House West Wing adjoining the Situation Room. General Taylor was brought in as Military Representative of the President. A Cuba Study Group named by the President to examine the causes of the Bay of Pigs failure recommended the establishment of a new organization, in effect a "headquarters for the cold war," but the President approved only the formation of the Special Group—Counter-Insurgency—to monitor new and expanded counter-insurgency programs.

## THE SITUATION ROOM ESTABLISHED

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President Kennedy's decision to play an active and timely role in the formulation and implementation of national security policy necessitated a greatly expanded information system to support him—not only intelligence reports but also field recommendations and reports of actions taken by the bureaucracy at home and abroad. The Bay of Pigs disaster revealed another new White House requirement—fast and secure communications with departments and agencies to carry presidential orders during crises. Decisions affecting the movement of U.S. Navy ships and U.S. Air Force planes had been relayed during the Bay of Pigs crisis from the Cabinet Room to the Pentagon over unclassified telephone lines.

The new unit was called the Situation Room rather than the operations center, to make clear that it was a facility—not a command post except in most unusual circumstances. Its purpose was to serve as a funnel for all classified information coming from all national security agencies and present it to the President and his national security staff in an orderly fashion. It aimed at coordinating the many information channels to the White House which sprang up in the early days of the Kennedy Administration, including those of the Central Intelligence Agency, the State and Defense Departments and the Chiefs of Staff through their aides in the White House.

Space for the Situation Room was found in the basement of the West Wing of the White House. The area had been a bowling alley used by the White House Staff. The Room was constructed by Navy Sea Bees in May 1961. Existing communication links to the White House which terminated in the bomb shelter built under the East Wing in 1942 were preempted. These lines and the code machines in the shelter were used only for test purposes, ensuring that they would be available in case of war. These machines were put to decoding and printing hard copies of messages relayed by the national security agencies. Copies of the messages were hand carried from the East Wing shelter to the Situation Room until a pneumatic tube was built between the two locations. Later, additional links and coding machines were put in by the White House Communications Agency which paid for and operated them. A facsimile capability handling top secret material linked the State Department, the National Military Command Center, and the Central Intelligence Agency. Signal Board telephone lines tied the Situation Room and the residences of all Council members, Council advisers and NSC-White House staff officers.

Staffing on a 24-hour year-round basis was provided by the Central Intelligence Agency. One plan for the facility drawn up by the military called for a staff of about one hundred officers and comparable space. However, President Kennedy turned this down and asked his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs to give him a much smaller one.

Control of the new facility was in the hands of the President's national security assistant and the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council. The Director of the facility, who was a member of the NSC staff, exercised supervision over the watch officers detailed by CIA. An informal group called the Washington Procedures Coordinating Committee, consisting of representatives from the national security agencies, sought to achieve faster and freer flow of information on critical situations among Washington alert centers. Its informal meetings were held in the Situation Room chaired by the Room's director.

With the active support of the President, the national security agencies began relaying their messages to the Situation Room. The State Department said the new facility would be swamped if all classified State traffic were relayed. An attempt was made to draw up a list of the types of messages the White House wanted to receive. This effort was not successful. Finally, the problem was largely solved by asking that all messages bearing a priority designator be relayed immediately. Reception of classified national security messages from the Defense Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff was achieved by using the newly created National Military Command Center which was being helped by the Situation Room to achieve status as the unique military communication channel to the White House.

The automatic relay of all outgoing messages which had been cleared by the President or the White House-NSC staff gave an additional check on the implementation of presidential policies.

All communications coming into the Situation Room were routed through the NSC Executive Secretary to the national security assistant and screened for the President. Copies of almost all communications were sent to appropriate staff officers for handling or for information.

By 1963, the functions of the Situation Room were:

- To receive information and intelligence, classified and unclassified, by telephone, long distance Xerography (after 1965) and courier from the Departments of Defense and State, the JCS, CIA, and the National Security Agency, which had originated in Washington or in U.S. establishments worldwide.
- To respond to presidential requests for national security information after normal working hours and to obtain and forward written reports to him on critical situations.
- To alert senior White House and NSC staff officers to important developments taking place during the night or after normal working hours.

Calling attention to the information as well as the coordinating advantages of the Situation Room, President Johnson in 1964 cited the Executive Secretary of the NSC as "a skilled and dedicated advisor in the national security field, who has revolutionized the communications system supporting Presidential decision-making and action in foreign affairs. Through rare judgment, energy and tact, he has generated a steady enlargement of a sense of common purpose among the executive agencies in national security affairs."

## **INTERIM REPORT ON NATIONAL SECURITY SYSTEM, SEPTEMBER 1961**

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In July 1961, Senator Jackson wrote to McGeorge Bundy informing him that the Senate sub-committee on National Policy Machinery was bringing to a close "its nonpartisan study of how our Government can best staff and organize itself to develop and carry out the kind of national security policies required to meet the challenge of world communism." The Senator asked whether the present Administration could furnish official memoranda which would be the current equivalent of memoranda given us by the Eisenhower Administration.

Bundy replied on September 4 by giving an interim report on how the Kennedy Administration had changed the previous national security system. There is no more authoritative description of the new system, including not only the Council but also its staff, than this reply which reads in part:

This Administration has been revising these arrangements [the large and complex series of processes of the previous Administration] to fit the needs of a new President, but the work of revision is far from done, and it is too soon for me to report with any finality upon the matters about which you ask.

Much of what you have been told in the reports of the previous Administration about the legal framework and concept of the Council remains true today. There has been no recent change in the National Security Act of 1947. Nor has there been any change in the basic and decisive fact that the Council is advisory only. Decisions are made by the President.

Finally, there has been no change in the basic proposition that, in the language of Robert Cutler, 'the Council is a vehicle for a President to use in accordance with its suitability to his plans for conducting his great office.' As Mr. Cutler further remarked, 'a peculiar virtue of the National Security Act is its flexibility,' and 'each President may use the Council as he finds most suitable at a given time.' It is within the spirit of this doctrine that a new process of using the NSC is developing.

