

PAUL THAYER  
INTERVIEW WITH  
OSD HISTORIANS  
SEPTEMBER 19, 1990

Matloff: This is an oral history interview with Mr. W. Paul Thayer, held in the Pentagon on September 19, 1990, at 9:00 a.m. The interview is being recorded on tape, and a copy of the transcript will be sent to Mr. Thayer for his review. Representing the OSD Historical Office are Drs. Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff.

Mr. Thayer, we shall focus in this interview particularly on your service as Deputy Secretary of Defense from January 1983 to January 1984. First, by way of background, I should like to ask you, what contacts had you had, in your previous capacities, with Secretaries of Defense and OSD, before your appointment as Deputy Secretary of Defense?

Thayer: I had had a lot of contact over the years with OSD, because I was in the aerospace side of the Defense organization in the United States, all the way from test pilot up through the chief executive officer of a fairly large company in the aerospace industry.

Goldberg: Any specific instances in which you can remember dealing with the Secretaries or officials of OSD?

Thayer: Most of my dealings, as is true with most of the members of the aerospace industry, were with the military and secondarily with OSD; of course, in varying degrees, depending on the size and complexity of various weapon systems programs, dealing also with Congress.

Matloff: You had been the president of the Chance Vought Corporation in 1963, then moved on to president of the LTV Aerospace Corporation, 1965-70, and then chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the LTV Corporation from 1970-83, a long stretch in top management positions. Also during that period you were involved with the Chamber of Commerce. In your capacity as chairman of that organization, did you have any dealings with OSD?

Thayer: Yes. It generally had to deal with the budget and helping, in a rather unofficial way, the Defense Department with certain members of Congress. And also helping the White House.

Matloff: How familiar were you, before you came into the position of Deputy, with the trends in Defense organization and management? Were you familiar with the National Security Act of 1947 and the amendments that followed? Had you kept abreast of those?

Thayer: As they affected the organization of OSD?

Matloff: Yes.

Thayer: In a general sense. Like most of my colleagues in the aerospace industry, we made it our business to know, for any particular program in which we were interested, who the people were, regardless of where they stood in the organizational hierarchy, that were most interested and considered to be in the chain of command for the decisions that would be made on that program.

Matloff: So you were looking at it more from the weapons development, research, and procurement standpoints, I take it.

Thayer: Yes.

Matloff: Did you have any reactions to the movement for unification of the services after World War II reflected in those National Security Acts? Did you have strong feelings, one way or another? You had served in the Navy in WWII and been a fighter pilot in Africa and the Pacific theater, and had risen from ensign to Lt. Commander in the naval reserves.

Thayer: I had a strong personal opposition to it. I felt that the roles and missions of the various services were sufficiently diverse that to try and combine everything under one overall military organization would be like trying to build an attack airplane for the Army that was also a good bomber for the Air Force and a carrier-based attack airplane for the Navy. I never really gave a lot of thought, to be perfectly honest with you, in those days as to why it was so important, when it happened, for the Air Force to separate from the Army. I felt that those two organizations could very easily exist under the same organizational structure. But I couldn't see the Navy or the Marines fitting under that.

Goldberg: In this you reflected the traditional and typical Navy viewpoint. Did you change your mind as the years went by, and alter that view?

Matloff: Particularly when you got the job as Deputy Secretary of Defense.

Thayer: Yes. I felt that if you could put aside the emotional reaction and involvement that most people had with the Marine Corps, the Corps could well be eliminated and its role performed by a part of the Navy.

Goldberg: This was a later view of yours, wasn't it?

Thayer: Yes. I never really considered it practical, because of all the opposition that would be raised against it, but I still felt that it would be possible to combine the Air Force and the Army and achieve some defense benefits as a result. One of the things that drove me towards combining military functions as they were separated by the services was the frustration that really came to a peak (but that I certainly knew a lot about, having been a member of the aerospace industry) when I became the Deputy Secretary of Defense and saw, firsthand, more of the really stupid acquisitions that were being made, particularly in the ammunitions area or in missiles, that were not only a high degree of duplication, but also in such simple things as communications. When out in the field under a combat situation, it was difficult for a unit of the Army for instance, to talk to a unit of the Air Force. }

Goldberg: { It was one of the things that did the Japanese in during World War II, the Army, Navy, and Air Force couldn't talk to each other. }

Matloff: You came up through the fighter pilot ranks. Did you have any strong feelings during WWII or beyond about the struggle between the carrier aviation enthusiasts versus the battleship admirals--the perennial conflict that was going on in the '20s, '30s, and even on the eve of Pearl Harbor?

Thayer: Even in WWII, I thought battleships were extremely vulnerable targets and, except for fairly early in the war, did not really make that much difference in any confrontation in the Pacific. Just before and in the early days, when I was at Guadalcanal, there were some pretty serious battles between the U. S. Navy and the Japanese, where surface ships did a yeoman's job in swinging the battle in favor of the U. S. forces. But from the middle of the war on, I felt

that, with the overwhelming power of the carrier forces, battleships were a thing of the past. I was very much against bringing the battleships back ten years ago.

Matloff: A general question: Before becoming a Deputy Secretary of Defense, how familiar were you with trends in strategic theory-- the buildup, use, and control of nuclear weapons, strategic and nuclear, for example, or the struggle over flexible response versus massive retaliation?

Thayer: Mutual assured destruction?

Matloff: Had you had any occasion to get versed in those matters?

Thayer: Yes. It's been quite some time ago. <I was not a fan of McNamara's, or of some of the staff at that time.> I felt that many of the strategic concepts that were determining which way we went with strategic systems were pretty flimsy theory. I never could understand, for example, why it was a bad thing, from the standpoint of nuclear escalation, to be able to defend yourself from a nuclear exchange.

Goldberg: Are you speaking of ABM now?

Thayer: Yes. <I didn't follow the line of reasoning that said that to build up the antiballistic missile defenses was provocative.>

Matloff: Were you doing any reading in the writings of people like the Rand Corporation theorists, such as Brodie, Wohlstetter, or others?

Thayer: I probably was at the time. I don't recall any at the moment, but I know they were often quoted in those days.

Matloff: About the campaign in 1980--did you play any role during the election campaign or in the transition from Carter to Reagan, particularly in connection with defense or national security issues?

Thayer: Yes. I was an active member of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce at that point. I was active also in Texas in some fundraising activities, and I made some speeches on behalf of people like John Tower.

Matloff: What were the circumstances of your appointment to the position of Deputy Secretary of Defense? Who recommended you for the position?

Thayer: Bill Clements recommended me.

Matloff: How were you informed of the nomination?

Thayer: Bill Clements called me and said, "Don't be surprised if you get a call asking you to come to Washington to discuss the possibility of your being offered the job of Deputy Secretary of Defense." I initially said, "Bill, I'm not really ready to do that." He said, "Think about it, because I do think you are going to get invited." So I did, and I was invited to come up and talk with Tom Wills (?) in the White House. I believe that he had also been asked to work with Bill Clements on the selection or proposed selection of a Deputy Secretary of Defense.

Goldberg: Clements was out of office at the time; he was not Governor at that particular time, but he had a term before and a term after.

Matloff: How well did you know President Reagan and Secretary of Defense Weinberger at that time?

Thayer: I didn't know either one. I had met Weinberger at a social function. I was called over to Reagan's office, when I was the Chairman of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, and he personally thanked me for persuading quite a few members of the Chamber to help him on a no-tax bill.

Matloff: How did you prepare for your confirmation by Congress? Did you touch base with anybody here in Defense or get some briefings?

Thayer: I came in a little early, about a week before my confirmation hearings started, and talked with Weinberger and visited all the service secretaries and a few other people here and there. That was the essence of the preparation.

