

**Matloff:** This is an oral history interview with Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., held in Arlington, Virginia, on May 29, 1991, at 10:45 a.m. The interview is being recorded on tape and a copy of the transcript will be sent to Adm. Zumwalt for his review.

Representing the OSD Historical Office are Drs. Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff.

Admiral Zumwalt, as we indicated in our letter of April 5, 1991, we shall focus in this interview on your roles as Chief of Naval Operations and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the period 1970-1974. First, by way of background, I should like to ask you about certain factors in your earlier experience in the service relevant to the history of OSD and national security policy in the post-World War II era. On the earlier passage of the National Security Act of 1947, do you recall your reactions to that act, and to the whole movement for unification, the setting up of the Defense establishment, and the like?

**Zumwalt:** As a junior lieutenant in 1947, I was much more preoccupied with the terrible budgetary problems we were having, and very unconcerned about what was going on with regard to the Defense establishment.

**Goldberg:** Do you remember, during those years, among your fellow officers at your grade or higher, an attitude toward this whole business of unification, the notion of something sitting on top of the Navy and the Army?

**Zumwalt:** No. We were very much aware that our seniors were concerned about it, but in that day it was such a fight to keep body and soul together in the service with the Louis Johnson economy era having absolutely emasculated our operational capability, that our concern was for the morale of our sailors and holding things together, and a lot of bitching about what Congress was doing to emasculate the Navy.

**Matloff:** To go to your service on the OSD staff from 1962 to '63 in the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for ISA, do you recall who recommended and appointed you to this position?

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**Zumwalt**: Yes, the sequence was as follows: Paul Nitze gave a speech at the National War College where I was a student. He said that Gen. Griswold, the Commandant of the National War College, was not interested in talking to him about his speech, but about the speech that I had given the day before on the problem of succession in the Soviet Union. Paul Nitze went back to his military exec and said, "There is a student over there by the name of Zumwalt that apparently knows something about the Soviet Union. Get him in here for duty." Then my detailer in the Bureau of Naval Personnel sent for me and told me this would be a bad tour for me, debilitating to my career, and asked me to let him say I didn't want the assignment. I said I did want it. What it reveals is that at that time the tour of duty in the Office of the Secretary of Defense was not considered the way to the top in the Navy.

**Matloff**: What were your functions and what role did you play in that position?

**Zumwalt**: Initially I was the desk officer for Spain, France, and Portugal. That was a very short tour, only three months or so. When there was a vacancy in the position of Director of Arms Control, Paul Nitze put me in that. That was the position that I filled for the majority of my tour in the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense. However, during the Cuban missile crisis, Paul Nitze used me as one of a four-man team to work on the papers for him in between dashing to and from the White House.

**Matloff**: To the EXCOMM meetings?

**Zumwalt**: Right. So I really had that special assignment, too.

**Goldberg**: So you were never assigned to any Russian desk in ISA?

**Zumwalt**: No, but he assigned me to the directorship of arms control because he felt that I would bring to the job my knowledge of the Soviet mentality.

**Matloff**: Did you have contacts with other parts of OSD in that experience, in addition to seeing Nitze?

**Zumwalt**: Yes, a wide number of contacts. I reported on a Friday and was told to have two papers ready by Monday for Mr. McNamara, one of which was to be an estimate of

the number of nations that might have nuclear weapons in ten and twenty years, and the other had to do with the test ban issue. Knowing nothing about either subject, I spent all of Friday afternoon and Saturday of my first weekend, interviewing Harold Brown, then the Director of DDR&E, and Gene Fubini, his deputy, to get all the technical information to write those papers. That kind of back and forth continued. I did a lot of work with John McNaughton, who was General Counsel, but who was also given special assignments in arms control. As an alternate to Paul Nitze on the Committee of Principals, which was the intergovernment agency arrangement for arms control issues, I dealt with people like Dean Rusk, Bill Foster, George Ball, and Adrian Fisher.

Matloff: How helpful was this experience on the OSD staff in your later capacity as CNO?

Zumwalt: I think it was absolutely the quintessence of my ability to perform as CNO--far more important, in my view, than any of the other jobs I had had on the way up.

Goldberg: Do you think other CNOs feel that way about it?

Zumwalt: Very few of them have had experience in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, so they probably feel that they did well without it. What it did for me was to make me more interested in broader range issues than just the Navy issues. For example, my interest in getting President Nixon aware of the fact that things looked so dismal in the RISOP/SIOP came out of that experience.

Matloff: To move on to the next position, as Executive Assistant and Senior Aide to the Secretary of the Navy, Paul Nitze--Was this a recommendation and appointment by Nitze, himself?

