

Lucius D. Battle, Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 7/9/1968
Administrative Information

Creator: Lucius D. Battle
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Biographical Note

Battle worked in the Department of State as special assistant to the Secretary and Executive Secretary (1961-1962), Consul General (1962), and Assistant Secretary of State for Education and Cultural Affairs (1962-1964); he was Ambassador to the United Arab Republic (1964-1967); and chairman of the UNESCO General Conference in Paris (1962). In this interview, Battle discusses his time as special assistant to the Secretary and Executive Secretary, including the roles of key administrators in the State Department during the Kennedy Administration, relations between the White House and State Department, and the fallout from the Bay of Pigs invasion, among other issues.

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Lucius D. Battle – JFK#1

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First of Three Oral History Interviews

with

Lucius D. Battle

July 9, 1968
Washington, D.C.

By Larry J. Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: Did you have any relationship, Mr. Battle, with John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] before he became President?

BATTLE: I knew him slightly. I first met then Congressman Kennedy, I would guess, about 1950. I occasionally ran into him socially over the next years. I had no official dealings of any kind with him, really, until he became President.

HACKMAN: Did you get involved in the '60 presidential race at all?

BATTLE: Only in a very small way. I was then vice president of Colonial Williamburg, (Inc.), and I played a mild role in that area. But I wasn't very—I've never been particularly active in politics. I participated a little bit. Bobby Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] came down and spoke for us. It was the first time I had met Bobby Kennedy. He spoke at the College of William and Mary in the area, and I met him on that occasion. That was the first time, as I said, I had met him.

[-1-]

HACKMAN: Can you remember anything about the response of the local

Democratic leaders in that area?

BATTLE: Well, I remember several things about it. I said it was at the College of William and Mary, as I thought for a moment. It wasn't; it was scheduled to be at the College of William and Mary and the meeting was announced, then there was a delay of several hours. And we had tied up traffic in the center of this little town. We moved over to the courthouse, which is nearby, because of the problem. The police asked us to move, and there was some doubt—the students were running around saying, “He's not going to show. He's not going to show.”

HACKMAN: He was in Richmond giving a speech.

BATTLE: He was in Richmond giving a speech, and he came on down and spoke to a rather difficult crowd of students. I saw him do it many times after that in years to come. But it was the first time I had seen him participate in this sort of thing. He was extremely good, and I thought extremely effective. It was before the days of student protest movements in the way that we have them now, but they had ripped away part of the equipment that we had, and he ended up speaking on top of a table. I remember Bill Battle [William Cullen Battle], who had come down with him—and Bill Battle and I were talking about this the other day. It was a very vigorous kind of gathering and, I thought, a very useful one. I might add that the area was Republican, but other than that we did pretty well. But that was the only involvement, really, that I had in the campaign. I helped with a couple of speeches and things; people called me at various times; but I took no particular part in it.

[-2-]

Right after Dean Rusk was appointed Secretary of State—I had known him and worked with him in the years of the Truman [Harry S. Truman] era. I was then assistant to Dean Acheson [Dean G. Acheson] throughout the period he was Secretary of State and had known Dean Rusk quite well. Dean was then Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs. And right after he was appointed, he called me and asked me to come back to Washington. I returned with great enthusiasm and great excitement. I came, as I remember, in the early part of February, just a few days after the Inaugural.

HACKMAN: Who had been filling this position up to that time? Was...

BATTLE: Walter J. Stoessel [Walter J. Stoessel, Jr.] had been. And he's just been named as Ambassador to Poland. He was Executive Secretary of the Department. Then they called it head of the Executive Secretariat. I changed the title when I took over for a variety of reasons. Dean Rusk wanted someone who had been a friend of his, that he had known, and he asked me to come back for that reason. I had that job until I guess April of '62 when I switched to another one, but it was a very exciting period because there were many changes going on here, in the Department of State.

The Department had been through, I think, a rather difficult period. One of the things the Kennedy group didn't realize, and I think I played a role there in a number of ways—and I don't wish to be too personal about this, but I, having been in the Foreign Service and yet having been very close to a lot of people around the White House (I knew a lot of them), was able to sort of bridge the gaps between the Department and the White House in a way that I felt was useful at times. I also understood some of the problems here, and I tried to make some of the White House group understand some of the difficulties. For example, I have in mind, particularly, the effect of two eras on the Department of State and particularly the Foreign Service of the United States.

[-3-]

First, the McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] era, which had had a devastating effect on morale and on individual initiative and on the willingness to stand up and be counted. An era of that sort can't help having a rather strong and startling effect on an organization. And then, secondly, the whole period of John Foster Dulles, whom I had known quite well over a long period of time. He was not a person who used the Foreign Service. He distrusted it completely, and he had very little to do with it. The combination of the McCarthy era plus the Dulles era had pretty well shaken the self-confidence that the Service had. It was a difficult period, and I felt....

I remember talking with Arthur Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] and Mac Bundy [McGeorge Bundy] and some of the ones around the President at that time who felt, and quite rightly—I agree completely with their purpose and their goal—but they felt that the Department and the Service had to assume a leadership role in foreign policy and with the other agencies in town that it had not had. I said I agreed totally and completely, but that I did not feel that the Service was at that stage in a position where it had either the confidence or the talent to carry the leadership role that they felt should be assigned to it. I did not disagree with the assignment.

I agreed completely, for example, when the OCB [Operations Coordinating Board] was abolished that this was a proper step and that the leadership had to come from over here, but I doubted that we were ready for it. I doubted that the Service was ready for it, and I thought that it was going to take time to build the Service and a confidence in the Service that would let it play the kind of role that President Kennedy and those around him wanted it to play at that time. I agreed totally, as I said, with the objective, I just felt that the carrying out of that program was going to take a little more time and a bit more patience than, perhaps, they realized.

[-4-]

It was an interesting period in many ways. It was a period of enormous excitement, as you know, and new appointments. Everyone wanted to be part of what was a very exciting thing, the New Frontier. There was the greatest sense of exhilaration in the Department of State and in the city of Washington. I've been around here a long time off and on, and it was the greatest sense of excitement that I recall. And it was, I thought, a period in which everyone had very high hopes.

One thing, also, that was rather interesting, that I'm not sure that some of those around the Kennedy group in the White House really understood, and that was while the Foreign Service and the Department had traditionally been the kind of stronghold of conservatism and of stand-patism, if there's such a word, and it was regarded as a group that was largely Republican-oriented and so on, that this was not at all the case at the time. The Foreign Service and the Department were very, very pleased. I think if you had taken a poll in this building at that time, at the time of the election of 1960, that Kennedy would have carried it overwhelmingly. There was a good deal more sympathy for what he wanted to do. After that there developed some problems.

There were some problems in confidence that developed after that. But the initial period was one of enormous pleasure and excitement of the new era coming in and of great pleasure that the new president was going to look to the Department and to the Service. And actually, I think the Service had every reason to be very pleased with what happened, even after the strains developed with some of the members of the White House staff. I'm not speaking of myself because I had very close relationships with the entire group around President Kennedy at that time, and it continued all through those years, but I'm speaking of the Department and the Service and their relations, not my own, because my own were something else.

[-5 -]

But the percentage of career appointments, for example, to ambassadorial assignments was very high through the Kennedy era. I think the Service had every reason to believe that it had gotten a new lease on life, and I think that in the main it was a period that was good for the Service. It was a critical, demanding period, as I said, up really to performing White House wanted it. But it wanted to, and the White House wanted it to, and that was something.

