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A Soldier in Camelot: Maxwell Taylor in the Kennedy White House

DOUGLAS KINNARD

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“He was, with Bob McNamara, the most effective person that I had met. Looking back . . . I would say that the two people who have made the greatest difference as far as the government is concerned are Bob McNamara and Maxwell Taylor.”

—Robert Kennedy¹

On 20 January 1961, when John F. Kennedy set forth his vision for the United States in his inaugural address, former Army Chief of Staff Maxwell Taylor was comfortably settled in New York as the new president of the Lincoln Center. As he listened to the brave resolutions—“Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship . . . to secure the success of liberty”—Taylor could not know that the President’s first attempt to put these resolutions into action would lead to his own return to government service.

Upon leaving government, almost two years before, Taylor had published *The Uncertain Trumpet*, a book critical of Eisenhower’s nuclear-heavy strategy, “The New Look.” The basic theme of the book was that the United States needed a more flexible military strategy designed to deter small or large wars and to assist in winning the Cold War. JFK was familiar with these views, having used Taylor’s book as a basis for criticizing Eisenhower’s defense policies during the 1960 campaign, and was impressed with the author’s background as well as his strategic views.²

What led directly to Taylor's return to government in what was to be the most influential decade of his life was not, however, his book, but the infamous Bay of Pigs invasion attempt. The concept of an invasion of some sort by Cuban exiles trained in Guatemala by the CIA was a legacy of the Eisenhower Administration. The actual decision to make the invasion, however, was Kennedy's. The operation, which began on 17 April 1961, was a complete disaster, with the entire brigade-sized force being either killed or captured. On 21 April JFK called Taylor, whom he did not know personally, and asked him to come to Washington to discuss Operation Zapata, the code name for the invasion.³

The Cuba Study Group

The following day Kennedy briefed Taylor privately on the origins and purpose of the Cuban operation; his main concern was to determine the cause of the failure. He wanted Taylor, working out of the White House, to chair a study group consisting of Attorney General Robert Kennedy and two other officials who had been involved in the episode—Allen Dulles, head of the CIA, and Admiral Arleigh Burke, Chief of Naval Operations.

The basic question in Kennedy's mind concerning Operation Zapata was whether or not the Joint Chiefs had fulfilled their responsibilities in advising him. They of course felt they had, pointing out that the operation was a CIA undertaking, with their role one of commenting on the plan and providing support. Their doubts about certain aspects of the plan, particularly the choice of landing areas, apparently never came through clearly to the President. One of the Chiefs later told the author that there was a difficulty in communicating with the new President that they had not experienced with his predecessor, since Kennedy did not seem to grasp military matters.⁴ In any case, whatever the justification, Kennedy felt that the Chiefs had let him down, and relations between the Chief Executive and his senior military advisers were strained from that point on.

Such was the prevailing atmosphere when Taylor in the course of the study group's work ran into JFK outside the Oval Office. Kennedy indicated he would be going over to the Pentagon to talk to the Chiefs and asked for suggestions. As Taylor tells it, he had by chance developed a working paper on the subject of the responsibilities of the Chiefs to the President. His concepts

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apparently coincided with the President's because Kennedy took the paper and used it in his meeting at the Pentagon. As adapted by Kennedy, it read in part:

I must say frankly that I do not think that the JCS gave me the support to which the President is entitled.

While the CIA was in charge of it, I would say that you should have been continuously scrutinizing the military soundness of their plan and advising them and me as to your views. The record as I know it does not show this kind of watchfulness.