Zumwalt: Yes, he was appointed to be Secretary of the Navy while serving as Assistant Secretary of Defense, and asked me to go with him. Since he was going to be the Secretary of the Navy, he merely told the Navy he was doing that.

Matloff: What were your functions in this role?

Zumwalt : To be his chief executive officer. I qualify that in that the CNO, Adm. McDonald, very much ran the Navy, and Paul Nitze at the very outset agreed, with my strong recommendation, that the key to success was to have a duumvirate leadership with the Secretary and the CNO being hand in hand; having their arguments in private, but always being together in public. Therefore, when I say I was chief executive officer, it was for those things that were the responsibility of Paul Nitze, including making the duumvirate work.

Matloff: What were your reactions to the McNamara policies in Defense in general, and to their impact on the Navy in particular during this period?

Zumwalt: I was schizoid. I recognized that the management system in the Pentagon was abominable. At the same time it was clear to me that Mr. McNamara was inclined to pay very little attention to military and operational experience. This meant that he used his service secretaries, really, as deputy secretaries of defense for the Army, Navy, and Air Force. When you had someone of the type of Fred Korth, who was not well grounded, that did not work at all. When you had someone as brilliant as Paul Nitze, who was well grounded, it worked very well. But it was not a process designed to achieve optimum results, in my judgment.

Matloff: How about the impact of his policies on the Navy, itself? Did you have any reactions, during this period?

Zumwalt: During the period that I was in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense I was out of contact, and therefore didn't have an opinion. I came with Paul Nitze, and the thing worked so well with the team that he and McDonald made of themselves, that I was satisfied that we were getting the best shake that was possible under McNamara's system, with which I did not agree.

Goldberg: Were you favorably regarded by McDonald during this period?

Zumwalt: Yes, I believe I was. His exec was then Captain Ike Kidd. The two of us worked very closely with each other. The two captains had an agreement that we

always checked signals to find out which of the two "great men," as we referred to them, really had the bit in his teeth on a specific issue. If it was one that was typically more operational, where Dave McDonald was just not going to lose, I would urge Paul Nitze in private to make his best case and back off. Where it was one that Paul Nitze was just not going to lose, a more national issue, the reverse. The two "great men" wanted it to work that way, and made it work.

Matloff: To go to 1966 and 1968, when you became the Director of the Division of Systems Analysis in the Office of the CNO, what led to the Navy's establishment of this Division. You were the first Director. Was it an offshoot or reaction to OSD's use of systems analysis in the McNamara era?

Zumwalt: Yes. Paul Nitze had been making the case to Dave McDonald for some time that the McNamara systems analysis system was going to survive, and that the Navy would do better if it would develop competence in that field. When Dave McDonald told me he was giving me the assignment, he told me in his usual blunt way, "I've decided that if I can't whip them I'd better join them, and your job is to join them."

Matloff: What had been your attitude toward the usage of systems analysis on the OSD level?

Zumwalt: I was only peripherally involved, because in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense it was military-political analysis, and you didn't do the technical systems management analysis. In the studies upon which I was briefed, both there and as exec to Paul Nitze, it seemed to me that it was useful and intelligent in getting at which was the better of competitive systems, but that the broader you made that analysis the less useful it was, and that in any event, even at the more narrow level, if it failed to take operational insights into account, it could lead to very misleading answers.

Matloff: How closely was this Division working with Enthoven's office in OSD?

Zumwalt: Very closely, because my job was to make it work, and to get the best shake for the Navy that we could get. So I made it a point to keep in close touch with both Enthoven and his Deputy, Russ Murray, and to make sure that all of my people kept in touch with all of their opposite numbers on his staff.

Matloff: Were any of the recommendations coming out of the studies that this Division was working on accepted on the OSD level then, or later?

Zumwalt: Yes, they were. Two most significant ones come quickly to mind. The very first one that we did was the analysis of the F-11B. My assignment was very carefully orchestrated by Paul Nitze working with McNamara. That is, that I was to study the cost effectiveness of the F-11B in competition with its alternatives, under the assumption that it could land and take off of an aircraft carrier. The analysis showed that, on that basis, because of its AWG-9 fire control system and its AIM-54 missile, it could whip any competitor. We turned that in, but at the same time I made it very clear to Paul Nitze that the assumption that the F-11B could operate from a carrier was wrong. The significance of that work was two-fold. Once Mr. McNamara finally bit the bullet and admitted that the aircraft could not land and take off from an aircraft carrier, we put the same missile and the same fire control system into the F-14 and everybody in the building analytically agreed that that was the way to go, because it was the same analysis but in a platform that now could land and take off from a carrier. The other significant one that was done early was the Major Fleet Escort study. I had "stolen" the Navy's genius, Charles DiBona, from the Under Secretary of the Navy, and he worked very closely with me both on the F-14 study and on this study. We got Enthoven to agree in advance as to what the right figure of merit calculation should be, that is, that we would come in with an analysis which added an escort progressively to a task force, until we reached that point where the damage to the task force was less costly than adding another escort. Enthoven bought that, although he was furious with the fact that we then ended up proving that we needed more escorts. He said to

me at the end that it was so important for systems analysis to survive that he would live with the consequences of his agreement, because it was, after all, the right outcome.

