

And this morning, I would like to explore that just a little bit with you if I might, sir.

In your statement last year, I believe you said that the most serious flaw, as you saw it, was the inadequacy of the Joint Chiefs as military advisers to the President and to the Secretary of Defense.

You further indicated in your statement that they had rarely, if ever, performed an advisory role of any importance at the level of national policy; and, as a result, you advocated at that time that the Chief of Staff, who takes the place of the JCS Chairman, become the principal military adviser.

Let me ask you, sir, are the proposals which you bring to us today, which would strengthen the Chairman, are they, in your judgment, tantamount to making the Chairman the principal military adviser?

General TAYLOR. Is that your question?

Mr. NICHOLS. Yes, sir.

General TAYLOR. I want to first explain that my views of last year remain essentially unchanged. My testimony today did not pick up where I left off last year. What I wrote last year, I still believe today but from the start I knew I was writing my druthers, rather than a proposal likely to be approved. The kind of chain I would favor, similar to that in Mr. Skelton's bill, I am all for; but I realize the great difficulty of getting it now when you have a Secretary of Defense who says everything is OK.

The pragmatic course today is to undertake what may be feasible under present conditions. So I shall give you my suggestions.

As to how to get better military advice with minimum change, you would get more out the Joint Chiefs if indeed the Chairman could break off debate, stop trying to get a consensus, and say, "Gentleman, I am going to decide this issue this way, and that goes, unless you protest my decision, to the Secretary of Defense."

I might say, sir, when I accepted the job as Chairman, from Mr. Robert McNamara, I had a good chat with him. We were old friends by that time. I said, "Bob, I want you to understand. I am not going to use the black snake whip to get a consensus out of the Joint Chiefs. We are going to try to get a consensus, but if there are differing opinions, which are solid, in the sense that they are legitimate and require consideration, I am going to handle the situation like the Supreme Court. We are going to send you a brief of the arguments, and then I am going to add my brief to it."

We worked on that basis for 2 years, and I would say that we never had any serious delay in that time. Since that time, the idea of having to get a consensus seems to have come back, and that adds to much of the weakness of the Joint Chiefs as a source of timely advice. They can offer advice if you wait perhaps a year, but a President or a Secretary wants advice faster than that.

The other point which I felt must be settled is the one I would like to see this committee give priority attention—the role of the Secretary of Defense. You really can't say what role the Chairman should fill until you know what the Secretary's should be. The latter in its entirety has never been defined.

It is not generally recognized that the Secretary of Defense is two-hatted, just the way the Joint Chiefs are. First, he is the head of a great department, one of the biggest and most—it spends more