

## INTERVIEW OF CARL KAYSEN

by Howard P. Willens and Deanne C. Siemer

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- Willens: Dr. Carl Kaysen served on the National Security staff during the Kennedy Administration and has had an illustrious government and academic career. We are on the telephone with Dr. Carl Kaysen who is in Boston, Massachusetts, and who has kindly agreed to be interviewed in connection with the book that we are writing about the history of the Northern Marianas quest for political affiliation with the United States. Dr. Kaysen, what caused you to take this job in Washington?
- Kaysen: I had a research fellowship at Harvard while I was getting my doctoral degree. I started teaching actually before I got the degree. The research fellowship had a bit of a club element to it and I got to know McGeorge Bundy there. We had overlapped there for two years. Shortly after Bundy went to the White House, that is, shortly after he had accepted his position—before the inauguration actually—he called me and asked me whether I would come down. I had watched the trek to Washington and I was susceptible, so I came down. I actually came down in March as a consultant working on civil defense during the spring vacation, because I was already signed up for a couple of teaching courses and I couldn't abandon them. I came full time after classes ended, and then in the fall when Rostow went over to the State Department I became Bundy's deputy, the post which Rostow previously held. So that how I got there.
- Willens: When you became a deputy to Bundy did you have any specific areas of responsibility?
- Kaysen: Well, the staff of the NSC was very small. I think there were a dozen professional people. We had major areas of concern, but we shifted around a lot. My major areas of concern were the defense budget, arms control and disarmament, and issues related to that. But related to your inquiry, both George Ball and Bob Kennedy had been to Okinawa different times on their way home from Japan. And both were surprised at the dissatisfaction of the Okinawans with the Americans. George said to the President, "You know, we are running a military dictatorship out there." Bobby said, as I was told, that when he was in Tokyo the Japanese talked more about Okinawa than anything else. Towards the end of that summer of 1961, I had finished a couple of big things that I had been doing and Bundy said to me, "How would you like to go to Okinawa and find out what's going on there?" I said, "Why not?" I had never been in the Pacific, so I did. I assembled the Task Force and drafted up an NSAM and went to talk to the President and he said sure. So I got a group together from State, Defense, and what not. And we went out and marched around Okinawa for a couple of weeks. Then we went to Tokyo and I talked to this sort of Bundy's parallel in Tokyo. I talked to the Prime Minister as well. Eddie Reischauer, who was our Ambassador then, was an old friend of ours in college. I came back and wrote a report about Okinawa, which is (I am sure) why I got into the Micronesian business.
- Siemer: Was there any discussion about Micronesia at that time, any indication of Japanese interest?
- Kaysen: There was not. Let me qualify that answer and make a general remark. I do not remember any and I think there was not. If you came and gave me a piece of paper dated October 1st, which I signed which was about Micronesia, I would have to say, "Oh, yes we talked about that."

