

Fletcher Prouty
4201 Peachtree Place
Alexandria, VA 22304

5/30/91

Dear Felch,

Thanks for your very informative 5/27. It does help my understanding.

I didn't know you'd been operated on. From my experience you are absolutely right to want to get all the exercise you can. I've been prohibited most and I sure feel it!

My recollection must have been incorrect ~~of~~ the date the Post published the second of those two short stories I do remember. It must have been much later. But what I recall of it is consistent with the changed LBJ policy that came later.

The content of the first one is entirely consistent with the front page of the Pacific Stars and Stripes I'm glad to have and thank you for.

I do not have JFK's Trade Mart speech to which you refer. Is it in what the Commission published? I do not recall that it is. If you have a copy and it isn't too much trouble I'd appreciate one, thanks. I don't recall ever reading it.

You refer to the Dulles ^{homes} ~~homes~~. It may amuse you to know that I knew Foster's kitchen rather well. He was a customer. He loved my birds and they were one of the foods he did enjoy that did not activate his gout. Once when both were away the butler (husband of the cook) showed me the living room. If I recall correctly, rather dull ~~gik~~ upholstery. I have a clearer recollection of the whiskey he preferred, which was given to me. Old Overholt, an old rye brand. I had no interest in the living room but did not want to offend the butler. Place on the west side of Woodland Drive, on the curve of a fairly steep hill as I now recall. When she was away she left his menu for every day she'd be gone.

I've very glad that you explained the steps JFK took to see to it that Diem was not assassinated. I did not even heard of that.

When you say we never saw a known missile in Cuba did you mean warhead? I don't remember any proof any were there but what were those pictures flashed at the UN and on TV if not missiles in Cuba?

I agree with you that in 1962 a real world war was unthinkable. But then the USSR had that treaty with Castro, "mutual" assistance. No way they could protect Cuba. So Khrushchev put the missiles in. How was JFK going to get them out by force other than by a world war?

So, he didn't use force and the world moved well ahead until he was assassinated.

My work on the Tonkin Gulf was without any access to any official records. It was contemporaneous analysis of what was being released, including the supposedly verbatim transcripts of what was radioed, if I recall now. It convinced me that it never happened as LBJ alleged.

A friend has promised to copy those extracts from the Gravel edition, thanks.

When Tad Sculc identified "Eduardo" as his friend Barker I lost the little doubt I had about Sculc's connections. He knew him well and that was not a simple mistake.

again thanks and best wishes, Harold

4201 Peachtree Place, Alexandria, VA 22304 May 27, 1991

Harold Weisberg
7627 Old Receiver Road
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Dear Harold,

As you will note, I am enclosing a copy of the front page of the STARS AND STRIPES Armed Forces newspaper from the Pacific region. This White House Report is none other than the McNamara & Taylor trip Report that was presented to JFK when they returned.

That Trip Report was approved by JFK and made "official" by providing it with a Cover Paper known as NSAM 263. The most important thing about NSAM 263 has been over-looked by most historians. It was the kick-off of JFK's plans for re-election in 1964. That is why it stated that 1,000 men will be returned home by Christmas 1963, and added that all-Americans will be out of Vietnam by the end of 1965...note Headline.

This latter is of course the most important part of the paper, and this is why it was spread across the full headlines of the STARS & STRIPES. We must keep all of this in proper perspective. At that time we had some 15,000 military men in Vietnam. All of them, except those with the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), were under the operational control of the CIA. They did not operate under their own military commanders.

This is most important. Most of these men were helicopter mechanics, supply people, medical staffs and the like. There were about 1,000 combat trained men who were acting as advisors for the newly formed South Vietnamese armed forces.

Military men, under their own military commanders did not go into South Vietnam until the March 1965 invasion by the US Marines.

Therefore, these numbers used by Kennedy in NSAM 263 were most significant in that day. 1,000 men home by Christmas, is a lot out of 15,000. And all out by the end of 1965 meant the rest of them plus all other Americans.

Just to compare this with later figures, do you recall that more than 10,000,000 American men were flown to Saigon by commercial airlift alone during the period of the Vietnam War. 10,000,000! Had JFK lived, none of them would have gone.

I have written about this report (NSAM 263) and this action and don't want to repeat it here; but McNamara and Taylor did NOT write this Report. JFK had made up his mind about Vietnam as far back as May or June 1963. He started making plans. He sent Gen Krulak, my boss, to Vietnam to get him completely up to date on things out there. When Krulak came back he began visiting the White House frequently...working mostly with Bobby...and they worked up a huge Report that was precisely what JFK and his closest advisors wanted. This was all done in the White House and in the Pentagon. I did a lot of the work on it.

Then JFK sent McNamara and Taylor to Vietnam just for headlines. The Report was finished, illustrated and bound and flown by a jet

fighter to Honolulu and given to the returning McNamara and Taylor. They gave it "figuratively and photographically" to JFK on the White House lawn.

