

Stephen Ailes Oral History Interview - JFK #3, 10/16/1968
Administrative Information

Creator: Stephen Ailes
Interviewer: Larry J. Hackman
Date of Interview: October 16, 1968
Place of Interview: Washington, D.C.
Length: 20 pp.

Biographical Note

Ailes, under secretary of the Army under President John F. Kennedy, talks about the Reserves and the National Guard, and discusses the reorganization of those forces.

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Suggested Citation

Stephen Ailes, recorded interview by Larry J. Hackman, October 16, 1968, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

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STEPHEN AILES
JFK #3

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Third Oral History Interview

with

STEPHEN AILES

October 16, 1968
Washington, D.C.

By Larry J. Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: I thought maybe we could start off by talking about Reserve and National Guard affairs, which is something you had direct responsibility for.

AILES: Right.

HACKMAN: What can you remember about the initial discussions on this when you came into the area in '61? Was this one of McNamara's [Robert S. McNamara] studies, or whatever they called it, how many trombones or whatever the question?

AILES: I know. You're talking about the hundred projects or whatever they were.

HACKMAN: That's right. Or do you recall it coming up that early?

AILES: I really can't recall when the whole problem of reorganizing the reserve and guard came up. I know that President Eisenhower had told McNamara that the reserves were not worth the powder and shot it would take to blow them up [Laughter], whatever that means, and that Bob started out with the strong feeling that the whole operation was worthless.

The administration prior to the Kennedy administration had an alignment within the services under which there was an assistant secretary whose job was called

“Manpower and Reserve Forces” and that job terminated when the Kennedy administration came in, or really immediately before it, because we were organized on a different basis. It might have been just by executive fiat, but I think the statute said there could be three assistant secretaries. And probably one of the first acts of the new administration was to terminate

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that Manpower and Reserve Forces job and create a job, or make the director of research and development in each of the services an assistant secretary. That was done, and the responsibilities for manpower and reserve forces were assigned to the order secretary. So I received this responsibility immediately, and I was heavily engaged in this activity all the time I was in the Pentagon, although my recollections as to initial bath in this thing are really vague.

I suppose the first thing I learned about them was in the summer of '61, when we realized that we had to call up some forces in connection with the developing crisis over Berlin. I had gone to the Far East, and I got back in July of '61, and we were really heading toward some sort of a partial mobilization. We ended up by calling about 110,000 reserve and guard troops into active duty. I did a lot of work on the plans for transporting those troops to Germany, and this led me into a study of the relative readiness of these forces.

We learned quite a bit about the responsiveness of the guard and the reserve during that period, and the individuals, as a general proposition, performed extraordinarily well, but I think the lessons learned in the call up prompted us to want to do something about reorganizing the forces and getting them in a more effective condition. I remember that we used to say that the program cost over a billion dollars a year and wonder whether or not we were buying a billion dollars worth of readiness that way.

As you got into the matter, it soon became apparent that the organization of the Army Reserve and Guard contemplated a huge, massive deployment to Europe, as if in World War II, after a buildup that took place over a period of time; the emphasis was on the size of the force that could be produced by the reserve and not by quick readiness at all. As an example, I suppose there must have been forty-five divisions in the guard and the reserve. The length of time it takes to get a division ready for combat if made out of whole cloth is something like a year and, if produced out of the Reserve, was something like eight or nine months. We had literally no plans to equip such a force, not the slightest. And we had no plans to use such a force, as the plans began to evolve.

So here we were with an organization which was completely out of step with the war plans and completely out of step with the procurement plans. And yet, I was appalled to find that there was a great deal of rigidity in this structure for purely political reasons and that senators and congressmen who would have been appalled at trying to tell you how many divisions there should be in the army or what the configuration of those divisions should be were completely positive in their judgments about how many divisions there ought to be in the reserve and what kind of divisions they ought to be and

really felt that it was a terrible encroachment on congressional prerogatives for anybody in the Pentagon even to be thinking about these things.

There had been a history of efforts to modernize that structure in the past that just ran into tremendous congressional opposition, the point being

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that slots in reserve and guard units constitute federal jobs in states back home. If you talk about changing the number of federal jobs back home, you're in trouble with congressmen and senators. Furthermore, we had a National Guard hierarchy which considered itself independent of the Pentagon and was confident in its political strength. And lastly, our internal organization of the Pentagon meant that the National Guard was completely autonomous. The reason was that the statute said that the chief of the National Guard bureau reported to--or was the advisor for the chief of staff of the army on National Guard affairs. This meant, in effect, that he was under no control whatsoever because, obviously, the chief of staff had a lot of other responsibilities.

HACKMAN: Do you want me to cut this off?

AILES: No, that's all right. Well, I say I'd have to go back and reconstruct a chronology, but I can tell you what we ended up by accomplishing and then what we tried to do which we got knocked off on. We worked out a reorganization of the guard and reserve. You see, each year Congress was actually putting a floor under the strength--four hundred thousand in the guard and three hundred thousand in the reserve--without any regard to what the troop structure should be or what was needed. But we worked out a re-organization and abolished a whole lot of divisions from both the guard and the reserve, and we really got the support of the Guard in this operation. And it was because of the marvelous work that was done by General Don McGowan [Donald W. McGowan], who was chief of the national guard bureau, who really supported us in our effort to straighten this out, and by Jim Cantwell [James F. Cantwell], who is still the head of the National Guard. Those men really supported a constructive program to upgrade units, to get rid of divisions and substitute other kinds of units, combat and otherwise, in smaller categories that gave you a more flexible force that fitted in with the war plans and fitted in with the equipment plans. And we ended up with a somewhat smaller force--I can't now give you the numbers, but I would say it was something like two hundred and....