The specific changes which have occurred are three. First, the NSC meets less often than it did. There were 16 meetings in the first 6 months of the Kennedy Administration. Much that used to flow routinely to the weekly meetings of the Council is now settled in other ways—by separate meetings with the President, by letters, by written memoranda, and at levels below that of the President. President Kennedy has preferred to call meetings of the NSC only after determining that a particular issue is ready for discussion in this particular forum.

I know you share my understanding that the National Security Council has never been and should never become the only instrument of counsel and decision

available to the President in dealing with the problems of our national security. The National Security Council is one instrument among many; it must never be made an end in itself.

But for certain issues of great moment, the NSC is indeed valuable. President Kennedy has used it for discussion of basic national policy toward a number of countries. He has used it both for advice on particular pressing decisions and for recommendations on long-term policy. As new attitudes develop within the Administration, and as new issues arise in the world, the NSC is likely to continue as a major channel through which broad issues of national security policy come forward for Presidential decision.

Meanwhile, the President continues to meet at very frequent intervals with the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and other officials closely concerned with problems of national security. Such meetings may be as large as an NSC meeting or as small as a face-to-face discussion with a single Cabinet officer. What they have in common is that a careful record is kept, in the appropriate way, whenever a decision is reached. Where primary responsibility falls clearly to a single Department, the primary record of such decisions will usually be made through the Department. Where the issue is broader, or where the action requires continued White House attention, the decision will be recorded through the process of the National Security Council. Thus the business of the National Security Council staff goes well beyond what is treated in formal meetings of the National Security Council. It is our purpose, in cooperation with other Presidential staff officers, to meet the President's staff needs throughout the national security area.

The second and more significant change in the administration of the National Security Council and its subordinate agencies is the abolition by Executive Order 10920 of the Operations Coordinating Board. This change needs to be understood both for what it is and for what it is not. It is not in any sense a downgrading of the tasks of coordination and follow-up; neither is it an abandonment of Presidential responsibility for these tasks. It is rather a move to eliminate an instrument that does not match the style of operation and coordination of the current Administration.

From the point of view of the new Administration, the decisive difficulty in the OCB was that without unanimity it had no authority. No one of its eight members had authority over any other. It was never a truly Presidential instrument, and its practices were those of a group of able men attempting, at the second and third levels of Government, to keep large departments in reasonable harmony with each other. Because of good will among its members, and unusual administrative skill in its secretariat, it did much useful work; it also had weaknesses. But its most serious weakness, for the new Administration, was simply that neither the President himself nor the present Administration as a whole conceives of operational coordination as a task for a large committee in which no one man has authority. It was and is our belief that there is much to be done that the OCB could not do, and that the things it did do can be done as well or better in other ways.

The most important of these other ways is an increased reliance on the leadership of the Department of State. The President has made it very clear that he does not want a large separate organization between him and his Secretary of State. Neither does he wish any question to arise as to the clear authority and responsibility of the Secretary of State, not only in his own Department, and not only in such large-scale related areas as foreign aid and information policy, but also as the agent of coordination in all our major policies toward other nations.

The third change in the affairs of the NSC grows out of the first two and has a similar purpose. We have deliberately rubbed out the distinction between planning and operation which governed the administrative structure of the NSC staff in the last Administration. This distinction, real enough at the extremes of the daily cable traffic and long-range assessment of future possibilities, breaks down in most of the business of decision and action. This is especially true at the level of Presidential action.

Mr. Bundy concluded his letter by saying: "I have been conscious... of the limits which are imposed upon me by the need to avoid classified questions, and still more by the requirement that the President's own business be treated in confidence."



## THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL STAFF

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By September 1961, McGeorge Bundy, the new president's special assistant for national security affairs, had revised the mission and replaced the personnel of the National Security Council's staff. In his letter to Senator Jackson referred to earlier, Bundy stated that the NSC staff, "which is essentially a presidential instrument, should be composed of men who can serve equally well in the process of planning and in that of operational follow-up. The President's interests and purposes can be better served if the staff officer who keeps in daily touch with operations in a given area is also the officer who acts for the White House staff in related planning activities."

As to the role of the Presidential staff as a whole in national security affairs, Bundy said this staff would be smaller than it was in the last Administration and "more closely knit." "The president uses in these areas a number of officers holding White House appointment, and a number of others holding appointments on the National Security Council staff. He also uses extensively the staff of the Bureau of the Budget. These men are all staff officers. Their job is to help the President, not to supersede or supplement any of the high officials who hold line responsibilities in the executive departments and agencies. Their task is that of all staff officers: to extend the range and enlarge the direct effectiveness of the man they serve. ..."

One major change gradually developed which greatly increased the responsibilities of the NSC staff. Bundy took over the management of the president's day-to-day foreign policy and national security business. This activity had been handled for President Eisenhower by the White House Staff Secretary while the special assistant dealt primarily with longer-range Council papers and Council meetings.

In 1953, the mission of the career NSC staff had been set out in the report written by Robert Cutler and approved by President Eisenhower. Part of the enlarged NSC staff was a small special staff with specific duties such as independent analysis and review of each Planning Board report before its submission to the Council; continuous examination of the totality of national security policies with a view to determining if gaps existed which should be filled and if important issues or anticipated developments were sufficiently explored; and continuing integrated evaluation of the capabilities of the free world versus the capabilities of the Soviet and Satellites and estimates of the situation, in order to bring such evaluations and estimates before the Council. As envisaged by Cutler, the entire NSC staff, beginning with the Executive Secretary on down, would be career personnel, but the Special Assistant, as a political figure, would go out with each administration.

The staff emphasis in the 1950s was on the formulation and coordination of foreign and national security policy for Council and presidential consideration. Bundy made clear that the business of the revised national security staff would go well beyond what would be treated in formal meetings of the Council. "It is our purpose," he wrote,

"in cooperation with other Presidential staff officers, to meet the President's staff needs throughout the national security area."

