

INTERVIEW WITH MR. JAQUELIN H. HUME

This interview was conducted by LtCol Donald R. Baucom at 0845 on 28 October 1987 in Mr. Hume's room at the Madison Hotel in Washington, D.C..

LtCol Donald R. Baucom (B): I am the Historian for the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization. The first project that General Abrahamson gave me was to take a look at the process that led President Reagan to make his March 1983 speech. At this particular time, he had a few ideas of what had been involved and knew several people who were involved: General Graham, Dr. Teller, Mr. Bendetsen, Mr. Coors. What I've been doing is going through that list and interviewing these people. In the process, I came up with other names of people I should talk to. Mr. Coors, for example, mentioned your name as a person I should definitely talk to and gave me your telephone number. Once I finish these interviews, they will be the basic documents I shall use to write the history of the process that led President Reagan to make his speech. The first question I have for you is how did you come to know Mr. Reagan?

Mr. Jaquelin H. Hume (H): I met him when he was considering running for Governor of California in 1965. Some of my friends from the Goldwater campaign in '64, in Los Angeles, had asked him to run for governor and suggested he talk to me in Northern California, since I had been active up there.

B: Have you maintained close contact with the President since that time?

H: Yes.

B: Have you served as an advisor to him on occasion?

H: I don't think "advisor" would be correct; I have met with him frequently on a variety of different subjects.

B: Could you tell me how you first came to be involved in the Strategic Defense Initiative?

H: Karl Bendetsen, whom I knew at the Bohemian Grove, was anxious to meet Ed Meese and eventually to talk to the President who I believe was at the Grove that year. I arranged for Bendetsen to meet Ed Meese, and he felt that my contacts with the President would be helpful to the committee he was setting up.

B: Do you recall roughly when this might have been? Fall of '82?

H: No. This was--it must have been the summer of 1980 or conceivably the summer of 1981, but I think the summer of '80.

B: Did you work then with Mr. Bendetsen on the High Frontier committee that included also Dr. Teller; Dr. Keyworth, the President's Science Advisor; and Mr. Coors?

H: That's correct.

B: Did you come to many of these meetings that were held in Washington?

H: I think I attended all of them.

B: There were a couple of other very important milestones in the committee's history. One that I discovered in talking with Mr. Coors and Dr. Keyworth is an 8 January 1982 meeting with the President. At this meeting, the spokesman for the committee was Mr. Bendetsen. Do you know anything about this?

H: I arranged that meeting.

B: Were you able to attend it?

H: Yes, I attended it.

B: From what I understand, at this meeting you gave Mr. Reagan a briefing paper on strategic defense.

H: That is correct. We worked on that paper for some time prior to that meeting--in Mr. Bendetsen's office, it was about the fifth or sixth draft.

B: Can you tell me any of the things that were in it? Some of the ideas that you put to the President?

H: Well, we felt it was possible to defend the country against ballistic missiles and believed it could be done in a comparatively short time if it were given the kind of priority that was accorded the atomic energy effort during the Second World War. If strategic defense were left within the military services, it would be hampered by red tape and an inability to move fast. We believed that strategic defense was such an urgent problem because of the window of vulnerability that we faced. Therefore, we should move very fast on it.

B: What about the window of vulnerability. Where did you come into contact with this concept, was it through this committee with Mr. Bendetsen?

H: Yes.

B: So you all did quite a bit of talking about military strategy and things like this.

H: Yes.

B: Did you know Dr. Teller very well?

H: Well, I got to know him through this committee. I'd known him briefly before but he attended many of these meetings.

B: Would you say he was more or less your science advisor in this process?

H: Yes. He and Jay Keyworth. Jay Keyworth was very important in this also. The two of them were the science advisors. Graham was also a science advisor to the committee. However, he had a definite idea of how this thing should be done; and we really broke with Graham on that point because we didn't feel that there was sufficient information in our hands to determine if a particular approach should be taken to strategic defense. We were simply advocating that the subject be explored by properly equipped scientists to determine which way they should go and that several different routes probably should be investigated. Graham was pretty well set on the idea of a group of orbiting satellites.

B: I understand that Dr. Teller also pushed very hard on his pet project which is the bomb pumped x-ray laser.