Goldberg: No coaching or anything?

Thayer: Coaching? There might have been some of that, but no one sat down and conducted a discussion with an agenda for the dos and don'ts of going through a hearing.

Matloff: How much of an ordeal was it? You had made some critical remarks earlier about federal spending and the military budget. Was that a help or a hindrance in the hearings?

Thayer: The hearing was totally painless. Barry Goldwater, John Tower, and some others were good friends of mine. I was asked three or four pointed questions, but it was like a walk in the park. I was surprised. I thought that I would really catch it, but it just didn't happen.

Matloff: Did those previous critical remarks hurt in any way when you came to the Pentagon with the administration?

Thayer: No, I didn't notice any. You mean the remarks about the waste in the budget? Everybody realized that. I don't remember that anybody with whom I talked said that he didn't agree with me that there was a lot of waste in the defense budget, either in the Defense Department or out.

Goldberg: That's a pretty safe remark, as far as accuracy is concerned.

Thayer: I think I quoted that, properly organized and spent, the Defense budget could be reduced about 30 percent.

Goldberg: Too bad you never got to do it.

Thayer: I did take some money out and nobody ever missed it.

Matloff: What instructions, if any, were you given by the President or Mr. Weinberger once you were confirmed? Were there any directives or instructions?

Thayer: I never got any from the President, and very few from Weinberger. I tried to talk with Weinberger more than once on how I would like to see us operate together. I would like to say that I admire Caspar Weinberger very much as a man, but he was not prone to operate through an organization chart. I wanted to operate as closely as possible to what is expected of a chief operating officer in industry.

Matloff: Were you briefed by your predecessor, Mr. Carlucci?

Thayer: No, not really. We might have spent a couple of hours together, but it was not any in-depth briefing.

Matloff: Was the transition from the corporate world to the federal bureaucracy difficult?

Thayer: It was a little frustrating at times, but not unexpected.

I had worked with the Department of Defense long enough to understand pretty well and appreciate the comparative lethargy that you have to deal with in a bureaucracy, as opposed to dealing with a staff in the private sector.

Goldberg: When you speak of the bureaucracy, do you distinguish between levels, in terms of your difficulties?

Thayer: Every level has a bureaucratic way of life.

Goldberg: I have reference to your relations and difficulties--was it at the departmental secretary and the OSD assistant secretary level, primarily the upper level? Because that's where you were doing most of your dealings.

Thayer: I'd have to define what I mean by bureaucracy.

Goldberg: Let me clarify. You were operating at the policy level, which means that you probably didn't have anything to do with the bureaucracy below that level. My understanding would be that your difficulties would come at that level, rather than with the operating people down below.

Thayer: That's true. When you got into the operating part of the services, you had some bureaucracy in the form of overly large staffs at many of the operating levels.

Goldberg: In OSD, too.

Thayer: I think that it really is a truism that the further away one gets from Washington, D. C., primarily in the military services, the less bureaucracy there is. Bureaucracy, to me, consists of massive overstaffing of people required to get the job done; a tendency on the part of large groups, who don't have enough to do, to make work for each other; an increasing tendency on the part of people involved in a large bureaucratic operation to do nothing rather than something, because by doing nothing they are less apt to get criticized than to do something that has some air of controversy about it; and not being able really to reward people on merit and to fire people for incompetence.

Matloff: What in your background proved most useful in this new capacity as Deputy Secretary of Defense?



Thayer: I think the thing that helped me most in the Pentagon, in the accumulation of experience that I had up to that point, was the ability to work with people and motivate them. That sounds kind of blase and general, but I don't think it was my technical knowledge, although I did understand the weapons systems, I think, better than most people that walk into that job, simply because I had thirty years or more of experience.

Goldberg: Working with people is the key, definitely.

Matloff: Mr. Reagan had been elected on a platform with definite views about national security policy, military buildup, and the like. Were you ideologically committed to Mr. Reagan's approach to national security issues? Did you feel the same way, basically?

Thayer: I was for a strong defense, but I disagreed with the approach that we took to build up our defenses, which was simply to give the services a wish list and try to convert it into a budget that we would then take to Congress and try to cram down Congress's throat. I felt that it was not in our best interest to adopt the absolutely rigid position that we took on everything in the budget. There was no room for compromise. The way Star Wars got started was a disappointment to me. I was appointed organizational chairman of the program as well as technical chairman. President Reagan became excited about Star Wars after a quarterly briefing by Gen. Vessey, who gave the President a taste of the kind of technology we were paying for and some of the results we were getting for what turned out to be the Star Wars technology. Some people in the White House had some preconceived notion about how much money we should spend on Star Wars, regardless of whether we could spend it well or not.

Goldberg: As Deputy Secretary of Defense you presumably reached the conclusion that it was necessary to have somebody above the services to make decisions and adjudicate among them, in terms of money, and other things, too. So that your views on the existence and necessity of OSD and DoD have certainly evolved over the years.

Thayer: I think the services were wondering why somebody didn't do that. After the Defense Resources Board meetings in August, I

had several high-ranking military officers come to me and say, "Mr. Secretary, we didn't get everything we wanted, but we think some of the decisions you made--even though we would argue against them for the benefit of our service--from the standpoint of decisions that are made for the good of the country and the good of the Department of Defense were the right ones, and we will support you."

Matloff: How did Mr. Weinberger and you conceive the role of the Deputy Secretary of Defense? Were you the inside man, alter ego, manager of resources?

Thayer: I think he perceived me to be the inside man, but primarily when he was outside.

Goldberg: Which was often.

Thayer: Which was very often. But I had told Cap that I felt that I needed to have more authority over the service secretaries and their procurement policies, which were being created particularly by Lehman in the Navy, without any regard at all for the other services. It made no sense and it was confusing to everybody, particularly to Congress and the aerospace industry. What was a procurement policy for one service was not necessarily the policy for another. So I felt that we had to get our procurement practices simplified and uniform across the board. There was no reason why the Army should buy anything in a different way from the Navy or the Air Force.

Goldberg: Was it your view that the services at that time were getting too much money too fast?

Thayer: Yes. They were wasting a lot of money. I held out about \$5 billion at the start of the Defense Resources Board meeting. The people that knew about it were Dick DeLauer, David Chu, and my Comptroller, Vince Puritano. And nobody ever pressed me for it. I expected that one of the first things the services would do would be to start making requests for their third or fourth of the money, but they never even knew it was there.

Goldberg: They had more than they could handle.

Thayer: And they spent money on some more duplication--lots of it on hardware and not enough on ammunition and spare parts, things with which you fight a war.

Matloff: Was this overseeing function one that you set for yourself as a high priority in this capacity?

Thayer: Yes, and if I could have stayed longer, it would have happened. It was happening.

Goldberg: Did you have Weinberger's support?

Thayer: Yes, I think Weinberger was coming around to that way of thinking. I think that if I had been here, the \$900 hammers would not have been nearly as big an issue as they were.

Matloff: Did Mr. Weinberger leave the day-to-day management of the Pentagon to you?

Thayer: To a great extent. (Lehman made a lot of overt trips to the Secretary's office because we had had some verbal exchanges which he didn't appreciate, and I didn't either.) He and the other secretaries-- and I didn't blame them--would often go to Weinberger with a problem when I thought they should have come to me, because I was the one that had the problems of procurement. Dealing with Congress was a very haphazard operation which we could have improved on immensely by stating to the service secretaries and the top level of the military what the defense posture, or the defense policies of the leadership in the Department of Defense, were, and that they would either adhere to them or we would get somebody that would.

Matloff: You mentioned earlier that you would have preferred to work through the organizational chart, whereas Mr. Weinberger apparently had his own style of managing. Did your philosophy or style of management differ from his in any other way?