The mission of the NSC staff as described by Bundy remained much the same during the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. The staff's work went to the presidents through the special assistants and almost always in the name of Bundy or later Walt Rostow. Four officers handled the four geographic areas corresponding to State Department regional offices. Functional policies were handled by additional officers. Daily staff meetings kept all staff officers informed of their colleagues' work and permitted the special assistant to manage the entire operation. Because the Council was used less, the special assistants spent a great deal of their time, and that of the staff, in arranging and preparing meetings for the president on specific national security issues which were not formal Council meetings.

The special assistants and the NSC staff played the dominant role in activities which were uniquely presidential such as summit conferences, visits of foreign heads of state to Washington, trips of the presidents abroad and correspondence with heads of foreign states. Approval of presidential instructions to heads of delegations was another area of intense activity. Arms control, nuclear testing, NATO meetings—all required presidential guidance for U.S. negotiators.

Only rarely did the special assistants and NSC staff officers engage directly in implementing policies. They were considered and considered themselves to be presidential staff officers, giving advice or becoming line officers only when asked by the president.

## THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS — EXCOM

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The October–November 1962 Cuban crisis was a major test of the system President Kennedy used when dealing with national security problems. The first phase of the operation, October 15–20, involved the procedures used in getting intelligence to the President and in preparing recommendations to him for formal consideration before decision.

Photographic evidence of the construction of Soviet offensive missile sites in Cuba reached ranking government officials late in the evening of October 15. The following morning, before the President began his working day, Bundy summarized for him the intelligence community's findings. For the next four weeks, the President received every day, and sometimes twice a day, either written summaries of the photographic "readout" or enlarged pictures of the Soviet sites under construction in Cuba. During the last two weeks of October, the United States Intelligence Board produced numerous estimates covering many subjects such as the impact in Latin America and worldwide of the deployment to Cuba of Soviet missiles.

The planning of the U.S. response to the mounting evidence of the Soviet missile deployment began Tuesday morning, October 16. A working senior committee of advisers comprising the President's *de facto* choice of individuals was established. During four days, these officials, meeting sometimes off-the-record with the President, but often in the State Department without him, drafted alternative ways of dealing with the problem, including lists of political, military and economic actions to be taken under each alternative. The group included the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Treasury, the Attorney General, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Under Secretary of State, the Deputy Under Secretary of State, and the Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America. Because the planning had reached the point of presidential decision and because additional evidence of the rapidity of the Soviet missile build-up was at hand, the group asked the President to meet with them on October 20. The President, on an out-of-town trip which he had not cancelled, in an effort to keep secret the existence of a crisis, returned to Washington feigning a minor illness.

On the afternoon of October 20, a secret meeting of the National Security Council was held in the White House, thus initiating the second organizational phase of the Cuban crisis. This meeting, presided over by the President, was opened with a visual presentation of the extensive photographic evidence resulting from the increased number of reconnaissance missions flown over Cuba during the preceding days. Papers outlining the alternative responses to the Soviet initiative, including argumentation in support of each, were presented and discussed in detail.

A second meeting of the NSC, held on Sunday, October 21, centered on the draft of a speech in which the President would inform the American people of the

situation—their first knowledge of it—and of his plan of action. Numerous policy decisions were made by the President in the course of agreeing on the specific wording of the draft. A detailed diplomatic plan, including our tactics in the United Nations, consultations with the Organization of American States, with NATO and with other Allies, non-committed or neutral, was presented and discussed. Military questions were raised by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense and discussed by the Council.

The third NSC meeting, held October 22, reviewed the measures already taken to place the military forces in a posture to respond to any contingency as well as to carry out any course of action decided by the President. The objectives of the response to the Soviet action were decided upon, the mechanics of a possible quarantine were settled, consultations with Congressional leaders and other national leaders were agreed upon, and public information guidelines were approved.

By action of the President on October 22, the informal group working on the Cuban problem was formally established as the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, usually referred to as EXCOM. The President's memorandum reads:

"I hereby establish, for the purpose of effective conduct of the operations of the Executive Branch in the current crisis, an Executive Committee of the National Security Council. This committee will meet, until further notice, daily at 10:00 a.m. in the Cabinet Room. I shall act as Chairman of this committee and its additional regular members will be as follows: the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Attorney General, the Director of Central Intelligence, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Ambassador-at-Large, the Special Counsel and the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

The first meeting of this committee will be held at the regular hour on Tuesday, October 23rd, at which point further arrangements with respect to its management and operation will be decided."

Additional officials who regularly were invited to attend later EXCOM meetings included the Director of the United States Information Agency, the Deputy Under Secretary of State, the Assistant Secretary of Defense, the Counselor of the State Department, and the Executive Secretary of the NSC. Numerous other officials attended some meetings. Among these were the Assistant Secretaries of State for Inter-American Affairs, for International Organization Affairs, and for Public Affairs; the President's Press Secretary and the U.S. Representative to the UN.

To facilitate the work of EXCOM, three interdepartmental sub-committees were established. The first, chaired by Assistant Secretary of Defense Nitze, worked on Berlin contingencies. The second, chaired by the Chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council, Walt W. Rostow, did advance planning, and the third, chaired by the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Administration, William H. Orrick, Jr., addressed itself to establishing an effective worldwide communications system to meet the requirements of a crisis.

On October 29, after the Russians had agreed to withdraw their missiles from Cuba, the President established a coordinating committee to give full time to matters involved in concluding the Cuban crisis. It served as a link between EXCOM and the negotiations underway in New York with the Soviet representatives and with the Acting Secretary General of the UN. John J. McCloy, a member of the U.S. Mission to the UN, was named Chairman. Other members were the Under Secretary of State and the Deputy Secretary of Defense. After the crisis was over, it was dissolved by the President on January 11, 1963, along with the two other sub-committees of EXCOM, the Sub-committee for Berlin Contingencies and the Sub-committee on Advance Planning.