HACKMAN: Can you remember discussing this problem with Secretary Rusk in the early days? Did he have any plans in this area?

BATTLE: Yes, although in the very beginning—I remember the first day I came to the building Dean Rusk said to me, the first thing he said is, “Get our relations with the White House straightened out.” He said, “There's just no order to it.” Part of this grew out, I think, of the fact of a new administration with the energy that that one had and with the talent at the White House, which was incredible. It was quite a group we had around in those days.

But the mail, the flow of mail—I remember back in my Acheson days the number of memos and papers between the State Department and the White House per day was very small indeed. In the Kennedy era, there were two channels developed to the White House at that period: either Battle to Bundy or Bundy to Battle; that was one channel. And the other was the President-Secretary of State channel. But each day the flow of traffic was absolutely incredible. But there wasn't very much order at the White House in those initial days. Anybody over there played with anything he wanted to and there was a good deal of sorting out to be done over there.

[-6 -]

We found ourselves, I remember the first weeks a few times—I don't even recall what the issues were—but we found that memos had gone, for example, from an assistant secretary of state to the President. And that was quite common at that particular moment. There would be two memos recommending completely opposite courses to the President. Well, there's something to be said for that, you know, and I don't say that it's all wrong, but from the standpoint of the Secretary of State, who's in charge of this enormous structure, it's rather awkward when the two assistant secretaries send over memos recommending different courses.

HACKMAN: How, physically, could both of these have gotten over there in that period?

BATTLE: Well, they just sent them over directly, you see. And I put in a very strong order that things could only go through one or the other of the two channels, in an effort to get some sort of coordination in what we were trying to do here. The Secretary wanted very much to have this happen. At the White House Mac Bundy and I talked about it many times—we used to go to lunch together every few days at that point—and we tried to keep some semblance of order. I don't believe in holding down dissent, and I think that—I am one who believes that both the President and the Secretary of State should have more than one view. But everybody ought to know that they're getting both and that the President doesn't act on one memorandum that doesn't represent a complete study of a situation.

HACKMAN: Was this a problem particularly with new people, or was this happening with people who had been around for a while?

BATTLE: It was happening with.... Members of the White House staff would call over and ask an office to let them know what they thought about so and so, and that office would send over a memorandum and a paper study, and somebody else would be sending over a similar study in an official way, flowing up through the normal channels of this place, and you would find yourself

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with two opposite views. I never believed that we should refuse to send more than one view, but there had to be a recommendation by the Secretary as to which view, in his judgment, was the proper view. And, at a minimum, the two opposing groups ought to be aware of the other and answer it. It's simply impossible to permit the view of one small segment of the Department to ignore the other parts of the Department on any major issue. To be heard, yes, but not to be acted upon without at least knowledge of all considerations.

HACKMAN: How did Bundy and the White House people respond to your attempts

to get some order in this?

BATTLE: Well, we got along beautifully. I worked all during that period, and Mac and I never had a cross word, really.... Well, that's not quite true. We had some differences of opinion, but we got along beautifully. I have an enormous respect for him, and he understood my problems over here. We ended up sort of compromising out those issues in which there were differences between various segments of the Department to be sure that they were all known over there—not that they were ignored. But during that period I worked very closely with Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan], with Fred Dutton [Frederick G. Dutton], with Arthur Schlesinger, with Mac Bundy, and with various others around. All in all, our relationships were excellent. It was a very exciting period. It was a period in which the Bowles [Chester B. Bowles]-Rusk relationship presented some problems, but George Ball [George W. Ball] replaced Bowles and the relationships on the seventh floor became a bit easier. And that helped a good deal.

HACKMAN: What particularly were the problems between the two as they developed, before Bowles went out in November?

[-8-]

BATTLE: Well, basically the problem was that Rusk and Bowles are such different personalities that they just don't operate on the same wavelength. There's a good deal of admiration and respect, I think, each of them for the other, which—it may surprise you that I say that. I think it's, perhaps, greater in retrospect than it seemed at the time. Chet liked to talk about vague directions at great length, not addressing himself to a decision or to a specific problem or paper. Rusk is very definite, he's directed, he is precise, he wants to operate on the basis of the issue that is being discussed at that time. And each point of view has a place in this building, but it wasn't in that particular framework that it could, I think, find its most useful expression. I think that was as much the problem as anything else.

HACKMAN: Was that problem alleviated to any degree before Bowles left, or did this continue to be a problem?

BATTLE: No, it actually got considerably worse in the last stage of time. It put me in a very awkward position. I was very close to both Bowles and to Rusk and continue to be so, I'm happy to say, and it was very awkward because frequently they would both communicate to me rather than with each other. And I tried my very best in those days to assure that they talked with each other about problems.

I tried to get them to set up a regular time of day when they would meet or something of that sort. I used to try to get Chet to sort of focus his attention on specific problems when he was going in there. Some of the time I would go in with the two of them—most of them I tried not to because I felt it was not right for me to be a party to the meeting—but only if I might channel it in a specific direction. It seemed to me at times it was useless for me to be there. I could see the problems between the two of them, and having a real affection for both

of them, a good deal of liking for both of them, I could see the problem and want to do something about it, but it was rather hard to lick it. That was the basic problem.

[-9-]

HACKMAN: How did the White House become aware of this problem? How was it communicated to them from over here?

BATTLE: Well, you talk with some of them over there. They were aware of it, and it began to, you know, put a strain on my own loyalties. I was loyal to the President, to the Secretary, and to the Under Secretary. I was in a rather awkward position there for a time. But the contacts between the Department and the White House were so constant and so regular during that stage that it was impossible not to have a sense of impending difficulty. On specifics—well, I'm sure you've got a lot in your tape files on this particular subject. I'll leave that one to some of the others. Exactly what stimulated their interest and concern over there, I'm not sure, but it was perfectly obvious.

Chet did a lot of very good things. He was superb in the early days and I think in the selection of people for jobs. I can't recall a period in which the selection of ambassadors, for example, received the kind of special love and attention that the early appointments received. It was quite remarkable in many ways. And of the original group of appointments, many of them had very special relationships with the countries that they served in; not only with these taken from the career, but also from the outside. They had a very direct and very special kind of reason for being appointed to various countries. And I thought Chet did a very admirable job.

HACKMAN: Can you remember anything about how he went about running this operation in looking for ambassadors? How much help did you give him, for instance, on this?

[-10-]

BATTLE: I gave him some. He would frequently ask me, but I was extremely busy and I didn't spend any great amount of time. He would often ask me about appointments. He would very frequently ask me what I thought of individuals and whether I thought they would be right or wrong for a certain post. I had a good deal to do with some appointments. But I can't really say that this was a function that I made any effort to have any regular or defined part in. I occasionally would object when I would see one coming along that I thought was wrong, and more frequently than not, Chet would ask me about them.

But he spent an enormous amount of time—really too much in the beginning, considering what else had to be done in the building—on the selection of these people. And on the seventh floor, the routine—it wasn't routine, very little is really routine if it reaches the seventh floor—but a lot of work was not being done that needed to be done. I can look back with great pride on what Chet did on those appointments, but recognizing that it took an

inordinate amount of his time. And he spent a great deal of time with individuals, contacts in various worlds, education, business and so on, getting suggestions and names. He really did a remarkable job.

HACKMAN: How did this process work, then, as far as bringing Secretary Rusk and the White House in on the appointments?

