

THE “TANK”

THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF



Christopher D. Holmes

Joint History and Research Office
Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Washington, DC • 2026

Cover photo: "U.S. High Command Plans Strategy in Map Filled Sanctum," *Life*, Vol. 18, No. 8, (22 February 1943), 73.



*Public Health Service building appropriated for wartime use by the Combined Chiefs of Staff.
(Library of Congress photo)*

Major General Ira C. Eaker, US Army Air Forces, was a man on a mission when he arrived at the Combined Chiefs of Staff building on Constitution Avenue in Washington, DC, on a cool and cloudy day in late April 1943. The weather was appropriate for the occasion. Sixteen months had passed since the United States formally entered World War II and Eaker was to present to the nation's seniormost military leaders—four men who comprised the Joint Chiefs of Staff—a plan that would change the character of the war, then raging in Europe. The general's briefing concerned the concentrated, heavy bombing of German industries, an effort that would become known as the Combined Bomber Offensive.¹ It was a sensitive and weighty subject, one suitable to be discussed and debated in the secure and privileged space recently built for the chiefs and specifically for occasions like this.

Leaving his vehicle, Eaker climbed the front stairs of what had been the Public Health Service building before the war demanded its repurposing for military use. He crossed the marble lobby—notable for its distinctly un-militaristic art deco motifs—before descending a short, unremarkable flight of stairs opposite the front doors. At the base of these stairs, Eaker stepped through a narrow doorway surrounded by a run of pipes that intruded on the passageway, giving it a distinctly industrial, almost claustrophobic feel. On the other side of the door, he stepped into Room 100, a large and windowless space of curved walls that gave one an impression of stepping into a *tank*, an experience that gave rise to the room's nickname by officers who later entered the space.² It was in that space that the chiefs awaited Eaker and his briefing.

The four men Eaker briefed had been meeting regularly since the United States declared war on Japan and Germany nearly a year and a half earlier. In the weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, a delegation of British officials that included Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and his military chiefs, traveled to Washington to plot a cooperative course with their American

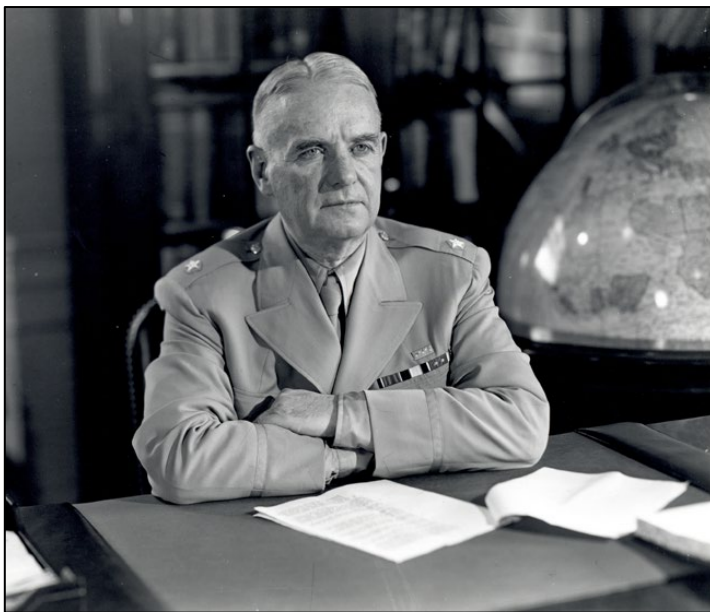
allies. The British had been at war for nearly two years and arrived with a well-functioning military staff capable of driving strategic discussions with the Americans, who quickly were coming to the realization that the scope and scale of their responsibilities far exceeded what they had imagined. To best integrate with their British counterparts, the American service chiefs created a new body they called the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in January 1942.

Consisting of the Chief of Staff of the Army, Chief of Naval Operations, the commanding general of the Army Air Forces, and the Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief, the JCS were co-equals.³ In addition to addressing their specific services' needs, these four men were responsible for developing national-level strategies for concurrently fighting three adversaries around the world. Wars of such scale are resource intensive, consuming machinery, munitions, and personnel at incredible volumes. The JCS were likewise responsible for setting requirements for domestic industrial production to supply the American and allied military efforts, ensuring that the means were adequate to achieve the desired strategic outcomes.