The advice you owe me as Commander-in-Chief . . . should come to me directly. I imagine that there will be times when the Secretary of Defense will not agree with your advice to me, in which case I would naturally expect him to tell me so and why.⁵

On 13 June 1961, Taylor forwarded to the President the report of the Cuba Study Group, which had met with some 50 witnesses in 21 sessions. The description of the operation and its failures need not detain us, but two of the conclusions are pertinent: (1) the Joint Chiefs had not adequately reviewed the plan, and (2) the United States must in the future be prepared to conduct operations employing a counterinsurgency model when appropriate.⁶

These conclusions led to the study group's recommendations stressing organizational factors. Maxwell Taylor always had a proclivity to solve problems with organizational innovations. In this case, the principal recommendation was to establish a strategic resources group headed by a presidentially appointed chairman and having a high-level membership, to include the Undersecretary of State, Deputy Secretary of Defense, Director of the CIA, and Chairman of the JCS. The purpose of the group would be to serve as a staff for the President for Cold War operations. Naturally, Secretary of State Rusk was less than enthusiastic, but the President eventually approved such a body, which was called Special Group (Counterinsurgency). While its potential powers were somewhat less than envisioned by the study group, it did serve to instigate high-level interest in counterinsurgency for a time.

Military Representative of the President

The President had wanted Taylor in the administration in some capacity from the outset, and others had suggested it as well. In reporting Taylor's appointment as president of the Lincoln Center in October 1960, *The New York Times* had opined that should Kennedy win the election he might try to bring the general back into the government. In fact, a few days after his inauguration Kennedy had Secretary of State Dean Rusk telephone Taylor to offer him the ambassadorship to France. Taylor, having just signed a five-year contract with the Lincoln Center, declined.⁷

Now that Taylor was in the White House temporarily, Robert Kennedy approached him about a nonspecific job with the administration; toward the end of the study group's work, this became an offer of Director of the CIA to replace the bureaucratically wounded and soon-to-be-fired Allen Dulles. In turning down this position, Taylor did say he would accept a job that called on his military background.

There was talk with JFK about reactivating the position of Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief as a spot for Taylor. Roosevelt had created the position in World War II so as to have a chairman for the wartime service Chiefs of Staff, with only Admiral William Leahy having held the position. But at that time the Joint Chiefs were nonstatutory, and there was no JCS Chairman. Since the National Security Act of 1947 established the Joint Chiefs and its 1949 amendment created a statutory Chairman, naming a supernumerary chairman would probably have been illegal.

The solution decided upon was the creation of a new position within the White House known as the Military Representative of the President and to recall Taylor to active service to fill that position. In making the appointment, Kennedy wrote a fairly specific letter as to what he expected of Taylor. He was first to be a staff officer without command authority and with interests primarily in the military and intelligence fields. He was not to be interposed between the President and any of his statutory advisers such as the Secretary of Defense or the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In the intelligence field he was to work closely with the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board and to ascertain that the government's intelligence apparatus was meeting the President's needs.⁸ A specific task assigned Taylor is worth noting. He was asked by the President to "review the planning on Vietnam and give me your views on how to respond to President Diem's request for a 100,000-man increase in his army."

Copies of this letter went to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Special Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy, and CIA Director Allen Dulles. To avoid misunderstandings and to cement his own role, Taylor suggested a meeting with JFK, Rusk, McNamara, and himself, which the President promptly scheduled.

Settling Taylor's role and the immediate problems on which he wanted help in this meeting, the President sent a memorandum to the Joint Chiefs two days later. Still smarting from the Bay of Pigs fiasco, JFK told them the relationship he expected of them in Cold War operations. Some excerpts: "I expect your advice to come to me direct and unfiltered. . . . I look to you for dynamic and imaginative leadership. . . . I expect you to be more than military men and to combine your military views into a unified and effective overall pattern."

Naturally the Chiefs feared that the new Military Representative of the President would wall them off from Kennedy. This was not without some

basis, for in *Trumpet* Taylor had written that he "would dissolve the JCS as it now exists and replace it by a single Defense Chief of Staff." Is that what he would do, and become, now? Outside the government some others were also a bit skeptical about Taylor and his new role. Military historian S. L. A. "Slam" Marshall of the *Detroit News* wrote in one of the flurry of articles about the new appointee, "Taylor is the wrong man for this job. . . . [He is] actively interested in the exercise of power for his own sake."⁹ Actually it was never Taylor's intent to come between the Chiefs and the President in his new job, but rather to assist them in getting through to the President. The Chiefs' fear turned out to be unfounded. Taylor kept reasonably close liaison with the Chiefs and serious problems never developed.¹⁰

While JFK had from the earliest days considered removing Chairman Lemnitzer, whom he considered likable but "dim," and replacing him with Taylor, rather than create a furor in the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill, he decided to bide his time.