BATTLE: Well, he would very often—he would review a list with Dean Rusk. He would prepare a list and would send it over. And then Ralph Dungan did most of the appointments at that period, although occasionally others got in it. But it was largely Ralph. And this is a role that Ralph continued to play over the several years of that administration. Ralph also—I knew Ralph very well—he also would call me frequently and ask me about individuals. And he continued to do this even after I left the seventh floor, although I really tried to bow out of some of the things that I had been doing on the seventh floor.

[-11-]

Just the fact that I was still in the building did not seem to me to entitle me to be floundering around in other people's business. And I tried to detach myself from some of the things that went on up there. But the fact that I had known Ball and had known Rusk and had the friends that I had at the White House resulted in my being involved long after I should not have been involved, although I tried to reduce it as much as possible.

HACKMAN: Was there a time after the very early period when Bowles was putting in so much time on this when the appointment process almost passed over to the White House, where Dungan was doing the initiating rather than...

BATTLE: I think to a much greater extent after the first round of appointments was made, yes, although it continued. It was a process of first Roger Jones [Roger W. Jones], who was the then Deputy Under Secretary for Administration, and subsequently, Bill Crockett [William J. Crockett]. An initial list would be prepared, checked with Ball and—or Bowles before that—and then it would go over to Dungan. There would also be a good deal of telephone conversation and consultation on it. And Ralph would call around and he would ask other opinions, including my own, as I said. Sometimes, between the time an actual official paper went over, there'd been a great deal of spade work done that had resulted in maybe two or three names for a specific post, and one or more would be presented to the President.

HACKMAN: There were stories written at the time that the White House was very impatient with State's response on appointments and also on the quality of the appointments State was suggesting. Did you get any of this feedback from the White House?

[-12-]

BATTLE: Yes, I did. And I think on numerous occasions it was quite justified. I think that we, that the Foreign Service at that particular period, did not reflect in what it sent over the degree of care, for example, that Chet Bowles was giving. It was largely a matter of seniority and other considerations that are somewhat more traditional in this place. And the approach that Chet was trying to give to it....

I remember talking several times with Roger Jones, and I said, "You simply must see that the names you send over from career service are really adequate. And competitively, we've got to approach this from the standpoint of getting the best person for the job, career or not." And while I, being career—although I've had an odd career—I felt that to the extent possible, all things being equal, we ought to attempt to support the career people; but I felt they had to be of the quality and of the personality and of the background that related to the assignment and be consistent with the style of the President. And if we didn't have someone equal to what was available on the outside, I felt that....

In the last analysis, this is the very essence of whether the Foreign Service is, over many years, going to be able to compete and do its job. It's got to be the best. It should not claim special privileges and special rights to presidential appointments if they're not going to have people equal to those that can be brought in from the outside. Again, all things being equal, I think the trend ought to be—I believe there's a place for a mixture of both career and non-career. I still think so. But if you have two people, one out and one in, and they're of equal—if you're going to define that situation that precisely, I favor the career person, but not if they don't have the abilities and experience and special qualifications that I think permit that privilege.

HACKMAN: Is this something that Secretary Rusk took any particular interest in, or was it a time problem in the early period?

[-13-]

BATTLE: No, in the earlier days I can't say that he did. This was left to a combination of Roger Jones and Chet, in the original period, and to Bill Crockett and George Ball later. George Ball took a very active role in it, particularly with respect to internal arrangements and internal assignments and appointments. All these things were always reviewed with the Secretary, but it was rather rare that he would initiate or took any special part in—he was extremely busy. It was a very difficult period from a substantive point of view, and I can't say that he gave a great deal of time at that period. I don't also believe that the amount of time that he gave was necessarily disproportionate in terms of what he should expect from others around him and of the substantive demands that were being made on him in other fields. He tended to rely on the Under Secretary and the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration to generate the names and the appointments that should be made.

HACKMAN: You'd mentioned Mr. Jones and Mr. Crockett, what about the fellow

who came over from Justice, Orrick [William Horsley Orrick, Jr.], who didn't stay very long, and apparently had some real problems?

BATTLE: Oh, Bill Orrick, yes. I knew Bill fairly well. I wouldn't say that I knew him intimately. I liked him very much. I recall when he was appointed, George Ball asked me to go over and see him. Again, this was outside my bailiwick. I was then in Educational and Cultural Affairs, as I remember it. I think it was. I was about to if I wasn't already there. But he wanted me to go over and talk with him. I went over and spent an hour or so with him, tried very hard to help him in the earlier stages when he first came over here. He found the place somewhat baffling, and I certainly understand that point of view. He found it very difficult to operate here. It was just not his assignment. I can't put my finger on what was wrong, but he found the internal operation of the place difficult for him, and he didn't like it, which became fairly obvious. He has many abilities; really, he's a very excellent man. But I don't think he was equipped for this particular job in a number of ways. He didn't last long. And then Crockett replaced him.

[-14-]

HACKMAN: Do you know anything about how this appointment came about, what the discontent was with Roger Jones, and why Orrick came over?

BATTLE: Well, Jones—again, you know, to give an honest answer on all these things, I've got to treat them.... I happen to be, as you see, fond of all of them. I'm extremely fond of Roger Jones. Roger tended to, I think, to operate too much as a kind of personnel officer, carrying his two or three problems of that day before him, working them out, rather than dealing with the very broad brush policy and procedural aspects of the Department that so badly needed to be done at that time. He got so swamped with the detail and rather than turn these things over to others, he tended to do them himself. And I think this is basically what caused part of his problem. He's a very fine man. And he ran into some congressional flak, and he had two or three real problems with several key people on the Hill. And the combination, I think, of these two made it a problem. Also, I gather he didn't get along too well with some of the White House staff, which was something of a problem.

Again, when the appointment was made it seemed to me to be exactly right. He was sort of "Mister Civil Service" in a way, and yet, not Foreign Service. And that combination—he was career, but not one of us. I thought that was a good combination. He had a career approach, but not particularly sympathetic or imbued in the practices and the lore of this place which was, I thought, very good. And I think at a different time it might have worked. You know, if he'd come in a little later. But the pace was so frantic at that moment and the problems were so myriad in number and greatly complex that, again, he just wasn't geared to it.

HACKMAN: Did the problem of finding somebody who could really fill this position well increase the burden on your operation?

[-15-]

BATTLE: Yes, it did, and quite a lot. It resulted, I felt, in my getting involved in a kind of seventh floor managerial function which was beyond what the job should have been. It didn't bother me; I rather liked it. I used to occasionally worry about it because I felt that I was developing a broader managerial role than I felt the Executive Secretary of the Department ought to have. You might like to get other opinions on this one, but I think I got into a situation there which—I don't reject this kind of thing, not the personnel side of it, which I took some part in but not a great deal. But in the broader sense of how foreign policy is made and how the place is managed and all that, I did find myself more deeply involved in those aspects of it, in organizational changes and things of that sort than the Executive Secretary of the Department should normally be involved in.

HACKMAN: Can you talk about some of these things in the early period that—and how...

BATTLE: I think what I did, as I look back on it, worked out pretty well. But I recall, for example, trying to consolidate the clearance of intelligence operations in one place. I had a role in creating the Operations Center which did not go for a long time the way I wanted it to go. I started the concept. It finally was put under me, and we got it to be what I felt it ought to be, which was essentially a service function rather than a substantive one. I remember setting up what is now the office of Politico-Military Affairs and of making the selection of Jeff Kitchen [Jeffrey C. Kitchen] to head that office, that kind of thing, which was outside—really it should have been done by other segments of the Department.

