



McFarlane, Robert C. "Bud": Files, 1982-1985

Finding Aid Type

White House Staff and Office File Collections

Subtitle/Office

National Security Affairs, Advisor to the President for

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Record Type

Textual

Biography

Biography

Robert Carl "Bud" McFarlane (1937-2022) was a retired Marine Corps officer who served in political appointments with Henry Kissinger, Alexander Haig, and the Senate Armed Services Committee. He was the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs for President Ronald Reagan from 1983 through 1985.

McFarlane was involved in the Iran-Contra Affair. He plead guilty to charges of withholding information from Congress but received a pardon from President George H.W. Bush on Christmas Eve, 1992.

McFarlane was born in Texas to a former Texas Democratic Congressman William McFarlane on July 12, 1937. After graduating from high school, McFarlane entered the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, where he graduated in 1959. He was the third member of his family to attend the Academy, after his uncle Robert McFarlane (1925) and his brother Bill (1949). At the academy he graduated in the top 15 percent of the class and lettered twice in gymnastics. He sang in the Chapel Choir, was a Brigade Administrative Officer and 14th Company Commander.

Following graduation from the Naval Academy in 1959, McFarlane was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps, where he served as a field artillery officer. As a Marine Corps officer, McFarlane commanded platoons, a battery of field artillery howitzers and was the Operations Officer for an artillery regiment. He taught Gunnery at the Army Advanced Artillery Course. He was the executive assistant to the Marine Corps' Operations Deputy from 1968-1971, preparing the deputy for meetings with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. During this assignment he was also the Action Officer in the Marine Corps Operations Division for Europe/NATO, the Middle East and Latin America.

McFarlane served two combat tours in the Vietnam War. In March 1965, he commanded the artillery battery in the first landing of U.S. combat forces in Vietnam. While deployed during his first tour, McFarlane was selected for graduate studies as an Olmsted Scholar. McFarlane received a master's degree in strategic studies with highest honors from the Graduate Institute of International Studies (*Institut de Hautes Etudes Internationales*, HEI) in Geneva, Switzerland.

After attending the Graduate Institute of International Studies, McFarlane returned for a second tour in Vietnam, 1967-1968. This tour, he was a Regimental Fire Support Coordinator for the 3rd Marine Division deployed along the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone during the Tet Offensive. He organized all fire support (B-52s,

naval gunfire from the USS *New Jersey* (BB-62) and artillery) for forces deployed at Con Thien, Cam Lo, Dong Ha, The Rockpile, Khe Sanh and points between. McFarlane received a Bronze Star and a Navy Commendation Medal both the Valor devices.

Following his second tour in Vietnam and a tour at Headquarters Marine Corps, McFarlane was selected as the first Marine Corps White House Fellow in 1971. McFarlane was assigned to the Office of Legislative Affairs at the White House and at the conclusion of that assignment was selected as the Military Assistant to Henry Kissinger at the National Security Council. In this post, McFarlane dealt with intelligence exchanges with the People's Republic of China from 1973 to 1976, giving detailed intelligence briefings to China at the time of the Sino-Soviet split. He also accompanied Kissinger on his visits to China. In addition, McFarlane dealt with other aspects of foreign policy, including the Middle East, relations with the Soviet Union and arms control. McFarlane was appointed by President Gerald Ford as his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs while a Lieutenant Colonel and was awarded the Navy Distinguished Service Medal in 1976.

Upon leaving the White House, McFarlane was assigned to the National Defense University, where he co-authored a book on crisis management while concurrently receiving a diploma from the National War College.

He ended his Marine Corps career on Okinawa as Operations Officer for the 12th Marine Regiment. McFarlane retired in 1979 with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

In 1979, he was appointed by U.S. Senator John Tower to the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee, where he was responsible for staffing Senate consideration of the SALT II Treaty from 1979 to 1981. He also assisted in formulating Ronald Reagan's foreign policy platform during the 1980 presidential campaign.

In 1981, President Reagan appointed McFarlane and the Senate confirmed him as Counselor to the Department of State. In this post he assisted Secretary of State Alexander Haig, most specifically with Middle East issues. He also worked with Congress on restoring money to the MX missile program and to advance nuclear arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. He also met and worked closely with Deputy Secretary William P. Clark. Clark pushed Reagan to appoint McFarlane as his Deputy after Clark went to the White House as President Reagan's National

Security in 1982.