EXCOM meetings usually began with an intelligence briefing by the CIA Director. In addition, the latest intelligence on the Cuban situation was circulated in writing by means of a "Crisis Memorandum" prepared especially for EXCOM. The intelligence material often gave rise to policy discussions.

Next on the committee's regular agenda was a report by the Secretary of State on political developments. Discussion and presidential decisions on diplomatic matters usually followed.

Military questions were then raised by the Secretary of Defense. Operational problems involved in carrying out the Cuban quarantine and in conducting aerial reconnaissance were presented and decided.

The remainder of each meeting was spent on a wide variety of crisis problems as diverse as directives to USIA, curtailing the "leaking" of information to the press, and civil defense preparations.

EXCOM met with the President 42 times from the date of its creation, October 22, until it ceased operations on March 29, 1963. During the first month, when it dealt only with the Cuban crisis, it met 30 times. Although the Vice President was an active participant, he presided, at the President's request, at only one meeting and then, only until the President arrived. For one meeting, EXCOM members flew to Hyannis Port to meet with the President.

Bundy, who was given total responsibility by the President for the operation of EXCOM, made this half-serious comment in a speech in 1963. "I have sometimes thought that my own principal contribution in those days was to see to it that a large amount of carefully prepared and excellent advice did not get to the President. It is very easy, when a government is full of able and energetic men, for any officer to be so overwhelmed with good advice that he has no time to think his own thoughts and hammer out his own decisions."

The only subjects dealt with by EXCOM, other than Cuba, were policies toward Brazil, the Congo, Europe, and South Asia; the multilateral nuclear European force, and Assistant Secretary of State Harriman's mission to India and Pakistan. Even these subjects were discussed at meetings which also dealt with Cuba. One subject, the reappraisal of policy toward Europe, started out in EXCOM but ended up being discussed in a formal NSC meeting.

Several times, after the Cuban missile crisis, Cabinet secretaries suggested that the EXCOM be used to deal with other major problems. In August 1963, both

Secretary Rusk and Secretary McNamara thought that EXCOM should be reconstituted. However, in a memorandum to the President, Bundy recommended against their suggestion. He wrote: "EXCOM, with you and the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense on hand, is a good instrument for major interdepartmental decision. It is not so good for lesser matters of coordination, and it has not proved effective at all, except during the extraordinary week of October 16-22 (sic), in the process of forward planning."

## **EISENHOWER CRITICISM AND BUNDY REBUTTAL, NOVEMBER 1962**

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Before the Cuban missile crisis was fully resolved, President Kennedy was confronted with criticism of his NSC system from an unusual source—former President Eisenhower.

CIA Director McCone had been asked by President Kennedy to give intelligence briefings to the former president. In mid-November, Mr. McCone, in a memorandum for Kennedy, summarized Eisenhower's views on the "adequacy of the organization of the Executive Branch of Government as now constituted." McCone said that on a number of occasions during the past several months, Eisenhower had raised the question of the national security system. He said Eisenhower felt that:

- NSC meetings should be held regularly, at weekly intervals, and should be attended by designated members.
- Benefit of such meetings is so that the President can hear the views of his principal advisors on all matters of interest, expressed in the presence of one another, so that he, the president, will have the benefit of differing points of view on any particular problem expressed in the presence of one another and in his own presence.
- Of particular importance in General Eisenhower's opinion is to have regular intelligence briefings at NSC meetings so that the president can benefit by conflicting evaluations or opinions of his principal advisers with respect to intelligence matters. Eisenhower feels very strongly that the circulation of intelligence reports fails to accomplish this specific objective.
- The NSC, to function properly and adequately serve the president, must be supported by properly organized planning staffs. Eisenhower supports the concept that the Operations Coordinating Board and the Planning Board have permanent, established organizations to prepare for NSC meetings and to ensure decisions are properly carried out, and he recognizes that organizations of this type must be tailored to the desires of the president. In this connection Eisenhower feels that committees established for specific purposes are frequently not supported by staff, and their work is not carefully coordinated with related problems which may be outside the jurisdiction of the committee.

President Kennedy sent the McCone memorandum to Bundy who, the same day, responded in writing.

It is probably...true that we did not promptly develop fully adequate new procedures of our own. The State Department has not proved to be as effective an agency of executive management as we hoped, and above all, it has not shown the capacity for interdepartmental coordination which we hoped to force upon it. We

have always had, however, rather more organization than General Eisenhower probably recognizes. We have, for example, kept in our service the most effective professional members of the National Security Council staff, and we have added to them...notably qualified staff officers. We have instituted a system of administrative follow-up on presidential decisions which works both by formal memorandum and by informal and continuous communication. We have also increased the administrative support of certain important interdepartmental committees.

The National Security Council as such has seemed to us a much too cumbersome instrument for intensive use, but in the course of the recent Cuban crisis, you have instituted an Executive Committee which so far has worked unusually well.

It will remain true that our operating style will be somewhat different from General Eisenhower's. Your own instinct is to work closely with the men who are most directly concerned with a particular problem, and to seek advice from a wider and more varied circle than General Eisenhower used. For this reason, your tendency is to use frequent small meetings with those who have an immediate concern with a problem—Laos, the Congo, the defense budget, nuclear testing, Cuba, Berlin and balance of payments. This is simply the way you do your job and I see no chance that you will want to take the opposite course of reviewing the agreed papers laboriously ground forward by a third-level bureaucracy and presented to you through the medium of weekly meetings of 30 or 40 people.

As I reread John McCone's memorandum, I think that much of General Eisenhower's criticism may be directed against phenomena which were more characteristic of our first few months than of our present operations. I think that it may be worthwhile to emphasize both that we have learned a lot in the last year and a half. What we have said and what I, at least, have deeply believed, is that different presidents are bound to have different administrative methods. General Eisenhower is a believer in a military concept of staff operations, and you govern by direct personal involvement and decision.