**Matloff:** In the operational role that you had as Commander of U.S. Naval Forces in Vietnam and Chief of the Naval Advisory Group in 1968-70, just prior to the CNO appointment, what associations did you have, if any, with OSD in these capacities?

**Zumwalt:** Very little. My boss on the Joint side was Gen. Abrams, and I had a dotted line relationship to CINCPAC Fleet. But almost all of my substantive work was done for Gen. Abrams, and therefore I only saw members of OSD when they came out as visitors.

**Matloff:** In your memoirs you speak about your initiation of the naval Vietnamization program in 1968. You were still there when Laird came out as Secretary of Defense. Did you discuss the program with him?

**Zumwalt:** No, because the Vietnamization program that I recommended to Abrams was done while Johnson was still president. Abrams was sent for by Johnson, flew straight into the meeting at the White House, flew straight back, and arrived red-eyed. His instructions from the President, as he reported to us, were, "I want you to draft every Vietnamese wearing a peter and get him into the service, and get out as fast as you can." The same day we were scheduled to brief Gen. Abrams, who was in an abominable mood as a result of that trip.

**Goldberg:** Those were Johnson's instructions in 1968?

**Zumwalt:** Yes. The Air Force briefed first, and Gen. Abrams tore him apart, and was so angry that he got up and left for a 15-minute recess. His Chief of Staff came up and said to me, "Do you want to wait and try this another day, now that you've listened?" and I said, "No, I am ready to go." We had the program that I knew was just the answer to what Abrams was catching hell from Johnson about, namely, the fastest possible turnover. When Abrams came back and we briefed him, he bought it and said to submit it immediately. We didn't get it in, actually, for two or three days. But before I could make myself right with my Navy side, it had gone up through Joint

channels and Adm. Moorer was upset with me for the fact that he hadn't heard about what, in truth, should have been cleared with the Navy, and would have, had it not been for the Commander-in-Chief's directive.

Matloff: What had led you to initiating this process for the Navy?

Zumwalt: My wife, children and I had a weekend home on the Nitze farm, and so I was seeing him every weekend. Even though I was director of systems analysis, I was hearing everything that was going on in the White House in National Security Council channels, and was absolutely convinced that our days were limited in Vietnam, just from listening to the politics of what was going on in Washington.

Matloff: But you don't recall any discussion with Secretary of Defense Laird when he came out to visit about this very issue of Vietnamization?

Zumwalt: I briefed him on our plan, when he came out, and he was very pleased with it. I think that's one of the reasons why, based on what he has said to me, that when he came back he told John Chafee that when he sent the nomination up for Tom Moorer to give him three names and be sure Zumwalt was one of them.

Matloff: Did he ever acknowledge your lead in the area of Vietnamization? He is usually identified with it, as you know.

Zumwalt: No.

Matloff: To go to your career as CNO from 1970-74. In connection with the background of that appointment, you have already indicated some interest by Laird; was anyone else involved in that appointment?

Zumwalt: So far as I know, both he and Chafee consulted on it. Chafee was also for it, because he was chomping at the bit about the racist and sexist problems in the Navy. In his interviews with numbers of us, he had come to the conclusion that we all had essentially similar strategic views, but that I was the one that had the views that coincided with his on racism and sexism.

Goldberg: Was Moorer consulted?

Zumwalt: Yes, and was very much against it.

Goldberg: It wasn't a matter of calling him and asking him for recommendations?

Zumwalt: He was asked for his recommendations, and his recommendation was Chick Clarey. When he was told that I was going to get it, I was informed, he walked back into his office and kicked the wastepaper basket across the room.

Matloff: This was breaking with a tradition of at least ten years of naval aviators in the post.

Zumwalt: Yes, although Clarey, to Moorer's credit, was also a non-aviator. He was a submariner, but they were very close. Tom Moorer's argument, not unreasonable, was that I was too young and needed more experience, and that I could be saved for later.

Matloff: You were the youngest officer to be appointed to this post.

Zumwalt: Right.

Matloff: How well did you know some of the top officials at this point--for example, President Nixon, Laird?

Zumwalt: I had never met President Nixon, and I had met Laird only once, on that visit to Vietnam, and then only to shake hands and brief him.

Matloff: Chafee?

Zumwalt: I had known Chafee because he had been out to Vietnam. He had had me in for an interview three or four months before the nomination.