HACKMAN: I've seen them; I've forgotten them.

AILES: I was going to say.... We started out four hundred thousand and three hundred thousand. My recollection of the National Guard figure, two hundred and sixty thousand now, and about two forty in the reserves, but I could be just wrong about that now. But we did reduce the number; we did abolish a lot of units; we did reconfigure a whole lot of units and get rid of all these division

structures; we greatly increased the readiness of it; and, by God, McNamara supported us by including a buy for the reserves and guard in the army equipment program.

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So that we had as a goal equipping a guard and reserve force so that it really could be utilized within the time frame that the plans called for. This was a donnybrook on the Hill, but one on which we ultimately prevailed. We had to testify a great many times. I had to testify a great many times before the House and the Senate with respect to it.

I got in trouble because Joe Peck [Merton J. Peck], who is now on the Council of Economic Advisers, was working over there, and Joe had worked out the basic plan to reorganize the guard and the reserve--that is, a revised troop structure. When I went up to testify before the House Armed Services Committee, I decided that what I better do was say that myself before anybody wormed it out of me. And so at the conclusion of my prepared statement, I said there were a couple of comments I wanted to make. One was that we'd been greatly assisted in revising this troop structure by the efforts of one Joe Peck who is up in Hitch's [Charles J. Hitch] office, assistant secretary of defense (Comptroller), I said I was interested in whether the plan was good and not who made it. "In fact," I said, "I don't care if the plan was found in a bottle in the Potomac River; if it's good, we ought to put it into effect." And General Decker [George H. Decker], who was sitting next to me, who was then the chief of staff, said "Steve, I can see tomorrow's headlines, 'Army Reserve reorganization plan found in bottle in Potomac River.'" And that's just about what the paper had in it. [Laughter] But I got a lot of kidding about that, as you can imagine.

But the thing was, really, that it made all kinds of sense, and it did get worked out, and it did get into effect. We reorganized the situation within the Pentagon by creating a job called "Chief of Reserve Components"--CORC, it's called--and putting a lieutenant general in it, Sterling Wright [W. H. S. Wright] was the first one (he had been the commander of the Second Armor Division). He's a first-rate officer. And General McGowan acceded to this revised line of authority--it really wasn't a line of authority either because we still had that statute. But the chief of staff made it perfectly plain that whatever he did with respect to the National Guard, he was going to do on the advice of the chief of reserve components.

Furthermore, that job was made a lieutenant general's job, and that makes a difference in any military organization. The chief of reserve components functioned very effectively. And we've had some first-rate people in there since. There was a fellow named Tom Kenan [Thomas A. Kenan], Brigadier General Tom Kenan, who came in at the beginning and was in that job over three years as the deputy, and he did an incredible amount of good in working this thing out. The job is today held by Freddie Weyand [Fred C. Weyand] who is just back from Vietnam as an area commander over there and one of the really strong men in the army, which is a good example of how important the army considers the whole thing.

We did then later, in about '64, reach the conclusion that the forces should be revised even further: indeed, that the whole strike force, the whole force should be put in the National Guard, and that we should not have

a guard and a reserve separately. We made a terrible effort to get that put into effect, without success. Unfortunately, it got announced by Bob McNamara as a McNamara proposal, although I remember him calling me and saying I should come to the press conference because if anybody asked him who was responsible for it, McNamara said he was going to point at me and say, "There's the S.O.B. right there." [Laughter] Which isn't quite what happened. But, nevertheless, it had a McNamara flavor to it, whereas the army was wholeheartedly in support of it. And it also got announced at a press conference where congressional travel was under attack and where the abolition of the reserve units from all the services on the Hill was announced on the theory that no more traffic in commissions was going to take place. And these three things together created a congressional opposition that was permanent, and we really could never go further.

However, since I left, there had been a continuing fight to tear down this force and increase its readiness and make it better and more effective, and I really believe that a great deal has been accomplished. It prompts this observation that there is a limit to congressional power in this area because the executive branch can just continue to struggle for what it needs, and after all, it's the one that really is in the best position to analyze military needs, and over time, maybe over a long time, indeed, but over time you can get the job done. But it's painfully slow and difficult.

HACKMAN: Okay. Let me go back and run through again then with some questions. At the time of the call-up for the Berlin crisis, was the army at all opposed to this call-up in the way that it took place, any conflict between army and McNamara and his people on the way the call-up was done? I believe the navy wasn't too anxious to get involved in the call-up at that time. Is there anything on the army's side?

AILES: Not at all that I recall. I remember we rushed to put the unit list together. I remember we were changing it on the way to McNamara's office. We always did have this problem, which really sort of developed after that call-up: Query, how often you can utilize Reserves in a cold war situation? There are those, of course, who argue that you can't call them at all unless you're actually at war because they were organized and men joined these services on the theory that they would be called up in time of war. Query, whether a cold war is a war.

HACKMAN: We found out a couple weeks ago. [Laughter]

AILES: Secondly, you've got this problem: We would not have sent those National Guard divisions to Germany; we would have sent regular army divisions to Germany and then put the National Guard divisions in the slots that were vacated and the posts that were vacated to go

into training. But for some reason or other, the fellow who is ripped out of his job on the theory that he is prepared to defend his country gets sick of sitting at Port Lewis, Washington. And there are those who will try to make him sicker.