More delicate relationships that Taylor had to work out were those within the Camelot White House itself. Kennedy had dismantled the National Security Council apparatus and in its place surrounded himself with individual advisers, both in and out of the White House, of varying degrees of brilliance and experience. Thus was fostered a contest among equals for the President's ear. In effect, Kennedy had established a little NSC of his own. The group included brother Bobby, Taylor, Rusk, McNamara, and McGeorge Bundy.

The Taylor-Rostow Mission

South Vietnam was created de facto by the Geneva Accords of 1954. Headed by the American choice, Ngo Dinh Diem, it had been supported thereafter by the Eisenhower Administration with substantial military and economic aid and a limited number of American advisers. By 1961 Diem's government had become increasingly authoritarian. This was manifested, for example, by the allocation of the bulk of American aid to military and police forces, with only a small portion for economic development, and even more by Diem's attempt to keep all political power within his own family. This caused increasing discontent within the country.¹¹

In the minds of the Viet Cong, the war had not ended with the 1954 Accords. Feeding on the growing discontent in South Vietnam, they resumed their struggle through guerrilla warfare in 1957 and 1958. In early 1959 North Vietnam formally approved the resumption of the struggle in the south and began sending arms and advisers to the Viet Cong. By the end of the Eisenhower Administration the insurgents in the south had joined together to establish the National Liberation Front. It aimed to overthrow the Diem regime, end American involvement, and achieve unification with the North. This was the situation when Kennedy came to office.

Shortly after the Bay of Pigs, the new President ordered a review of the Vietnam problem to determine what could be done to prevent communist domination. The review panel, headed by Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric, recommended a small increase in the American advisory group and a substantial increase in the South Vietnamese army. Kennedy agreed to a 20,000-man increase in South Vietnamese forces along with an increase in advisers. Though this decision involved only a hundred Americans, it was the prologue for American actions that would eventually exceed the adviser limit established by the 1954 Geneva Accords. In May of 1961, only a short time later, Kennedy agreed to send even more Americans to Vietnam, this time in the form of Special Forces. He also approved an increase of South Vietnamese forces and took under consideration a possible US troop commitment in the future.

In the midst of these May decisions, Kennedy decided that Vice President Johnson should go to South Vietnam; this was the trip in which LBJ referred to Diem as “the Winston Churchill of Southeast Asia.” On Kennedy’s behalf, Johnson asked Diem to forward a list of military needs to Washington. It was not long—9 June, to be precise—until Diem had a letter off to Kennedy asking for support of an expansion of no less than 100,000 more troops for the South Vietnamese army to be financed by the United States and for a considerable expansion of the US Military Advisory Group. This letter was important for Maxwell Taylor; from then on he was to be face-to-face with the problem of Vietnam.

As Taylor tells the story in his memoirs, he happened to encounter Kennedy in the White House while the President was holding Diem’s letter. Asked by JFK for his comments, Taylor suggested an interim reply agreeing to an increase of 30,000 South Vietnamese troops, a move Kennedy subsequently approved. Thus began for Taylor “an involvement in the Vietnam problem to which I was to commit a large part of my life during the next eight years.”