But I hadn't been around here, having been out of government for several years, and having reflected a good deal on some of the things that we needed in this building, I took steps in fields of that sort that I think were somewhat beyond what my own role should have been. But the offices—the two or three changes have gone on and worked out awfully well over the time, over the years since then. It would be hard to imagine the place at the moment Without the Operations Center, for example, or without the Politico-Military office or a few other things of that sort.

[-16-]

HACKMAN: What were the problems in getting this Operations Center? [Theodore C.] Achilles, I believe, was the first...

BATTLE: Yes, the first mistake—you see, I.... The idea was one of the first things that I floated when I came back here, was that we were operating in a period when.... I reflected back on my own days with Dean Acheson when I was the only man in the office and I was on call every night, really, around the clock, and I felt that we needed a little more of an institution here on a round the clock basis, and that we also needed a place where the combined knowledge of the

government—that is CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], military, State, other agencies—were put together on a minute to minute basis; that we needed an improved communication facility between these several agencies and our own; that we were really operating in a kind of horse and buggy age at that particular period.

I was working on this, and George McGhee and I were having a great argument on the nature of this thing. George felt that the Operations Center should be the focal point for presidential task forces and that you should take problems out of the structure of the Department and put a presidentially designated individual in charge of a task force in a crisis situation. I felt that you couldn't do it, that you could never remove the responsibilities of the Secretary of State, that this always had to be a Secretary of State relationship to the White House, but that you couldn't put a White House appointed man to head what was essentially a State Department group.

Then, in the middle of all this discussion, Cuba occurred. And then there was a frantic move to revitalize the place, which we all felt was necessary, and during that period, my idea—completely ungelled at that point—of the Operations Center was floated. And in some mysterious way, Ted Achilles [Theodore Carter Achilles], again an old friend of mine, who had just come back from being ambassador somewhere or other—I've forgotten...

HACKMAN: Peru?

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BATTLE: Peru? It was a Latin American post—came in, and he was unassigned, and he was put in charge of it. Ted had his own ideas of substance. Steve Smith came over and worked for him at that period. I, from the very beginning, argued that you were going to have utter confusion in this place if you created another substantive layer, and that you had to make, if there were task forces on a crisis, either the assistant secretary in charge of that region or his deputy the head of the task force; and that what we needed there was a little more fat, a little more leeway in terms of personnel, to provide around the clock watches, to give an extra service function to help serve that particular assistant secretary or deputy; and that the Operations Center was not one it should compete with, but should supplement it; and that we needed a small group of Foreign Service officers who had represented a variety of areas of experience and a person from one of the two or three key agencies working more or less permanently there; and that they would backstop whatever crisis, to be augmented if necessary, depending on the number of crises we had at a time. I've done this now.

This past year I've had any number of crises: Arab and Israeli, and Cyprus, and Greece, and other problems, and it has worked very well. During periods of crises, I just move up to the Operations Center, and we bring in—we use my country desk officer or what I have, but it isn't adequate to staff twenty-four hours a day, and this was to sort of supplement that.

Well, after this went on for a while—back to the period of its original formation—it became pretty clear the assistant secretaries resented it. Ted Achilles was a senior Foreign Service officer interested in substance, with knowledge and ability, but he had no sort of constitutional function or role in this thing. I did not believe, and used to argue very strongly

with Ted at the time, that it would work to put him in a sort of super assistant secretary role, and that the focal point still had to be on the regional assistant secretary. Well, in time the assistant secretaries would refuse to use the Operations Center because they were afraid this was overriding any authority they had in the matter.

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Eventually, Ted left, and eventually, this was then put under me, and we put it back on the.... One of my three deputies was head of the Operations Center, and we began to move into the direction that we now have it. Many things have been added since, which I had nothing to do with, many improvements have been made. It now, I think, fills a very necessary role in the Department and has been very helpful.

HACKMAN: How did this work, some of the early task forces? Non-State people were heading them, like Nitze [Paul Henry Nitze] on Berlin and Gilpatric [Roswell L. Gilpatric] on Viet-Nam.

BATTLE: Well, it varied by the task force at that stage, and some of them became sort of floating crap games with membership and leadership at times rather confused. But I think the direction in which this has moved has been the direction that I thought from the very beginning, and there are papers in the building that I wrote at the time that I think show it was the right direction; that as long as we're structured regionally as we are, it had to be the regional bureau with the expertise in any area.

Now, I wouldn't necessarily oppose other inter-agency task forces, but I think they have to be handled—it depends on what the issue is, and I'm not always opposed to chairmanship outside. But, in the main, I think it ought to be the regional assistant secretary. There are reasons for exceptions on occasion. And there are times when I think that the military and other departments have just as much—both knowledge and expertise—as we have and that we ought to recognize that. But in the main, speaking generally, I think the regional assistant secretary. I find myself, now, in one of these jobs, and I feel it even more strongly now than I did then.

HACKMAN: You had mentioned earlier that you were in agreement with the abolition of the OCB?

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BATTLE: Yes.

HACKMAN: How did this, again, affect your operation as the Executive Secretary?

BATTLE: Well, the OCB was suddenly abolished. It had become a giant paper factory. What happened to the OCB depends in large measure on what

was to be done with the NSC [National Security Council] and the way in which that was used. The OCB was the operating executive arm of the National Security Council. The NSC fell into a different pattern of operation than it had either in the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] or the Truman eras, and therefore the volume of work generated thereby was somewhat different, and we began to move into a period in which Mac Bundy's office, in combination with my own, created the National Security Action Memoranda that have been used since then.

Mac would do a summary of either NSC or other presidential level meetings and the actions required there from. Then they would put it over here, and we would farm it out as necessary, ride herd on it and see that it was acted upon and responded to. So in a way, we became a kind of junior grade OCB. That's the wrong way to describe it, but I think in many ways we did the same thing with considerably less flak than in the case of the OCB. We've come eventually to IRGs [Interdepartmental Regional Groups] and SIGs [Senior Interdepartmental Groups] which is.... I hadn't quite seen it this way, but this has worked very well, I think—at least in my area it has. It seemed to me that inter-agency coordination and interagency relationships can't be put in one place or one level. They have to reflect the seriousness of the problem, the nature of the problem, and the problem will find its level. I remember saying at the time....

I recall when I was first the desk officer in this building in the mid-forties. I was then second on the Canadian desk. I was a GS-12 at the time, and I was totally untroubled by protocol or rank. And I simply called inter-agency meetings dealing with the problems of Canada—a perfectly natural, normal, simple thing to do. I recall it rather astonished people at the time, but it didn't seem odd to me at all. I would invite all those in the government who were concerned with my problem to come

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to these meetings. I used to have brigadier generals and various senior people show up. Nobody ever questioned it. They probably didn't even know what rank I held. It wasn't a question of rank; it was a question of function and of exercising a degree of leadership.

Well, I tried at that stage to stimulate the Department to begin inter-agency meetings at all levels. I said the same thing to my country directors in here last week: that the fact that we now have IRGs and SIGs is no substitute for their taking the initiative on problems that don't have to come for policy decision up the line, but to pull together those parts of the government that relate to the problem at hand and to try to deal with it constructively and in a coordinated way. If it has to come up, then let it come up. But the fact that I had an IRG is no substitute whatever for their having their own country meetings involving, at their selection, those agencies that have something to do with their problem. Now, this is what I felt was needed.

Again, the Department and the Service, having gone through the years of McCarthy and Dulles, these things had fallen into disuse, to the extent that they had existed, and they never existed enough. But they had fallen into disuse, and there was a sort of a hesitation and a reluctance to grasp leadership, even though a great many people had agreed—everybody, virtually everybody—that we should play the central leadership role in foreign policy.