There was a guy named Warren Rogers, who was at that time writing to the *Herald Tribune*, who would go out and camp, I mean go and collect horror stories and gripes from people--principally the 32nd division from Wisconsin, the Red Arrow division which got a lot of bad publicity and was called the "crybaby division" and a lot of things like that because of news stories that did get published about.... I remember Congressman O'Konski [Alvin E. O'Konski], who actually sent a message out there saying, "You should be home, but you're only there because there are men in Washington trying to play God. If you'll raise enough hell, you'll be called home." I actually inquired to find out whether or not this was not legally subversive.

The thing is nobody would think of doing this with regular army troops, but the guard and the reserve thing, the politicians just have a different view of it entirely. But we had some problems there. I myself felt that you would destroy the effectiveness, you would destroy the possibility of having a reserve with a small r as contemplated by this whole plan if men were called up very often. Let's put it this way, your wife wouldn't let you stay in a reserve unit if you were going to miss two out of every five years from your job or something like that. And this did present a problem, I mean there were a lot of discussions on that subject.

I remember Ros Gilpatric [Roswell L. Gilpatric] was quoted as saying, "Hell, that's what these guys are for." But the problem never was quite that simple. The leaders of the guard and the reserve didn't want any limitations placed on when these people could be called because they had long justified the whole program on the theory that they were ready. But a lot of us felt that, realistically, you could destroy the program not by working people too hard or anything like that but by being too ready to call people away from their jobs when the situation was short of an actual combat situation.

HACKMAN: When had the study by Hitch's man--Joe Peck was it?--gotten started? Had this been before Berlin, or did this come out of the Berlin situation, do you remember, in the reserve performance there?

AILES: I would say I'm sure this was after the Berlin call-up and, undoubtedly based on some of the data that was produced by the call-up. [Interruption].

HACKMAN: What was your attitude toward this Peck study? Was this....

AILES: Oh, it was great. I am immensely fond of Joe Peck; he is a bright guy, but a thoroughly reasonable one and very understanding

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and quick to appreciate some of the nuances that the computer is not supposed to pick up. And Joe is just a damn good man. Actually, Joe and I went to Europe together studying the problem of manpower in Europe. In other words, did we

really need all of the force that we've got in Europe and what could be done, in connection with the gold flow and other problems on cutting back on that force? And Joe is absolutely superb.

HACKMAN: This during the Kennedy administration?

AILES: Yes, oh sure. This was probably in something like early '62, and I found Joe absolutely delightful to work with. And when he worked with us on the reserve thing and came up with some proposals, you could sit down with Joe and say, "But that one doesn't make any sense." And he'd say, "Why not?" You'd point it out to him, and he says, "It doesn't make any sense," And out it'd come. And yet he'd have some ingenious ways of handling other problems. He brought a fine mind and certain techniques of analysis to a terribly sticky problem.

HACKMAN: And understood the political aspects of the problem?

AILES: That's right. But what he was trying to do was some up with.... We decided early that the only way you met that political problem was head-on. I mean, you couldn't compromise; you'd better come up with a solution that you think really makes sense because if you can defend it effectively, you're a hell of a lot better off than if it's a botched up compromise that itself won't work. When we could say, "Here is a superior force that does a much better job in terms of the national defense and costs a great deal less money," it's real hard to argue with that, you know. But Joe's help was just tremendous in this thing. But some of the opponents of the plan, of course, wanted to say that this wasn't the product of an analysis of military needs, this was dreamed up by some longhair in the Pentagon. So we were at pains to point out that Joe has his hair cut about a quarter of an inch long, you know. [Laughter]

HACKMAN: How did General Decker and his people react to this? Did they....

AILES: Very well, very well. In fact, the idea that I proposed later of putting the whole thing in the National Guard really was one that General Hamlett [Barksdale Hamlett] had proposed way back in that early period, Hamlett being the vice chief of staff at the time. No, the thing made so much sense, just from every point of view, that the only way you could oppose it was on the grounds like the wrong guy prepared the plan or turbulence would be created by a reorganization and so on and so on and so on.

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HACKMAN: Did publicity, critical publicity coming out at the time during the Berlin crisis, put great pressure on you people to come out with this plan that quickly, or was it a regular....

AILES: No, oh no. That was addressed to another issue. That was addressed to the

issue of.... It was, in the first place, a political argument, politically motivated, a lot of it, and people were simply trying to demonstrate that the administration had done a terrible thing to the young men called up. I happen to think militarily the call-up was extremely useful, and I tried to say that. I went to a lot of the functions when units were ready to go home, and I tried to make the point that we had demonstrated an ability to call civilians into uniform, and that within a relatively short period of time, they really became effective units; that this demonstrated that the army had a tremendous capacity for expansion; and, furthermore, that the very call-up of them itself demonstrated that we were prepared to take measures to cope with the situation that faced us over Berlin; and that all of these aspects of the thing were effective.

But, as I say, the criticism, it's just like a lot of the stuff that you hear today and a lot of the stuff that's said on the college campus: The fellow who faces the draft is a sitting duck, unless he's pretty highly motivated, for the fellow who comes along and says that the war that you're supposed to fight is immoral. Therefore, you should oppose the draft. You're talking to a guy who's suffering a terrible interference with his personal liberty. And if you can convince him that that's wrong for some reason or other, he feels better about the fact that he resents it. [Laughter] That's what it was all about.

HACKMAN: When that legislation for the reorganization went up in, I believe, April or May of '62, it was considered then by the committee, and I believe Congressman Hebert [F. Edward Hebert] at one point made a statement that this proposal was an insult to the House committee and that it had to be redone in some way. And then in December it was finally approved after, apparently, he said something had been done about the parts he objected to. Can you remember working this out at all and what had to be done?