## THE NSC STANDING GROUP

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At the end of the first year of the Kennedy Administration, Bundy set up a group, under the chairmanship of the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, to "organize and monitor the work of the National Security Council and to take up such other matters as may be presented to the group by its members." The group, meeting weekly in the White House Situation Room, was regularly composed of the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Director of the CIA, and the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The Executive Secretary of the NSC was to participate in the work of the group and organize its staffing. Depending on the agenda, representatives of other agencies of the government would be invited to participate.

The group met 15 times between January 1962 and August 1962 during its eight-month life. Its usefulness varied, but lack of driving support from the State Department representative resulted in a rather desultory life. It dealt with policy issues for countries such as Algeria, the Congo, Angola, Syria, Iran, Korea, and Japan. It discussed papers on functional subjects such as nuclear testing, civil aviation policy toward the Sino-Soviet Bloc, US-USSR cooperation in outer space, export trade policy and the military aid program.

The following Spring, April 1963, the Standing Group was revived, but about all that remained the same as the earlier group was the name and the weekly meeting place—the White House Situation Room. Bundy became chairman and the membership was expanded.

In a preliminary memorandum to the President in early April 1963, Bundy called the new organization the "Plans and Operations Committee of the National Security Council." The name soon changed to the Standing Committee, and finally the earlier name was revived—the NSC Standing Group. Bundy presented the organizational plan to the President this way:

As you know, there has been considerable discussion in recent months of the need for strengthening interdepartmental planning and coordination on major national security issues. ...I have talked at some length with the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, Averell Harriman, and others, in an effort to find a new pattern which would help in both planning and operations. I have come out with the following guidelines:

- One new committee should be responsible for planning and operations at the level short of your own controlling judgment. We have done well in this Administration not to let planning get separated from the responsibility for action, and vice versa. ...We should not abandon this principle now.
- The committee should be established at a sufficiently senior level so that it is not merely a staff exercise. In my judgment, this means that with four

exceptions its membership should be parallel to that of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council. It should include such men as the Secretary of the Treasury, the Attorney General, Ed Murrow (USIA), John McCone (CIA) and probably (General) Max Taylor. The people it should *not* include, in my judgment, are the President and Vice President, and the two Cabinet officers with a final responsibility for policy advice to you, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense.

Neither of these two Cabinet officers can speak in committee without engaging the whole weight of a great advisory department, and both of them have preferred not to be pinned to any procedure in which their direct responsibilities to you might somehow be absorbed in a committee process.

- The Plans and Operations Committee should be chaired from the White House, presumably by me, but it should rely mainly upon State, Defense and CIA for staff work. For this reason, it is of the greatest importance that the State representative be a man with a broad and continuous operational responsibility, but also with time and energy for this particular assignment. ...
- The committee should meet weekly, and it should have as little continuing infrastructure as possible. Except for State, Defense, and CIA—its members should attend as individuals and not as representatives of agencies. If a man cannot come, in other words, no one automatically comes in his place—except in the case of State, Defense and CIA, where the departments simply have to be included.

My recommendation is that its initial composition should be as follows:

- The political Under Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, and the Director for State, Defense and CIA, respectively; the following as members by your personal appointment: Douglas Dillon, Robert Kennedy, Edward Murrow, Dave Bell (Budget), Maxwell Taylor, Theodore Sorensen, and (Ambassador-at-Large) Llewellyn Thompson. The chairman of this committee should be myself, and its administrative support should be provided by Bromley Smith.
- The Plans and Operations Committee should *not* occupy itself with business better handled through other channels. In particular, it should not try to get on the cables or to replace the manifold arrangements through which your own executive business is now conducted. Still less should it be concerned with matters of daily Departmental operation. It should, instead, be alert to planning problems that are a little less ripe than today's required decisions—like Cuba a year from now—or China in 1965. It should serve as a ready medium for review of ongoing programs with strongly interdepartmental aspects: I think of overseas base planning, of counter-insurgency support, and of information policy as examples. It should be used for occasional discursive review of drastic alternatives to existing policy, and its members should be encouraged to table unorthodox ideas for such review. It would be a logical place for occasional review of intelligence estimates in progress, from the point of view of their relevance to plans and operations.

Ten days later, Bundy reported to the President that the establishment of the committee had been agreed around town and would begin operations in a week. "...We intend to have absolutely no publicity about it in order to avoid useless chatter about seizing the initiative from the State Department or restoring the OCB, or otherwise reorganizing ourselves in the spring of our discontent."

At the organizing meeting, Bundy outlined the Group's area of work as (a) planning problems—and longer range, and (b) review of on-going programs, such as overseas base planning and information policy.

In the final list of members, the Director of the Bureau of the Budget and the State Department's Ambassador-at-Large were deleted while the Administrator of AID was added. The Secretary of the Treasury was concerned about being a member of a committee which included the Under Secretary of State and the Deputy Secretary of Defense, so he was replaced as a member by the Under Secretary of the Treasury.

Only members were to attend meetings. A maximum of one or two experts could be invited during discussions involving their expertise. A representative of an agency not on the committee could be invited if the subject for discussion was of primary interest to that agency, such as the Atomic Energy Commission or the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

At its second meeting, when the subject of Cuba was on the agenda, the Secretaries of Defense and Treasury attended as did the Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America.

The group spent most of its time dealing with interdepartmental papers which were on their way to the President for decision. Nine full meetings and parts of two more involved policy and programs toward Cuba. Other subjects were Spanish bases, the test ban treaty, Israeli arms, Iran, Africa, military aid for India and Pakistan.

As once before, the Group meetings declined in number and its work was taken over by informal *ad hoc* committees.

## KENNEDY'S YEAR-END COUNCIL MEETINGS

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President Kennedy used the first Council meetings in both 1962 and 1963 to make informal statements to about 50 officers of the government principally concerned with foreign affairs and the national security of the United States. In addition to the statutory members and advisers of the Council, he invited all assistant secretaries of both State and Defense, all the military chiefs of staff, as well as ranking CIA and Treasury officers.