- Willens: I know. We appreciate that difficulty. As you see from the draft chapter that we sent you, we are trying to pinpoint the time and the source of the White House interest in addressing the Trust Territory.
- Kaysen: I am sure that you have it right. That is, without specific information, what you say makes very good sense in that the President did have to make a speech to the General Assembly. When the President had to make a speech, it was typical that, if the general subject had been decided by the President, probably Sorenson, or whomever else he might have wanted to talk to about it (maybe some of the Senate people if it was going to be on a subject of Congressional political concern), would send out a request for suggestions. I had some experience with that kind of thing. So, if it was a foreign policy speech, the request would go over to the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense and Bundy and maybe to me depending on what the subject was. If there was a speech at the United Nations, a request would go over to the Secretary of State and to Adlai Stevenson. And the Secretary, Dean Rusk, would say this is Harlan Cleveland's area and would pass the request on to him. So it makes perfect sense that the prospect of the speech would have stimulated Harlan Cleveland to say here is something that we are going to get beat up on and maybe we ought to talk about it.
- Siemer: Was it a given that the President would address the General Assembly?
- Kaysen: No, it wasn't a given. It was something he certainly had a choice to do. Almost any head of State can get to address the General Assembly. But it is the President of the United States, as the political leader of the host country, who gets a chance to address the opening of the General Assembly, which is a more heightened occasion than its on-going meetings. And this was an address of an opening. And of course it was his first appearance.
- Willens: You may have seen references to some extensive memoranda that Ball prepared for the President in anticipation of his meetings with Ambassador Stevenson a month or so in advance of the appearance. And it did look as though the State Department and the White House were aware that most of the critical issues of the day had a U.N. perspective.
- Kaysen: Right. And, of course, Stevenson and Cleveland's business within the State Department would focus on the U.N. You have to realize that relationships between Stevenson and the President were tense. And Ball was often kind of an intermediary. Both Ball and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. served in this role because both had worked on Stevenson's campaign.
- Willens: Actually the only reference to Schlesinger we have seen in the materials happens to be that first memorandum in the collection. That is the source on which we base our assessment that there had been a pre-speech effort to reach some forward looking new policy for the Trust Territory and that it had failed.
- Kaysen: Right. And I was not aware of that. I went to Okinawa in September. Actually, I don't remember the dates and I haven't checked them. I remember turning in my report on Okinawa somewhat later than this—the date of the President's speech—but again I am not sure.
- Siemer: You picked up the Micronesian assignment after you got done with your Okinawa assignment? Had someone else on the staff been working on this problem before you?
- Kaysen: Probably not. Mike Forrestal had not yet come down [to Washington] or had just come down. Michael later became the leading Vietnam specialist and therefore kind of tended to take over Pacific affairs. Bob Komer, Michael and I were really the only three senior staff members who were responsive to Bundy and who dealt directly with the President. Bob Johnson and Chuck Johnson dealt with Bundy. Bramley is a little different. He basically

had a kind of bureaucratic office running the National Security Council minutes and things like that. But the other junior people, like Marcus Raskin, all dealt with Bundy or me or Forrestal but not with the President. Komer, Forrestal, and I dealt with the President on things that were our responsibility. And, of course, Rostow before he went over to the State Department [dealt with the President]. It wasn't a habit of that staff for people to go to Bundy and say I want to see the President. If you got (so to speak) on the President's list, you called Mrs. Lincoln or Kenny O'Donnell and said I would like to see the President about such and at such a time. You got a call saying come over at such a time.

Willens: Charles Johnson seemed to have stayed with the subject area.

Kaysen: Charles Johnson was an inheritance from the old NSC staff.

Willens: I see. What was his background if you remember?

Kaysen: Well, I don't. I can call up his face and so on. He was kind of a professional NSC bureaucrat. I don't know if he had been a Foreign Service Officer, I think not. Robert Johnson had been a Foreign Service Officer. He had been on the NSC staff and as you, I am sure, are aware, the NSC staff under Eisenhower was very much bigger. And he went back to the State Department. I think possibly by the end of the first year.

Willens: I forgot whether Michael Forrestal was a lawyer from New York or an investment banker?

Kaysen: I think Forrestal was a lawyer. He was a partner in Sherman and Sterling. He was also—and this is not irrelevant possibly to his appointment and certainly to the way he worked in Washington—a kind of almost adopted child of Averell Harriman. He was Jim Forrestal's son. When Forrestal committed suicide, Michael was about 13 or 14 years old. He was kind of brought up by Harriman. He was in the Navy, and he was assigned during the war or he was reassigned just after the war as an Assistant Naval Attache to the Embassy. Again, I am offering you speculations. The relationship I know very well, but it is speculation on my part that Forrestal's assignment was an arrangement that Harriman made. Forrestal knew Kennedy socially in New York and Washington. So Mac calling Forrestal down [to Washington], that was an element. I knew Forrestal when he was a law student. Bundy might well have known him when he was a law student. He graduated from Harvard Law School. Michael was 7 or 8 years younger than I, but I had been to war for awhile in World War II. So he was a law student when I was a graduate student and a young faculty member.

Willens: There came a time maybe late in 1961 when, after you returned from Okinawa, it looks as though you assumed responsibility for trying to elicit from the various agencies some kind of recommendation to the President.

Kaysen: I think it was late 1961 and early in 1962. I am sure this is again my reconstruction not my memory. I am sure that Mac said that Harlan is fussing around about Micronesia. It is a good idea, it seems to be a good idea where the President is interested, or whatever he said. And you know the Navy is dragging its feet and the Interior Department needs a push, so why don't you see what you can do. I mean that would be the way an assignment like that would arise in our staff.