AILES: I have literally no recollection about it. The way we.... I remember that, in the first place, we really didn't need any legislation to do this.

HACKMAN: Was it the reorganization plan that had to be submitted?

AILES: No. I mean all of this, you see.... After all, this is just troop structure. We really needed no legislation any more than

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you would if you decided to create another airborne division or something in the regular army. You did have some problems about a floor under the strength of those units, and there had been a rider regularly put into the appropriations legislation to that effect, so that would kill it, because you just have so many more people than you know what to do with. But it doesn't prevent you from changing units in this sort of thing. But we did hit upon some legislative device--we being Congressman Hebert and ourselves. And I remember there was some legislative byplay and there was some sort of a compromise reached, but I really can't remember the details of that at all.

HACKMAN: Can you remember any other people on the Hill who were particularly difficult?

AILES: Of course, I remember Eddie Hebert, not as a guy who was particularly difficult but as a guy that I worked with a great deal and of whom I am very fond. Eddie is just a tremendously nice guy. He's an alley fighter on this kind of thing and certainly was later on when he and Mendel Rivers [L. Mendel Rivers] really made up their mind they were going to make it as difficult as possible for McNamara. But all those members of the House committee were active in that.

The guy who was most helpful to us was Lucien Nedzi from Michigan. He is a fellow who is very helpful always. There were some who were much more understanding than others; there were some doctrinaire opponents. Oh, Bill Bray [William G. Bray], who had commanded the tank battalion in World War II, was a little hard to persuade on some of these things. For the most part, certainly on the first go-around, they proved to be very understanding and really to go along with what we had. The second one I honestly think would have gone had we not gotten caught up in what was a real donnybrook on the question of congressional prerogatives. And Mendel Rivers was the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee then instead of Carl Vinson, and that made a tremendous difference. The staff had changed and....

You know, I was up there so much I remember going up in March of '65 to testify. My birthday happens to be the 25th of March, and that was the day that I went up to begin about six days of testimony. And just when they called the hearing to order, Eddie Hebert rapped for order and then gave a signal, and two waiters came walking in with a birthday cake for me. [Laughter]

HACKMAN: Can you remember anything about a study by General Van Fleet [James A. Van Fleet] around the time of the Berlin, after the Berlin call-up of the reserves? I believe the president requested he make some kind of study of the reserve situation.

AILES: Oh, I just have a vague recollection that Van Fleet was charging around in this situation somewhere.

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HACKMAN: That's what I've heard. Did you have the feeling that McNamara didn't understand the political problems in this area and was always wanting to go faster than could be done realistically?

AILES: It never is appropriate to say that McNamara didn't understand something; he just didn't give a damn about them, you know. He felt very damn strongly that the situation was wrong, that it should be corrected. And I must say that I thought the solutions that McNamara approved were always 100 percent right. We were never in a position.... I spent 90 percent of my time up on the Hill saying, "What I'm up here advocating is not something dictated by Secretary McNamara; it's

something we in the army think is right. And we have his 100 percent approval because it's obviously such a big improvement." But the opponents of it would always talk about "the McNamara plan." But where we came out on all these things.... I never advocated for a day anything up there that had been forced down my throat by McNamara. What we were up there for I thought was 100 percent right. I think it was a mistake for him to announce that last one. I think it would've been better if we'd announced it, in terms of the political opposition. It'd have been harder for the politicians to gun at the army, as such. And it was a mistake to couple it with congressional travel and the abolition of the units on the Hill. But this was part of Bob's grand strategy as far as Congress was concerned, I suppose.

HACKMAN: Did Secretary Stahr react basically the same way you did toward this, or was this something that upset him?

AILES: Well, you see, I'm just trying to think. Elvis left there on about the first of July, '62, and I'm just not sure how much activity we really had under way on the reserve reorganization by then. Elvis had a tendency to want to hold back a little bit on this because, as a junior assistant to Frank Pace, he'd worked in this direct area ten years before and was more closely associated for that reason with some of the older men in the guard and in the reserve who are most bitterly resentful of change. But he was under some influences and pressures that really were not being leveled on some of the rest of us.

HACKMAN: You talked about getting the support of....

AILES: I don't mean to say from that that Elvis was against reorganization at all because I don't remember that as a fact at all. I just remember that he tended to be a little cautious on how he moved sometimes.

HACKMAN: You talked about getting the support of those two men, I've forgotten their names, who were....

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AILES: McGowan?

HACKMAN: Right. How did you go about this?

AILES: Well, McGowan, of course, worked with us on a daily basis. I should say there's another chap, Major General Bill Sutton [William F. Sutton], who's still over there, who supported this thing, even the last one. Let's put it this way: He supported it in the sense that an officer takes an order and executes it even though he doesn't believe it. But Bill, I thought, was marvelously loyal to the administration in the Pentagon with a project that really was very painful to him. This was sort of McGowan's situation in the early days of the National Guard reorganization,

but I think Don really came to believe pretty much in what we were doing. And they had a reorganization in the National Guard Association, or whatever it is and the Adjutant Generals Association, and some younger guys took over. I mentioned Jim Cantwell who is still the head of them. There was a fellow named Max Rich [Maxwell E. Rich] who was the adjutant General from, I think, Utah, who was a fine guy. And there are others: Bo Hearn [George A. Hearn], who's adjutant general for Georgia. And if my memory was a little better, I'd rattle off some more names of people who are reasonable and patriotic and who could understand why it is we had to do something and what it was we were trying to do.

HACKMAN: Well, staying with this thing on Secretary Stahr, one of the things we haven't talked about is how his resignation came about, how the relationships worked out during that year and a half when he was there. Was it tied to a specific event, or was it a gradual deterioration?