HACKMAN: Let me ask you something else. In the early period—I don't know if this carried over into the period you were here—do you know anything about a study being made on how to go about developing a selection-out process for people in State who the White House or State, I guess, would decide should go?

[-21-]

BATTLE: Well, there is a selection-out process provided for in the Foreign Service Act of 1946. There was a strong feeling at that stage that the selection-out process had not been adequately used. Part of the problems that I have just discussed with you had, I think, made a lot of people who had had talents in their youth, but had not lived up to them, had put them in senior positions, when just their work habits and their pattern of thought and so on was not consistent with the period in which we were living and the load of things that had to be carried.

At that time, and I don't remember how this came about, there was this new incentive retirement program. I've forgotten what it was that the retiree received that benefited his annual income by—I've forgotten; it was ten or fifteen per cent or something—if he retired rather than waiting. This may be what you're referring to.

HACKMAN: No, I'm referring specifically to a list that was developed between the election and the Inauguration. And I don't know whether anybody was still working on it.

BATTLE: The only thing that I can recall, there were various lists that were prepared of appointments to be made—you know, the great talent hunt of that period—but there were a couple of lists prepared by a task force under George Ball's chairmanship, which was selecting those ambassadorial level people who were not, in their judgment, up to the new period.

HACKMAN: This is the operation under Robert Schaetzel [J. Robert Schaetzel]? Do you remember anything about that?

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BATTLE: Schaetzel and Ball and Tom Finney and—I've forgotten who else I knew on it. There were several of them. I wasn't involved in it.

HACKMAN: You don't know if anything ever came out of it?

BATTLE: Well, those lists floated around, yes. And I think out of those lists a number of people probably were dropped. I didn't have anything to do with it, and I had no.... I was aware that there were, as part of the general search for talent—I mean the thing of getting names for all the jobs, they also had a

list of those that they felt ought to go, but I can't tell you any details. I just don't know. I had nothing to do with it.

HACKMAN: To what extent would members of the press contact you or your staff to find out about things going on in the Department? Was this frequent?

BATTLE: I tried to avoid this; I did not succeed. I saw comparatively few members of the press. I saw some. I, unfortunately, or fortunately, happened to have known a number of the people of the press of that era, still do. Numerous of them would come to me, particularly during the period of the Bowles-Rusk strain. Oddly enough, Chet several times asked me to see people, and I did; tried to put things in an honest perspective. People from the press would call about how the place was operating and want to come in to see me. We'd talk about—try to talk about various things.

I tried in those days not—and I didn't—to involve myself in substance. I would not discuss, for example, what was not my responsibility. Although I was active and participated in a great deal that went on of a substantive character, that was not my essential function, and I felt it unfair and unwise for me to talk to the press about those, and I wouldn't. I did, however, talk with people who were writing pieces on the Department of State or the organization of the Department, the evolution of the OCB, things of that sort.

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As the Bowles-Ball thing became more difficult I stopped seeing the press, even though each time I did it I know that both of them knew it. I wasn't making a secret of it. And I tried at that period to make, as I always do, what we had to work with work. I tried to be as constructive as I could in the handling of the press, but as the strain between them, I thought, put me increasingly in the middle between them, I didn't feel that I could discuss it with the press without either being disloyal or, certainly, unhelpful. And I refused to do it. So the latter period of that little era I was not seeing the press. I had earlier.

HACKMAN: How frequently would your operation get involved in dealing with press contacts on the part of other people in the Department, leaks in the Department or from other places around the government, trying to...

BATTLE: Well, from time to time I would get an irate call from Mac Bundy saying, "The President's furious about this, that, or the other story. Where did the leak come from?" I would turn security on it, and we would try to find out who did it. But this is always very difficult. When there are some copies of telegrams that go all over the government, it's just awfully hard to pin leaks down. We set up various controls and limited distribution on various telegrams and so on. I think it's less of a problem over this last year than it used to be. But the numbers of copies still is a problem. And people who don't know enough about some of these issues tend to talk more freely than

those who know more about them, which is one of the reasons I've always avoided the press except in areas of my own direct concern. I don't think it's a good practice. But leaks would occur, and some of them came out of the White House, incidentally. A few times I was pretty sure. I knew where things came from, and it wasn't necessarily the way the fingers were pointing. But there was too much of it, both here and there, in my opinion.

[-24-]

HACKMAN: Did the Department make a point of this to the Whites House, reverse this thing and turn it around?

BATTLE: I did, to Mac, several times. [Laughter] I said, "Mac, now look, fellow. You know this didn't come out of here, and you know where it came from," that sort of thing on numerous occasions. But that was the kind of personal—we had an excellent personal relationship, a fine working relationship. And on occasion he would know it. Well, there were instances where I did try to—you could never be absolutely positive—I always tried to see to what extent we could pin this down.

HACKMAN: You mentioned briefly the impact of Cuba on the operations Center. What impact did the Bay of Pigs have on the White House-State relationship that you can recall? Anything specific that happened?

BATTLE: Well, yes. I recall a couple of things that happened. I'm going to have to put a longer time period on the use of this.

HACKMAN: That's all right. It's not worth anything unless...

BATTLE: I remember a couple of days after Cuba we had a meeting. It was a Saturday morning, and the people in charge of ARA [Bureau of Inter-American Affairs] had prepared a document to go over to the President. Chet was then acting secretary. And without anybody's knowledge, Chet had told Abe Chayes [Abram Chayes] to prepare a paper. This has been in the press, this particular incident. And in the meeting Abe suddenly produced his paper, and it just had very little reality. It reflected the fact that Abe hadn't been involved in the problem and didn't know much about it. Chet grabbed onto that paper and dashed over to the President with it and was laughed out of court.

[-25-]

This had a very real effect on Chet's relations with the President, I thought. And it certainly had, for a time, an effect on the relationships over here because it was regarded—we all groaned when he went out of the room. It all happened so very rapidly that.... And it just was the wrong way to run this building. I told Chet this. I'm not saying anything on this tape that I didn't say to Chet at the time. But that was regarded in the White House—they didn't know the background of it—as the best that we were able to do. And what it really

reflected was Chet's frustration and his own lack of direction from an organizational point of view and his faith in Abe Chayes. Abe was deserving of faith, but in his field.

And you cannot spring—he'd written the paper the preceding night. It was supposed to be post-Bay of Pigs steps by the Department. Well, it just had no reality whatever to the way the thing was. So that brought forth all sorts of recriminations and actually was *the* thing that led to the specific sense that the Secretary said. He called me in and said, "What's this Operations Center"—this is right after that—"this Operations Center you've been talking about? We've just got to do something to make this place a little more vital and pull in inter-agency...."

As I remember it—I don't even recall the points of the Chayes thing—but my recollection is that it reflected an absence of any assessments with the other agencies, and it was purely, you know, a little think piece by a very bright mind, but an uninvolved one. It reflected, perhaps erroneously because of the way it was handled, but it reflected the nature of our problem in terms of pulling government together and getting the ideas in precise form to go before the President of the United States.

The Bay of Pigs also had a lot of other results. Most of those have been all-too-fully covered by the press, and I don't think it would serve any purpose for me to put down my own memories of that particular thing. Looking back on it, I wonder, somehow, how we got in the situation we did. But we did. But I think there's enough of this on the record from people who knew much more about it than I did, and I don't think I want to get into it. If you've got any specific question that I...