Vast amounts of complex information flowed in the chiefs' direction, creating a sheer volume that threatened to overwhelm and stymie deliberations, let alone decision-making. Such information typically took the form of traditional written reports, a format that risked stealing every moment of available time necessary to read and then imagine in their own minds' eyes what the reports' authors wished to convey. The chiefs needed to be able to work more efficiently. Then there was then the matter of actual discussion and deliberation. To that end, they recognized they required a private and secure location to discuss and deliberate over all that had been presented to them.

The chiefs understood they were not alone in confronting these problems of scope, scale, and inefficiencies. President Franklin D. Roosevelt faced the same challenges. To help solve his problem, the president had turned toward an old friend, William J. Donovan, and the chiefs would do the same.

William J. Donovan and "Visual Presentation"



*William J. Donovan as a brigadier general.
(National Archives photo)*

William Donovan first met Franklin Roosevelt when they were classmates at Columbia University Law School. A native New Yorker, Donovan practiced law for several years before World War I led him to suspend his legal work for military service. That war took Donovan to Europe, and it was in France that his heroism in combat earned him the Medal of Honor and national fame. When the war ended, Donovan returned to practicing law in New York. He was an unconventional lawyer whose innovations in the presentation of evidence were revolutionary. Rather than relying solely on his lawyerly orations, Donovan began using visual aids to present complex information to juries. In his view, presenting information visually rendered it more

intelligible.⁴ His inspiration came from a peculiar place: popular medical displays at international exhibitions throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵ Donovan used these methods to great effect, especially when he moved from private to public practice. His techniques secured several convictions in cases of organized crime and police corruption while serving in the Department of Justice.⁶

Donovan was a man who made impressions, and those impressions made him especially well connected. When war broke out in Europe in 1939, President Roosevelt appointed Donovan's good friend, William Franklin "Frank" Knox, to serve as secretary of the Navy. Knox, confident in Donovan's abilities, recommended him to the president, encouraging Roosevelt to capitalize on the lawyer's talents. Roosevelt accepted the recommendation and tasked Donovan to conduct several fact-finding missions overseas, intended to gauge the capabilities of America's allies and its possible adversaries.⁷ By summer 1941, Donovan foresaw the United States becoming deeply involved in the wars in Europe and Asia. The question was a matter of when, not if.

As certain as Donovan was of American involvement, he was also clear-eyed about the need for senior government leaders and officials to be able to grapple with the volume and complexity of information presented to them. Here he relied on his experiences as a lawyer. "Strategy, without information upon which it can rely is helpless," wrote Donovan in a memorandum for Roosevelt. On the cusp of the United States entering the war, Donovan was worried that the government lacked an "effective service for analyzing, comprehending, and appraising" information about America's likely enemies and their respective "economic and military resources."⁸ Roosevelt concurred and appointed Donovan the coordinator of strategic information in July, a title that evolved into the coordinator of information (COI) and was the eponymous name of the organization he formed and then led.⁹ Donovan, as head of COI, had considerable access—reporting directly to the president—and a broad mandate "to collect and analyze information and data, which may bear upon national security; to correlate such strategic information and data; and to make such information and data available to the president and to such departments and officials of the government as the president may determine."¹⁰