AILES: Oh no. Well, I think everybody would say that Stahr and McNamara are sort of incompatible in a sense that they're just entirely different people. Elvis is a very bright guy in his own right and an excellent judge of people. I think some of the work he did on trying to pick out who ought to step into the senior slots in the army was first-rate. And not only that, he was a very good advocate for the army outside, on the Hill, public statements, and whatnot, and a tremendously engaging sort of a guy. But a fellow whose background, being in the university, really taught him to solve problems with a beautifully turned phrase. McNamara really thinks in numbers, and Cy Vance [Cyrus R. Vance] and I, for instance, found it much easier than Elvis did to get along with McNamara because both of us had spent most of our careers in complicated, corporate litigation in the courtroom where you have to think with figures and think in terms of being precise and thorough and all this sort of thing.

Secondly, Elvis was caught in a major process of change, that is, he was caught by a major change in the operation of the Pentagon, and he had

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an army hierarchy of excellent men who'd lived under a different administration entirely where things were done totally differently. The army that he had behind him was simply not prepared to cope--I'm talking about the senior army staff--was simply not prepared to cope with the McNamara requirements in terms of analyses, material, presentations, and whatnot. You see, in about October of '62 General Decker was succeeded by General Wheeler [Earle G. Wheeler] who had had the benefit of a year and a half with McNamara, the bulk of which was spent as secretary or whatever it is, director of the joint staff. And through a process of change and evolution, you had people in there who had become much more accustomed to the McNamara needs and the world in which we were living. So Vance, and later myself, I got a hell of a lot more support in that whole operation from the army staff than Elvis did, not because of any differences among us, but because of process of evolution. The army is adaptable and very alert and bright about how to get along with things, and it really worked out a way of doing those things.

But Elvis was unhappy working for Bob (McNamara); Bob can be terribly austere; and if you don't hit it off with him, that's clear to you--repeatedly. [Laughter]

And the other thing is that his ambition involved being the president of a Big Ten university, and when that opportunity came along, he just simply availed himself of it. It was as simple as that.

HACKMAN: Could you see in the period while Secretary Stahr was there that McNamara, and especially his civilian assistants, would look to you or someplace else in the Department of Army for things that Secretary Stahr was unable to give them?

AILES: Oh, I don't think really. Elvis and I worked as a team; there were some things that were sort of in my bailiwick. I remember the Berlin build-up; I was the guy that always had the numbers on those things; Elvis always took me with him for his regular meeting with McNamara, and so did Cy [Cy Vance], and then this was something that I did when I was secretary which makes a lot of sense. And McNamara had a tendency always of.... Now, he was arguing with you and you were sort of debating with him a little bit, he would begin to sort of address comment to the other guy in the room. Now he used to say to me, "That's right, that's right," when Elvis was there, and I found when Ignatius [Paul R. Ignatius] and I used to go up, then it was Ignatius who was right a lot of times [Laughter] if I was the guy who was arguing with McNamara. But this is just sort of a mannerism more than anything else, and I find I do it myself.

HACKMAN: At the time that Vance was appointed then, there were rumors that either you or Carlisle Runge, I believe, would get that appointment. [Laughter] Anything there that you had any indication on?

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AILES: Elvis's resignation came without much warning, and it was announced promptly, and we did have a period of doubt and uncertainty. Bob was away and I went up to see Ros Gilpatric and told him that I would be delighted to step down and return to the law office if they wanted a whole new administration, and he told me that they thought it was very important that I stay to preserve some continuity. He said that he didn't know what McNamara's plans were with respect to Elvis's successor, that they really hadn't had a chance to talk about it, So I said, "Well, if you want to put Cy Vance in as secretary, which I've seen rumored, I would be delighted to stay as under secretary. Otherwise, I'm leaving."

In other words, I wasn't particularly interested in occupying the same slot with somebody who just came in cold from outside, and I really didn't.... Well, there's no point in my discussing my relationships with Runge. Runge was a very nice guy and a guy I got along very well with while he was assistant secretary for manpower. And, of course, when Bob came back, he called me up right away and told me that he had decided he wanted to appoint Cy as secretary because of some work he had done on various

things or his familiarity with the army. And I told him that was fine with me, which I really meant because after what I had been through with Elvis--I'm talking about in the relationships with McNamara--I was extremely anxious to see the army headed up by somebody who really could communicate with McNamara, and I wasn't at all sure that I could. But I was positive that Cy could, and I was also positive that I could communicate with Cy. I'd known him, oh, he and I had been in a law suit together ten years before, and we had a great many mutual friends since we both have West Virginia ties. But I'd worked with Cy quite a bit in the year and a half I'd been there, and you don't work with him over about a day before you decide he's a hell of a fellow. So that's the way it worked out, and, my God, it was superb. I mean, Vance and I worked together like a couple of law partners, and he brought a great deal to the army. It was just an extremely beneficial arrangement all way around.

HACKMAN: How did he differ in the way he ran things from Secretary Stahr, other than the relationship with McNamara?

AILES: Well, he soon had a different chief; we were in a different era; we were really working on different problems. I think Cy--of course, Cy puts in those terrible hours--Cy sort of has a tendency to want to get into operations more. When we were in those Oxford Mississippi, scrambles and things like that, Cy was practically the action officer on those things. In those ways he was different. And then he had a couple of very bright guys working for him up there, and Cy came in with notions that perhaps there were some radical things that had to be done with the army in terms of force structure chances and whatnot. He, again, is

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alert to people, and he developed a tremendous faith in and devotion to a lot of those senior guys in the army, so they had a marvelous working relationship there.