Willens: One gets the sense from the materials that Cleveland was very much leading the effort within the Executive Branch to get some re-evaluation because of the U.N. concerns.

Kaysen: I think that is a correct assessment. Rusk was a very orderly man and, of course, the State Department is a big enterprise. It is a lot of people and a lot of responsibility. He was an

orderly man, and he believed he should rely on his Assistant Secretaries, and he did. I am not saying this with any tone to it. That was the way he ran his department. And therefore Cleveland had the responsibility and Rusk would let him have it.

Willens: You mentioned in our earlier conversation that you have known Cleveland over the years.

Kaysen: Well, you know I had not known him before we met in Washington, but then I would run into him at a conference and we would exchange correspondence. It has been awhile since I have seen him.

Willens: Do you happen to know whether he is still in Minnesota?

Kaysen: No, I don't. My last set of correspondence for Cleveland was out in Hawaii. At the East-West Center.

Willens: He did spend time there. I interviewed him in Minneapolis some years ago. The reason I ask, just off the wall, was that we recently tried to correspond with him and the letter came back with no forwarding address.

Kaysen: I don't remember reading his obituary. I think he is alive, but I don't really know where.

Willens: There is an indication in a lot of the published literature to the effect that President Kennedy had a more of a personal interest in the Pacific than might have been anticipated. You may have seen the comment that Congressman Aspinall thought Kennedy was obsessed with the matter because of his World War II experience.

Kaysen: But I think that is wrong.

Willens: Do you have any personal recollection of discussions with President Kennedy about the Trust Territory?

Kaysen: No, I do not. I really don't. I was surprised to learn that I drafted a NSAM.

Willens: Well, I hope we treated the White House fairly.

Kaysen: I think so. I read the whole thing. I was interested and I was glad to read it. I have only one broad comment. I think you played down what Kennedy took from Harlan Cleveland's effort and Arthur [Schlesinger] and whomever. What he took was the occasion to make a Cold War speech. That paragraph is not at all about Micronesia.

Siemer: Well, we understand that.

Kaysen: I mean you understand how it's placed. I think you have to sort of be up front about that. I can remember an occasion when Paul Nitze in an entirely different connection was talking about something about relations with DeGaulle, I think it was. And he said, "Well, what we have to say is that we didn't come here to talk about my backside, we came here to talk about your backside." That's part of it. Kennedy had that flavor. And he said the way for me to deal with criticism about Micronesia is tell people how the Russians deal with their colonial states.

Willens: Well, that is certainly a fair comment. We did cite Mr. McHenry, I guess, for the proposition that this did have some overall impact on U.S. policy towards colonialism.

Kaysen: It did, and so did my report on Okinawa. But just let me give you a comparison. I came in and said, in effect, that George Ball is right. There is a military dictatorship. General Caraway, who is the High Commissioner and the Commander of the Ninth Army, signed the passport for every Japanese who wanted to come to Okinawa or every Okinawan who wanted to go to Japan. I mean, can you imagine anything more absurd?

There were a lot more people in Okinawa than there were in the Trust Territory. I had various recommendations, including getting a civilian High Commissioner. Well, in the Kennedy Administration, we got a civilian Deputy High Commissioner. In the Johnson Administration, we continued that. But in the Nixon Administration, we allowed for the reversion of Okinawa to Japan. We withdrew our government and made a treaty with Japan for base rights. So it took that long, and the military was fighting every inch of the way.

Willens: So one might take from this exchange that for want of anything more specific that he could say about Micronesia, President Kennedy decided to address the issue of colonialism in the way in which he did.

Kaysen: There is no doubt in my mind that Kennedy had an anti-colonial attitude. It was displayed in many ways. You may or may not remember that the Indonesia got independence somewhat before this and there was a lot of press about it. There was a question of whether Indonesia was taking territories hadn't been granted by Holland, namely, the other half of New Guinea.

Siemer: Irian Jaya?