Thayer: I told Cap that I would handle Congress differently. We were called over once to Howard Baker's office and had breakfast in his conference room with some of the key committee members, including a couple of members from the House. The purpose of the meeting was to try and get the defense budget down from 15 1/2 percent, or whatever it was, down to something that Baker felt that he and the rest of the friends of the DoD and Congress could live with. Cap absolutely wouldn't negotiate. He was hard over on 15 1/2. I told him, while we were going over, that we ought to be prepared to compromise downward to some extent because I didn't think it would hurt the defense posture of the country to do that. Baker pleaded with us to accept something like 10 or 10 1/2 percent. Finally,

Baker said, "Screw both of you. We'll let you stew in your own juices. I'm not going to do anything to help you if you're going to take that attitude." I don't believe in giving the store away before you have to. I recognize that you do have to take positions occasionally which are pretty hard against the opposition, but this wasn't something that we could really, if pressed against the wall, justify--getting another 15 percent increase. It just wasn't justifiable.

Goldberg: How do you explain this rigidity on Weinberger's part? You had to deal with it, and others did, too.

Thayer: I think the rigidity came primarily from Ronald Reagan. I think Weinberger and Ronald Reagan, which they should have done, got together and decided what they wanted, and I don't know why Reagan was so rigid about it, but I think he imparted that to Weinberger.

Goldberg: You don't think it might have been the other way around?

Thayer: It could have been.

Goldberg: Apparently Weinberger influenced Reagan at the beginning, on the budget business, versus Stockman, in 1981. He was terribly consistent on it and there were instances in which Reagan did compromise to some extent. He was certainly influenced by his advisers. So it was possible that, had Weinberger taken a more flexible position, he might have persuaded Reagan.

Matloff: One of the criticisms offered about Weinberger was that he would never accept setting priorities among weapons systems, that he wanted the whole thing. Would you have been more willing to accept priorities?

Thayer: Absolutely, I tried to establish priorities. I would say to him, "Cap the Navy and the White House keep harping on this 600-ship Navy and they cannot tell you what the 600 ships are that they want. It is absolutely absurd for us to be pointing towards a goal of 600 ships and not be able to define in detail what the extra 150 are that we want." Cap would agree. One time, during a Defense Resources Board meeting, Cap walked in late when we were

just completing the discussion of some issue. I had had a disagreement with the Navy over something that they wanted. Cap caught the last part of that and started to sympathize with the Navy's point of view. I really was upset at that. I thought that he could sympathize with the Navy's view to me, but to come in and sympathize with the Navy after I had told it "no" was a little difficult to swallow. I went to lunch on the Hill, and Will Taft went to Weinberger after the meeting and said, "Cap, if you do that one more time to Paul Thayer, you will probably have to get a new Deputy Secretary." Cap said, "Do what?" He didn't even realize what he had done. Will told him, and Cap phoned me at lunch and apologized, saying he meant no harm and was not trying to usurp my authority, and that whatever I wanted to do was fine. Cap was a very smart man in a lot of ways. He would think and act, but the fact that it might be creating a problem because of other authorities or responsibilities never occurred to him.

Goldberg: He was very verbal and articulate, and it seems that he spoke without really knowing the full circumstances of what he was talking about, as in that particular instance.

Thayer: He would get himself into a bit of a hole. I think that's the way the terrible controversy started over procurement screwups with \$900 hammers, the toilet seats, and so on.

Goldberg: Did you think that he was well informed about these issues and problems that you were dealing with? Presumably you kept him informed to the extent that you could. You had meetings with him and told him what was going on and what you proposed to do. He presumably said, "OK" or "not OK". Did he overrule you very much?

Thayer: No.

Goldberg: Did you feel that he was really well informed about these matters that you were dealing with?

Thayer: No, he was not.

Matloff: While we are on the subject of organization and management-- you inherited the Carlucci initiatives. He had tried to get a review of the entire defense acquisition process before you arrived. What

did you do about these initiatives? Did you try to carry them out, modify them, or add to them?

Thayer: There were quite a few of them. I did not try to do all of them. I selected about four that I really tried to concentrate on. I modified them. All of the warts of the Department of Defense were, I think, brought out, not only by the Carlucci initiatives and the Packard Report, but by other reports over the past years. I don't think that I came in with any brand new problems to solve. The problems were reasonably well defined. Unfortunately, the solutions were not at all well outlined. But I think that during the year I was here, we made some progress in the acquisition process. It's difficult for me to look that far back now and provide any measurement of that.

Matloff: Would you go along with the quotation made by Mr. Stubbing in his book, The Defense Game: "Secretary Weinberger's attention to these issues (meaning planning and management), never very close, waned after 1981." From where you were sitting, does this seem like a reasonable statement, and if so, did it make your task harder in trying to manage the bureaucracy?

Thayer: I think he points out they were never very close. The answer to that is I don't know that they "waned" because they weren't very strong to begin with. The thing for which I criticized OSD, the military services, and the Joint Chiefs, which was not a new idea with me, but something that I had come to realize over the years, was that, in spite of all of the talk about being able in those days to gear up and fight a war and a half, as nearly as I could tell, we never got a lot closer than that general statement really to define the threat. We defined the threat in Russia with a little red book that we put out annually.

Goldberg: Soviet Military Power.

Thayer: You could find in the Joint Chiefs' and in all of the military files millions of words on the threat. You would find, I think, that in a good many cases the Navy is fighting a different war from the Air Force, and the Air Force is fighting a different war from the Army. And to match the hardware, roles and missions, and manpower

requirement to the threat was never really done. > It was given lip service, but OSD never dictated or really pushed to pull together an objective group, a mixture of military and civilian knowledgeable people, who could put aside their own personal objectives for their service--if they were service people--and decide how the country should arm itself.

Goldberg: Did they really want that kind of guidance, do you think?

Thayer: They didn't want it, but they should have had it. I think the Department of Defense owes the country that.

Goldberg: Their argument is that they don't get the guidance from the President and the State Department on policy which would permit them then to go ahead and assess the threat and try to size the requirements and all the rest of it in terms of it.

Thayer: That's part of it. What I'm saying is that the exercise is lacking, and it's a shame that we don't find some way, with the leadership in Washington, D. C., to force that kind of an approach to determining what the defense of the country should be. It is a lot different now than it was five years ago. I know that there are a lot of exercises going on to cope more readily with things like Iraq, flareups in the Middle East, or any place else in the world, but < I don't see that we are matching our procurement requirements to any change in the threat, except that which is being forced by Congress. >

Goldberg: Don't you think that the absence of policy and guidance is perhaps because the leadership keeps changing over the years and also because they see the international situation changing so rapidly all the time that they feel they can't get a fix long enough to do something that will provide long term guidance or policy? Isn't that perhaps part of the problem?

Thayer: Certainly it is part of the problem. But recognizing that the situation can change rapidly, and recognizing at the same time that you want to maintain, vis-a-vis the rest of the world and potential enemies, real or imagined, a powerful stance militarily, I don't think it's as tough as the people who don't want to go through that exercise say it is, to come up with a scenario of things that are

apt to happen between now and the year 2000 to which we should tailor our procurement policies and military organization.

Goldberg: Part of it is the fear of guessing wrong and its turning out differently from predicted. The only time we had a consistent set of basic national security policies stated to be followed was during the Eisenhower administration. Practically never, since World War II, have we had anything like that. That was dumped-- every year they are issuing a basic national policy to guide the services. They had an input to it also. It has been on a kind of ad hoc basis since then, making things up as we went along.