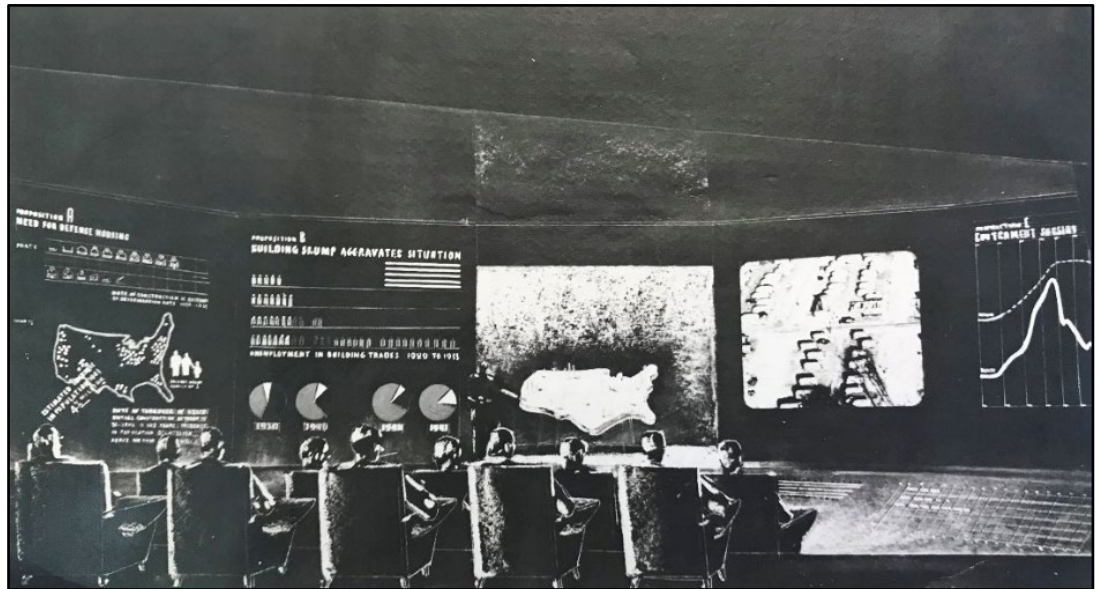
For Donovan, the adage of "knowledge is power" was a truism. In this coming war, information would be as important as guns, bullets, and planes. Making sense of that information remained his focus, because the faster American leaders could understand and act upon a given issue, the greater the advantage the United States could have over its enemies. Now empowered by Roosevelt to implement his ideas, Donovan worked to determine how best to communicate material to decisionmakers. Just as in his legal practice, Donovan believed that "easy, prompt visual presentation" could ease "the tired mind of the president, or another high official, now burdened by a mountain of reports."¹¹ Leveraging his authority as head of COI, Donovan proposed that various government departments and agencies submit information bound for the president to the Visual Presentation Branch, an office within COI that was responsible for consolidating information and translating it into graphic displays. Finished products were to then be displayed in a "visual presentation" building where Roosevelt and other senior officials could view a "panorama of concentrated information" whenever the need arose.¹²

Converting complex information into a visual presentation was one important step, but Donovan considered the setting where that information would be presented to be just as important. In essence, the conveyance of information required a production. Leveraging his personal and professional connections, Donovan called on his friend and Hollywood filmmaker, Merian C. Cooper, who had directed *King Kong* eight years earlier. Months before, in spring

1941, Cooper was gathering material in Britain for a new film and had the opportunity to visit the war room used by the British government. Based on his observations there and sensing what Donovan hoped to achieve in Washington, Cooper proposed a “war theatre room” to “present at any hour, day or night, a complete visual picture of world conditions as they might relate to the war.” The goal was a setting where Roosevelt could process data “within a few minutes...which might take months to assimilate by written reports or verbal presentation.”¹³

Cooper and Donovan were sympatico. The latter, building on his own instincts and Cooper’s ideas, conceived the construction of a “war theatre building” consisting of “mechanical and electrical

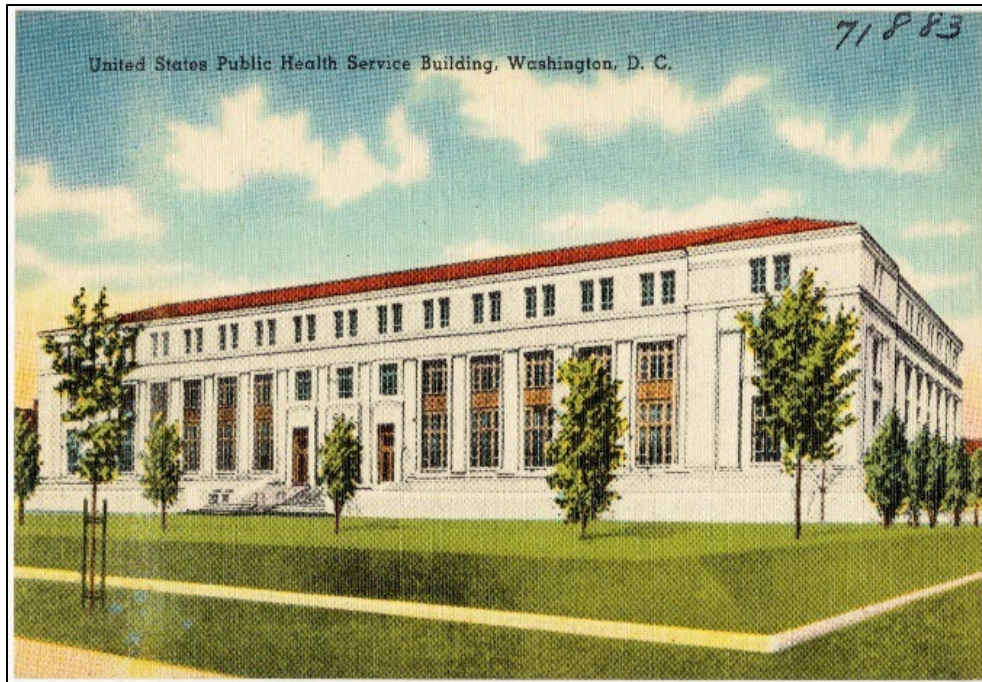
displays illustrating the strategic position of the countries of the world,” using “projectors, maps, and other equipment.” Measured in manpower and money, converting volumes of material into displayable information