Kaysen: Yes, West Irian. They took it. The Dutch were outraged and called on us for help. And there were people in the State Department who sort of took the attitude that Netherlands was a valued NATO ally, and Sukarno was a bad man, and we ought to do something. I can remember hearing Kennedy saying, "Do you think I am going to war over West Irian on behalf of the Netherlands? They're crazy." He was very consistent in all that. He was quite interested in Okinawa, in the report. I mean, he was interested when Bobby and George Ball said what they said, and he was interested in the report. I think Kennedy had a very strong sense of what's very important and what's not. And having worked on these matters, you understand how little time the President had for anything. So that it is not likely that, having expressed an opinion, he would pay continued attention unless it was brought to him in some way. Unless something happened, somebody pushed, somebody asked for it, there was a crisis, there was a noise some place.

Willens: The question we have been exploring is whether there was really sufficient noise and threat of controversy emitting from Micronesia during these years, or whether the impetus came from the State Department because of U.N. problems, or from the Defense Department seeking reassurance as to what it could do out there in the future.

Kaysen: Here again I am offering you a generalized conclusion for what its worth. Having read all of the memoranda, remembered some things, and read your text which I thought was very clear, I would say that Cleveland sees what was a genuine occasion caused not only by the report of the previous [U.N.] visiting mission but by the fact that the President was going to make his first appearance in the General Assembly. And during the Kennedy term—as we then thought of it eight years—Micronesia would probably be the only Trust Territory left. We would be the last colonialists. And given what we said and what we were saying in Kennedy's record, he thought that was not the right thing, and I think he was right.

Siemer: Would it be fair to say that once you came back and presented your report on the Ryukyus that the military appreciated that they were probably going to revert to Japan?

Kaysen: No, I would say that the military fought about all the way. I am trying to think when Cy Vance became Secretary of State. Anyhow, all of this started with the Secretary of the Army. Cy Vance was then General Counsel of the Department of Defense. Bob McNamara blessed this, but he wasn't particularly concerned. Cy and Ros Gilpatric keep pushing. But

the military just was extraordinarily resistant. And you have to remember that McNamara was reining in the military on a lot more fronts than this. He was denying weapons that they wanted, he was changing the crown jewels of the Air Force, he was doing all these things. And they were there on the ground. The other thing that was important—and this was probably important in Micronesia although you don't address it much or I missed it if you do—it was the military who testified before Congress for the bulk of the AID appropriation that we gave to Okinawa. And again I am sure it was the Navy that got the substantial amount of resources for the part of the Saipan what they were interested in. Interior's ability to get money from Congress was puny compared to DOD. Nobody is as good at getting money from Congress as DOD.

Siemer: That certainly is right.

Kaysen: So all of these things are sort of in the calculus.

Willens: You mentioned the other day that you don't have any recollection of John Carver.

Kaysen: I have a vague recollection of him as a kind of earnest guy without too much spark.

Willens: He approached this issue, more so in the years after you left than when you were there, with a passion that often appears quite inexplicable.

Kaysen: Well, the memory I have is of an earnest guy. He decided this is right and important and, therefore, he went and did it. The government is full of good people like that.

Willens: It does appear as though the Interior appointees under Udall visited there [Micronesia] and came to their own independent judgment that something had to be done that departed from the policies of the previous Administration. Do you have any sense that the Interior Department really was motivated to address the human needs out there?

Kaysen: Yes, I do. And this is again more general than specific. I have an impression of Stuart Udall—and I interacted with him on a few things as well as Micronesia—that he was more concerned about these kinds of things. He was concerned about the Indians, he was concerned about conservation issues. Well, he was kind of a New Deal type. He was concerned about the sense of the department that it was a lobbyist for the mining, oil and gas interests, and he didn't like it.

Siemer: Was he very close to the President?

Kaysen: I don't know that. I think they were politically close. You know it was his brother who had been in Congress, Morris. I don't know, I simply don't know what the pre-1961, pre-campaign relationship was. I know that Udall was active in the campaign. I don't know what the pre-campaign relation between the President and Udall was.

Siemer: Could Udall call the President on something like this?

Kaysen: Sure.

Siemer: Would he?