Matloff: Moorer?

Zumwalt: I knew him pretty well, because when he was CINCPAC Fleet, I had kept him well informed on Paul Nitze's thinking when I was Paul's exec. When Moorer was Chief of Naval Operations, he inherited me as his Director of Systems Analysis. I worked, then, fairly closely with him.

Goldberg: Was it a satisfactory relationship for you at the time?

Zumwalt: It was for me, although I had been told that he was very concerned, because I was not an aviator, about having analytical work done that might be harmful to the carrier aviation, which was his primary love.

Matloff: How about the Assistant for National Security Affairs, Mr. Kissinger? Did you know him at this point?

Zumwalt: No, I had never met him until he interviewed me in March of 1970 when I was brought home for that first interview with Chafee.

Goldberg: What role did he play in connection with the appointment?

Zumwalt: I had been told that Laird consulted with him, and that he wanted to meet me. I met with him during my March 1970 visit to Washington; that's the only contact I had with him. He did most of the talking and was impressed with my listening.

Matloff: Were any conditions asked of you or did you assert any conditions when you took over as CNO?

Zumwalt: No, neither way. I had expressed all of my views about the things I thought ought to get done, including reduction of ships and personnel in order to start procurement of new ships and aircraft, and including racial and sexual changes. It was clear from the affirmative nods and smiles that John Chafee was all for it. I don't recall discussing those views with Mel Laird, but I am sure he was well aware of them from John Chafee.

Matloff: Were you given any instructions or directives, orally or written, when you took over?

Zumwalt: No. I met the President the day of the announcement. He made the comment, when he found out that I was from Tulare, that he used to pick lemons in Lindsay, which was right near there, and said it was very hot. He said I was very young and would receive a lot of criticism, but to hang in there, or words to that effect. That was the sum and substance of the guidance.

Matloff: He didn't say that he had been in the Navy, himself?

Zumwalt: I don't recall that he made a point of that. He obviously knew that I knew it.

Matloff: What was your initial conception of your role as CNO?

Zumwalt: It was that I was to be the principal naval adviser to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of the Navy on strategic issues; that I was to be a member of a committee on those issues as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and that I would be responsible to make the recommendations to the Secretary of the Navy on the way to train and develop weapons systems, and do all of the purely Navy logistics kinds of things.

Matloff: What priorities did you set for yourself or were set for you by higher authority?

Zumwalt: Interestingly enough, maybe because they were busy, and maybe because neither one had been managers of businesses, neither Mr. Chafee nor Mr. Laird, that I can recall, ever gave a kind of overall vision or guidance to me. It was clear, instinctively, from the beginning that they liked the views that I had expressed. I told Mel Laird that I would within 60 days give him my overall concept of how I would operate during the four years. He approved, in principle, Project 60, so that I think one would say that he knew what I was about and approved of it, and specifically approved the Project 60, which was the implementation of what I was about.

Matloff: Did your conception of the role change during the four years that you were in it?

Zumwalt: It changed in the sense that a little over two years after I took over, when John Chafee left and John Warner took over, I had a completely different relationship with the Secretary of the Navy. Chafee and I operated much more as I had tried to have Nitze and McDonald operate. Warner marched to a different drummer, and I ended up on the significant issues having to go directly to the Secretary of Defense.

Goldberg: You had a good relationship with Chafee?

Zumwalt: Yes, and, I always thought, with Laird, Richardson, and Schlesinger. It was primarily Schlesinger to whom I had to go in the last year to win on the issues that I just couldn't get John Warner to take a position on.

Matloff: On the question of interservice competition, or rivalry, how serious a problem was this for you?

Zumwalt: It was a little bit of a problem to me in reverse context from what you would have thought. Because the services had been so immaculate about trying to live by the roles and missions decision that had been set during Truman's administration, and because by custom, therefore, proceeding from that decision, the Chiefs had learned that they had a lot fewer headaches for themselves if they didn't interfere and go beyond their own charter, I inherited a situation in which nobody wanted to fiddle with changing it. And I didn't want to change it to the advantage of the Navy. I wanted, specifically, the Air Force to get involved in ocean surveillance and reconnaissance, because that would have let me do a lot more with my resources in other ways. As my book reports, Jack Ryan, after thinking about it and consulting with his staff, wouldn't touch it, because it represented the first breakout from the roles and missions agreed to. Subsequently, that is such an intelligent suggestion that it is being done.

Goldberg: There could have been other reasons for rejection also.

Zumwalt: He said to me, "I can't touch it, because of the roles and missions." There may have been other reasons, but that's the one he gave me.

Matloff: How about the Secretaries of Defense, the Laird-Richardson-Schlesinger trio that you had to deal with--how did they stand on the roles and missions, particularly of the Navy? Did they differ in any way for your conception?

