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NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR. STAFF ASSISTANT ROBERT C. ("BUD") MCFARLANE FILES, 1974-77

Collection Type

White House Office Files

Extent

3.0 linear feet (ca. 6,000 pages)

Record Type

Textual

Access

Open, but some materials continue to be national security classified and restricted. Access is governed by the donor's deed of gift, a copy of which is available on request, and National Archives and Records Administration regulations (36 CFR 1256).

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Processed by

William McNitt, October 1996; Revised by Donna Lehman, September 2013

Scope and Content Note

After a long career as a Marine Corps officer and a year as a White House Fellow, Robert C. ("Bud") McFarlane joined the National Security Council staff as military aide to the National Security Adviser in June 1973. He remained in that position for the rest of the Nixon administration and much of the Ford administration, then was promoted to Special Assistant to the President in 1976.

Although officially listed as an aide to Henry Kissinger for much of his NSC service, McFarlane appears to have worked more closely with Kissinger's deputy Brent Scowcroft. After Scowcroft became National Security Adviser in November 1975, McFarlane assisted both Scowcroft and his deputy William Hyland. McFarlane worked in an office on the Ground Floor of the White House West Wing with other aides to the National Security Adviser for the first part of the Ford administration, but later moved upstairs into Hyland's office.

McFarlane was responsible for supervision of the NSC decision process, including substantive review, management, and criticism of all matters requiring action by the President or National Security Adviser. He also performed other aide functions, such as assuring logistical, secretarial, and communications support to Kissinger, Scowcroft, and Hyland while they were away from Washington. During the early months of the Ford administration, McFarlane apparently shared the handling of NSC congressional relations matters with Les Janka and participated in the administration's Legislative Interdepartmental Group, but Janka assumed full responsibility for this area early in 1975.

During the intelligence investigations conducted by the Rockefeller Commission and the Church and Pike Committees, McFarlane served as the NSC contact with other agencies and White House offices for purposes of coordinating the administration's response. He advised Kissinger and Scowcroft on the release of documents to investigators and drafted memoranda attempting to implement recommendations of the Rockefeller Commission. Later he served as the NSC representative on the administration's Intelligence Coordinating Group. During the course of the investigations, the NSC brought in Air Force Captain John Matheny to assist McFarlane. Matheny eventually took over most of the intelligence work, freeing McFarlane to focus on other aspects of his position.

Although the McFarlane Files cover a wide variety of issues and activities, the best documented topic is the intelligence investigations and reforms. The subject file contains McFarlane's drafts of decision memoranda to the President concerning the implementation of Rockefeller Commission recommendations, July-September 1975; testimony of administration officials; and analyses of the reports of the Murphy and Rockefeller Commissions. The chronological file contains additional material on the Church Committee, Pike Committee, Rockefeller Commission, President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, and the Intelligence Coordinating Group. However, virtually no materials on the February 1976 Executive order reforming the intelligence community, or the decision making process that led to its issuance, appear in the collection.

The collection partially documents other aspects of McFarlane's work, including his advice and recommendations to Kissinger, Scowcroft, and Hyland; coordination of NSC decision papers for the President; and NSC congressional liaison during the

early months of the administration. His memoranda and notes to the National Security Advisers, often returned to him with their comments or acknowledgment, are especially important. Many documents reveal NSC processes and procedures and provide valuable insights into NSC channels of communication. McFarlane did not routinely save copies of most documents that he reviewed or edited, however, so a researcher must look for them in the files of the National Security Advisers and other NSC collections.

Related Materials (September 2013)

The working files of National Security Advisers Henry Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft are closely related. The files of Staff Secretary Jeanne Davis and Staff Assistants John Matheny and Peter Rodman contain additional materials that reflect the staff role in providing logistical support. They also include documentation related to the intelligence investigations and reorganization, as do the NSC Information Liaison with Commissions and Committees Files and several White House collections, including the files of Philip Buchen, John Marsh, Michael Raoul-Duval, James Wilderotter, and Mason Cargill/Timothy Hardy.