Kaysen: The way the President behaved in general was that he always took calls from Cabinet members or tried to call them back as soon as he could. But the Cabinet members learned that, depending on whom it was and what the issue was, it would be more effective to call some staff guy in the following sense. Let's suppose Udall called the President and gets in at 11 o'clock. At 12 o'clock the President has a lunch with a foreign leader and at 2 o'clock he is going some place. If he hasn't recorded Udall's call—I don't mean recorded on a tape although he did tape the calls but recorded by saying to somebody like Kenny, Donald,

- Mac, or Larry that Stuart Udall called me about this and would you see that somebody worries about it—it would disappear. The President runs on perpetual overload.
- Willens: Were the National Security Action Memoranda a way of focusing Presidential attention on a matter?
- Kaysen: Absolutely. Every NSAM had some staff member attached to it. In a kind of an abstract way, it was Bundy. He was the National Security Adviser. But in practice, Komer or Forrestal or I or Mac was attached to any memoranda. That is, we knew that was on our action file. Unless it got to somebody else's action file. It was clear that Micronesia got to Michael Forrestal's action file sometime early in 1962 and stayed there.
- Willens: But in early 1962, you played a role in drafting NSAM 145.
- Kaysen: But before sometime by May or June. I am just looking at the documents and thinking about it. By then it was Mike's account. I was very much into disarming things at that time, and I was worrying about Russia a lot. I was also responsible for a war in the Congo.
- Siemer: How much did Bundy change the National Security Action Memo structure or the way you went about?
- Kaysen: He changed it enormously. The staff under Eisenhower—I don't know the numbers but there is a record on this—was at least 100 people. You know it was like the staff under Kissinger. And the process was much more formal. The Secretary of the NSC was a man named James Lay who was much more active. Barney Smith was really more of a record-keeper. If something was on my account, it would never be Barney Smith who would call up and say, "What are you doing about it?" It might be that the President, who had a very lively sense of person and not a very lively sense of organization, would say to Komer, when Komer was in the office, "Hey Bob what's going on about Micronesia." And Bob would know that was my account just as if the President said something to me about West Irian, I would call Bob and say, "Hey Bob, the President said x and y so make a note on it." There was a kind of an informal network that kept things attached to the people who worked for them.
- Siemer: So that when Defense had a view or a problem with respect to something that was going through that process they typically would call the NSC staffer?
- Kaysen: It would depend on what level. Bob McNamara would call Bundy or the President. Packard would call Bundy or the President. Paul Nitze would call Bundy or on a range of issues he would call me. Henry Rowan and a whole a lot of other people whose names you may not know would call me, and I would call them every day. The assistant secretaries tended to call the particular person who was dealing with their account. When China invaded India at the same time that the missile crisis was going on, I got the China-India war as my account. So Phil Talbot who was the Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East and I were talking every day for those ten days or two weeks. This was a very hot number and that was the way the structure worked. And we thought of ourselves, the NSC staff, as a kind of switchboard on the one hand and traffic cops for the President—to be sure that he got to see both what he wanted to see and what we, and that was an important part of our job, said he ought to see. These are Bundy's words, thoughts maybe not his words. But we all believed in this thought very strongly. A big part of our job was to see that no decision was made without the President being aware of it if in our judgment it was a Presidential decision. It was better to have the President say don't bother me with that, far better to make that error, than to make the error of letting an Assistant Secretary

of State or an Assistant Secretary of Defense, even a very important Assistant Secretary of Defense like Paul Nitze, agree on something and do it, sign off on it and send a cable and the President not know it if it was an issue that was of Presidential concern.

Willens: Was it your judgment early on that developing a new policy for Micronesia was of Presidential significance?

Kaysen: No, it was Cleveland's judgment, but when he put it forward I said that makes sense.

Willens: You think it was Cleveland's judgment?

Kaysen: Yes, I didn't initiate it. I was not an initiator in this at all. Harlan was the initiator.

Willens: But you didn't have any reservations about it?

Kaysen: I said this seems like a sensible idea, this is right.

Siemer: Do you recall Stevenson having much of a role in this particular area?

Kaysen: I don't. I only saw Stevenson a very few times. His White House connection was Arthur Schlesinger. And when he wanted to get something to the President he would call Arthur. When the President wanted to tell Stevenson something and didn't want to talk to him, he would tell Arthur.

Siemer: Did you know Roswell Gilpatric at all?