McFarlane received the appointment from President Reagan as the Deputy National Security Advisor. McFarlane was responsible for the integration of policy recommendations of the Departments of State, Treasury, Defense and other agencies. In 1983, he was appointed by the president as his Special Representative in the Middle East responsible for Israeli-Arab negotiations particularly concerned with the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon and ongoing fighting in Lebanon concerning the Palestine Liberation Organization forces stationed there.

Due to this heavy involvement in the Lebanon War, McFarlane faced criticism for his part in involving the United States armed forces in the Lebanon Civil War. McFarlane supported the gunship bombardment of Lebanese opposition forces. These U.S. aggressions may have led to the 1983 Beirut barracks bombing where 241 American servicemen were killed. McFarlane spoke often on the type of coordinated policy needed to fight terrorism of this sort and he stated that conflicts within the Reagan Administration over any use of force in this situation, even against known terrorist training camps in retaliation for this bombing, created a long-term problem in dealing with terrorism in modern society.

Following his Mideast assignments, McFarlane returned to the White House where he was appointed President Reagan's National Security Advisor after William Clark left to be Secretary of the Interior. His duties included meeting with the President daily to discuss foreign relations of the United States. In this post, he was responsible for the development of U.S. foreign and defense policy and coordinating and negotiating agency positions for presentation to the President. He was a supporter of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI or "Star Wars") and he worked with Secretary of State George Shultz to try and "reset" United States relations with the Soviet Union. As the National Security Advisor, McFarlane was a member of the National Security Council and he was the head of the White House National Security Council (NSC) staff.

At this time, he also became heavily involved in the President's policy on Central America and dealing with the Soviet-backed Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. The President strongly favored supplying and supporting a group of Nicaraguan "contras", who he referred to as Freedom Fighters, to oust the Sandinistas. Congress wavered on support for this policy throughout the Reagan Administration, at various

times pulling all but humanitarian support for the contras.

In 1984, Reagan directed McFarlane to keep the financially strapped contras alive as a viable fighting force, despite a ban on U.S. military assistance. McFarlane assigned the job to a National Security Council staff member, Lt. Col. Oliver North. North kept McFarlane generally informed of his efforts on behalf of the contras, which McFarlane told North to undertake in utmost secrecy. When Congress in 1985 inquired about press reports of North's contra-aid efforts, McFarlane denied the allegations.

With these underground efforts to assist and fund the contras, the NSC staff under President Reagan assumed a role beyond that of an advisory or coordinating body: It at times became operational, taking on primary responsibility for the execution of the contra covert operations and then a covert operation in Iran. McFarlane was involved in some of these operational tasks that were of high personal interest to the President.

Following the withdrawal of American troops from Lebanon and the continued Lebanon Civil War, pro-Iranian terrorists in Beirut began a long campaign to take American hostages for certain demands. President Reagan was extremely anxious to negotiate the release of these hostages and return them to their families. In 1985, McFarlane and CIA Director William Casey were chief advocates to Reagan of a scheme to reach out to moderate Iranians to apply pressure on "Hezbollah" (the Iranian-backed) Lebanese terrorists to release U.S. hostages and to perhaps affect some breakthrough in U.S./Iran relations. Again, McFarlane used NSC staffer North to help implement this scheme.

This situation quickly devolved into a straight "arms for hostages" deal with the United States selling arms to Iran through Israel and with the release of only two hostages. McFarlane says by late December 1985 he was urging Reagan to end the arms shipments. McFarlane resigned on December 4, 1985, telling Reagan his strained relationship with Secretary of Defense Weinberger and new White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan were making his job difficult. He was replaced by Vice Admiral John Poindexter, his deputy.

Although McFarlane had resigned, he stayed in contact with John Poindexter, and with North. He remained involved in the Iran weapons sales, acting as President Reagan's emissary on an ill-fated mission to Tehran in May 1986. In November 1986,

McFarlane helped Poindexter and North conceal details of the Iran initiative as the story was breaking publicly just as they had done when the operation was underway.

And more controversy was to follow when Attorney General Edwin Meese discovered that money paid by Iran into secret Swiss bank accounts for the arms had been diverted to support the Nicaraguan contras. When the fuller details of these two covert missions were exposed, McFarlane voluntarily provided information to Congress, to President Reagan's Tower Board and to an Independent Counsel investigation. He was still, however, unwilling to reveal all the covert operations involving contra aid and support. Eventually he plead guilty to four misdemeanor charges that he withheld information from Congress about North's contra-support activities and about the solicitation of foreign funding for the contras. He was pardoned by President George H.W. Bush in 1992.