Diem was not the only person pushing increased support for Vietnam. Even before receipt of Diem’s letter, Walt Rostow, Bundy’s assistant for Southeast Asia and an aggressive believer in counterinsurgency, was pushing for a greater US effort. The Joint Chiefs thought that Diem should also be requesting US troops at this point. In fact, by October 1961 Kennedy had proposals coming from many directions for more American involvement in Vietnam. U. Alexis Johnson in State and William Bundy in Defense were two others on this bandwagon. Facing all these pressures, Kennedy decided in October to send a mission to Vietnam to get more facts on which to base his decisions. He chose Taylor to head this mission, with Rostow as his deputy and experts from various government agencies designated to accompany them.¹²

The issues facing the mission on arrival in Saigon can generally be grouped into four areas. First, there was the problem of how to counter the

buildup of the Viet Cong, which had expanded from around 10,000 troops in early 1961 to around 17,000. Second, there was the question of how to bring the peasants in rural areas closer to the central government, the daytime government, if you will, since the nighttime government in the countryside was increasingly that of the Viet Cong. Third—and the big question on President Kennedy's mind when he dispatched the mission—was whether the South Vietnamese army could really cope with the Viet Cong without American troops. Finally, could the Diem government itself survive? If not, what were the alternatives to sticking with Diem?

Shortly after arrival Taylor and Rostow had a lengthy meeting with Diem and six other US and Vietnamese officials. The meeting, conducted in French, took 22 pages of notes to summarize. A reader of the US notes grasps how difficult it must have been to deal with this mandarin, getting him to face the realities of the situation while countering his skepticism about American resolve to stay the course.¹³

For 12 days the mission traveled all over South Vietnam, and Taylor became convinced that the crisis in Vietnamese affairs was a crisis for America as well. His eyes-only message to the President makes this clear. He pointed out to JFK the South Vietnamese people's doubts both about American resolve and about the ability of the Diem government to defeat the insurgency. He proposed to counter such doubts by a massive joint effort and a limited partnership with the Vietnamese government. In what was to become a famous line, he commented in one of his messages on the hazards involved: "The risks of backing into a major land war by way of SVN are present but not impressive."¹⁴

The Taylor-Rostow mission returned to Washington, and Taylor submitted his official report to the President on 3 November. He recommended significant American support forces of helicopters, transport aircraft, additional US advisers, and much more economic aid. The most controversial recommendation was his proposal to send an 8000-man US task force to Vietnam. For a cover, it would be designated as a relief force to alleviate an immense flood that was ravaging the Mekong Delta. When the flood ended, the US troops could be withdrawn if desired without a loss of prestige, or kept on if deemed necessary for other reasons.

Now followed an intense week while the decisionmakers debated the issues, especially the troop commitment. The main participants were the President, McNamara, Rusk, the Joint Chiefs, and of course Rostow and Taylor. On 11 November 1961, the President ended the debate with these determinations:

- He rejected the dispatch of organized combat units to Vietnam, but approved the large expansion of other forms of military support proposed.
- He approved and made more exacting the terms of a partnership with the South Vietnamese. Increased American support would be contingent on Diem's acceptance of greater American influence over his government. As it turned out, Diem was to pay lip service to this, but only that.

• He affirmed the great strategic importance of South Vietnam, implying that stronger actions and commitments might come later if needed.

These decisions were the major turning point in the JFK Administration's commitment to Vietnam. The bottom line is that the American presence in Vietnam would escalate from Eisenhower's 700 advisers to over 16,000 advisers *and support troops* by the time of Kennedy's assassination two years later.¹⁵

While Kennedy did not pledge himself to prevent South Vietnam's fall, he in effect said no to the notion of a negotiated settlement of the problem. His veto of Taylor's troop proposal still left open the possibility of a later troop commitment, and the debate on the sending of troops distracted the decisionmakers from what was really happening—a significant American escalation of men, supplies, and money to Diem. By ignoring the Geneva Accords, Kennedy set in motion a chain of events whose outcome had to be further escalation. The only question was when and how much. Thus the Taylor-Rostow mission, with its resulting presidential decisions, was one of the five great turning points in America's longest war. In one way or another, Maxwell Taylor was to be involved in three of them.¹⁶

Bureaucratic Politics

Especially at the beginning, Kennedy did not run a tight ship at the White House. This was particularly true of the National Security Council apparatus, which had been very formalized and structured during the Eisenhower years. As we have seen, for all practical purposes Kennedy dismantled the NSC in 1961. He also brought Special Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy directly under him to deal with day-to-day foreign and defense issues. This erasure of the distinction between planning and operations would have a profound long-range effect in that it set the stage for future Kissingers, Brzezinskis, and Poindexters.