Zumwalt: No, I don't recall any problems with any of the three on roles and missions. I felt that I had very good support from each of the three, although Richardson's term was very brief.

**Matloff**: No outstanding differences with the other Chiefs on the question of roles and missions? Were the others reaching for anything that had to do with the Navy's area?

**Zumwalt**: No. In prior years, the Air Force had made several attempts to get control of the Polaris submarines, but Jack Ryan was a straight shooter and there was no attempt made during my watch.

**Goldberg**: What about spying on each other? Were the services spying on each other trying to find out what they were thinking and planning to do?

**Zumwalt**: I don't recall that being a conscious issue, because we always knew what each other was thinking by getting the briefs on the positions that the Deputies took in the tank. By the time I got ready to go down to the tank to argue with my opposite numbers, we knew chapter and verse what the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps positions were. The Deputies may have done some spying, you would have to ask them, but I don't have any consciousness of that. I was very much aware of the fact, of course, that Moorer was spying on the White House.

**Goldberg**: That's a well-known story now. I was thinking about actual spying by the services on each other, getting documents and papers from each other's offices, internal materials. I remember encountering it during that period--in both Air Force and Navy.

**Zumwalt**: Really? Do you remember specific issues? Maybe it will jog my memory.

**Goldberg**: No, I don't. I do remember being told at one time that the Air Force had obtained some Navy documents; that you became aware of it; and that you sent a note to Ryan saying "Dear Jack, if you want this sort of thing, just let us know, and we will send it to you." Whether that was an apocryphal story or not, I don't know.

**Zumwalt**: It could well have happened; it obviously didn't make much of an impression on me, so I didn't consider it a major issue. I do recall that Westy quite openly sent one of his people up to talk to my exec saying, "Before the Navy sends out another Z-gram, would you give us 24-hours notice, because I get jumped on every

time one goes out." We were meticulous about doing it; but that wasn't spying, it was requesting help.

Goldberg: When we interviewed Adm. Carney, some time ago, he told us very forcefully that "Raddy" tried to interfere with him all the time when he was CNO and Radford was the Chairman. And that he had to reject him and hold him off, so he wouldn't have a major say. Did you have any of that problem with Moorer?

Zumwalt: Again, schizoid. Tom Moorer and I--I think he would confirm this--thought very similarly on most strategic issues, and therefore, nine times out of ten I wouldn't get the sense of any interference or second guessing on his part. He was very unhappy with my racial and sexual changes, and he did try to bring that to a halt. On one weapon system, in my judgment, Tom was the real reason that it got canceled--the sea control ship that he considered to be a threat to the carrier. Other than that, I don't think he interfered.

Matloff: To go to the Defense budget and the Navy share of it, what role did you play in connection with the Defense budget, and how were the budget figures for the Navy arrived at?

Zumwalt: The broad strategy of it, which is what I dealt with, because I never considered myself a numbers cruncher, was, first, that I came in convinced that we had to start rebuilding the Navy. We had not built ships to speak of at the replacement rate for years. That meant that we had to cut ships and numbers of personnel rapidly to free the money. I knew something else would flow from that. I knew that since you only spent as an appropriation five percent of what was authorized for a ship the first year and 15 percent the second year and so on, that if I moved quickly and got the camel's nose under the tent, I would have created an almost irresistible momentum toward getting a larger share of the Defense budget in my second, third, and fourth years, because they would have to go along with those increasing appropriations, having supported the authorization and initial 5 percent appropriation. So, although I

pushed hard for the real reasons, namely the need to modernize, I knew I was going to get more and more of the budget using that strategy. It turned out to be the case-- each year we got a larger fraction of the Defense budget.

Goldberg: John Lehman learned from that.

Zumwalt: Yes.

Goldberg: Did Lehman ever talk to you about this?

Zumwalt: Yes. He and I talked about it in my later years as CNO while he was in the White House.

Matloff: Were you satisfied with the Navy's share of the Defense budget, on the whole?

Zumwalt: Yes. I never said so, but I was very happy that I was getting an increasing percentage of a decreasing Defense budget every year.

Matloff: In your capacity as member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, what role were they playing in connection with the Defense budget?

Zumwalt: Almost none. The JSOP was always so much above any realistic budget that it played very little role.

Matloff: Did you feel that Schlesinger, for example, gave the JCS more of a role than Laird or Richardson?

Zumwalt: I thought Schlesinger paid more attention to the strategic issues, because he was better educated on those; but, on the budget, it seemed to me that he came at it through the three services rather than through the JCS.

Matloff: How close were you with the three secretaries of OSD? How often did you meet with them?