H: I wouldn't say that. He felt that that was a possible method of doing it, but he believed there were also other ways it could be done. He felt that the idea of an atomic explosion creating sufficient energy to make an effective laser--a very high powered laser--had been pretty well proved, at least to his satisfaction. This, certainly, is one of the things that should be studied. Early on though, I think our committee was impressed with the idea of kinetic kill as a preliminary technology that could be put into place promptly.

B: The KKV was more or less Graham's idea?

H: No. The idea of having a ground based approach that would use the method that had been used at Kwajelin to destroy the missile was very appealing since this was a proven method at that point.

B: This sounds similar to the ERIS and HEDI systems that SDIO is currently pursuing. They are ground based and attack warheads in the latter parts of their flight.

H: Yes. They were thinking in terms of either a spread of small missiles from the big missile so that it would give you a shotgun kind of a blast of particles in the air. I remember seeing the effect of a small piece of metal that had been fired at a high velocity penetrating a piece of steel that was brought to one of the meetings.

B: You've mentioned Mr. Bendetsen quite a bit. According to Mr. Coors, Bendetsen was probably the central figure in this committee; and that's the reason I call it the Bendetsen committee. Can you elaborate a little bit on how he organized this committee and some of the activities of the committee itself.

H: Bendetsen is a great American and had been part of the Defense Department in, I believe, the Second World War; and he also was a very successful corporate executive. He felt strongly that something could be done about defending ourselves against missiles. He believed that the idea of mutually assured destruc-

tion was basically wrong and decided to put together this committee. I was very fortunate in being asked to be a part of it--that was simply because he knew I was familiar with the President. I think, as I had told you, I had introduced him to Ed Meese and I think--I'm not sure whether I introduced him to the President that time at the Grove or not.

B: Was there another meeting later than this January 1982? Mr. Coors seems to think that there was a meeting that was held maybe in January or February of 1983; that would have been just before the President made his speech in March. Do you recall anything like that?

H: Well, we continued to have meetings on the subject after the original meeting with the President, and trying to develop this matter further. So I think that unquestionably there were meetings--I think I came out here quite often--I get a little confused because I was also working with the so-called "Kitchen Cabinet" at that time and made many trips in connection with that.

B: I understand you and, at least Mr. Coors were members of that "Cabinet."

H: That's right.

B: Were you two the only two members on this ad hoc committee who were also, what we might say, members of the "Kitchen Cabi-

net?"

H: That's right.

B: So you say that you did meet with the President after the January '82 meeting.

H: No. I don't think we met again with the President on this subject.

B: But the committee did meet to talk about how you were going to go?

H: That's right.

B: Now I do know of one other meeting, at least, that Mr. Coors was in. This occurred after the President made his speech. During this meeting, Mr. Coors and this group began to discuss how the strategic defense organization should be organized and what powers it should have. Were you involved in that meeting?

H: Well, I told you that part of our talk to the President was about the importance of structuring a program that was not under the normal Department of Defense activity; and I talked to Weinberger about that and told him how important I thought it was that it not be trapped in the red tape of the Defense Department; and he said something I did not know. He claimed that the atomic energy department--the work on the atomic bomb--reported to the

Secretary of Defense. It reported directly to him and he said that this program that had been set up for the strategic defense also initiative reported directly to him and did not report to any of the Secretaries of the individual services. And I talked to Abrahamson about this at one point, since we were very worried that the way the thing had been finally put together called for a committee to be set up with representatives of the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, giving each service a kind of a veto power--or at least an oversight power--over what General Abrahamson was doing. We felt this had the potential of slowing down the program.

B: In these meetings with the Bendetsen committee, did you talk about the strategic situation that the United States was in? For example, the difficulty we were having basing the new MX missile.

H: Probably, but I don't remember it.

B: What about the Bishop's Letter on nuclear deterrence that was in the mill at that time?

H: No.

B: Do you recall, Sir, if you had a chance to look at the President's speech, the speech that he made on strategic defense, before he actually made it?

H: No, I did not.

B: Are there any other things about your involvement in this process that you think I should know about?