McFarlane suffered more than criminal charges as a result of the Iran-Contra Affairs. On February 7, 1987, disheartened, and depressed over his role in disappointing the president, McFarlane attempted suicide with an overdose of 25 to 30 valium tablets and was admitted into the hospital. McFarlane stated that he had failed his country. McFarlane was publicly open about his mental health and depression during this time. He became an advocate of mental health treatments and dealing with depression.

After recovering his health, McFarlane founded Global Energy Investors, LLC, which sponsored energy and environmental projects in Brazil, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia and China.

McFarlane became committed to fuel alternatives and focused on raising public understanding of the risks to the security of our nation when all air, sea, and land transportation must utilize a single fuel (oil) whose price is set by a foreign cartel. He had been a founding member, director, or advisor to various groups promoting this view including the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, the Set-America Free Coalition, the U.S. Energy Security Council, the Fuel Freedom Foundation and the Alphabet Energy Board.

McFarlane was also a member of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) Board of Advisors.

McFarlane was on the Advisory Board for the Partnership for a Secure America, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to recreating the bipartisan center in American national security and foreign policy.

McFarlane was an advisor to John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign.

Since 2009, McFarlane had been working in the southern region of Sudan and Darfur on intertribal relations and development projects. On September 30, 2009, the *Washington Post* published a story suggesting that McFarlane's contract for this work, which was supported by the government of Qatar, was the result of a request by Sudanese officials. McFarlane denied any improper contact with Sudanese officials or efforts to avoid disclosure of his work. That article prompted the FBI investigators to review McFarlane's activities in the Sudan. After an exhaustive probe that lasted three years, investigators concluded their search and did not file any criminal charges.

McFarlane received an honorary doctorate from the Institute for World Politics in Washington, DC in 2014

In the past decade, McFarlane was the co-founder and Director of IP3 International (short for International Peace, Power & Prosperity), a consortium of firms wanting to build nuclear power reactors in Saudi Arabia and other parts of the Middle East. The firm is led by retired U.S. military commanders and former White House officials. In May 2019, McFarlane wrote an op-ed in the *Washington Times* advocating for developing nuclear power generation in the Middle East titled "The New Imperialism." This op-ed outlined a proposal dubbed the "Middle East Marshall Plan" by its backers.

McFarlane wrote, with the assistance of Zofia Smardz, an autobiography entitled, *Special Trust* published in 1994.

In 1959 McFarlane married Jonda Riley. They resided in Washington, DC. Their family included three children: Lauren, Melissa, Scott, and eight grandchildren. McFarlane died May 12, 2022 at a hospital in Lansing, Michigan. He was 84. Cause of death was an exacerbation of a previous lung condition, said his son, Scott McFarlane. McFarlane was hospitalized while visiting with family in Michigan.

Scope and Content Note

Scope & Content Note

McFarlane's collection is a reflection of his three foreign policy positions in the Reagan Administration: Counselor of the Department of State, 1981-April 1982; Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, April 1982-October 1983; and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, October 1983-December 1985.

When McFarlane followed William Clark, Deputy Secretary of State, to the National Security Council in 1982, he brought some material with him. His collection then became a mixture of his State Department position and his two positions at the White House.

This collection was one of a group of National Security Council collections seized by the FBI regarding the Iran-Contra affairs (see the McFarlane biography for more information on this incident). The McFarlane collection is based on the material returned by the FBI to the National Security Council Secretariat.

The Robert McFarlane collection consists of three series: SERIES I: Subject File; SERIES II: Chronological File; and SERIES III: Administrative File.

Series List

SERIES I: SUBJECT

SERIES II: CHRONOLOGICAL FILE

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Last Modified Date

2024-02-26

SERIES I: SUBJECT

RAC Box 1

| Status | Title |
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| Status | Title |
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|---------------|---|
| OPEN | Middle East (Secret/Super Sensitive): Middle East Reading File #2 |
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| OPEN | Sakhain [Sakhalin] Project (1982) |
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|--------|---|
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| OPEN | START (05/20/1982-07/15/1983) |