Taylor's office (MILREP, as it became known), created because of Kennedy's post-Bay of Pigs loss of faith in the Joint Chiefs, was small and noninstitutionalized. Dependent upon Taylor's own eminent stature for its efficacy, it was not intended as a permanent institution. It was staffed by extremely competent professionals, all chosen by Taylor.¹⁷ An important MILREP concern was that of relations with the National Security Council staff headed by McGeorge Bundy. Because Taylor was not in the chain of command, his office was outside the normal flow of information and depended on various kinds of liaison. He was increasingly thwarted by Bundy's staff—in particular Bob Komer, later Vietnam pacification czar, and Carl Kaysen. Both were adept at keeping their projects away from MILREP. At the morning liaison meetings for the White House staff, Bundy's people increasingly held their high cards to their chests. When they did discuss key

problems, it was in a kind of shorthand known only to insiders. While the Bundy-Taylor personal relationship was good, the NSC lower-level staff tended to wall off MILREP on many matters.

The outside agency most relevant to MILREP was of course the Department of Defense. By early 1962 McNamara had established himself as the strongest Secretary of Defense to date. He was no longer the greenhorn of early 1961, preoccupied with counting beans and noses. His strength was built at the expense of the JCS, setting the stage for the later Vietnam disaster since the President relied on him more and more to answer questions he would once have asked the JCS or Taylor.

Taylor's influence in the White House depended increasingly on bureaucratic maneuvering, and here he had an ally in McGeorge Bundy, who sensed that McNamara's growing power threatened his own influence on the President. Bundy also felt that JFK should have a military person judge McNamara's solutions, and he knew that the JCS as then manned was not likely to fill that role. The preparation of the 1963 defense budget revealed McNamara's strength. Taylor found it difficult to insert himself into this vital but routinized and protracted bureaucratic process, as contrasted to the operational situation such as Vietnam in the fall of 1961, to which Taylor found an immediate and natural entree.

Perhaps the most important and clear-cut example of the White House staff's bypassing of MILREP was in nuclear matters such as atmospheric testing, nuclear dispersal, and the production of nuclear weapons. A group MILREP referred to as "the anti-nuclear wrecking crew" particularly tried to keep Taylor's office out of this area. The group was a coterie of personal friends dispersed in various jobs around the White House and in the Departments of Defense and State. In general they were lone wolves with a high degree of intellectual self-assurance, usually not based on a detailed knowledge of the subject, and a deep emotional bias against nuclear weapons. One of their techniques was to deal with an issue covertly and rapidly so as to dispose of it before it could be debated. Often they were not concerned with being thorough, but only in making an end run.

They avoided touching base with Taylor in many instances, even if his final view was likely to be agreeable, since his precise and conscientious analysis was likely to show up their sometimes specious reasoning. In a matter involving nuclear dispersal, a senior adviser once informed JFK that Taylor was abreast of the problem when he actually was not, thus preventing the President from hearing Taylor's potentially conflicting views.

However, in spite of the White House bureaucratic jungle in which Taylor and his office operated, he always had the President's confidence. For this reason his office scored philosophical gains despite the surreptitious opposition. At a time when military influence was at a low ebb in the White House, the presence of MILREP showed the rest of the bureaucracy that the military

voice was not muted. Unfortunately, the senior military in the Pentagon were not able to build on Taylor's influence to regain prominence on their own merits.