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HACKMAN: No, I was just thinking about...

BATTLE: I had nothing to do with it. I sat in none of the meetings leading up to it. I knew about it, but only in the most general terms, and I knew about it from Mac Bundy, not from Dean Rusk who was holding a series of very secret meetings. I knew what they were on. They were on Cuba. And one needed only to read the *New York Times* at that period. But Mac did talk with me about it.

HACKMAN: I had wondered, immediately after this Robert Kennedy and Maxwell Taylor [Maxwell D. Taylor] were making a study on more or less what went wrong. Is this the study that the paper went to, or was this something initiated by...

BATTLE: No, no. That was a separate thing. My recollection of the Chayes thing—this ought to be checked because this is my memory of what is now some years ago—is that these were immediate steps that we ought to take to correct the results of the Bay of Pigs thing, not what went wrong. But it was only that it reflected an absence of inter-agency coordination and an absence of really rounding up the best that we could do and the fact that it was so very inadequate and that it appeared to be a Department paper, you see, and it wasn't.

HACKMAN: Did Bundy's operation change, that you could see from over here, after the Bay of Pigs in the way it was set up to contact people?

BATTLE: I think it affected everybody and everything in a way that couldn't help but produce change. I think it made everybody.... I can't say that it had good results because the Bay of Pigs was a disaster and we all know it, but to the extent that it made us all a little less cock-sure and a little less certain—and it particularly made everybody a little bit more careful.... It made everyone have a much greater sense of the things that I already felt—that was that you don't send to the President recommendations that aren't thoroughly staffed out.

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The basic problem with the Bay of Pigs was that it wasn't staffed out. If it had gone through the mechanism, some of the inherent dangers in it that should and could be studied in the detail that was required by the senior people involved in it, then some of those kinks would have been ironed out or would have been exposed by the klieg lights of the mechanism. I think defects were exposed, and it led to much greater care. And I think to that extent that was one of the few good things that came out of the Bay of Pigs.

HACKMAN: Do you know if anybody over here who was involved ever made the suggestion that this should be staffed by people working in the Cuban area of State? Mann [Thomas Clifton Mann] was Assistant Secretary.

BATTLE: No, I can't say. As I said, I talked to particularly—what's that fellow's name who was later on ambassador, who was then his deputy?

HACKMAN: Wymberly Coerr?

BATTLE: Wymb Coerr. I went over and talked with Wymb, who was very crushed that he hadn't fought it harder. One of the problems was that Tom Mann was in the process of leaving. And as I remember it—there's a lot on the record, I'm sure; this might add a little bit to it. Tom was in the process of going to Mexico as Ambassador, had gone through all the first stages of it and then Wymb Coerr was Acting, and Wymb moved into it after it had been under discussion for a long time; that's my recollection. He didn't know what had gone before, and therefore he hesitated to—and particularly being as junior as he was in that, senior a group of people—he hesitated to raise objections that he assumed had been reviewed and studied. I think that was part of the problem.

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And it was held very closely over here. As I said, I didn't know the nature of the plan. I figured out what it was. I didn't know—the papers were kept.... There really weren't any papers to my knowledge. They were all handled by the little group that was working on it.

Mac did talk with me a couple of times about it, said, “We want to be sure we have plenty of time; this is a very important decision,” and so on. That was the extent of my involvement, and the sort of hindsight that everybody had afterward as to what might have been different.... But I wasn't really involved enough to have any judgment on it.

HACKMAN: Can you remember if Tom Mann's departure was timed specifically so that he wouldn't be identified with the Bay of Pigs?

BATTLE: I don't think it had anything to do with it. That was my impression.

HACKMAN: Was this his own decision to leave, or where did this come from? Do you remember?

BATTLE: Well, I don't remember. My recollection was that he was due for a change. He'd been an Assistant Secretary for Latin America for some time. He wanted to go to the field. I don't recall at what moment his ambassadorial appointment came up, and I don't recall why. My recollection is that this was moving independently; that one mechanism was appointing him Ambassador to Mexico and another was working on the Bay of Pigs, and I suppose the uncertainties at the beginning probably didn't force anyone to relate that move to the fact that Tom was about to leave.

HACKMAN: Moving on to something else, what was the relationship of your operation with Secretary Rusk's special assistants, Emory Swank [Emory Coblentz Swank]—is that it—in the early period and Chip Bohlen [Charles E. Bohlen] and then his—what's that guy?

[-29-]

BATTLE: Well, there was no particular problem there. I made it very clear in the beginning that as far as that floor was concerned that each of the special assistants to Ball, to Bowles, to Rusk, all reported to two people: they reported to me, and they reported to their boss; and that I had to know what was going on in each of those offices in detail. I sat in the small staff meeting every morning—none of these assistants came. I got most of them together afterwards and briefed them on what had to be done in an effort to keep us all together. There were a few frictions at times, but not anything very serious. Bohlen worked entirely in the realm of Soviet issues and things that didn't have much to do with what I was about. And with the sort of mechanism of the three top offices....

At that stage I also put Alex Johnson's [U. Alexis Johnson] office under my wing, too. So that the distribution of papers—we decided where they went—the things coming up that needed to be acted upon—whether they had to go to the Secretary, the Under Secretary or the Deputy Under Secretary. And with Alex's concurrence, and indeed his wish, his office.... Frank Meloy [Francis Edward Meloy], who was an old personal friend of mine, was his special assistant. Frank felt very strongly that it was wise, and so, in effect, Frank reported to me as well as to Alex in a funny kind of way. I wrote all the efficiency reports on

those fellows, and then the Secretary or the under secretaries put a reviewing statement on it. So that this wasn't—this was all right, it was perfectly all right.

HACKMAN: When you speak of the morning staff meetings, who would attend these?

BATTLE: Well, we had, of course, the larger meeting, the 9:15 meeting, which was all the assistant secretaries. That was a large session; thirty, thirty-five people.

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HACKMAN: This is every morning you had that?

BATTLE: Three mornings a week, I think, originally: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. But we also had a small session at 9:05, and don't ask me why it was 9:05, but it was. We met for ten minutes preceding that larger meeting, the Secretary, the two under secretaries, the two deputies and I. I think that was all. Oh, and the head of AID [Agency for International Development] came. They were not permitted to send alternates. Nearly always somebody had some other commitment or was out of town or something. So there were about five of us, probably, usually. It worked part of the time; it didn't work all the time.

It was a kind of a sorting out session between the top individuals. One of the problems that I frequently had was that the two under secretaries, for example, would each grab onto the same problem. I would get copies of their daily schedules, and I would see that two of them were having meetings on the Congo or something. I would just raise the question in there, "Now, who is supposed to be doing this?" And it reached the stage, for a time, where they sort of looked to me. The Secretary would speak, and he would say, "Does anybody have anything?" If no one did, they would turn to me and say, "What's pending?"

I had a better sense of some of their problems between each other, in a flow of organizational structure, than they did themselves. It was simply because of where I sat, and nothing more. I picked up the uncertainties down below as to authority on a specific issue on the seventh floor, you see. The assistant secretaries would call me, and they would say, "Well, so and so are both working on this," or "Who is supposed to be doing this?" I would simply act as a kind of device for seeing that it was, to the extent possible, sorted out. It didn't always work, but that was the theory of it.

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HACKMAN: A lot of people have commented that Under Secretary Ball was very aggressive in moving into new fields. Does that sound right, or...

BATTLE: Are you speaking of when he was under Secretary for Economic Affairs?