Thayer: We are going ahead and buying the B-2 -- just one example. { The B-2, in my opinion and in the opinion of a lot of other people, is now a very expensive weapon looking for a mission. } The mission as a strategic deterrent has diminished to the point that it can be accomplished by the B-1, the B-52, our nuclear submarine fleet and land-based ballistic missiles. { To proceed to buy an airplane that will probably cost well over \$1.5 billion a copy, if it goes through to completion, and that will probably never be used in a strategic sense but to send to a place like Saudi Arabia--one use for it today, if it existed--to bomb Baghdad, is ludicrous. }

Goldberg: Like using a jackhammer to kill an ant.

Thayer: Yes, this is what I'm talking about. We don't have a strong enough threat policy, procurement policy, military theater policy, to say that we are going to have to put the B-2 in the Smithsonian because, from here on in, we are going to buy some other things with that money which we need to cover what, I think, is a worldwide threat that is more on the side of being a terrorist activity than a full-scale war.

Matloff: One or two other questions on organization. The fiscal year 1984 Defense Authorization Bill of September 1983 provided for four new assistant secretary positions--development and support, research and technology, command, control, and communications and intelligence, and the other for reserve affairs--as well as for the establishment of an office of operational test and evaluation. Did



you play any role in connection with the planning or implementation of these positions?

Thayer: I regarded changing the organization chart to that degree as another interesting exercise which was not the answer to the problem. The organization chart that we had and with which we were working allowed us to pull together any of those functions in any order of priority we wanted. To rearrange the organization to try and insulate some functions from others of equal importance was not the best way to expedite and improve the procurement process. I think that it is typical, not only of government, but also of some corporations that when they run into problems, they reorganize. All they need to do is have the right people filling the right slots and they can handle those problems with the organization chart they have.

Matloff: I take it you were not actively pushing for these changes?

Thayer: No.

Matloff: You alluded earlier to SDI and the emphasis coming from the White House on this. Did you have anything to do with the establishment, under the Presidential Directive of January 1984, of the SDI organization, the defense agency to report directly to the Secretary of Defense?

Thayer: I was given the job, which I didn't seek, and didn't really want, of being the chairman of both the committees that were formed, one for technology and the other for programs. First of all, we found much to our surprise and that of everybody in the DoD, that we were spending a lot more money in this area than we realized. It was all fragmented across the services, so it did make sense to pull that together and try and coordinate it. We didn't feel that we could spend much more than the \$800 million or so that we were spending in the current budget and get back a meaningful advancement in technology. But we did add enough, because of pressures from the White House, to bring the total up to about \$1.2 billion. Word came back that that wasn't enough. I thought the strategic defense initiative was something we should emphasize, particularly trying

to improve our technology in the areas where we knew that the Russians had a head start, but to give it the additional emphasis in dollars and talent without first getting organized didn't make a lot of sense to me. I thought it should be brought along on a modest basis until we could properly evaluate what it could realistically do for defense. I will admit, now, that I did underrate the program as a political tool, because { I do think that it has proven to be a valuable bargaining chip with the Russians and has been very helpful in the strategic disarmament meetings. }

Goldberg: It had a political utility, primarily. Almost all efforts to create air defense, civil defense, ABM, etc., up until this time had been failures. They had never been followed through or gotten full political or military support. Do you think that there was any knowledge on the part of Reagan, Weinberger, or others working with him on SDIO, of this, and that this is the reason why they insisted that it be as OSD level rather than being turned over to one of the services? The services were not all that enthusiastic about it, either, were they?

Thayer: No, the most enthusiastic service, I believe, was the Army, at that point; the Navy was the least. It didn't seem to make a lot of sense to give it to a service, because the technology was spread out, at that point, over all three services in varying degrees. I should say related technologies. I think the cause of Reagan's interest, which was created over about a five or ten minute briefing period given by Vessey (incidentally, just a month or two before I arrived on the scene), was kind of a fascination with the ultimate possibilities that he had been led to believe were possible if the technology was thoroughly developed.

Matloff: Let me ask you about your working relationships with various agencies in and out of Defense. How often did you meet with Mr. Weinberger? Was it a daily affair, or more than once daily?

Thayer: { We met daily; we met every morning in his office at 8:00 or 8:30. We spent most of the time talking about what had been said about the Department of Defense in the papers that morning. }

All of us got a little book of clippings, before we went to the meeting, from The Washington Post, The New York Times, and several others.

Goldberg: Current News.

Thayer: Yes. < I told Cap that I thought the meeting might be a little more useful to everybody if we discussed operating, organization, or problems internal to the Defense Department rather than worrying about what The Washington Post said that morning. >

Goldberg: What about your individual meetings with him?

Thayer: I saw him just about every day.

Goldberg: When he was there?

Thayer: Yes.

Goldberg: How would you estimate that time away during your time in office?

Thayer: I would say he was away at least half the time.

Matloff: How about with other top officials in OSD? How often did you meet with them, and did you meet with some more often than others?

Thayer: < Lehman and I had a real conflict, so I didn't deal much with him directly. I would have liked to, but he had Cap's ear. >

Matloff: Were there some Assistant Secretaries or Under Secretaries on the OSD level that you were meeting with more than others?

Thayer: Yes. I dealt mostly with Dick DeLauer, David Chu, and Vince Puritano.

Matloff: How about the JCS? How often did you meet with them, and did you meet with the Chairman more often than with the body of JCS members?

Thayer: Vessey and Weinberger had a standing meeting every morning, and I was invited to that. I didn't always go, but I went to a lot of them. The meeting lasted only 15 or 20 minutes, unless there was something very unusual going on. We had a weekly meeting with the JCS, which I attended with Weinberger.

Matloff: Did you ever have any problem getting information from the JCS or from the services?

Thayer: Yes, on occasion. I don't recall ever having any problems

getting information from the JCS, but the services, particularly the Navy, would react to a request for information by giving you as little as it thought it could get by with.

Goldberg: They've only been doing that for the last 43 years.

Thayer: You would have to raise a little hell, and then it would be forthcoming.

Matloff: How often did you meet with the service secretaries? I take it, with Lehman, there weren't many.

Thayer: With Lehman, it wasn't very often. I met with Jack Marsh and Verne Orr fairly often. They took the initiative fairly often to come to my office and tell me about something they thought was important. I had a good working relationship with both of them.

Matloff: Were any changes made by you or Mr. Weinberger in connection with the services' participation in the budgetary process or in connection with acquisition and procurement?

Thayer: No, I don't recall any, except the Defense Resources Board meeting.

Matloff: Did you have any direct dealings with Secretary Shultz or any other members of the State Department?

Thayer: Weinberger and I had weekly meetings with Shultz and his deputy, and with the CIA.

Goldberg: Did you hold a meeting when Weinberger was not there?

Thayer: Yes, on occasion.

Matloff: Did your views on national security policy differ from those of the Secretary of State--for example, on arms control or on use of military force? Shultz and Weinberger apparently had strong differences of views on such matters. Did you find yourself differing also from the Secretary of State?

Thayer: I don't think I differed as strongly as Weinberger would and did.

Matloff: How about relations with the President--how often did you meet with him?

Thayer: I would guess it would be an average of once a week. I went to the Cabinet meetings and the National Security Council meetings, at which he was present. I would occasionally go over when he

entertained heads of state for lunch and Weinberger and I were invited to attend. We also would have a special meeting once in a while.

Matloff: Did you have to clear with the Assistant for National Security Affairs before you could see the President, or could you go directly to him?

Thayer: I don't recall ever going directly to him on my own initiative.

Matloff: When Mr. Weinberger was here, you would clear with him? And did you go directly then to the President?

Thayer: It was always associated with either a Cabinet, National Security Council, or a special meeting. None of those would require that I go through Weinberger or the National Security Adviser.