Return to the E-Ring

By the summer of 1962 Kennedy was ready to solve two of his senior personnel problems. He had determined to displace General Lyman Lemnitzer, with whom he had long been dissatisfied, as Chairman JCS, and he also wanted to get rid of General Lauris Norstad, Supreme Allied Commander Europe. Norstad had become impaled on the nuclear issue. Both Kennedy and McNamara felt that his initiatives to enhance the prospects for alliance control of nuclear weapons were far too risky. In addition, McNamara could never accept the notion that the Allied Commander answered to the North Atlantic Council and not to him, an issue on which Norstad was particularly testy.¹⁸ On 20 July 1962, Kennedy solved both problems by announcing that Norstad would retire and be succeeded by Lemnitzer, who in turn would be replaced by Maxwell Taylor.

Taylor is the only person to have served as Chairman who was recalled from retired status, much less from duty in the White House. The advantages of having been near the Oval Office are obvious: he knew the President and understood his policies. Less obvious is the disadvantage: that the other senior military officials considered him a White House man. Just ahead in his tenure as JCS Chairman lay the high drama of the Cuban missile crisis



General Taylor is sworn in as JCS Chairman by Attorney General Robert Kennedy as President Kennedy looks on, 1 October 1962.

and increasingly what eventually became Taylor's *bête noire*, Americanization of the Vietnam War. But that is another story.

Some Observations

Taylor's arrival in the White House occurred in the light of the President's perception that he had received poor advice on the Bay of Pigs invasion from the CIA Director and the Joint Chiefs. As we have seen, during the work of the Cuba Study Group, Taylor, as its head, had fit in well with the new White House leadership, and when the group's work ended he went on to become the first and only Military Representative of the President. General Earle Wheeler, the Army Chief of Staff, accurately summed up the initial reaction of the Joint Chiefs to this unusual appointment, saying that it was "quite clear that the Joint Chiefs in effect were not as close to the President as the law and as custom and as what you might say the logic of the chain of command would indicate."¹⁹

The high point of Taylor's influence during his White House tour was his fall 1961 trip to Vietnam and his subsequent report to Kennedy. The presidential decisions based on that report were among the great milestones of American involvement in the Vietnam War, even more entangling than Eisenhower's earlier decision to replace the French in the south.

As time went on and McNamara gained power in Defense and influence with the President, Taylor's White House role became less influential. At that point, neither Taylor nor Kennedy found the MILREP arrangement fully satisfactory, although the President retained enormous confidence in Taylor personally.²⁰ As for Taylor, the unchartered bureaucratic jungle he found himself in became increasingly frustrating.

MILREP was, however, a bully pulpit for Maxwell Taylor. Speeches, interviews, and awards for distinguished service accompanied his new visibility. Projected on the national scene as never before and cutting a wide swath internationally as well, he began the most prominent decade of his life. Unfortunately, the major expression of this prominence was to become Vietnam.

At the end of his White House tour he returned to a world he knew well. But this time he was no longer a lame-duck service Chief of Staff as he had been in the late 1950s under Eisenhower. He was instead Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest military position in America. Not just another Chairman either, but one who knew the President and White House apparatus personally.

In sum, Taylor in his White House role is a conspicuous example of those whose impact on national policy results not from their succession to an existing office, but rather from their ability to fashion a role that would not otherwise exist. While Taylor never overstepped his charter, it can be accurately said that he shaped his office to his ambitions and registered a palpable influence on history in the process.