Kaysen: Sure, I knew him reasonably well. I had a lot of interaction with the Defense Department. I was the President's staff officer for those items in the military budget which he signed off on. The big ticket items. How many missiles do we buy and so on. And Ros Gilpatric was very deeply involved in all of that and I had a lot of traffic with him.

Siemer: What was in Gilpatric's background that brought into the Administration?

Kaysen: Well, he was Wall Street lawyer. I think Sullivan & Cromwell. No, not Sullivan & Cromwell, Cravath, Swaine & Moore. And he had been in the Truman Administration. I think he had been Undersecretary of the Air Force. I am not sure of that. He had served on a couple of Presidential Task Forces in the Truman Administration and he was kind of an important Democrat. And you know important Democrats are not thick on the ground on Wall Street. I don't know whether he and McNamara were acquainted before McNamara came to Washington. I don't believe so, but I cannot say that. I don't think Ford [Motor Company] was a client [of Cravath's], at least I didn't get that sense.

Willens: There were some suggestions throughout a period of years in the 1960's that the military officials at Defense were more or less satisfied with the status quo, namely keeping the Trusteeship, and it was the civilian officials who were more receptive to the other interests.

Kaysen: Again, the military wanted to have a free hand. I don't know whether anybody ever suggested that Saipan become a State, but I heard with my own ears a General, supposedly the Chief of Intelligence out there, suggest it would be a good idea if Okinawa would become a State since it was militarily so important.

Willens: There were debates in subsequent years, even in the years that you were there, about the concern expressed by Interior regularly that Chairman Aspinall and Congress were key players here and we in the Executive Branch had to defer to them.

Kaysen: No question about that.

Willens: Did you have any personal dealings with Aspinall?

- Kaysen: No, I didn't. On the whole, especially that early in the Administration, we on the NSC staff, this small group, did not talk to Congress. That sort of softened up a little later on, but on the whole the President's view was he was better at talking to Congressmen than we were. And as far as White House people go, he wanted O'Brien and company to do the talking to Congressmen or the Cabinet people who had a responsibility. And he wanted the White House staff people other than the Congressional staff to stay out of that.
- Willens: National Security Action Memorandum No. 145 created a Task Force that was chaired by Assistant Secretary Carver and you saw in our collection the memo from Forrestal after 11 months expressing his dissatisfaction with it. Do you have any recollection of hearing from Forrestal or others as to what the Task Force was doing or not doing?
- Kaysen: I do not, I'm sorry. I don't.
- Willens: Did you have any sense that the State Department was complaining perhaps to the staff at the White House that there was a need for some further White House intervention here?
- Kaysen: I can imagine that. It would be fairly typical that Harlan Cleveland—or the guy at the next level whose every day account it was—was getting impatient and would call up Forrestal and say, "Mike I need help."
- Willens: As you recall, Joe Sisco was Cleveland's Deputy for many years until he succeeded him.
- Kaysen: An activist guy as you know. Joe Sisco was somebody who did call people like me or Mike and we called him. It's very possible but I can't go past that.
- Willens: Was the creation of the Solomon Commission something that took place after you left?
- Kaysen: It took place just about then, and I remember putting two cents worth in. Although I remember really interacting with Tony Solomon later.
- Willens: Your study of Okinawa was viewed as the precedent for the Solomon effort.
- Kaysen: Yes, and what I am trying to think is in 1962 did Tony Solomon have some role as a consultant, something like that, to Herter and Bill Roth at the U.S. Trade crowd and Mike Blumenthal who went back and forth from Geneva to Washington as a part of the U.S. trade negotiating mission there. I have a memory of Tony showing up in that context and that is my memory of where I first knew him. But again don't bet the farm on it.
- Siemer: How about the Bureau of the Budget at the time, was Bell the director?
- Kaysen: Bell was the director of the Bureau of the Budget at that time. About early 1962, maybe middle 1962, he became Director of AID and Kermit Gordon became Director of the Bureau of the Budget.
- Siemer: What kind of influence did they have over this area when you were working on it?
- Kaysen: They had an important influence. One of the three or four top people in the Bureau of the Budget would be consulted on anything that would involve money, the budget, dealing with Congress, or legislation. Now legislation generally didn't play a role in the foreign affairs business. But there were Bell, Gordon, a Deputy Director, Ken Hansen, who was an Assistant Director. Those names come quickly to my mind as people we would talk with about an issue. Bell, of course, had been a Harvard colleague and somebody I knew well.
- Willens: Did you ever see or hear of the doctrine of *uti possidetis* before you saw it in our manuscript?
- Kaysen: Yes. I have some occasion to try to read a little about international law.