Last Modified Date

2025-03-17

Intelligence Investigations Subject File, 1975.

(Boxes 1-2, 0.8 linear feet)

Memoranda, testimony, reports, and lists. The materials cover from April to September 1975 and document McFarlane's work on drafting and reviewing presidential decision memoranda on implementation of Rockefeller Commission recommendations; testimony of administration officials before the Rockefeller Commission and the Church Committee; and analyses of the reports of the Murphy Commission (intelligence recommendations only) and Rockefeller Commission.

Arranged alphabetically by topic and chronologically thereunder.

Box 1 - Intelligence Investigations Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Church Committee - Colby Testimony, May 23, 1975 (1)-(2)

Status	Title
OPEN	Church Committee - Kissinger ♦ Testimony on Chile, Aug. 12, 1975 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Church Committee - Materials on Chile, Aug.-Sept. 1975
OPEN	Murphy Commission Recommendations on Intelligence
OPEN	Rockefeller Commission - Agency Comments on the Report, June 1975 (1)-(3)
OPEN	Rockefeller Commission - Finding Aid to the Files (1)-(4)

Box 2 - Intelligence Investigations Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Rockefeller Commission - General
OPEN	Rockefeller Commission - Implementation of Recommendations, July-Sept. 1975 (1)-(8)
OPEN	Rockefeller Commission - Report, May-June 1975
OPEN	Rockefeller Commission - Testimony: Richard Bissell, April 21, 1975
OPEN	Rockefeller Commission - Testimony: Richard Helms, April 28, 1975

Chronological File, 1974-77.

(Boxes 3-8, 2.2 linear feet)

Memoranda, letters, cables, draft Presidential speeches and statements, briefing papers, notes, and occasional memoranda of conversations. The series contains not only carbons of outgoing items, but also some ribbon copies that were returned to McFarlane and even some handwritten notes.

The materials concern policy matters, coordination of decision papers for the President, and operation of the NSC. Included are copies of substantive Kissinger and Scowcroft memoranda to the President and White House staff drafted by McFarlane; notes and memoranda to Kissinger, Scowcroft, or Hyland; and cables sent to Kissinger or Scowcroft during trips.

The series covers a wide variety of policy matters, but does not really present a full picture on any. Attachments referred to in the memoranda often do not appear in

the file. Many topics are represented by only a few scattered documents.

The series' most substantive topic, in quantity and quality, is the intelligence investigations and proposed reforms of the intelligence community. Specific topics include the Church Committee (including its requests for documents), Pike Committee, Rockefeller Commission (especially its report and attempts to implement its recommendations), President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, and the Intelligence Coordinating Group (including handwritten notes from its meetings).

Other topics with significant amounts of scattered material include foreign aid legislation, congressional liaison (early months only), review of the Murphy Commission report, Vietnamese War (especially aid to Cambodia and South Vietnam and the evacuations), American policies in Africa, and aid to Turkey. Some campaign-related items concerning attacks on the administration's foreign policy by Ronald Reagan appear, as do materials on the platform, President Ford's convention acceptance speech, and the debates.

Several memoranda of conversations appear in the series, but none cover meetings attended by the President. They concern SALT (several in the fall of 1974), legislative matters (Nov. 15, 1974), the Intelligence Coordinating Group (Sept. 23, 1975), and Angola (March 11, 1976).

Arranged chronologically.

Box 3 - Chronological File

Status	Title
OPEN	August 1974-January 1975

Box 4 - Chronological File

Status	Title
OPEN	February-June 1975

Box 5 - Chronological File

Status	Title
OPEN	July-October 1975

Box 6 - Chronological File

Status	Title
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OPEN November 1975-April 1976

Box 7 - Chronological File

Status

Title

OPEN May-September 1976

Box 8 - Chronological File

Status

Title

OPEN October 1976-January 1977