This was one of the two most important papers JFK directed during his 1,000 days. I am amazed at how many historians have badly missed or mis-read all this. If you want to refresh your memory with all of this, dig out JFK's Trade Mart Speech for Dallas, Nov 22, 1963. That tells you just what JFK was thinking up to the day he died. It's important to be read that way.

All that happened in Oct 1963. Then NSAM 273 came along on Nov 26, 1963. I can not believe that JFK had anything to do with NSAM 273. It was an unimportant paper and was overtaken quickly by the important NSAM 288 of March 1964. This was a Johnson paper and this started the great escalation of the war.

Thought I'd get that off right away before you go out to work on the daylilies again...or do the lawn. I was working on the lawn this PM. Following my operation what I need the most is exercise and I try to do as much of my own work as possible. It was too hot today; but I got about half done.

Thanks for the clue about the National Security Archive. Actually my book was written in the 1985-1987 time period and has appeared in 20 monthly instalments in a small magazine. What I am doing now is turning 20 separate articles into one manuscript.

I do not do much archival work. I have tons of material and notes from my work. Most of what I write is about things that I did myself or things that I was close to. For example, I first went into South Vietnam during 1952, 1953 and 1954 as an Air Force Transport unit Commander. When I did CIA work I had the good fortune to work with Allen Dulles and Foster Dulles in their own homes, on some matters. I knew Helms and Colby and many others. McNamara was my boss as was Taylor later.

Re NSAM's, some are most important, others are not. JFK's most important ones were NSAM 55, 56, 57 and 263.

For your "evaluation" and "re-evaluation" of Vietnam in Oct-Nov 1963 be careful of your sources. The only ones that matter are JFK, McNamara, Taylor and the elements of the JCS that were involved. Most of the rest is revisionist trash. JFK had Vietnam down clearly by Sept 1963. He wanted General Minh to take Diem's place. He was pleased with that change, although he had carefully planned NOT to have the Diems killed. That was a stupid, local slip-up as so often happens.

Note his time-table: only 1,000 in 1963: then all the rest in 1965. That was to take care of his re-election.

I can't figure out your "later there was a second short story attributed to the Pentagon." Taylor and McNamara WERE the Pentagon in those days, and they were not changing their Oct story at least while JFK lived. They changed it afterwards; but they heard the bullets.

Take the Oct 1962 "Missile" crisis with care. This government NEVER actually saw a single missile in Cuba. We had magnificent

U-2 pictures of various "sites." We had unbelievably good low level pictures by photo RCN aircraft that went in on the deck. They were so good that we could identify Russian advisors easily because their pictures were so clear and so close up. Despite all that, we NEVER saw or had a picture of a known missile.

We gathered a massive force in Florida and had JFK ordered it we would have taken Cuba much as we took Kuwait. I was sent by the JCS to speak with the General and Admiral in Command of both forces, the Army and Air in Tampa and the Navy in Norfolk. I know exactly what their orders were. But they were not based upon the sighting or identification of a missile.

By Oct 1962 Castro was upset because of the size and activity of MONGOOSE. He ought to have been; but JFK kept MONGOOSE under control. It was a threat and a good one. It served to cover many things.

Another thing is important. You have written "having another world war." By 1955 this government knew that the size and proliferation of the new Hydrogen weapons and their delivery systems had made "another world war" impossible. These missiles could have been launched and detonated; but that would have brought about the death of mankind and the end of a viable planet Earth. Men will fight duels, because there is a fifty-fifty chance, or better; but our leaders had learned by 1955 that a nuclear war was suicide, not a duel and certainly not combat. This is why there never was a chance of Victory in either Korea or Vietnam.

If you ever have the opportunity, dig out a small book by Lt Gen Victor H. Krulak, "First to Fight." It is a typical "Gung Ho" Marine book, BUT...the finest chapter ever written about the Vietnam War is in that book. It will open your eyes and stun you, as it did me...as well as I know Krulak. It's just one small chapter in a small book; but magnificent.

I hope in your work on the Tonkin Gulf you reviewed fully the OP-34 plan that the JCS had developed back in 1963. This series of covert attacks on North Vietnam, called by Wiesner the "Tit for Tat" campaign is what instigated the so-called "attack" on the ships in the gulf of Tonkin...a put up job by the Ivy Leaguers.

I hope you can find the Gravel Edition of the Pentagon Papers. It is the best, but keep in mind that it is not complete. It was never the intent of Les Gelb and Dan Ellsberg to release the full and true story of Vietnam. They held back the best.

Keep in mind that the NSAM 263 pages signed by Bundy are not the whole 263. It goes on for many, many pages. It was a huge Report.

I believe Tad Szulc was CIA, or CIA affiliated somehow. His stuff reads like that.

Ciao,



L. Fletcher Prouty