Rendering of Q-2 War Theatre. (OSS Files, National Archives)

would not come cheaply. Donovan estimated that this new facility would require about 400 technicians and a budget of nearly \$4 million just to operate, or approximately \$88 million in 2026 dollars. In his proposal to Roosevelt, Donovan named this new space Q-2, after the building proposed to house his creation.¹⁴

It was shortly after Donovan submitted his proposal to Roosevelt that Churchill and his senior military advisors traveled to Washington to meet with their American counterparts, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In January 1942, both the British and American military chiefs agreed to form the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS), a body formed by the service chiefs of both countries; the American chiefs formed themselves into the Joint Chiefs of Staff at this time.¹⁵ These new bodies required a dedicated space from which to work and confer, space not only for the principal leaders but respective staffs as well. To that end, Roosevelt directed the



*Public Health Service building appropriated for wartime use by the Combined Chiefs of Staff.
(Postcard by Atlantic News Company, 1930)*

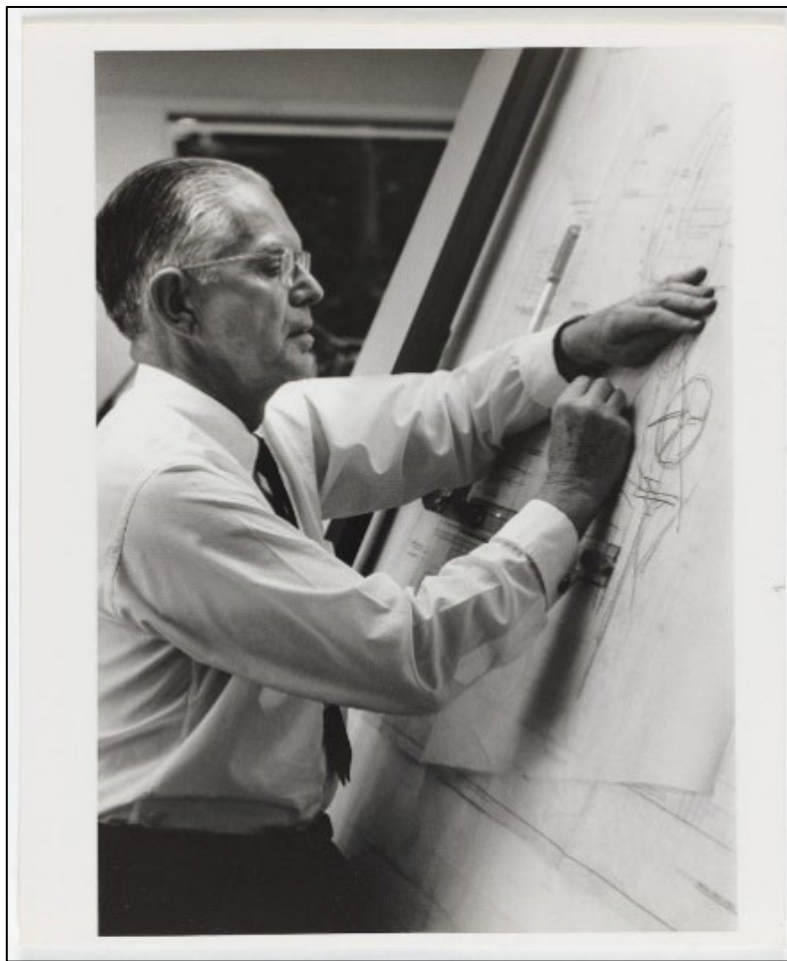
appropriation of the Public Health Service building on Constitution Avenue.¹⁶ While the Joint Chiefs maintained offices at the headquarters of their respective services, they met in the Public Health Service building—dubbed the CCS building after the president’s reappropriation—to discuss joint and combined issues.¹⁷