Matloff: Did you and/or Mr. Weinberger ever find yourselves in an adversarial position with the Assistant for National Security Affairs?

Thayer: Yes, I would say I did, but I can't remember a specific instance.

Matloff: How did you feel about Congress's roll in past problems with defense procurement? Did you lay more blame on Congress than on the Pentagon?

Thayer: < Yes, I think they bear a large share of the blame, present and past. I think that some of them attempt to micromanage to a ridiculous degree. Then when they reach a budget deadline, they go into a nonstop 18-20 hour session and make some decisions at the eleventh hour which are not too smart. >

Matloff: As time went on, Weinberger's style led to some irritations in Congress. Did that style give you added problems?

Thayer: Yes. It gave me added problems with individuals who were important to the budget. I would go over to their offices to talk about a particular problem, and they would tell me to convince my boss to deal with them as if they could contribute, not treat them as nuisances.

Matloff: Were there any specific issues on which you found Congress most sensitive, aside from money sums, budget levels, and the like?

Thayer: The B-2 actually got started then, but that was largely pushed by the Air Force and the White House. In the case of strategic

weapons, the issue was always very controversial with certain members of Congress.

Matloff: You alluded before to differences between procurement policies and threat. What was your perception of the threat when you took over as Deputy Secretary of Defense?

Thayer: I regarded Russia as the threat. I didn't think much in terms of any Middle East country like Iraq, or any country on the Pacific rim as a threat. I felt that the odds of a nuclear exchange were extremely small, almost nonexistent at that point, except for some madman who always has to be part of the equation. I considered, like almost everyone else, that the real threat could be conventional war in Europe.

Goldberg: Do you think the administration exaggerated the threat, and therefore was able to institute a very large buildup?

Thayer: To be perfectly candid, I think it is difficult to say that the strategic threat was exaggerated, because at that time Russia could kill us more times than we could kill them; at least we told ourselves that.

Matloff: You weren't aware of any differences in your view of the threat from that of Mr. Weinberger or other members of the administration?

Thayer: Basically, no. My criticism was that we didn't take the threat and design a fairly long term approach to weapons system procurement that really best coped with the presumed threat.

Goldberg: Did you feel that the buildup was intended to be as much for political purposes as for military purposes? Because now we are told that it was this buildup that really brought the Soviets to terms. Mr. Weinberger and Mr. Reagan tell us that that big buildup made it clear to the Soviets that they couldn't hope to continue to compete and consequently it has had the effect that we have seen in the last few years on the Soviet Union. Do you think that was conscious on the part of the President, Mr. Weinberger, and others in 1981 and 1982?

Matloff: Do you think there was a deliberate linkage done by design, by conscious decision?

Thayer: I think almost everybody who had a leadership role in any part of the DoD, or the interested people in Congress, or in the administration, felt that it was necessary to maintain a very strong strategic defense against Russia. A lot of people said that they should also, even if necessary at the expense of some of the strategic budget, build up our conventional forces to where we could last something more than a week against any invading Russian forces that decided to sweep across Europe. We never got very far, in my opinion, in coping with that part of the Russian threat. < We can handle it from a strategic point of view, but from a conventional point of view, I don't think there is any question that in an all-out conventional war with the tanks marching to the English Channel and all the forces and tactical aircraft that it would take to get there, that we could have lasted in NATO much more than a week before the NATO commander would have said, "Either I give up or you will allow me the use of tactical nuclear weapons." > We might have gotten a little bit beyond that after I left, but I don't think much further. < So I don't really feel that NATO, except politically, was ever regarded by Russia as being a very significant military threat, because I don't think it could have held out long enough to have survived a conventional war. Maybe in some respects you can argue that since we didn't have a strong capability to sustain a conventional war in Europe and would have had to resort to nuclear weapons or surrender that that in itself was a deterrent. > I am sure that that was an argument.

Matloff: Was there a link in the thinking of the administration from the beginning between the projected U. S. Military buildup and eventual arms control agreements with the Russians?

Thayer: < I think that our buildup did contribute to arms control agreements. >

Goldberg: Beyond that, then, to the changes that have been occurring in the Soviet Union since. Do you think it was a major factor?

Thayer: < I think the major factor is the pressures that were building up for over a decade internal to Russia. That's had more to do with their change of heart than the fact that we had a military buildup. >

Goldberg: <You are in agreement with Richard Nixon on that. That's his analysis, that internal factors were the prime reason.>

Matloff: In strategic planning and policy, did you play any role, as Deputy Secretary of Defense, in this connection? For example, the development of strategic nuclear policy and the like?

Thayer: That wouldn't have been out of my bailiwick, although when I was here, the strategic policy was pretty well formed, unless you are talking about whether we should have mobile missiles.

Matloff: The use, buildup, and control of nuclear weapons; counter-force versus counter-city doctrine; some of the perennials of the last decade or so. Were you drawn in on those questions or were they pretty much set by the time you arrived?

Thayer: There was always some discussion, but I don't remember internally in the DoD a major issue other than that the mobile missile was always good for a 15-minute discussion anyplace, whether it was in the DoD, in a speech to Congress, or elsewhere. I don't remember any major issue that came up in the year I was here that was pointed towards a debate on significantly adding to or subtracting from the policy that was in existence.

Matloff: The Reagan administration has been criticized as having three different military strategies, one for each of the services. From where you were sitting, did OSD and JCS set a coherent strategy, or did it leave each service to pursue its own?

Thayer: I agree with that statement, that <each service was allowed to form its own acquisition plans almost independently of the other services. I am against that. I wanted to institute some procedures which would cope with what I considered to be a problem in the overall procurement process.>

Matloff: Did you agree with Secretary Lehman's forward strategy?

Thayer: No. In spite of the fact that I was in the Navy, I went on record several times that to consider that <an aircraft carrier was anything but a liability in a major all-out war was silly. It was really a head-in-the-sand dogmatic attitude which could not survive in the cold hard facts of life.>



Matloff: Are you speaking of aircraft carrier in general, or large ones?

Thayer: Any kind.

Matloff: Nuclear or otherwise?

Thayer: An aircraft carrier is good to demonstrate a military presence in certain parts of the world when tensions are running somewhat high, or in some ridiculous military conflict like we got into in Vietnam; but <to consider it to be a cost-efficient weapon in case of an all out war with a country like Russia does not hold water.>

Goldberg: Even in a limited war against a capable enemy it wouldn't be effective. <Remember at the time of the Korean War, when it was clear we were going in the first thing the Navy did was to withdraw its carriers from the Sea of Japan to get them away from Korea. For ten days they were not available. They were afraid of losing them. Once they are gone, they're gone for good.>

Matloff: How serious a problem was interservice rivalry for you, and what did you or the Secretary do to try to mitigate the competition?

Thayer: I tried to do a lot of that in the series of Defense Resource Board meetings. Interservice rivalry is a problem, but if I understand the roles and the authority of the office of the Secretary of Defense, it can be only as big a problem as he wants it to be. A little interservice rivalry is healthy, but if it is allowed to reign unchecked, then it is a liability and a problem. I don't think it's a matter of simply waving a magic wand over the services and saying, "Knock off this intense interservice rivalry and come down to some more moderate level." I think you have to work at it, but I am absolutely convinced it can be done. In a good many cases in the military, you are going to see some cooperation that you wouldn't have thought existed.

Goldberg: With reference to General Dugan. Don't you think that to some extent the things that he said and that other Air Force people have said in recent weeks were inspired basically by interservice competition and the desire to put his service forward and put it in a strong position vis-a-vis the Navy in particular?

Thayer: Yes, I sure do. With the action that Cheney took, there is bound to be at least publicly a great reduction of interservice rivalry of that nature.