HACKMAN: What about the relationships on the Hill? Did he handle these differently than Secretary Stahr did?

AILES: Well, yes, but both were very effective on the Hill; the people on the Hill had a great deal of confidence in both. They were different groups because, you know, Cy had worked on the Hill. He'd worked with some preparedness committee up there. And then he and Jerry Ford [Gerald R. Ford] had been in law school together. Cy and I used to go talk to Jerry just to alert him to things we were going to do, and they had a very fine relationship. Elvis just happened to know a different bunch of people, but Elvis had a gift for getting along with congressmen. Cy was different, but he could do it extremely well.

HACKMAN: Let me move on to another kind of reorganization, the one from the pentatomic division to the ROAD [Reorganization Objective: Army

Division] concept when this came in. Can you remember had this been started before you came over?

AILES: No. I'm just having a little trouble trying to remember what kicked off that project. The pentatomic division literally had been produced, and the concept came out of the fact that nuclear weapons might be used on the battlefield, and it was supposed to be dispersible to a greater extent. As you moved on, as time marched on, it became obvious that the use of tactical nuclear weapons was not going to be widespread and that you'd better have a division that can function effectively in the conventional battlefield situation. You had a serious problem with the span of control in the pentatomic division, and it lacked mobility, and the structure was a little bit rigid in terms of your ability to vary it.

Some interesting work has been done in the army staff on a new concept of a division organization which was flexible and which had a tighter control arrangement and so on and so on. I remember McNamara becoming tremendously interested in it, but I don't believe for a minute that the origins of that idea were up in Defense; I think they came from down in the army. General Johnnie Heintjes [John A. Heintjes] was a brigadier general then and just back from Laos, and he sort of had the con on getting that things worked out.

I've worked on that a great deal myself. In fact, it was really my responsibility to get that thing okayed up above. I remember the session I had with McNamara when we were trying to get that reorganization accepted and the issues, you know, of whether this required more men in the army and

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whether there were corresponding reductions at the corps level. But that thing--it was a marvel to me the way the army was able to dream up that idea and revise its equipment tables and everything and its MOS (military occupational specialty) requirements and then put that into effect, and it was all done very damn smoothly, to the great benefit of the army. There's no question that that ROAD division is the great benefit of the army. There's no question that that ROAD division is the modern battlefield—a hell of a lot better. One thing that did interest me in terms of civilian control was the extent of civilian participation in the decisions to go ahead on that.

HACKMAN: Yes, that's been debated.

AILES: In fact, I went over to the White House to brief--I think I'm wrong, I was going to say I went over to brief Max Taylor, but I think I went over to brief him on the Reserve reorganization. Max Taylor was very much interested in the road division change because the pentatomic division had really been his, and we were held up on that some when we were really ready to go because of General Taylor's opposition or presumed opposition. Actually, I can remember McNamara wanting to get thoroughly informed with respect to that before anything was

done so that if he had to debate the situation over at the White House, he would know enough about it to be able to do it.

And I remember reading someplace, I think, that the pentatomic division had been put into effect, I think, probably without ever even having been discussed with the secretary of the army. [Laughter] That could be absolute baloney, that would be just a rumor, but I suspect that there is some difference, some substantial difference in the extent of civilian participation in those two decisions.

HACKMAN: I've heard two different views on this. One is that General Taylor's opposition to the change was the delaying factor, and the other that Secretary McNamara, either because he didn't understand it well enough or--and this seems rather unbelievable--was afraid to, maybe not afraid, didn't want to take on General Taylor at this point on this issue.

AILES: Well, I would say that's not true. As I said earlier, I think two things, both of which I mentioned: One is that McNamara wanted to be damn sure that we finished up with had at least as much combat effectiveness per man involved, a man involved in all levels, as what we started out with or what we went into before. And, you see, the number of people you have in the army has a hell of an effect on how much this thing costs. Every time you add a man to the army, you add a third of a man to the training camp plus a fifth of a trainer--something like this. And you add so much to your O&M [Operations and Maintenance]

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budget, to your military housing requirements, to your payroll, of course, and all that sort of stuff, so that the real key factor is how many men you've got. And there was always a terrible feeling on the part of McNamara and a lot of his experts that the army had way too many men.

The other thing is that, you don't talk about a division, you talk about a division slice or you talk about... A division has fifteen thousand men, and a division slice has like forty-five thousand men in it. These are men on the battlefield that constitute the troops at corps and army level and back at Com-Z, the communication zone, so called, when you're thinking of Europe. Well, the numbers would say a German division has fourteen thousand men, but the division slice is twenty-one thousand; or the Russian division has eighteen thousand men, and the division slice is twenty-six thousand. How come forty-five? And we went round and round and round on that always. The difference, of course, is that what we call a division and what they call a division are two different things. And they put them in the line, fight them until they are so badly beat up. They've got to be drawn back out, and they go and reconstitute them, put another one in. We put a division in there, and there it stays. And it stays because the replacements come up through the system, the supplies come up through the system, the equipment is all maintained. And it can fight there indefinitely. We think that that's a much better protection for our people, a much more effective combat unit, and so on and so on.

Well, it took us a long time to establish that with Bob and his guys, I'll guarantee you. In that context, when you start talking about changing the division format from 13,500 to 15,000, he says, "Wait a minute! [Laughter] Does that mean that the Corps goes down that amount?" you see, and so on and so on. And I'll say parenthetically that those analyses helped the army try to figure out what the hell its troop structure ought to be.