At the January 1962 meeting, the President began his discussion of policy problems by expressing his gratitude to all for their work during 1961. He expressed the hope that all concerned would move ahead in the same spirit of increasing cooperation in 1962. He referred to the Council as the agency principally responsible for integrating the work of the Departments of State and Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency, with the participation of the Treasury Department and other departments and agencies when matters of interest to them were being considered. He asked those present to cooperate in making the Council meetings useful and in ensuring that decisions arising out of the Council meetings were effectively carried out.

As a kind of pep talk to his national security team, the President commented that too much time elapsed before decisions were taken after study and recommendations. He said there was still too much leaking to the press and he urged that interagency fighting and personal battles within the Administration be kept as low as at the present time.

The President then discussed our world-wide political responsibilities, our basic military and foreign aid policies and our policies toward specific countries such as Vietnam, Laos, Cuba and Berlin.

The President concluded by emphasizing again the importance of cooperation among all departments and agencies concerned with national security. He thought such cooperation had been very good, and he was grateful for it. "We are partners by necessity and choice."

During the January 1963 Council meeting the President summarized our policies toward Cuba and Western Europe, our negotiations on a nuclear test ban treaty and on trade relations, our attitude toward neutrals and our aid to foreign countries, our defense problems and our domestic problems.

Concluding his remarks, the President thanked the assembled officers for their cooperation, commented on the harmonious relations which exist among the departments and agencies, and expressed the hope that during the coming year we could build on the solid foundation which now exists.

## **FIRST NSC MEETING CHAIRED BY JOHNSON**

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President Johnson chaired the first NSC meeting of his Administration on December 5, 1963. Because there was then no vice-president, the new President asked House Speaker McCormack to attend "from time to time as his schedule permitted." The Speaker reluctantly joined those at the table, sitting in the chair previously used by Vice President Johnson. The Speaker's reluctance arose from his concern about a representative of the legislative branch sitting in on high-level executive branch policy discussions with the President. However, the Speaker did attend half of the twenty-five NSC meetings presided over by President Johnson during 1963 and 1964. The unusual situation ended with the inauguration of a vice president in 1965.

Numerous ranking national security officials, including all the Service secretaries, attended this first meeting which the new President used to summarize his views on national security policy in general. He described the Council as the formal meeting place for those in the Executive Branch who have top responsibility for the safety of the nation. He said that not all national security work could be done in meetings of the Council, adding that he expected to hold special meetings for special purposes. However, he planned to use the Council from time to time as a forum in which national security matters could be examined. He said he welcomed candid and open expression of views and differences of opinion in these meetings, which would also give him the opportunity for making his own positions clear.

The President then called on the Director of CIA to give the intelligence community's briefing on Soviet military capabilities, followed by comments of the Secretaries of Defense, State and Treasury.

During the Johnson Administration, the Council met 75 times. Vietnam or Southeast Asia was on the agenda of 33 of these meetings, sometimes by itself but often along with other items. Three meetings in September of 1966, 1967, and 1968, dealt with U.S. positions on major issues on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly. Other meetings discussed policy toward Europe, Latin America, the Soviet Union, NATO, nuclear testing, food aid programs, East-West trade, etc. One meeting was held jointly with Congressional leaders as part of the President's extensive legislative briefing program.

## **THE DEFENSE BUDGET AND MILITARY POLICY**

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Even though the defense budget confronts a president with one of his major national security decisions, neither President Kennedy nor President Johnson processed it through the National Security Council. The confidence which both Presidents placed in Secretary of Defense McNamara resulted in other Administration officials having less to do with the defense budget than in the previous Administration.

The defense budget was worked out in the Pentagon. Although there were discussions with representatives of the State Department, the Treasury, the Bureau of the Budget, and the White House staff, the final document was presented to the President by the Secretary of Defense.

From 1961 to 1969, the Draft Presidential Memorandum (DPM) was the "key vehicle for performing the decision-making function in the Department of Defense." It originated in 1961 in the course of the preparation for President Kennedy of a 'white paper' on U.S. nuclear strategy and forces. From two DPMs in 1961, the number grew to 61 by 1968.

The DPMs set forth national security policy guidance, developed a rationale based on that guidance, and examined the alternative ways of accomplishing each program's purpose. They were coordinated, revised and promulgated after presidential clearance. They replaced the military paragraphs in the previous basic national security policy. Secretary McNamara used them not only to get decisions from the President but also to convey those decisions and policies to officers in the Defense Department.

Although the Assistant for National Security Affairs and his staff concerned themselves with many military matters, there was little need and not much presidential support for an analytic backstop in the White House to ensure that Secretary McNamara was taking presidential interests fully into account. However, the DPMs were reviewed by the White House staff.

President Kennedy's reliance on Defense Secretary McNamara for military policy recommendations led gradually to the abolition of the Council's Net Evaluation Sub-Committee.

The sub-committee had been established by President Eisenhower under the Council's umbrella to prepare a yearly report assessing the net capabilities of the USSR, in the event of a general war, to inflict direct injury upon the continental United States. The sub-committee's first assignment was to assess the situation three years in the future and to provide a continual watch for changes which would significantly alter those net capabilities. Its terms of reference were reviewed annually. After one presentation to the Council by the sub-committee's director, each national security agency was directed to review its programs in the light of the report

and submit any resulting policy recommendations to the Council through the NSC Planning Board.

The chairman of the sub-committee was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Members were the Director of the Office of Defense and Civilian Mobilization, the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, the Director of Central Intelligence and the two chairmen of the Council's intelligence and internal security committees. The staff director of the sub-committee was designated by the President.

The first sub-committee report made to President Kennedy was in July 1961. No Council action followed the presentation. In September 1963, the sub-committee again reported to the Council. President Kennedy did not attend the oral presentation to the Council but, after reading the sub-committee briefing paper, joined the other Council members for a discussion.

McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to President Kennedy for National Security Affairs, recalled, in 1986, the history and demise of the sub-committee as follows:

- There was a practice, developed in the Eisenhower administration, of an annual mock nuclear war; a paper was done by people who were in charge of something called the 'net assessment' [sic]. And they would run the war and see how our warheads did against their warheads and how many million casualties this produced. There is plenty of evidence in the Eisenhower papers that Ike found these exercises sobering, but he believed in that kind of briefing and went through it regularly.
- There was one in the Kennedy administration. Dean Rusk tells the story of coming out of that meeting with the President, walking across from the Cabinet Room to the Oval Office to discuss something else. As they walked, the President said to him, 'And we call ourselves the human race.' There was no second exercise of this sort in the Kennedy years. One was enough to show JFK that the results were inescapably unacceptable, if I may indulge in his own kind of understatement.

In 1964, McNamara concluded that the studies done by the sub-committee could be better done by other study groups in the Defense Department and the JCS. Because of the close relationship of strategic studies to forces, the budget and other on-going Defense Department studies, McNamara said the usefulness of studies made by the Special Studies Group of the JCS had become greater than the annual survey of the Net Evaluation Sub-Committee. The State Department did not object to the abolition but hoped that State Department representatives could continue to participate in the preparation of strategic studies by the Defense Department. In March 1965, President Johnson formally abolished it.

In 1968, the President's Foreign Intelligence Board, chaired by General Taylor, who had been chairman of the JCS in 1963 when the sub-committee had reported to the Council, recommended the reestablishment of the group. The recommendation was opposed by McNamara on the grounds that a substitute was in place. No further action was taken.

## **THE JOINT CHIEFS AS MILITARY ADVISERS**

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In 1949 an amendment to the National Security Act named the Joint Chiefs of Staff as military advisers to the National Security Council in addition to their responsibilities as military advisers to the President. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs served as spokesman for the Chiefs at National Security Council meetings. However, the President frequently met separately with the Chiefs on national security matters.

President Kennedy clarified and broadened the advisory role of the Chiefs in a National Security Memorandum of June 28, 1961, which spelled out his views on the relations of the Chiefs to the President in Cold War operations. After stating that the JCS were his principal military advisers whose advice was to come to him direct and unfiltered, he said they had a responsibility for the defense of the nation in the Cold War similar to that which they have in conventional hostilities. He said he expected the Chiefs to present the military viewpoint in governmental councils in such a way as to assure that the military factors are clearly understood before decisions are reached. He concluded by stating: "While I look to the Chiefs to present the military factor without reserve or hesitation, I regard them to be more than military men and expect their help in fitting military requirements into the overall context of any situation, recognizing that the most difficult problem in Government is to combine all assets in a unified, effective pattern."

At the time this presidential directive was issued, General Maxwell Taylor was a personal military adviser on the president's staff. Later, as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Taylor operated under the terms of this directive as JCS adviser to the Council and as a member of the Executive Committee of the NSC during the Cuban Missile Crisis.



## **TUESDAY LUNCHEON MEETINGS**

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Early in the Johnson Administration there developed alongside the NSC system an informal grouping which came to be known as the Tuesday lunch. Never formally established by Executive Order or presidential memorandum, it grew out of the President's desire to discuss major national security and related political issues with the small number of officials responsible for carrying out his policies in this field.

The first luncheon meeting was held in the second floor sitting room and adjoining family dining room of the White House in August 1964. Joining the President were only the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs. Further luncheons were scheduled irregularly at first with month-long lapses, but later, almost every Tuesday, sometimes immediately following scheduled NSC meetings. Over the years, several other officials were regularly invited, including the Director of Central Intelligence, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the President's press secretary and, in the final years, a presidential aide who took full notes of the discussions for the President's use only.

From the beginning there was an agenda for each meeting prepared by the Special Assistant which included items suggested by the Secretaries of State and Defense. Only decisions were reported to aides of the two Secretaries—not details of the discussions.

President Johnson preferred the smaller grouping of the luncheons to the larger formal NSC meetings, one reason being that there were no leaks to the press of what went on. Although Vietnam was very often on the agenda, many other national security decisions were taken by the President after a discussion at lunch. In fact, the NSC during the Johnson Administration dealt primarily with upcoming problems, while the luncheons discussed immediate presidential decisions.

## **NSC AS MANAGED BY ROSTOW**

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From April 1966 to the end of the Johnson Administration, the use of the NSC machinery was decided in large part by Walt W. Rostow, who had replaced Bundy as the President's special assistant for national security affairs.

Rostow believed that formal NSC meetings served a variety of purposes, such as those to formalize a decision already arrived at by the president; to hear a report from a returning Ambassador or special emissary; or to debate an issue which the president would soon have to decide. He concluded that "there were two kinds of NSC meetings to be avoided. First, a meeting on an important matter at which the president would be under pressure to make a major decision. A formal session in the Cabinet Room with some dozen men around the table and another dozen or more behind them along the walls is not a good setting for a final decision." The second kind to be avoided was "a session dealing with problems that might be interesting and important but on which the president was not likely to have to act soon, if ever. A president generally dislikes using his scarce working time, and that of his senior advisers, for formal meetings that have no operational content."

"...I suggested to Johnson that the NSC be used primarily for generating and exposing a series of major problems on which decisions would be required of the President, not at the moment but in some foreseeable time period. Johnson agreed. Some 20 NSC meetings of this anticipatory type were held. They proved useful in forcing the departments to present a coherent picture of a problem and of the alternatives confronting the President as seen in the bureaucracy. Even more important was the chance to hear the President's initial reactions and to reshape staff work, if necessary.

"Typical NSC meetings of this type were, for example: a review of developments in Indonesia over the previous year in anticipation of the annual meeting at The Hague of countries assisting economic development in Indonesia; a review of the food-population balance in the world over a ten-year period—a review which, in fact, once led to a decision on the spot to expand United States wheat acreage. ..."