Matloff: About the budget--what role did you play in connection with defense budget formulation? Certainly you got into the shaping of the defense budget of FY 1985. Were there any changes in the approach that you were using in the internal management of that budget formulation? You recall that the McNamara regime had introduced the PPBS system. Were there any changes made in that system during your tenure? I take it that you had a considerable share of responsibility for presenting and defending that budget. Were you conscious of what McNamara had done, or were you handling it in your own way?

Thayer: I was handling it in my own way. I was not conscious of what McNamara had done. I had had a lot of experience in pulling together groups of people to talk about business plans and allocation of resources in the private sector. This basically is not really any different.

Matloff: What did you learn from the struggle of trying to craft that budget of FY 85, in dealing with the Secretary, the services, and Congress?

Thayer: I came away with a conviction that most people want to do what's right. Their desires, in the case of the military, should be, and are primarily motivated by the service's requirements and needs as they see it. If you insist, once you get up to the Defense Resources Board level, that something be done to pull together the requirements for, say, the Air Force's air to ground mission, particularly in support of the Army, and you insist that those two services get together and come up with a plan of how they are going to satisfy that requirement to the satisfaction of the Army, which is more important on a mission like that than for the Air Force to be satisfied, they will do it. We made some progress in that regard with Charlie Gabriel, Orr, Marsh, and Wickham. I think that when you have some reasonable logic that results in improving the way

the services work together and you order them to do it, they will do it.

Matloff: Let me ask a general question: Did you see any relationship between the increases in defense spending and the large U. S. budget deficits, and were you disturbed by that at all?

Thayer: Yes, I think deficits are bad, and it disturbed me to see us wasting as much money as we were in the defense budget by, instead of managing the problem, throwing money at it and hoping that would get the job done. There was very little motive for the military to walk out of their candy store into a more economic environment. They had so much money that they literally, I think, found that when they were not spending the money that they had been allocated, then they would spend it on something foolish, simply because they operated on the theory that if they didn't spend their allocation, they would get cut in the next budget. >

Goldberg: Do you know that there was once a Chief of Staff who asked Congress not to give him so much money? It was George Marshall, in the summer of 1940, at the beginning of the big buildup. He testified before the congressional committees and said, "Don't give us so much; you are going to choke the cow." Can you imagine that happening now?

Thayer: No.

Matloff: Did you favor the all-volunteer force over the draft?

Thayer: Yes, I did.

Matloff: Did you feel it was working well?

Thayer: It was working reasonably well, but not quite as well as publicity would lead the public to believe. It was OK.

Matloff: When the Reagan administration came into office, it proclaimed the dire dangers of a strategic window of vulnerability with the Soviets for the mid-1980s. Does that ring a bell? Did you believe in that prognosis, and did it affect your work as Deputy Secretary of Defense, trying to close that window?

Thayer: I don't remember that.

Matloff: Did you advocate nuclear superiority, parity, sufficiency, any of the various terms the different administrations used, vis-a-vis the Russians?

Thayer: No, I didn't advocate superiority or parity. I advocated that we have enough to be a satisfactory deterrence. I didn't number that in warheads. I numbered that in our ability to deliver and the ability of the delivery systems to survive in the event of a first strike. I felt that our nuclear submarines were by a pretty good margin our most effective delivery systems and the least vulnerable, that our aircraft were next, and the silos were third, in an order of priority.

Matloff: There were debates going on in the Weinberger administration over Midgetman, SDI, MX intercontinental ballistic missile and basing scheme, in addition to the 600-ship Navy and the B-1 bomber. What positions did you take on these questions, other than on SDI, the 600-ship Navy, and the B-2 that you already mentioned?

Thayer: I thought Midgetman was presented simply as a sop to Congress and that the way I regarded it; as something to get Congress off of that part of the strategic issue.

Matloff: How about the MX, both the missile and the basing scheme?

Thayer: I thought the MX was OK the way it was. I did, and still do, believe that there is a place for land based intercontinental ballistic missiles, that the MX was getting a bad rap from the critics and Congress, and that we should have gone ahead with it.

Matloff: How about the B-1 bomber?

Thayer: I flew the B-1, and have a first-hand knowledge of the airplane. I think that in spite of its publicized problems, it is a considerably better delivery system than the B-2, and is, in fact, a replacement for that. I would have been in favor of delaying the B-2 and pushing the operational date for the B-2 up at least another three or four years, and buying another quantity of B-1s. We could have gotten another hundred for a fixed price.

Matloff: You already touched on differences with the Navy, particularly with Sec/Navy Lehman, over relying heavily on aircraft carriers. What other specific aspects of the Navy program disturbed you; for example, the proposal for a new class of destroyers, a proposal for a new attack plane?

Thayer: It wasn't a new attack plane; Lehman wanted to modernize

the A-6, which I felt had been modernized as much as was justifiable and that to continue to try and work with a 20-year old air frame did not make sense. I urged them to abandon that and go on with a new attack fighter. I think it was abandoned about a year or so after I left.

Matloff: How about the new class of destroyers that was being proposed?

Thayer: <The idea of spending \$1 billion for a destroyer didn't make sense to me at all.> I told several high-ranking people in the Navy, including Lehman, that to spend as much money as the Navy had planned to spend on defending the task force and the aircraft carriers was very contradictory, in my view, in trying to make the Navy more efficient as a tactical arm that had any cost effectiveness that would continue to make sense to the Congress and to the American public. As I recall, for every dollar that went into the Navy's task forces, we were spending much more than 50 percent of that to protect them at sea, which would reduce the strike effectiveness of the carrier Navy and it couldn't sustain that kind of ineffectiveness for an indefinite period.

Matloff: How much of the struggle between you and Mr. Lehman arose out of your conviction or feeling that too much of the defense budget was going to the Navy, and were you attempting to cut back on the Navy's share in favor of speedy modernization of the Army? Was that a factor in this struggle?

Thayer: <Yes. I felt that the army was getting shortchanged. I blamed the Army as much as anybody for that. The Army didn't wage as effective a battle for the budget dollar as the Navy or the Air Force, or even the Marines.>

Goldberg: To what do you ascribe that failure?

Thayer: <I think that they had been fed second-rate rations for so long that they were beginning to believe they were a second-rate force, compared to the Navy and the Air Force. They didn't have the overall leadership in the Army to fight the jungle warfare that goes on in Washington during the budget cycle.>

Goldberg: You'd think Wickham would have had it; he had served as military assistant to Schlesinger.

Thayer: But he couldn't do it all by himself. I think that Wickham was a good general, but he didn't have quite the charisma that is attached to the top level of either the Navy or the Air Force. They select their top level people based on not only their military skills, but on how well they might be viewed by the public and by Congress.

Matloff: What help, or allies, did you enlist in in this struggle? For example, where did Richard DeLauer or Weinberger stand?

Thayer: Weinberger never really took a stand, at least in my presence. He still wanted to give all of the services essentially what they asked for, and the Navy was making a lot more waves than the Army. The Air Force was just as forceful as the Navy in that regard, but it did it with a lot more finesse. There are really three navies, as you know--air, surface, and underwater. They put up a pretty good front when it comes to defending the Navy against the other services, but there is a lot of internal conflict, more so than in the Air Force and the Army, between the major elements of the service.

Matloff: How about Richard DeLauer, how did he side in this struggle?

Thayer: He sided with me, very strongly.

Goldberg: He was a Navy fighter, also, wasn't he?

Thayer: Yes.

Matloff: DeLauer was a very emotional man, and he let his feelings run away with him sometimes, as I did, too, I guess. For the most part, DeLauer did his homework. He knew where the weakness in many of the weapons systems arguments that were presented by all the services really lay, from a technical or performance point of view.