That was part of the problem. And the other part of the problem was I think McNamara wanted to be absolutely sure he really understood all this stuff before he took on General Taylor in debate. But I don't think it was ever a matter of.... There's no such thing as fear in his makeup, you know.

HACKMAN: Your mention of the general who came back from Laos...

AILES: Yes, Johnnie Heintjes.

HACKMAN: ...sort of leads to a question about the.... Several people, including Roger Hilsman in his controversial book, have talked about the differences in the field between the ambassador and the military advisor assistant group in the field out there. I think there was a General Boyle [Leo M. Boyle] out there at one point, and someone went out and replaced him. Can you remember getting at all involved in this?

AILES: In Laos?

HACKMAN: Yes.

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AILES: No. I really can't. I remember, of course, that was before the Viet Nam thing really began to build up. We didn't hear a great deal about Laos; we knew that there was a bad situation there; and we knew we had people out there for a while, but it was, you know, real back burner kind of stuff. I don't remember General Boyle or anything about that problem.

HACKMAN: All right. One of the other reorganizations that took place was in the technical services: Materiel, CDC [Combat Developments Command]....

AILES: Oh yes, Project 80.

HACKMAN: Right. Okay. Same type of question. How can you remember getting in on this, and what were the problems in getting it accomplished?

AILES: Well, that was one of McNamara's study items. And, you know, I'm not at all sure that there wasn't such a question with respect to the reserves, there

damn well could've been. But Project 80, that study group was organized, and we had about fifty colonels on it because the decision was made, "Let's put the guys who've got to live in this army in its revised shape." Lt. Gen. Dave Traub [David W. Traub], who was the comptroller of the army, was put in a high spot with respect to it. Larry Hoelscher [Leonard W. Hoelscher], who was the highest civilian in the regular army, you know, in the career service, who was deputy comptroller, had a major role to play with respect to it. And these guys turned to and made an analysis of how would you organize the whole army supply system if you were making a fresh start.

You've got to remember that the Quartermaster Corps dates from 1775 and Ordnance 1795, and the youngest one was the Chemical Corps in 1920 or something like that. And I believe Robert Lovett was quoted as having said, "trying to reorganize the technical services in the army is like backing into a buzz saw." [Laughter] But this job was done within the army, and it was done by army people. I remember McNamara laughing at me once when I said, "I was astounded to find men who have literally obeyed orders all their lives will obey literally an order to be completely independent and objective." [Laughter] They did.

Jack Norton [John W. Norton] was a key in this thing--General Jack Norton now; he was a colonel then--and they just did a perfectly marvelous piece of work. The trials and tribulations of that thing were long; they really sat down and tried to figure out what have we got and what are the deficiencies and what are the good things of what we've got. And where do we want to be twenty-five years from now and what are our goals. I mean, what is the world in which we're going to live, really, and how do we get organized to perform

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there most effectively. And it really was a marvelous process of analysis and a tremendous amount of hard work by a lot of really good guys.

They came up with this plan, and there was some heartbreak among some guys who were sort of suddenly out of the job in the service that they'd grown up in. But the revised organization was much more attuned to the modern problem. A tank, for instance, involved like four or five different technical services, and these distinctions even carried into the field, you see. The alignment fitted modern weaponry, modern warfare, modern procurement, modern communication. And then the important thing was the whole new way of handling personnel so that you had service-wide assignment of personnel instead of just keeping guys narrowly restricted in a branch, and put line officers into procurement and supply jobs, on tours, to make the whole thing user-oriented was the expression. You took a guy like Frank Besson, who had reached the top of the road as a transportation officer, and he got two more stars in two years. Of course, he's still running that AMC (Army Materiel Command) extraordinarily well. But under the old system, Frank really had no more future after he made major general because that was the highest transportation slot.

HACKMAN: Do you think McNamara and his people were surprised at how well this did go?

AILES: Yes, a little bit. [Laughter] They had real influence with it. Cy Vance particularly, and Sol Horwitz [Solis Horwitz] up there in his office was management expert, and they had a lot of views about span of control. McNamara influenced the course of this thing, and he particularly influenced the choice of Frank Besson. McNamara would say, "When you tell me that so-and-so would be a good guy to put as a number one guy because everybody likes him and he'll be able to put a real good coloration on this and so-and-so is a number two guy who is effective and has the ideas and can make the thing go and the two of them together are a great team, I agree with you completely except we'll put the number two guy in the number one slot and forget about all the rest of that stuff." [Laughter]

HACKMAN: Was this a reorganization plan that had.... This didn't have to go through Congress and be submitted as a reorganization plan, did it?

AILES: I don't think so. I really don't think so, but I couldn't be positive about that. But I don't think there's anything in the legislation that specified that there had to be a chief of ordnance or something like that.

HACKMAN: My question on the legislation was going to be: were there any instances when you worked with any of Larry O'Brien's [Lawrence F. O'Brien]

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staff or, within DOD [Department of Defense], with Norman Paul and then David McGiffert who worked on the congressional side over here?

AILES: All the time, all the time, sure.

HACKMAN: Any problems in this relationship?

AILES: None whatsoever.

HACKMAN: What about the congressional operation within the Department of Army, any problems between them and....

AILES: No, I don't believe so. Our legislative liaison people did slightly different things. They looked out really sort of for purely army stuff, and they worried about your relationship with so-and-so and would suggest maybe it'd be a good idea to go call on somebody just to pay a visit and that sort of thing. The work was pretty well parceled around on major pieces of legislation. Our OLL people would have some assignments with respect to legislation, but you wouldn't normally find the White House people and our people working on the same thing or McGiffert or Norm Paul and our people working on the same thing.