HACKMAN: Well, starting in that period and then...

BATTLE: When he had the second job, which was an economic one, he stuck very much to his own knitting at that particular time. As the Under Secretary, George—yes, he's a very active, aggressive, bright, intelligent fellow, and he liked to deal with the key thing before us. And yes, he did, to the extent that that's true. But the period when he and McGhee were there—certainly George McGhee is—no shrinking violet either; and the problem was to keep both of them from grabbing the same hot crisis, you see.

HACKMAN: This was more so than between Ball and Bowles in the early period?

BATTLE: Well, it just didn't come about the same way because in the early period Ball worked almost entirely on economic matters. He was deeply interested in the Common Market and various problems of that sort. He worked essentially with economic matters, and he spent his full time in the first months on that. And there was very, very little conflict between him and Bowles. They just didn't have much to do with each other in the first stages.

When that second under secretaryship was changed to political affairs, the sort of built-in conflict became more evident. And it was true that while I wasn't on the seventh floor during Averell Harriman's [William Averell Harriman] tenure as the second under secretary, there were problems during all that period with Ball, McGhee, and Harriman taking the same crisis. And this was a problem.

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Also, it grows out, in part, of the fact that the schedules of these people were such that they had to pinch hit for each other. An international meeting would take one away for two weeks, and somebody else had to pick up the problem. Then on the first fellow's return there was a problem. So it took a continuing sort of sorting out operation. It took a kind of constant alert to the dangers.

Now, I can't speak for the later period from knowledge of that floor because I wasn't there during the Harriman period. I can for the first year or so of the McGhee period.

HACKMAN: What was Walter Cutler [Walter Leon Cutler] involved in as Rusk's staff assistant?

BATTLE: Well, Rusk had two staff assistants, and one was Swank and the second was Walt Cutler; processing of papers, handling of telegrams, underlining key points in telegrams, worrying about appointments, seeing that they had the briefings that were out in time for appointments for Rusk that were being held, and all that sort of thing.

HACKMAN: So he had more of the appointment responsibility than your operation did, as far as...

BATTLE: We did almost no—oh, requests would come up from down below for the Secretary to see someone and that would go on into the Secretary's all of that sort of thing was done pretty much by office, but the office. And the combination of Phyllis Bernau [Phyllis D. Bernau] and Coby Swank and Walt Cutler scheduled the Secretary's day and let us know what was going on in these and asked for briefings if it was necessary. But I had two deputies; one serving the Under Secretary's office and one serving the Secretary's office; one handled all things coming up that were to go into the Secretary, one to the Under Secretary. And the one who handled the Secretary also pinch-hitted for me on the White House.

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HACKMAN: This was Brubeck [William H. Brubeck]?

BATTLE: Originally it was Mel Manfull [Melvin L. Manfull]. For a variety of reasons, Bill did the Under Secretary and the Deputy Under Secretary—or the two under secretaries, and the Deputy Under Secretary, and Mel Manfull did the Secretary and the White House. This was simply as the flow of paper was concerned. This is a heavy volume, you see. It's pretty horrendous. I did as little paper processing as possible, personally, although the office processed a great amount. The two of them would show me anything that was going to either place if it was of any particular significance, but I didn't see all the routine stuff that they checked for coordination, form, substance, et cetera.

HACKMAN: In this early period there was a task force on Latin American affairs operating under Adolf Berle [Adolf A. Berle, Jr.]—remember that? Apparently there were a lot of problems in getting this relationship ironed out. Can you remember any of that?

BATTLE: Well, I remember that it was a problem. I remember that it went on. There had been a number of task forces created before the change of administration actually took place, and this was one of them. And it kind of hung on for a while thereafter and was separate but part of various schemes. This is what I mean by the fact that you can't turn over the responsibility for an operation—you can do a think piece on the side. But the trouble with the Berle task force, it just didn't disappear. It went on and on and on, and it became a kind of operating thing, you see. And as to exactly what part it played in the Bay of Pigs, or what part Adolf Berle played, I don't know. I've heard various bits of gossip about it, but I can't really tell you that I....

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HACKMAN: Can you remember any consideration ever being given to his proposal, I believe, in that period, of having an Under Secretary of American Republics?

BATTLE: I remember that the idea was floated around. There's always a tendency to want to create an assistant secretary or a new under secretary for any special—there have been proposals made for under secretary of telecommunications, fish, everything you can think of. And everyone with a special area of interest—including the Congress—wants to create an under secretary for whatever special interest that they had.

If you created an Under Secretary for Latin American Affairs, in due course you would have an under secretary for all the regions. It may take a few years, but bit by bit, that would be what would happen. I tend to think this is wrong. If you want any kind of permanent organizational structure, it is more or less what we have. There are many things wrong with the current framework, but I won't go into that in this context. But I don't think it's rank; I think it's a lot more complicated than that.

HACKMAN: Can you remember any problems coming up in the early period with new people who came into State, new Kennedy appointees, particularly Mennen Williams [G. Mennen Williams] and Abe Chayes, procedural problems which would have...

BATTLE: Yes, there were some, but it varied pretty much by the individual, you know. I've seen a lot of people—it isn't just Kennedy appointments, it's people from the outside who come into this building—I've seen a great many of them in my years around here and about a third of them are absolute disasters, a third of them are absolutely great, and the other third are fair to middling. It's about, I suppose, maybe the same average as we have on our career people; I don't know. But I think, perhaps, a little higher percentage just don't fit into the crazy place than perhaps is true of those who come from within.

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Some of them were really quite disgruntled. There were too many new people all at one time. Frequently, the jobs were not too clearly thought out. A great many of them worked out beautifully over a period of time, and at the same time a lot of the career people had trouble gearing themselves to the pace of that period—so did a lot who came from the outside have trouble gearing themselves to the responsibility of the inside. And it's a different kind of thing. I mean, to sit on the outside and look at something without the responsibility of carrying it out is one thing, but to be in the operating line of the place is quite different. And this kind of problem, I think, did arise.

HACKMAN: Did you have any contacts with Robert Kennedy during this period when you were Executive Secretary that you can recall?

BATTLE: I had a few, but not many. My real contact with him came—and we ought to move on fairly soon. I've got to go up to Mr. Katzenbach [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach] at 3:30, so.... I don't want to cut you short. We can get back

together again if you prefer.

HACKMAN: I would prefer trying to finish the Executive Secretary stuff this time and come back and do the other.

BATTLE: That will be fine.

HACKMAN : Okay. A lot of people have talked about this memo, I believe it was in May of 1961, which went out from the President to the missions. I believe it was a Bowles memo on the country team idea. Can you recall how this came about or how this worked out?

[-36-]

BATTLE: Well, I recall helping draft part of it. I don't really remember what started it or at least what started that specific paper. It was part of the general lists that President Kennedy had, and those around him had, that I endorsed strongly a few minutes ago, that there had to be a leader and it had to be the central foreign policy agency and that in the field that meant the ambassador. It was reinforced, I think, by the sense of concern that the Bay of Pigs brought about about the operations of CIA. It was a feeling that had been building up for many months before that, several years before that, that several of the agencies moved abroad somewhat independently of the central mechanism. The document was prepared—it took weeks to get it agreed to—and finally it went out in May of '61. It did assign, and there were those—I would be one of them—who said it wasn't quite as strong in assigning to the ambassador the control that I think he has to have. But it was a major step forward, and it is still pointed to as the basic policy on that particular issue.

HACKMAN: There was no particular embassy or geographical area that this was aimed...