Matloff: Was there any pressure brought on you by the White House? I take it Mr. Weinberger stood off to the sidelines.

Thayer: Not directly. I would get little remarks now and then to the effect that I shouldn't be picking on the 600-ship Navy because the President wanted it. I said that he never told me that he wanted it. So I would say that it's probably more accurately portrayed as a White House desire if they had prefaced their remarks about the President wanting it, by saying instead that some of the President's staff wanted it. I never really felt that Reagan felt all that strongly about having 600 ships. But Lehman had some friends over there who were helping him fight his battle.

Goldberg: That was his strength--he had some friends in the White House and some in Congress.

Matloff: And he was resorting to the press. How successful do you feel you were in the struggle over the size and composition of the future fleet?

Thayer: I don't think that I had a great impact on it because I wasn't there long enough. I had a feeling, about six months after I had gone, that the waves that I made had subsided considerably.

Matloff: The Weinberger administration became known for the variety of weapons requested by the services that were bought or planned. Are there any examples of weapons systems that you or the Secretary opposed other than those mentioned here?

Thayer: The Army had its battlefield air defense--DIVADS. I went on record several times with the Army that I thought that was a mistake. The reason I thought it was a mistake was because of DeLauer. He had researched that vehicle well and it was performing very poorly at the time. I felt that that was a waste; I guess it was cancelled.

Matloff: Let's focus for a moment on area problems and crises during your tenure here. To what extent did you become involved with NATO policies, buildup, or strategy?

Thayer: I was not involved very much in that. I made a trip or two over, but the only way I really got into it was stressing the importance of building up our conventional warfare capability. In terms of policy I didn't really get involved.

Matloff: Your tenure coincided with two crises that occurred almost simultaneously: one was Lebanon; the other Grenada. How did you stand on the withdrawal of the Marines from Lebanon?

Thayer: I participated in the discussion but I wasn't really consulted.

Matloff: Did you play any role in connection with the invasion of Grenada?

Thayer: To some extent. I had some conversations with the Admiral who was Commander in Chief, Atlantic (Wesley L. McDonald). I followed it fairly closely and was appalled at some of the mistakes that were made, particularly in the area of communications. > After the Grenada incident was over, the planning that went into it came under some serious review, and a lot of excuses were made for some of the screw-ups that occurred. But my impression of it was that the planning

had been done by staff who were not experienced or competent in planning an operation like Grenada. I think we came out of it OK, simply because there wasn't much there to begin with, but if we had been facing a situation like the Bay of Pigs there would have been a similar outcome.

Goldberg: Weinberger says that he insisted on doubling the size of the force after the Joint Chiefs presented the plan to him. Were you aware of that at the time?

Thayer: I was in on several of those meetings, and I don't remember Weinberger's doubling the force, but it could have happened when I was not there. I wasn't privileged to attend all the meetings or be privy to all the communications between Weinberger and Vessey.

Matloff: Were you drawn into any other foreign area problems or crises? For example, the U. S. Central Command was established in January 1983, the new unified command for the Southwest Asia and Persian Gulf area.

Thayer: I was down in Florida and visited that command.

Matloff: You had nothing to do with getting it started, or implementing it?

Thayer: No.

Matloff: How about arms control and disarmament--did you have any strong views or play any role in this area?

Thayer: Only on the periphery and in the National Security Council meetings that I attended. I had no strong role to play in any part of that. My feeling at the time was that we were being out-traded, and that we had too many people, particularly in the State Department, who were willing to give part of the store away to get some incremental concession from Russia, and that I didn't have a lot of respect for the caliber of negotiations. I recognized at the time that I did not know all of the problems that they faced, but had I been in a position to do so, I would have gotten into that much further, because I did not have a warm feeling that we were negotiating on a par with the Russians.

Matloff: Did you have any dealings with Richard Perle, Assistant Secretary for International Security Policy, who, was carrying the ball on arms control for the Defense Department?



Thayer: Yes, I sure did. He was very independent and I barred him from meetings because he would wander into a meeting I had called whenever he wanted to, or would do something else in town. I called him in after a few weeks of this and said, "From now on, you are uninvited to attend the Defense Resources Board meetings and any other meetings that you have normally attended that I have called, unless I specifically call for you." That went on for about a month, and finally he came back in and asked for some kind of a compromise. I said, "All I wanted to hear is that you recognize that, when I call a meeting, it is not a prerogative of yours to decide whether you should come. Now we can start all over again."

Goldberg: With reference to his views on arms control, you were probably pretty close to him.

Thayer: Pretty close.

Matloff: Let me ask you one or two questions about Cold War policies. On the question of military aid, how effective was it, on the basis of your experience, as a tool for political leverage in the Cold War?

Thayer: I've never had any high regard for our military aid programs. I think they are given out too freely with not enough commitment from recipients on how they will use it or instructions from us on how it's to be used. Israel is a prime example of that. I let it be known what I felt about their coming over here and lobbying our Congress, White House, and Pentagon to get their new fighter started, which they wanted us to pay for and wanted us to allocate some R&D money which was specifically withheld from anything like their fighter program, or disallowed, I should say. But we had people in the White House and the State Department who, in effect, overruled that. They were publicizing how they were going to build a fighter and sell it for \$5 million a copy. I told them very frankly in a meeting in the Pentagon that I thought that was pure nonsense; of course, they started it anyway, but eventually had to cancel it because it was driving them up against a wall economically.

Goldberg: Do you think that a lot of the military aid programs were influenced to a greater extent by the State Department than by Defense? That with a lot of countries State was more important in deciding

whether we would give them aid and to what extent, than Defense was?

Thayer: I think that's true of all countries. Defense certainly has an input. I guess any time Weinberger wanted to make an issue out of it and take it to the President, State and the DoD would be on equal grounds at that point. I don't recall Weinberger ever taking it to that extreme. I don't recall his taking a strong stand on any part of the military aid program.

Matloff: Do you recall a typical work day as Deputy Secretary of Defense? Did you spend most of your time on the budget? Did you spend a lot of time on the Hill? In weekend work?

Thayer: I put in some long hours during the week and might come in Saturday morning, but I didn't, short of a crisis, work all weekend, like some. I rarely took anything home, except something to read in the limousine to and from and give it to the driver to return to me in the morning. I would get to work usually about 7:30-7:45, and practically every evening I left around 6:00 or 6:30. I would either go home or to some quick reception or occasionally a dinner party. My wife and I tried to stay home three nights a week, but I don't think we averaged that. As you well know, one can go out every night in this town, so you have to try and be selective. I don't like big parties; I think they are a social misfit.

Matloff: In what respect is the role of public manager, particularly in Defense, different from or similar to that of private manager in the corporate world?

Thayer: It's very simple. In the corporate world, you usually don't have to ask somebody to do something twice. You also expect that it be done expeditiously. If they can't do it expeditiously, they come back and tell you what the problem is. Also, you have the ability to change faces, talents, and competence at least a level below you, not just to fit your method of operation but to get the job done. None of that can you do easily in the government. And I didn't expect to; I knew that it was going to be that different. You have to look back further in time to see an accomplishment than you do in

the private sector. I could look back a month to see an accomplishment in my old company when I was CEO, and I might have to look back three or four months at the Pentagon.

Matloff: Did you brief your successor, Will Taft?

Thayer: I didn't need to. Will and I stayed fairly close. He and Weinberger were extremely close. Will knew enough about the operation. We had a few hours together the day I left, during which I could tell him what I had been emphasizing, most of which he already knew. I saw him again about two or three months later.

Matloff: At this point, we usually ask about perspectives on OSD organization and management. As a result of your experience and reflection, by the time you left did you see the need for further changes in the structure, working relations, and functions of DoD; for example, relations between the SecDef and JCS, the SecDef and the Deputy SecDef, and the services and OSD? Did you have any strong feelings in this connection by the time you left?