## **THE SPECIAL ASSISTANT'S ROLE — 1969**

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The role of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs varied with each of the two Presidents and with each of the two officers who held that position from 1961 to 1969. In the Eisenhower Administration, the assistant and the NSC staff provided staff support to the President. In the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, the assistants and the staff took on many additional responsibilities as directed by the Presidents.

A summary of the duties of the special assistant and the NSC staff as seen from the White House in the final year of the Johnson Administration reveals how much had changed in eight years.

### *I. Operation of the National Security Council*

- A. Organizing Council meetings, e.g., drawing up the agenda, arranging intelligence presentations, recording decisions.
- B. Reviewing departmental papers presented for discussion.
- C. Briefing the president on the substance of the scheduled discussion.

### *II. Interdepartmental National Security Committees*

- A. Tuesday luncheon meeting--prepared agenda, attends meeting and follows through on actions taken.
- B. Chairman of the following groups:
  1. Intelligence Coordinating Committee
  2. Underground nuclear tests committee
- C. White House representative on the following groups:
  1. Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG)
  2. Vietnam cabinet-level group
  3. Disarmament cabinet-level group (Committee of Principals)
- D. Organization and management of presidential committees or certain task forces, such as the Presidential Consultants on Foreign Policy.

### *III. Working with Presidential Consultants and Advisors*

- A. Advisory groups such as the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.
- B. Individuals such as General Taylor, special consultant on Vietnam.

***IV. Visits of Foreign Government Leaders***

- A. Supervising the substantive preparations for presidential discussions with heads of state, heads of governments, and other ranking officials visiting Washington.**
- B. Meeting with foreign officials the president is unable to see when the State Department so recommends.**

***V. Working with U.S. Government Officials***

- A. Interviewing U.S. Ambassadors and other U.S. officials in Washington on official business.**
- B. Organizing substantive preparations for presidential visits abroad.**
- C. Relaying to officials presidential instructions and requests.**
- D. Follow-up on presidential instructions.**
- E. Participating in cabinet-level discussions on national security problems prior to meetings with the president.**

***VI. Supervising Presidential Correspondence with Leaders of Foreign Governments***

- A. Private communications with heads of major powers.**
- B. Supervision of exchange of correspondence with leaders of smaller powers.**

***VII. Assignments as Presidential Agent***

- A. As a member of an interdepartmental negotiating team, e.g., trip to the Dominican Republic.**
- B. As a member of a presidential inspection group, e.g., trip to South Vietnam.**
- C. As a member of party accompanying the president on a foreign trip, e.g., European trip.**
- D. Confidential assignments involving meetings with private individuals.**
- E. Assignments involving meetings with Congressmen and Senators.**

***VIII. Papers for the President***

- A. Preparation of summary information memoranda recommending a presidential meeting or outlining courses of action needing discussion.**
- B. Preparation of analytical memoranda on the policy recommendations of Departments and Agencies requiring presidential decision.**
- C. Writing substantive contributions to draft presidential speeches.**

***IX. Press, Radio and TV***

- A. Receiving U.S. and foreign correspondents for background interviews.**
- B. Assisting in substantive preparations for presidential press conferences and presidential press statements.**
- C. Public appearances as an Administration spokesman on national security policy.**

***X. Direction of NSC Staff***

- A. Presides over tri-weekly meetings of senior NSC staff officers for discussion of current problems and planning of staff work.**
- B. Receives formal as well as oral reports from staff officers on problems which may require presidential attention. To make these reports, senior officers keep in close touch with officers at the assistant secretary level in the Department of State, AID and the Department of Defense. Each senior officer keeps up-to-date on all problems involving his geographic or functional area.**
- C. Reviews and signs for transmittal to the president memoranda and recommendations prepared for him by senior staff officers.**
- D. Assigns to staff officers special projects which may arise out of a presidential request for information on a specific situation.**

***XI. Information and Intelligence for the President***

- A. Supervision of the White House Situation Room.**
- B. Selecting and monitoring materials for presidential reading.**

## BROMLEY K. SMITH (BIOGRAPHY)

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Bromley K. Smith was born in Muscatine, Iowa in 1911, the son of a Baptist minister. He spent part of his youth in San Diego, where his father had moved to a new congregation. He graduated from Stanford University and, in the early 1930s did post-graduate studies at the Zimmers Institute in Geneva and the Institut des Hautes Études Internationales of the Sorbonne in Paris.

From 1935 to 1940, Mr. Smith worked as a reporter and news editor for the old *Washington Daily News*. He then left journalism for the Foreign Service and was stationed in Montreal and La Paz, Bolivia. He left the Foreign Service and spent the remainder of his State Department career in various staff assignments. These included: liaison officer to the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Preparatory Conference in San Francisco; staff assistant to Secretary of State George Marshall at the Councils of Foreign Ministers in Moscow and London; and adviser to the U.S. delegation at the 1950 NATO conference in Brussels.

In 1952, he moved to the White House as senior member of the staff of the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB), which was created that year as an action arm of the National Security Council designed to ensure the implementation of the President's national security decisions. In December 1958, he was promoted to the key position of Executive Officer of the OCB.

When President Kennedy came to office in 1961, he largely dismantled the National Security Council organization created by Eisenhower, and it fell to Bromley Smith, then Executive Secretary of the NSC, to help construct a replacement structure. He continued on as NSC Executive Secretary to the beginning of the Nixon Administration. In 1964, he received the Presidential Award for Distinguished Federal Civilian Service.

After the NSC, he joined the Office of Telecommunications Policy, where he participated in negotiations on the allocation of radio frequencies and on communications satellites — helping to found Intelsat.

Mr. Smith returned to the NSC staff in 1978 as a full-time consultant. It was during this period that he wrote this monograph, which he completed just four days before his death in February 1987.