Zumwalt: We had the formal meetings every Monday with the SecDef and his Armed Forces Policy Council. I didn't see very much of Mel Laird, because I was able to get most of my business done through his execs, Bob Pursley and then Dan Murphy, and I knew that the way the system worked, nine times out of ten I was better off to deal

with the exec and get the thing done quietly. Mel spent more of his time handling the congressional relations and the public relations aspect, and there we were very sympatico. I saw more of Dave Packard, and that one increasingly when John Warner was Secretary.

**Matloff:** How about Kenneth Rush, and Clements?

**Zumwalt:** Very little of either of those. I didn't consider either of them to play nearly the role that Dave Packard did, and I tried to get my business done through people that were more knowledgeable.

**Matloff:** How close did you feel the Secretaries of Defense were with the JCS and its chairmen; in this case, Moorer?

**Zumwalt:** You have to give a pass to Richardson because he was there so briefly. He was a very intelligent, thoughtful person, and I am sure would have had a good relationship. Schlesinger had very good relations at the cerebral level. He wanted to discuss substance and was very good at stimulating conversation. Laird was more interested in the practical issues. He didn't waste a lot of time on the policy formulation side of it; he wanted to get on with getting business done. I would say that, as an institution, they all got along with the Joint Chiefs. We know from subsequent disclosures that the spying operation caused some problems for Tom Moorer.

**Matloff:** Did you find these three secretaries impartial to the services? Were they sympathetic to the Navy and its problems?

**Zumwalt:** Yes. Laird had a naval background, and I think he understood that the Navy was the first line of defense, as did Mr. Nixon. So that naval background really facilitated my job. Richardson was objective, and Schlesinger, I think, was slightly pro-Navy.

**Matloff:** Did you ever have any strong differences with any of them on matters of principle or substance?

Zumwalt: I had one horn locking operation with Dave Packard over the F-14, and he backed away on that one; and one with Clements over a very minor matter--the number of blacks in Iceland. Those are the only two that I recall.

Matloff: Gen. Westmoreland in his book, A Soldier Reports, states: "Laird appeared to distrust the Joint Chiefs, seeming unable to accept as a consummate politician himself that we were apolitical." Would you agree with this characterization?

Zumwalt: I would not have said that. I would say that Mel Laird, based on his years of experience on the Hill, didn't trust anybody completely. I think he always checked everybody. I think Laird had a realistic insight as to the relative unimportance of the Joint Chiefs as an organization. They had become kind of redundant in that era as a result of the McNamara system, which was passed on. They are much more significant now than they were then. To the extent that one had any impact, in my day, he had it as a service chief, not as a member of the Joint Chiefs.

Goldberg: That has generally been true, don't you think?

Zumwalt: I think so.

Matloff: How would you compare the relationships of Laird and Schlesinger with the services and the top military during your tenure as CNO with those of former SecDef McNamara, based on your observation during the McNamara period?

Zumwalt: They were much happier during the Laird-Richardson-Schlesinger years. McNamara was so bitingly unobjective and disinterested in the Chiefs' advice.

Matloff: What techniques do you recall that Laird used, and possibly Schlesinger used, to have closer relationships with the top military and the CNO?

Zumwalt: Laird used the instincts of a politician. He was a hail fellow well met, and tried to make everybody feel good, but could be tough when he had to. Schlesinger did it on the substance. He stimulated thought.

Goldberg: He was respected by the Chiefs?

Zumwalt: Yes, he was respected as a thinker more than as a manager.

**Matloff:** Schlesinger takes great pride in his use of incentives for the services. He gave them incentives. I think this is one of the points that he would make. Laird, of course, emphasized "participatory management." This may have been part of the techniques that they used. To quote Schlesinger, "It has always seemed to me that one of the most significant roles of the Secretary [of Defense] is to establish incentives to which the services respond." Do you recall what incentives he offered the Navy?

**Zumwalt:** I recall none. I recall that we were able to win his support to overrule his staff on key issues where I felt very strongly about them, so I don't recall his being anti-Navy, but I just don't recall his having held out specific incentives.

**Matloff:** Did he back you on your concept of the high-low mix, for example?

**Zumwalt:** Yes, he did.

**Matloff:** And on such things as the patrol frigate, and the small aircraft carrier?

**Zumwalt:** Yes.

**Goldberg:** His notion of incentives was to offer money for greater effectiveness and economy by the services, to support you on a particular modern weapon system or a new kind of formation or organization, if it was going to really be better and more effective than what was there before.

**Zumwalt:** If that was his policy, he did it on a case by case basis, but without announcing it ahead of time. I recall no conversation in which he said, "If you do thus and so, you will get more money."

**Matloff:** He had that golden handshake with Abrams, for a deal that he made with him, and with Gen. Jones involving the F-16. I think these, in his mind, were part of the incentives.

