

M'NAMARA TAKES BAY OF PIGS BLAME

Says All Kennedy Advisers
Recommended 'Error'

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 4—Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara acknowledged today, for the first time in public, that he had been among the Presidential advisers who recommended the ill-starred invasion of Cuba in 1961.

"It is very much on my conscience," he said.

"It was a serious error," he said of the Bay of Pigs operation, "and it was an error for which President Kennedy assumed full responsibility. And that was a gallant deed, but I want the American people to know that it wasn't by any means a decision that was not supported by others in the Government. It was recommended to him unanimously by all of his advisers."

One of the other advisers, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, sat at Mr. McNamara's elbow as he spoke. They appeared together on a one-hour production of the National Broadcasting Company television program "Meet the Press." But Mr. Rusk said nothing about the Bay of Pigs affair.

May Have Been Valedictory

There were uncontradicted reports after the invasion had failed that Mr. McNamara, Mr. Rusk and others, notably the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Central Intelligence Agency, had recommended the invasion to President Kennedy.

Today's appearance may have been Mr. McNamara's public valedictory. He is to leave the Government soon to become head of the World Bank and will be succeeded by Clark M. Clifford, a Washington lawyer and Presidential adviser.

Asked if he would make any major changes in the American involvement in Vietnam, Mr. McNamara said: "This is not an appropriate time for me to be talking of changes, with

hindsight. There is no question but what five or ten or twenty years from now the historians will find actions that might have been done differently. I am sure they will.

"As a matter of fact, my wife pointed out to me the other day four lines from T. S. Eliot that answer your question. Eliot stated, 'We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploration [Eliot's word was "exploring"] will be, to arrive where we started and [to] know the place for the first time.'"

The lines are in the final stanza of "Little Gidding" in Eliot's "The Four Quartets."

'Applies to Vietnam'

Referring to the passage, Mr. McNamara continued: "Now that applies to Vietnam. I am learning more and more about Vietnam every day. There is no question I see better today than I did three years ago or five years ago what might have been done there.

"On balance, I feel much the way the Asian leaders do. I think the action that this Government has followed, policies it has followed, the objectives it has had in Vietnam, are wise. I do not by any means suggest that we have not made mistakes over the many, many years that we have been pursuing these objectives."

Mr. McNamara's admission on the Bay of Pigs was prompted by a questioner's observation that in Cuba in 1961, as in South Vietnam last week, an attack had been made by people who mistakenly believed their action would set off a general uprising of the population.

"Let me say, since he mentioned the Bay of Pigs," Mr. McNamara said, "that I have never said publicly, and I want to say today, that when President Kennedy assumed full responsibility for that action, he didn't say what he might have said, that every single one of his advisers, me included, recommended it. So I was responsible for that."

Later, he was asked if there had been other cases that had also failed.

He laughed softly and said, "I can think of far more than the time would permit me to list, but I do not propose to start trying."