Thayer: Yes. I felt that I had barely scratched the surface with the help of a lot of people in bringing about some improvements to the acquisition process and in trying to match the acquisition of weapons systems that result from well thought out requirements that are the natural result of an objective analysis of the threat. I felt that we could have done a lot better job with a lot fewer people, but I didn't have any illusions about being able to cut the OSD organization by 10 or 20 percent, or the military a like amount. That was not the biggest problem that we faced, even though I think it contributed a lot to the slow pace at which things were accomplished. I don't know that there has really been a lot of change since I left here. I know that the relationship between the Department of Defense and the aerospace industry has deteriorated, and, I think, to the detriment of the defense posture of the country, I have not really seen any great improvement any place, and I think a lot of it is due, from a morale point of view, to the terrible publicity that has reared up from time to time over the past few years and caused a lot of really good people either to leave or refuse to be available for service.

Goldberg: In government, or the aerospace industry?

Thayer: In government. <I have a lot of very competent friends who say that if asked to serve, they will not do it. They see that coming to Washington in a high-level, high-profile job is where you have a great opportunity to be a bum, and no chance to be a hero.>

Matloff: Did you feel that the Packard Commission's findings and recommendations and the Goldwater-Nichols reorganization act did not bring any fundamental changes?

Thayer: No, I don't think many of the Packard recommendations were really followed. They got a lot of conversation and a lot of talk about what to do about them, not only in the DoD, but in Congress as well. But I can't see that a lot of them have been implemented, not in the true sense of the word.

Matloff: Let me ask you for a characterization of styles, personalities, and effectiveness of top officials with whom you served--just thumbnail sketches. You have already talked about SecDef Weinberger. Do you have anything to add to that?

Thayer: I think <overall, Weinberger was a plus for the DoD.> He came in not really knowing much about defense, but he is a quick study, as they say, and he absorbed a lot in a short period of time. I think his biggest weakness was his lack of ability or desire to work with Congress and other people around the Washington scene who could be helpful. Along with that, he was overly sensitive to what the press had to say.

Matloff: How about JCS Chairman John Vessey?

Thayer: I think John Vessey is a very capable officer and I liked talking with him because he made sense and he had a good overall grasp of what was going on and what needed to be done within the limitations of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. One thing that surprised me, in the case of the Joint Chiefs, was that they put on a fairly unified front to the outside world, but even down in the "tank" their primary concern was for their individual services. I don't really think that they all adopted the same uniform and put on the same hat to the extent that Vessey did. Vessey came closer than any of the other members of the JCS. They didn't have the impact in a military sense that I expected to find at the Joint

Chief level. <They staffed things to death.> They wouldn't put out anything unless it had been approved by dozens of people, including themselves; <they bent over backwards to be noncontroversial; they ducked the real tough issues. I didn't expect to find that.>

Goldberg: Yes, I agree completely. They are supposed to wear purple suits down there, but they really wear purple faces, a good part of the time. One of the reasons, it seems to me, that from time to time the Secretary of Defense has been able to acquire power over them, is the fact that they won't make decisions, and they have to come up to him, and he is in a position to do it because they won't present a united front to him; any front, on some issues. Over the years, I would argue that <one of the reasons for accretion of power in OSD, in the Secretary and in his staff, is in effect this deferral by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.>

Thayer: Yes, I could sit down and talk with Vessey, one-on-one, and get some good advice, but I couldn't get it officially. I couldn't get what I really wanted out of him or the Joint Chiefs, which I really had to do by persuasion or go through Weinberger.

Goldberg: This has been the pattern right along. Usually the Secretary and the Chairman have gotten along pretty well and managed and the Secretary has benefited by that, but it's not come out officially from the Chiefs as a body.

Matloff: Did any of the under secretaries or assistant secretaries particularly impress you? You mentioned your dealings with Richard DeLauer; how about Fred Ikle, the Under Secretary for Policy?

Thayer: I liked Fred personally, and he had a fine mind. But his enthusiasm for anything was almost nonexistent. He would not have been missed if he had just taken a month off. He was not a big factor.

Matloff: As a result of your experience, are there any previous Secretaries or Deputy Secretaries of Defense that you admire the most?

Thayer: <My impression is that Cheney and Atwood make a good team.> I had some reservations about Cheney when he first came aboard, but only from hearsay, not from personal experience. I think he has, overall, acquitted himself very well. From what I know of Atwood

and what my friends who are still in the mainstream tell me, he is a good backup man for Cheney. I love Will Taft, but he is no Deputy Secretary of Defense. When Carlucci came back as Secretary of Defense, he did a reasonably good job. Before that, <I didn't really feel that Schlesinger or McNamara were good for the country, much less as Secretary of Defense. I don't think they did a good job.>

Goldberg: How about Harold Brown?

Thayer: <Harold was qualified; maybe a little over qualified. His only problem was that he couldn't stay out of detail. He couldn't leave things alone.>

Goldberg: That was true of his boss, too, wasn't it?

Thayer: Yes, that's right, exactly.

Goldberg: That's the criticism that Carter draws.

Matloff: Sometimes it was said that he was the right Secretary of Defense for the wrong President. How about Reagan? From your vantage point, did you come away with any impressions about his style of decision making, particularly in the national security field?

Thayer: I went, over the year, to 40 or 50 meetings in which Reagan was in attendance. I never saw him run one meeting. I was disappointed in that, because I thought that at least once in a while, particularly for a Cabinet meeting, he ought to run it. He was always a staff member. I sat next to him when Cap was out of town, because I was supposedly the Secretary of Defense, who was supposed to sit on his left. The senior State Department man sat on his right. I watched him doodle a lot. He would come in with a one-liner or two, and then wouldn't say much. Most of the time the meeting was ended by whoever was running it saying, "Mr. President, you've heard the pros and cons,"--which he really hadn't; he'd had what the staff or people on the agenda wanted to tell him--"we'd like to let you think about this for a few days and we will come to you for a decision." Everybody knew that what really happened was that a presidential directive would appear on his desk in two or three days and he would sign it.

Goldberg: What staff people would run the meeting?

Thayer: Meese was there to run a lot of them. Once in a while a Cabinet member would run one.

Goldberg: Baker?

Thayer: Yes.

Matloff: My last question: What do you regard as your major achievements during your tenure as Deputy Secretary of Defense and, conversely, what disappointed you the most or perhaps was not completed?

Thayer: What disappointed me the most was not being able to stay for another two or three years to get some things accomplished that I felt were possible and on which some measurable progress had been achieved at that point--particularly in the acquisition process, and to some extent in bringing the military to the realization that they have to live under a few budgetary restrictions.

Matloff: How about your achievements?

Thayer: I think that it was that, just to elaborate a little more on this line of thought, <with the exception of Lehman, we were pulling a group of people together who were willing to work towards getting some more rational decisions made as to how we go about establishing requirements and satisfying those requirements with a competitive procurement system which made sense.> I think the Army, Air Force, and the Marines (I got along very well with the top level of the Marines) were making some headway and we were getting some idea of how we wanted to control the destiny of the Department of Defense, recognizing that we do live in a cycle; that depending on the military threat to the country, as it's perceived by the American public and by Congress, we rise and fall in the opinion of the populace in general, and on the Washington scene specifically. We had so far to go, and still do, to persuade the American public that it is getting a reasonable bang for its buck, in the whole defense picture. I am very proud that we were able in one year to make some discernible progress, but very disappointed that it had to be cut short.

Matloff: Thank you very much for your cooperation, and for sharing your insights and recollections with us.

Thayer: You are welcome.