H: Well, I always felt that I made an important contribution to this in arranging this meeting with the President. We had talked with Graham about a meeting, but he was so insistent on putting forward a justification for a group of satellites orbiting and making this the major thrust that Teller, Bendetsen, Coors, and I came to the conclusion that we'd be better off not to depend on Graham to make a presentation but simply to go in and try to sell the President on the fundamental idea that it was possible to protect the country in some fashion from missiles and that it was very important that this program be adequately staffed and adequately funded and get underway promptly. I always felt that the President pulled together for that meeting a very representative group of people. I think that Secretary Weinberger was not there, but most other important people concerned with this were at that meeting--government people. Graham was not at it.

B: This is the January '82, meeting that we're talking about.

H: Yes. We were certainly listened to carefully. Baker was there; Deaver was there; Meese was there; Keyworth was there. I don't remember for sure, but I recall there were 15 people at that meeting.

B: I understand from Dr. Keyworth that this was a rather short

meeting. Was that true, Sir?

H: Half, three-quarters of an hour--something like that--I'd say three-quarters of an hour. There were very few questions. It was primarily a presentation. I recall that Bendetsen made a verbal presentation and then gave the President a summary which we had all been working on for some time. We'd had many meetings on this summary. I felt it was very important that the thing be summarized, hopefully, in one page; certainly not over a couple of pages, and we spent a lot of time trying to cut it down to the essence so that the President would not have to wade through a lot of technical information.

B: Returning to the Bendetsen ad hoc committee meetings--can you tell me a little more about the role Dr. Keyworth played? I know you said he was one of the science advisors, but did he take any positions that you recall or anything like that.

H: He is strongly in favor of this program. He felt it was entirely practical scientifically and that it was of extreme urgency that it be moved forward as rapidly as possible. He was a strong supporter of the effort of the committee.

B: Did you have any contact with Senator Wallop?

H: I did not. No.

B: Well, I can't think of any other questions that I've got,

Sir. Is there anything else that you think I should know about?

H: I continue to be hopeful that this thing can move forward rapidly. I've been disturbed ever since I got into this by the fact that we have the authority under the ABM treaty to put into place a defense set up at one location. Moscow has already done that--around Moscow. The Soviets built and tested an anti-ballistic missile defense, and I feel it is so wrong for us not to do the same thing when we know how to do it. Particularly with these new very fast missiles that, according to a paper by Martin Anderson, you can shoot from a single location at Grand Forks and still cover a tremendous area. Incidentally, I felt that this paper was so important that I went to see the President on this and talked to him about it and gave him the paper.

B: When was this, Sir? Was it before the speech or after?

H: This is a recent Martin Anderson article. He wrote it in May, I guess this year. It was published in the WALL STREET JOURNAL. This article described how the footprint of these new anti-ballistic missiles was such that the missiles would be able to protect much of the United States from a location like Grand Forks. And I felt that this thing was so very important that it just was urgent that we install a defense--install a defense set-up, since there are no treaty obligations preventing us from doing that. I've never heard from the President about that at all. That's not unusual. The President doesn't usually come back when he receives a piece of advice of this kind.

B: I did an interview with Dr. Anderson, and he told me that this was the way the President worked. He tends to absorb and not to reflect back. In other words, even if he disagrees with you, he won't let you know--he just listens.

H: That's right.

B: So you confirm that. Do you have any other insights into the way the President operates? You've known him since '65 I think you said.

H: '65. Well, I've never heard him ask advice. He's prepared to accept advice, but to say that you are an advisor of the President implies that he has requested you to do something or say something and I've never heard him do that. I've never heard him say that he had this judgement from someone else which is different from yours. Several times, I have heard him say when he's been given advice: well, thank you, I think I'm going to do it differently--I think I'm going to do it this way. And I've been impressed that he's usually right.

B: Dr. Keyworth says that this whole strategic defense thing is generally the President's idea--all these other things came together but Mr. Reagan was already committed to this idea of strategic defense. Martin Anderson's views are similar. According to Anderson, from the summer of 1979 when candidate Reagan went to NORAD and saw that we had no missile defenses, he was

committed to establishing a missile defense program. It was just a matter of waiting for the right time.

H: Yes. That may be. He has a great sense of timing.

B: Well, I can't think of any other questions, Sir. I really appreciate your giving me your time like this. Maybe this will give you a little bit of time to get to your next appointment.

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