BATTLE: I don't recall that it was.

HACKMAN: I've heard several ambassadors say, "Well, it wasn't my area; it was somebody else's area."

BATTLE: There may have been specific problems that brought the need to the front. But it was not, to the best of my knowledge, aimed at any one area. It was aimed at all areas.

[-37-]

HACKMAN: I had wondered, particularly, if you can remember anything about Laos in that early period. Supposedly, there were so many problems with the CIA and the military assistance group out there in that...

BATTLE: Yes. I recall that there were a lot of those problems. I recall that being cited as one of the examples of a country situation where we needed it. But I don't recall that it was aimed—I think it was the general concern and the general desire reflected in the evolution of OCB, all of these, that it was a kind of trend of thought at the time, if you see what I mean. Bill Brubeck worked very closely on this. Bill did a very good job on that and many other things. But my recollection is that it was a kind of general attitude that the proponents of this thing would seize upon any individual isolated case as supporting the need for it, rather than going the other way around.

HACKMAN: I've also read in several places about a memo, which supposedly came over to State from the White House in August of '61, requesting that the Secretary of State—and I've got quotes around this—“define the present assignments and responsibility within the Department of State.” And I think it's Hilsman [Roger Hilsman] in his book who says that this was never responded to because no one over here would...

BATTLE: August of '61?

HACKMAN: Yes. I've never seen any one other than Hilsman talk about it. I don't know if you recall anything about that.

BATTLE: Yes, I do remember that there was such a memorandum. Let me think for a moment, as I get a drink of water.

HACKMAN: Surely.

[-38-]

BATTLE: I remember it, but I don't remember it very vividly. My recollection—and there must be an easier way to get an accurate report of this than relying on my mind—my recollection is that, at the time, I thought it was evidence of another presidential irritation at the Department and that I tended to relate it in part to the problem, the debate that went on about Bowles at that point. You know, this is recollection, and it may or may not be accurate.

There were many periods in which President Kennedy and those around him felt that the Department—and sometimes they were justified in this view, sometimes they weren't—needed a clearer definition. At the same time they contributed to the confusion over here. The fact that there was confusion they found irritating and maddening—and it was. There was enough without adding any more to it. I certainly attest to that.

But there were several times when similar kinds of things would—word would come to me from Mac that the President felt this or that or was concerned about the absence of leadership on the seventh floor—either Bowles or Rusk or somebody. I don't recall that I found this memorandum startlingly important. I haven't read Roger Hilsman on this

subject—or for that matter, on anything else—so I just don't.... If I read that I might remember more about it. But this is about all I remember: I recall there being such a thing.

HACKMAN: Can you remember anything about the way people reacted to Hilsman in this period while he was Intelligence man over here?

BATTLE: Well, you have to separate the Hilsman of Intelligence and the Hilsman of the Far East. My own reaction to him in the I and R

[-39-]

[Intelligence and Research] days was pretty good. He was aggressive, *very* aggressive, very active, very bright, very determined to get control of a lot of things that were, he thought, wrong, and most of them were. I found that he was doing an admirable job from where I sat and what I saw. Now, I don't know enough about Viet-Nam and I wouldn't want, at that period, to analyze this on a substantive thing after he moved into EA [Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs] and then FE [Far Eastern Affairs]. The place by that stage was riddled with discord on Viet-Nam, and there began to be all sorts of arguments on the issues of Viet-Nam. And then, I think, there were a lot of unpleasantnesses that went all around the place. But I can't truly say that I felt that in the period of I and R that Roger did a bad job; in fact, I would say a good job, from where I sat.

HACKMAN: I wanted to get back to the Bowles thing for just a minute. There were a lot of rumors I believe in July of '61 that he was going out then. Can you remember something about it and how it was held up, or what happened at that point?

BATTLE: Well, I can remember it, not in terribly specific terms, but I can remember it. There was a decision made at that time that he was going, and a groundswell of congressional and other opposition developed to it. There were frantic telephone calls all around. It made a headline or two in the press. It got very widely circulated at that stage.

HACKMAN: Can you remember the congressional people at all?

BATTLE: Yes, a few of them raised questions about it. I don't recall that I had any talk with them, but they were—there was a sort of liberal Democratic group, particularly, that got very exercised. By the following November or December—which was it, when the final change was made?

HACKMAN: In November.

[-40-]

BATTLE: The latter part of November. By the time that occurred it was rather

interesting to me that it stirred up almost no opposition when it finally occurred; very little was said. The knowledge that there was a problem, that there was not complete unity between the two top people, that Chet....

Chet has many fine qualities, but he tends to float on cloud nine in one or the other direction and not to.... He just isn't specific. He doesn't direct himself to.... Again, as I said earlier, he has a role to play, but not in the operating chain of command and not as the second in command of a place this size. He could never see that foreign policy is frequently not made; it evolves by the telephone ringing or an ambassador coming to see you or the necessity to make a press statement, or the requirement to answer a letter; that within a certain framework policy evolves and that those things have to go on and that there's a shift, almost imperceptible, growing out of these day-to-day activities at senior levels; that the fact that you've got Ambassador X waiting outside requires you to think through what answers you're going to give him, and then policy....

He always felt that policy was something totally removed from operations. And this general attitude led him into a direction—Chet would have been a great planning staff head, you see. He's creative, he's interesting, he's stimulating, but he is somewhat theoretical, which is all right for a planning job. But the chain of command, the responsibilities of operations, are not for him. Given the nature of the relationship between him and Rusk and the attitudes that Dean has on many things, the fact that this was an impossible combination had, between the period of July and the following November, become so evident to so many people that nobody said or did much to avoid the change when it came in November.

HACKMAN: As this problem developed, was there any way that you could route work to Alexis Johnson or...

BATTLE: Well, what happened during that period—this is exactly what happened. Alex, in effect—I perhaps, shouldn't say this, but in the

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earlier period, the combination of Alex and myself, in effect, substituted for a Jones-Bowles situation. But Alex and I worked together hand and glove during that period, and we attempted to compensate for the tendencies of our two colleagues. I say that, and it sounds very critical, but it is an accurate statement and I'm sure you could get it substantiated and verified by many people, those who would recall. We better turn it off, I think. [Interruption]

HACKMAN: I've forgotten exactly what we're talking about. I think we had finished something.... There were, again, a lot of rumors in the early period about particular people at the White House getting involved in State Department things, Schlesinger and Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin], particularly. Can you remember any?

BATTLE: Yes. There was quite a little of this. Arthur got involved a good deal. Arthur usually got involved in things that were of particular—reflected

Arthur's interest and Arthur's bent and had it in his own mind. He was involved, for example, in the Bay of Pigs and a few things of that sort; usually he was not in the mainstream of issues, however. He tended to get involved in cultural things and things somewhat on the periphery except for occasional exceptions.

Dick Goodwin tended to be pretty much all over the lot. He spent most of his time on Latin America and for a time was one of the deputies to Ed Martin [Edward McCammon Martin] over here...

HACKMAN: Right, right. He came over.

BATTLE: ...and then later was head of this middle level manpower project at the Peace Corps. Then he went on and was about to get involved in the arts, himself, at the time of the death of President Kennedy.

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There were a lot—and particularly in the very beginning—there were a great many people over there who just interested themselves in various problems and probably reflected President Kennedy's tendency to ask individuals whose opinion he wanted (and certainly that's his prerogative) what he thought about X, Y, or Z. The result is that there was a great deal of...

HACKMAN: We're running out.

[END OF INTERVIEW #1]

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