NOTES

1. Interview by John B. Martin in 1964, as published in Edwin O. Guthman and Jeffrey Shulman, eds., *Robert Kennedy in His Own Words* (New York: Bantam, 1988), p. 255.
2. Research on Taylor must begin with his own writings, especially his autobiography *Swords and Plowshares* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972). His papers, comprising some 33 linear feet, are deposited in the National Defense University Library (NDUL), Washington, D.C. There are also relevant materials in the presidential libraries of Eisenhower in Abilene, Kennedy in Boston, and Johnson in Austin, as well as the US Army Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Pa. I supplemented my research with 12 interviews with Taylor and 40 interviews with other key figures such as George Ball, William Bundy, McGeorge Bundy, Robert McNamara, and Walt Rostow.
3. The Bay of Pigs episode has been extensively documented and commented upon. The most recent comprehensive treatment, containing an excellent bibliography, is Trumbull Higgins' *The Perfect Failure* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987). The only important, though brief, commentary on the Bay of Pigs since Higgins' book is in Thomas Schoenbaum's biography of Dean Rusk, *Waging Peace and War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).
4. Author's interview with General Lyman Lemnitzer, April 1981.
5. Working paper, Taylor Papers, NDUL, with the following notation in Taylor's hand: "This was read by President Kennedy to JCS about May 27, 1961."
6. General Taylor's letter to President Kennedy, with accompanying memorandum and testimony obtained during the investigation by the Study Group, is contained in *Operation Zapata*, ed. Luis Aguilar (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1981).
7. Many officials in the Kennedy White House believed erroneously that Taylor had resigned as Army Chief of Staff in protest over the Eisenhower nuclear-heavy strategy. He had, in fact, served his full four years as Chief and retired in the normal manner.
8. A copy of the letter of appointment, with enclosure, from President Kennedy to General Taylor, dated 26 June 1961, is contained in Taylor Papers, NDUL.
9. Quoted in *Time*, 28 July 1961, p.10.
10. General Earle Wheeler interview with Chester Clifton, 1964, Oral History Project, John F. Kennedy Library, pp. 25-26.
11. I call attention to only three fairly recent volumes that are especially useful for the Kennedy period: R. B. Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War: The Kennedy Strategy, Vol. II, 1961-1965* (New York: St. Martin's, 1985); William Gibbons, *The US Government and the Vietnam War, Part II, 1961-1964* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1986 [published in 1985 as a government document for the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations]); and US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963* (Washington: GPO, 1988). Out of 768 pages of text in this latter volume, 358 are concerned with the Taylor mission and its immediate aftermath. The recent biography of Dean Rusk by Schoenbaum, previously cited, is a valuable addition to insider accounts of Washington decisionmaking on Vietnam during both the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations.
12. Walt Whitman Rostow, Professor of Economic History at MIT in the 1950s, had through his writing made a strong impression on JFK, who wanted to place him in charge of policy planning at State. Rusk had other ideas, so he was assigned as a deputy to McGeorge Bundy. His own account of the Taylor-Rostow mission is contained in *The Diffusion of Power* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 274-79.
13. A typed version of the notes is contained in the Taylor Papers, NDUL.
14. Quoted in William J. Rust, *Kennedy in Vietnam* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), p.48.
15. To orchestrate the effort approved by Kennedy, two new agencies were created: the US Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), established in Saigon, 8 February 1962, and commanded initially by Taylor's choice, General Paul D. Harkins; and Special Group (Counterinsurgency), established in Washington, 18 January 1962, and chaired initially by Taylor, who had drawn up its charter at the President's request.
16. The two previous events were Truman's 1950 decision to aid the French in Indochina and Ike's 1954 decision to support and aid the new government of South Vietnam. The two subsequent events were LBJ's decisions in the spring and summer of 1965 to commit American combat troops and the LBJ/Nixon decisions of 1968-69 to de-escalate American involvement, which eventually came to be called Vietnamization. This selection of five turning points is my own; I have seen other formulations listing as many as 18.
17. For example, Julian J. Ewell, later an Army general of Vietnam fame; W. Y. Smith, later an Air Force general; Worth H. Bagley, later a Navy admiral; and Tom Parrott of the CIA. The following section on MILREP is based upon internal MILREP notes contained in the Taylor Papers, NDUL.
18. The author was a Special Assistant in the command element of Supreme Headquarters during the last year and a half of Norstad's tenure. For an interesting discussion of Norstad as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander as well as the institution itself, see Robert S. Jordan, ed., *Generals in International Politics* (Lexington, Ky.: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1987).
19. Earle Wheeler interview by Chester Clifton (1964), p. 26, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.
20. Bobby Kennedy affirms this in Guthman and Shulman, *passim*.