HACKMAN: There were always a lot of complaints about the Air Force, both information offices and the congressional office to some extent, I think. I think we talked about information last time on the speeches. I had wondered if anything like that came back on the congressional side.

AILES: No, I had heard before I went over there that the only way that you could really put the secretary of defense in control is to abolish legislative liaison staffs for each of the service because the secretary of defense was at such a handicap on the Hill, but I've decided that that was hogwash very quickly in the game and that our people were really doing a different kind of thing up there, and I don't think that they were really any handicap at all to the secretary of defense. And believe me, I certainly did everything I could and so did Elvis and so did Cy to make it damn clear that they were supposed to support the secretary of defense up there, you know, in every conceivable way.

HACKMAN: Another area that you had responsibility in was civil defense, the civil defense on the army side.

AILES: Right. Well, actually, we got the whole damn civil defense program, at some stage.

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HACKMAN: That was '64, I think.

AILES: My birthday. [Laughter]

HACKMAN: You've had some bad birthdays. [Laughter] Can you remember when this came over from the executive operation? It came over to who was it in DOD?

AILES: Well, there was an assistant secretary of defense for civil defense named Steuart Pittman.

HACKMAN: Pittman. That's right. As this worked out before the whole thing came over to army, were there efforts by Defense earlier to shift the whole burden to army, or what were your relations with Pittman?

AILES: No, our relationship was fine with Steuart and his people. I actually went over to the Bureau of the Budget for some conferences very early in the game when they were trying to decide what to do with that. And there was some talk at that time about the possibility of assigning the whole thing to the army; an analogy to something that had gone on earlier--I don't know whether it was CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) or what--was discussed. But the decision was not made to do that--it never really progressed very far--the decision was not made to do that, but

rather to assign it really to McNamara and set up that department even when Steuart had that for something called military support for civil defense. And we worked a lot on the question of how do you get organized to support....

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[END OF INTERVIEW]

Steven Ailes Oral History Transcript
Name List

President Kennedy	Kennedy, John F.
Powell	Pierpoint, Powell
Johnson	Johnson, Louis
Elvis	Stahr, Elvis
Frank	Pace, Frank
Paul	Warnke, Paul
Harold	Leventhal, Harold
Bill	Schaub, William F.
Dick	Morse, Richard S.
Paul	Ignatius, Paul
Tom	Morris, Thomas D.
Finn	Larsen, Finn
John	Bailey, John
Dick	Donahue, Richard K.
Dorothy	Davies, Dorothy
Cy	Vance, Cyrus R.
Stan	Resor, Stanley R.
Adam	Yarmolinsky, Adam
Bob	McNamara, Robert S.
Roy	Davenport, Roy K.
Al	Fitt, Alfred B.
President Johnson	Johnson, Lyndon B.
Ros	Gilpatric, Roswell L.
Gene	Zuckert, Eugene M.
Ed	Pratt, Edmund T. Jr.
Charlie	Hitch, Charles J.
Bob	Anthony, Robert
Jack	Fitch, John H.
Tyler	Port, Tyler
John	Macy, John
James	Cook, James
Robert	Willey, Robert
General Johnson	Johnson, Harold K.
Joe	Farland, Joseph S.
Barney	Koren, Henry L. T.
Eisenhower	Eisenhower, Dwight D.
Bob	Fleming, Robert J. Jr.
Phil	Leber, Walter P.
Elihu	Root, Elihu
Chiari	Chiari, Roberto F.
Mac	Bundy, McGeorge
Rusk	Rusk, Dean
Dicky	Arias, Ricardo M.
Ed	Martin, Edwin M
Gardner	Ackley, Gardner
Potter	Potter, W. E.
Zincke	Zincke, Bernard J.
Dan	Flood, Daniel J.
Don	McGowen, Donald W.
Jim	Cantwell, James F.

Joe	Peck, Merton J.
General Decker	Decker, George H.
Sterling	Wright, W. H. S.
Tom	Kenan, Thomas A.
Freddie	Weyland, Fred C.
Congressman O'Konski	O'Konski, Alvin E.
Ros	Gilpatric, Roswell L.
General Hamlett	Hamlett, Barksdale
Congressman Hebert	Hebert, F. Edward
Mendel	Rivers, L. Mendel
Bill	Bray, William G.
General Van Fleet	Van Fleet, James A.
Bill	Sutton, William F.
Max	Rich, Maxwell E.
Bo	Hearn, George A.
General Wheeler	Wheeler, Earle G.
Ignatius	Ignatius, Paul R.
Jerry	Ford, Gerald R.
Johnnie	Heintjes, John A.
Max	Taylor, Max
General Boyle	Boyle, Leo M.
Dave	Traub, David W.
Jack	Norton, John W.
Larry	Hoelcher, Leonard W.
Sol	Horwitz, Solis
Larry	O'Brien, Lawrence F.
Pittman	Pittman, Steuart
Ken	Hansen, Kenneth R.
Corbie	Truman, Corbie
Lou	Truman, Louis W.
Ed	McDermott, Edward A.
V.P. Johnson	Johnson, Lyndon B.
Tom	Powers, Tom
Gen. Westmoreland	Westmoreland, William C.
Gene	Salet, Eugene A.
Gene	Zuckert, Eugene M.
Tom	Morris, Thomas D.
Ribiciff	Ribbicoff, Abraham A.
McCloy	McCloy, John J.
Fisher	Fisher, Adrian S.
Ed	Gullion, Edmund A.
Harold	Brown, Harold
Lyle	Garlock, Lyle
Glenn	Seaborg, Glenn
Paul	Paul, Norman S.
Willis	Hawkins, Willis