**Zumwalt:** I think that's probably accurate. What you have to realize is that Schlesinger came in late in my four years and Project 60 was in the process of being implemented. He would have had a hard time walking back on those, so his role, for me, was more to be supportive, whereas in those cases he was dealing with new people.

**Matloff**: Apparently Schlesinger's relationship with you as CNO was good. Why did he run into more problems with the Navy than with the Air Force and the Army?

**Zumwalt**: The first thing that comes to mind is the Rickover problem. He had to deal with Rickover, because if you didn't deal with him, he would immediately go over your head. So Rickover was constantly coming in and bitching about decisions that I or the Secretary of the Navy had made. Another problem was the fact that the Navy is an army, an air force, and a navy. You are dealing with the Marines, the naval air, and the surface men.

**Goldberg**: The Marines don't admit to being part of the Navy, though.

**Matloff**: The navy aviators had their supporters in Congress along with Rickover, undoubtedly adding to Schlesinger's problems.

In connection with your relationships with other members of the Joint Chiefs and the chairmen, how much time did you spend on JCS business?

**Zumwalt**: A lot of time. If you ask me how much of it was worthwhile, I'd say only about 10 percent of it. At times such as during the Jordan crisis and during the Yom Kippur war, the time was very substantive and well spent. On the JSOP issues, I always found myself not wanting to go to those meetings, because it didn't make any difference who won and who lost, all the force levels were above what you would ever get, anyway.

**Goldberg**: It was a self-perpetuating process in good part.

**Zumwalt**: That's right.

**Matloff**: Were there deep splits in the JCS on any issues?

**Zumwalt**: Yes, there were always splits on the JSOPs. The Army and the Air Force always ganged up on the Navy with regard to fewer carriers and fewer missile subs, and the Marines and the Navy always stuck together on those issues. With Tom Moorer as the Chairman, we got a three-two vote on most of those kinds of issues during that era, but the Secretaries of Defense didn't seem to me to be persuaded whether it was

three-two or five-zero. They pretty much followed the recommendations made by their Systems Analysis and Comptroller divisions.

Goldberg: Did they often differ from the JCS decisions?

Zumwalt: Yes, frequently.

Goldberg: So the Joint Chiefs were, then, overridden?

Zumwalt: Yes.

Matloff: In the Radford case, how do you account for the spying, involving a young yeoman, a stenographer attached to the NSC staff, passing documents to Adm.

Moorer's office? When did you first become aware of this affair?

Zumwalt: I wasn't aware of that part of the modality until the scandal broke. When Rembrandt Robinson was there, I had no need for spying, because he would come over once a week and tell me everything that was going on, as he did to Tom Moorer. When Welander took over, on the other hand, he felt more responsible to the Chairman than to me, and I gather that he, then under instructions and being probably less brash than Rembrandt Robinson, who was always able to barge in on anybody and find out what was going on, apparently concluded that he needed a spy system.

Matloff: You refer to the whole episode in your book as a "seriocomic affair." How seriously did you regard this affair?

Zumwalt: It's "serio," because you can't ever condone spying. It's "comic," because everyone in Washington spies in one way or another. The congressmen who were making pious statements always have spies in every service reporting to them, and it was so hypocritical for them to be making much of it. Just as this thing with John Sununu is hypocritical. When every congressman and senator takes the plushiest kind of trips every year, to find fault with the chief of staff, who's got to be in touch wherever he is, is seriocomic.

Matloff: Did Moorer ever discuss this affair with you?

**Zumwalt**: Not until the story broke, and then he briefed all the Chiefs on what had happened. His story was that he had never asked for Radford to do that sort of thing.

**Matloff**: Why, in your view, did Nixon decide not to pursue the prosecution of either Radford or the Navy officers involved? In fact, he reappointed Moorer to a second term.

**Zumwalt**: I have been told that the reappointment of Moorer was because the White House mafia felt he had been successfully emasculated and would be their man. With regard to Radford, I've been told that he had made it clear that he had enough to cause problems for several members of the staff.

**Goldberg**: That was investigated at the OSD level by Fred Buzhardt, who wrote a long report on it that was lost, and never found. So something has been done to get rid of some of the papers from the case.

**Zumwalt**: That's fascinating. Somewhere there has to be a copy.

**Goldberg**: We haven't found it, and it's been searched for by lots of people. We feel that it was probably taken up by the White House at the time.

**Matloff**: How about your working relationships with the State Department? Did you have any dealings with Rogers or Kissinger?

