

McNamara's Many Wars

In power-jealous Washington, it was inevitable that an official as dynamic, aggressive and determined as Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara would eventually face full-scale congressional scrutiny. Last week South Carolina's L. Mendel Rivers, a McNamara critic who became chairman of the House Armed Services Committee a year ago, announced that he will soon launch not one but four parallel investigations of McNamara's policies.

McNamara has had his jousts with congressional committees before. But never have so many lances been pointed at him at once, and never by such aroused antagonists. Separate subcommittees will investigate 1) McNamara's decision to defer construction projects that he had requested earlier; 2) his plan to phase out two-thirds of the present heavy-bomber force by 1971; 3) all McNamara's research and development projects, present and pending; and 4) his policy of closing or reducing military

TIME, JANUARY 21, 1966

installations that he regards as surplus. All this will be in addition to the normal annual series of hearings on the budget, which this year will certainly concentrate on Viet Nam. Said one member of the Armed Services Committee: "We're going to work him over."

The Secretary has already promised to cooperate with the special investigations—and well he might. The committee, backing Rivers almost to a man, has decided not to consider any new Pentagon requests until the four subcommittees have completed their work. This will mean a delay for the \$12.5 billion supplemental appropriation that the President will request to finance the war in Viet Nam. Rivers, a Democrat and member of military committees for 25 years, says: "I think there are times when the Department of Defense forgets that the Congress exists for reasons other than to provide a blank check. I think the American people will always be willing to pay the price for having too much defense rather than risk the inestimable cost of having too little."

Giant Bottleneck. The case against McNamara is easy enough to make on purely emotional grounds. He has angered many senior military officers and legislators in a variety of ways. He strikes his critics as arrogant. He has brought proud service chiefs to heel, smashed old customs and prerogatives, scrapped weapons projects that had many champions, reduced Congress' influence in military affairs and eliminated

or cut back 852 military installations.

In recent months, McNamara's critics feel that they have picked up fresh ammunition against him. McNamara attempted, for instance, to reduce by half the \$1 billion military-pay increase voted by Congress. From the greenest recruit to the most bemedaled general, from the swampy boondocks of Viet Nam to the carpeted offices of the Pentagon, this stand brought the complaint among servicemen that their boss was not behind them. In 1963 and 1964, for economy reasons, McNamara also held down the Army's program to strengthen its helicopter force; now there is a crash drive on to form new helicopter units. Most serious of all—considering McNamara's reputation as an administrator and planner—is the giant logistics bottleneck in Viet Nam that is backing up ships and their precious military cargoes as far as Japan and slowing the U.S. war effort (TIME, Dec. 24). If McNamara knows anything, say his critics, he should know about logistics.

No Time. As far as the pay-raise issue goes, McNamara was acting in his familiar role of lightning rod for the White House. He was trying to control costs—as do all department heads. Besides the specific effort to hold down the fiscal-1967 budget, the Johnson Administration is committed to keep all wage increases within reasonable bounds.

The troubles with helicopter procurement and the flow of supplies rest more squarely on the Defense Secretary. The helicopter shortage was a miscalcula-

TIME, JANUARY 21, 1966

tion—one of the few that can be put at McNamara's door—and the seriousness of the logistics snarl did not become apparent to McNamara until November. A well-founded anecdote has it that when McNamara learned the extent of the difficulty at a Saigon briefing, he also discovered that General Earle Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Admiral Ulysses S. Grant Sharp Jr., the Pacific commander, had anticipated the trouble in September.

"Why in hell didn't you tell me?" demanded McNamara, as subordinates of Wheeler and Sharp looked on bug-eyed. "Why, damn it, I could have had the 8,000 logistics men that we need

direction. He has brought scientific deliberation into the previously haphazard selection and development of major weapons, imposed stern economy measures while increasing fighting strength. He is reshaping the Army reserves and National Guard from an antiquated, flabby militia into a modern, lean strike force. He has exported his brand of innovation to NATO, helped give the alliance a more effective fighting force.

In perhaps his greatest contribution, McNamara skillfully implemented the Kennedy Administration's goal of balancing the ability to mete out massive (nuclear) retaliation with the troop strength, versatility and mobility needed

JON R. WOODS



ARMED SERVICES CHAIRMAN RIVERS

From carpeted offices to the swampy boondocks, lances on every side.

U. S. DEFENSE DEPARTMENT



SECRETARY McNAMARA IN VIET NAM

here today—even if I had to go out and pull them in off the street."

McNamara's critics feel that he might have anticipated the problem on his own; after all, a dozen years ago Army officers foretold the difficulties of sustaining a major expeditionary force in Viet Nam as an argument against going to France's aid in the Indochinese war. Theoretically, a logistical foundation should always be laid before large numbers of troops land, but the war in Viet Nam strays far from the manual. The deteriorating military situation last spring, which led to the huge U.S. build-up, permitted no time for methodical preparation. The fact is that 190,000 troops are now in Viet Nam and performing well, and that most of them were put there in a hurry. The logistical snafu is being gradually unknotted. Most important of all, as McNamara says, "we have stopped losing the war."

Flabby Militia. Despite all the controversy that has grown up around McNamara since he took office five years ago this month, he has not lost many home-front wars either. He has become the strongest Defense Secretary the U.S. has ever had, achieving something his predecessors despaired of or only dreamed of: making the sprawling military establishment responsive to overall

to fight limited actions. Five years ago, the U.S. could have blown up much of the world, but it could not have put a relatively small ground force into Southeast Asia without undermining its strength elsewhere. Today the U.S. is able to honor its worldwide commitments while fighting in South Viet Nam.

For some of the very reasons that he is under attack in Congress, McNamara has been able to keep the defense budget from growing even faster than it has. The announced figure of \$58.3 billion for the year beginning July 1 may yet rise because of the war, but it would already be billions higher were it not for McNamara's reforms. Indeed, for the first time, the U.S. is waging a major military campaign overseas without crash mobilization or stringent economic controls at home.