- Willens: I wonder whether you have any reaction to the general sense of the day that it was better to keep Micronesia as a single territory because that was sort of an important element of the decolonization movement?
- Kaysen: Well, let me put a different way which amounts to the same thing. I certainly have a sense that the atmosphere was such that if we said we were going to cut it in half this would involve a lot of resistance. Even though historically there was no particular basis for putting those things together except the Japanese who had conquered them.
- Siemer: When you were in the White House, had anybody on the staff actually been out there to Saipan or Tinian?
- Kaysen: I can't answer that question.
- Siemer: I worked with Bob Komer later on, and he had been everywhere. So I just wondered if he had been there.
- Kaysen: Bob had been in the Army and then he was in the CIA before he came over to the White House. He certainly had been a lot of places. I do not have a sense that Bob had served in the Pacific in the military, but I am not sure of that. I had served in Europe, Bundy had served in Europe. Mike was in the Navy but at the end of the war and I don't believe Mike had been out in the Pacific before then. Some of the junior people like Charles Johnson certainly was of an age to be in the Second World War and Bramley, too. I have no idea what their military service was, where it was or anything of the sort.
- Siemer: Was there anyone at the Defense Department that you remember turning to who actually had been out there or had some specific knowledge of that area?
- Kaysen: For all of the people that I dealt with regularly at the Defense Department, the answer would be no.
- Willens: The chief staff man for the House [Interior] Committee was someone who was in the Navy, had participated in the invasion and subsequently became part of the Naval Administration out there. He brought expertise to the House Committee that sometimes the Executive Branch had difficulty dealing with. The question really is whether President Kennedy's level of interest in this could ultimately have resulted in a Special Assistant in the White House that might had taken charge of this and focused on achieving the goals of NSAM 145. As you can see from the text, the interagency debate was endless.
- Kaysen: My answer to that is that it is very contingent on what would have happened in Vietnam had Kennedy lived. There are some people who think in the Second Kennedy Administration we might had removed ourselves in somewhat the way Nixon did. If that had been the case, then I can see the possibility for what you said. If Vietnam grew the way it grew in the Johnson Administration I don't think it would have happened. The energies for the Pacific would have been taken up with Saigon and its problems and Japan and China which are part of the same picture. It would had been taken up with the big security problems in the Pacific—China, Korea, and Japan.
- Willens: Late in the 1960's, in the early years of the Nixon Administration, the intensification and concern about Vietnam led the military into a view that we can't afford to do anything with respect to the Trust Territory except bring the islands within the United States as a territorial entity so that you could have the fallback bases for sure. So I guess one could argue that the more serious the external threats, the more need was perceived to bring this territory under U.S. sovereignty.

- Kaysen: The balance between the political considerations of the U.N. and the security needs would have been different. The President and the Secretary of Defense can have only so many fights with the military going on at once. Bob McNamara was very conscious of this. If there are a number of important occasions in which the President and the Secretary have an idea of what should be done that is different from the military ideas, and they are going to have to work their way to some agreement on how to do it, then the influence of the military on secondary matters gets bigger and the willingness of the civilian leadership of the services to extend their efforts to one secondary matter gets much smaller.
- Willens: Right. That is certainly the way we perceived it, and that is what happened early in the Nixon Administration. When there was an opportunity to do something here, it sort of fell by the wayside. In any event, that sort of covers our area.
- Kaysen: I've told you enough more than I know so that it is getting dangerous.
- Willens: We are very appreciative of you taking the time and looking at the materials. I will send you a copy of the transcript.
- Kaysen: I think it is important to try to get the history straight and I am glad to help.
- Willens: Thank you and we will be in touch with you when we manage to transcribe this and we look forward to your reaction.
- Kaysen: Thank you.