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OBITUARIES

John McCone, CIA Director For Kennedy, Johnson, Dies

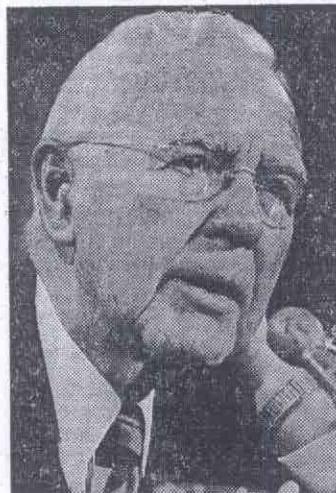
By J.Y. Smith
Washington Post Staff Writer

John A. McCone, 89, who was chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission during the Eisenhower administration and head of the Central Intelligence Agency under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, died of cardiac arrest Feb. 14 at his home at Pebble Beach, Calif.

A California Republican who made a fortune in engineering, shipbuilding and shipping, Mr. McCone's service as director of central intelligence encompassed the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, and the discussions that eventually led to President Johnson's decision in the summer of 1965 to commit massive U.S. ground forces to the war in Vietnam. He thus played a role in two of the principal events in the nation's post-World War II history.

Mr. McCone was tapped by Kennedy to head the CIA in September 1961. The administration had just been through the debacle of the Bay of Pigs, the failed invasion of Cuba. The CIA had organized the operation, and Allen Dulles, who had headed the agency since 1953, had resigned as a result of it. In choosing Mr. McCone to take over, Kennedy was mindful of his high standing in Republican circles, and he hoped that the appointment would still criticism of the administration from that quarter.

Mr. McCone proved to be an able and innovative manager in the intelligence field. He increased the agency's ability to collect informa-



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tion by technological means—for example, photographic missions by such spy planes as the U2—and he set up the CIA's directorate of science and technology.

In August 1962, he warned Kennedy that the Soviets had installed offensive ballistic missiles in Cuba. The president discounted the information as coming from an alarmist Republican, and Mr. McCone, who had recently married for the second time, took a wedding trip to Europe. In the meantime, flights over Cuba had been suspended because of the loss of spy planes over the Soviet Union and China. For this reason, further information on the situation in Cuba could not be obtained.

When he returned to Washington, Mr. McCone pressed hard for

the resumption of reconnaissance flights. They were instituted at the beginning of October, and the presence of missiles was confirmed on Oct. 10.

In the ensuing crisis, Kennedy forced Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev to withdraw the weapons. In return, the United States quietly withdrew missiles it had stationed in Turkey. *false*

In the discussions in early 1965 about what to do in Vietnam, Mr. McCone took the view that a ground campaign would not be successful, given the political restraints that would have to be put on it. He said the United States could not win the war unless it bombed North Vietnam into submission.

In April 1965, he resigned when Johnson refused to back his attempts to bring all of the government's intelligence efforts under the wing of the CIA.

Four months later, Mr. McCone was called upon by Edmund G. Brown, the Democratic governor of California, to head a commission looking into the riots that ravaged the Watts section of Los Angeles that summer, with a loss of 34 killed and more than 1,000 injured.

The group produced a widely hailed report that said the causes ranged from calls to protest by civil rights leaders to federal programs that did not deliver the services that had been promised. It concluded that the problems afflicting the black community required no less than "a new and, we believe, revolutionary attitude toward the problems of our city."

In 1974 and 1975, a Senate investigation revealed that while Mr. McCone was in charge of the CIA, the agency had engaged in numerous illegal activities, including reading the mail of private citizens and planning unsuccessful attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro of Cuba and other foreign leaders. Because of an organizational setup designed to give the director "plausible deniability," the investigating committee concluded that Mr. McCone's role in these matters, if he had one at all, could not be determined.

In a statement issued yesterday, William H. Webster, the present director of central intelligence, said Mr. McCone's "long and distinguished career in government was marked by excellence, integrity and selfless devotion to duty."

John Alex McCone was born in San Francisco on Jan. 4, 1902. He graduated from the University of California in 1922 and went to work for the Llewellyn Iron Works in Los Angeles. The company later merged with the Consolidated Steel Co., and Mr. McCone was a vice president and director by the time he was 32.

In 1937, he left the steel business to help found the Bechtel-McCone Corp., an engineering company. During the war, he became president of the California Shipbuilding Corp., which produced 467 ships worth \$1 billion for the war effort.

After the war, Mr. McCone took over the Joshua Hendy Corp., a shipping firm that operated a fleet of tankers and cargo vessels.

In 1948, Mr. McCone made his first foray into government service. He joined the Defense Department as an assistant to James V. Forrestal, the first secretary of defense, and helped him organize the CIA, which had been established the previous year. In 1950, he was made under secretary of the Air Force, and at the end of 1951 he returned to his business interests.

In 1958, Eisenhower named him chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. He headed that agency until the Kennedy administration took office on Jan. 20, 1961.

Mr. McCone returned to California in 1965 and lived in San Marino until 1979, when he settled in Pebble Beach.

His first wife, Rosemary Cooper McCone, died in 1961. His second wife, the former Theiline Pigott, whom he married in 1962, died in 1990.

Survivors include five stepchildren, Ann Wyckoff, Theiline Scheumann, Mary Ellen Hughes, Charles M. Pigott and James C. Pigott, all of Seattle; and a sister, Mary Louise Shelby of El Toro, Calif.