**Zumwalt**: Lots with Kissinger; very little with Rogers.

**Matloff**: In what forums would you be dealing with Kissinger?

**Zumwalt**: The primary forum was the occasional lunches I had with him, and the frequent telephone conversations, because he was the center of power on national security, and it was foolish to waste lances on anyone else. And because he was well aware of the importance of the Navy, from a show of the flag and presence standpoint, he was helpful on budget matters, to the extent that I could get him interested.

**Matloff**: What were your impressions about Rogers' and Kissinger's understanding of the role and uses of sea power?

**Zumwalt**: Kissinger certainly understood it very well; I am less clear on Rogers.

Matloff: He is a shadowy figure; he's very hard to track.

Zumwalt: Yes. Like a good lawyer, he tends to listen and take notes.

Matloff: How about with the White House itself, your relations with President Nixon-- how often did he meet with you and the other members of the Joint Chiefs?

Zumwalt: The only formal meeting was once a year, pre-budget, when we would go in and make our pitches and he would give the pre-programmed questions and make the decisions against us as soon as we left. It was just carrying out his responsibility to have listened to us. I was with him on the visit to the Sixth Fleet in the case of the Jordan crisis, and he asked me to come and see him after that to develop some of the ideas that I had given him there. On maybe one or two other occasions I had meetings with him, but he was not the kind of person, like George Bush, who would sit down, put his feet on the desk, and talk. He was really uncomfortable with people he didn't know well, and the meetings with the Joint Chiefs were exclusively pro forma, except for the one in 1973 when we started at breakfast and he talked in a monologue for almost three hours. Tom Moorer got in one quick comment, and I got in one comment, but I don't think anyone else did. That was a weird one, where it was as though he was drifting in and out of rationality. He was obviously very up tight over Watergate, and made frequent comments about the fact that we here were the last best hope and we had to put down the elite Eastern establishment--that kind of refrain over and over again.

Matloff: Was he attacking Harvard?

Zumwalt: I don't recall Harvard.

Goldberg: This was because of the handwriting on the wall.

Zumwalt: Yes.

Matloff: Did you have any impressions of how knowledgeable he was about the Navy and the uses of sea power?

**Zumwalt:** Very knowledgeable about the uses of sea power, but not at all knowledgeable on the details. He couldn't tell you one ship from another, except an aircraft carrier, or one aircraft from another, but he very well understood what a president needs to know about a navy.

**Matloff:** Did he get involved when there were differences within the JCS, or possibly between the JCS and the Sec/Def?

**Zumwalt:** No, I don't recall his ever getting personally involved. On one or two occasions, we heard Kissinger say, "The President wants this done," on issues concerning the carrier budget, particularly.

**Matloff:** What were your relationships with Kissinger, as Assistant for National Security Affairs?

**Zumwalt:** He was always very cordial in person, but I knew that behind my back he was as critical of me as he was of the people that he talked about in my presence.

**Matloff:** How about with Gen. Al Haig, first as his military assistant, and then as the Deputy Assistant in his own right, on the national security affairs staff?

**Zumwalt:** I have been told that Al blew his top when Kissinger told him after the fact that I had been nominated to be CNO. At that time, Al, still a colonel, had his eye on being Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and I think he thought of me as a young person being a competitor for that. He was also, of course, constantly carrying the Army's case in White House circles, just as I was trying my best to carry the Navy's case, so our relations, which superficially were cordial, were always uncomfortable.

**Matloff:** How much did you learn of the Kissinger-Haig-Nixon relationships?

**Zumwalt:** Quite a bit, as the quotes in my book from the Navy person on Kissinger's staff reveal. I knew, as it was going along, that Kissinger was poisoning the President on Haig, and Haig was poisoning the President on Kissinger, when each was out of the White House, and that there was a very paranoid triangular relationship.

Matloff: It's becoming apparent, as I read into this period, that everyone had that impression of these three. Did Nixon to your knowledge ever consider the dismissal of Laird as Secretary of Defense?

Zumwalt: Yes. Tom Moorer told me on at least two occasions that Nixon had made the statement that he was going to fire Laird.

Goldberg: Did you read Machiavelli and Guicciardini?

Zumwalt: Yes. And Kissinger fits the mold.

Matloff: Why might Nixon have considered dismissing Laird?

Zumwalt: It had to do in each case with his feeling that Laird was not supporting Nixon but rather was carrying out his own programs on Capitol Hill.

Matloff: With reference to Defense?

Zumwalt: Yes.



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**E. R. ZUMWALT, JR.**  
ADMIRAL, U. S. NAVY (RET.)

4 October 1991

Dr. Alfred Goldberg  
OSD Historian  
Office of the  
Secretary of Defense  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Dr. Goldberg:

I have corrected the attached transcript on pages  
2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 14 and 15.

I desire to stipulate Category 2 until the year  
2000 and Category 1 thereafter.

Sincerely,

E. R. Zumwalt, Jr.

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