SERIES II: CHRONOLOGICAL FILE

RAC Box 4

| Status | Title |
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| OPEN | Chron January/February 1982 (McFarlane) [01/01/1982-01/31/1982] |
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| OPEN | Chron January/February 1982 (McFarlane) [02/10/1982-02/17/1982] |
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| OPEN | Chron May 1982 (McFarlane) [05/01/1982-05/06/1982] |
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| OPEN | Chron May 1982 (McFarlane) [05/18/1982-05/19/1982] |
| OPEN | Chron May 1982 (McFarlane) [05/20/1982-05/24/1982] |
| OPEN | Chron May 1982 (McFarlane) [05/25/1982] |

| Status | Title |
|--------|---|
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| OPEN | Chron June 1982 (McFarlane) [06/08/1982-06/10/1982] |
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| OPEN | Chron June 1982 (McFarlane) [06/14/1982-06/16/1982] |
| OPEN | Chron June 1982 (McFarlane) [06/17/1982-06/20/1982] |
| OPEN | Chron June 1982 (McFarlane) [06/21/1982-06/22/1982] |
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| OPEN | Chron July 1982 [07/01/1982-07/07/1982] |
| OPEN | Chron July 1982 [07/08/1982-07/12/1982] |
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| OPEN | Chron August 1982 [08/01/1982-08/05/1982] |
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| OPEN | Chron August 1982 [08/11/1982-08/12/1982] |
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| OPEN | Chron August 1982 [08/14/1982-08/23/1982] |
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| Status | Title |
|---------------|--|
| OPEN | Chron October 1982 [10/22/1982-10/27/1982] |
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| OPEN | Official Photo File M-Z [R] 1984 |
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| OPEN | Official Photo File M-Z [T-U-V] 1984 |

| Status | Title |
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RAC Box 11

| Status | Title |
|---------------|--|
| OPEN | Press / Media Requests - 1982-1983 (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | Press Requests 1984 (January 1984-June 1984) (1)-(4) |
| OPEN | Press Requests 1984 (July 1984-December 1984) (1)-(4) |
| OPEN | Press Requests 1985 (January 1985-June 1985) (1)-(5) |
| OPEN | Press Requests 1985 (July 1985-December 1985) (1)(2) |
| OPEN | PROF Notes 1984 (November 1984-December 1984) |
| OPEN | PROF Notes 1985 (January 1985-June 1985) (1)(2) |
| OPEN | [Email] PROF Notes - May 1985-May 1986 |
| OPEN | Note Log Fortier, McFarlane [June 1985-August 1985] (1)(2) |
| OPEN | Résumés - 1982-1983 (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | Résumés - 1984 (1)-(6) |
| OPEN | Schedules (President's Monthly Block) 1983 (July 1983-December 1983) (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | Schedules (President's Monthly Block) 1984 (January 1984-June 1984) (1)-(3) |

RAC Box 12

| Status | Title |
|---------------|---|
| OPEN | Schedules (President's Monthly Block) 1985 (January 1985-June 1985) (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | Schedules (President's Block) 1985 (July 1985-December 1985) (1)(2) |
| OPEN | Schedule (Vice President) 1985 (January 1985-June 1985) (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | Pending Speaking Requests 1984 (January 1984-June 1984) (1)-(8) |
| OPEN | Pending Speaking Requests 1984 (July 1984-December 1984) (1)-(6) |
| OPEN | Pending Requests 1984: Address American Business Conference (09/12/1984) |

| Status | Title |
|--------|---|
| OPEN | Pending Tasking Memos to Staff / Agencies 1983 (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | Weekly-Minder Appointment Book 1985 (WRCM-1 12/30/1986) (1)(2) |
| OPEN | Weekly-Minder Appointment Book 1985 (WRCM-2 12/30/1986) (1)(2) |
| OPEN | Weekly-Minder Appointment Book 1986 (WRCM-3 05/26/1987) |
| OPEN | [McFarlane Appointment Schedules] 01/01/1986- 05/04/1986) |
| OPEN | [Berlin Airlift Material] |
| OPEN | [Filing] (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | RCM Handwritten Notes 1985 (1)(2) |
| OPEN | [Investigation: Document Copies Dated 01/09/1987] |
| OPEN | [Investigation: List] |
| OPEN | [Investigation: Review/General Doolittle Ceremony] |
| OPEN | Schedule: Personal 1985 |
| OPEN | Schedule: Personal 1986 |
| OPEN | [Schedule: Trip November 1984] |
| OPEN | [Schedule: Trip [Geneva, January 1985] |
| OPEN | Schedule: Trip [Europe May 1985] |
| OPEN | Schedule: Trip [Meeting with Shevardnadze, September 1985] |
| OPEN | [Schedule: Trip Various] (1)(2) |