In February 1942, as the Joint

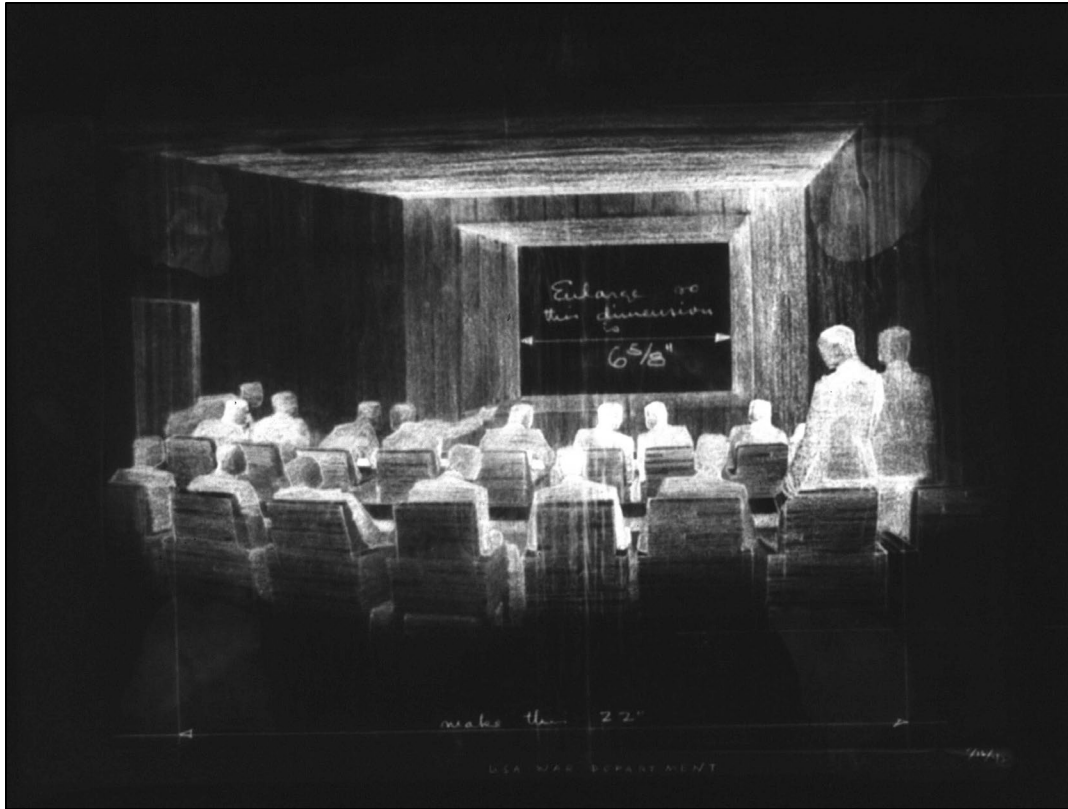
Chiefs began working together to coordinate the full scope of the nation’s military activities, they grew concerned about the risks COI’s direct channel to President Roosevelt could present. At its most benign, the direct line to the president would very well be duplicative, but at its worst, it could result in confusion with Roosevelt being presented with two distinct lines of information, analysis, and recommendations.¹⁸ To avoid this possibility, the chiefs wanted all of COI’s functions and facilities to fall under military control. They appointed Captain Francis C. Denebrink, the Navy’s liaison to COI, to shepherd the absorption of COI into the new JCS organization.¹⁹ Since Roosevelt had approved \$2 million for Donovan’s proposed construction of Q-2 for COI, Denebrink argued that it would be “highly desirable” that such a facility with all its promised capabilities be situated in the CCS building.²⁰ The following month Brigadier General Walter Bedell Smith, secretary of the JCS, nominated Donovan to chair the newly formed Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) in order to facilitate the transition. Donovan was perturbed at the loss of COI and the direct line to the president it had afforded him.²¹ Nonetheless, he agreed to the new position, but pushed for all of COI’s personnel to be retained to support this new effort under the JCS, a recommendation the chiefs happily accepted.²²

The Joint Chiefs fully shared Donovan’s conviction that “modern techniques of visual and graphic presentation provide an effective and time-saving method for the communication of vital information.”²³ They wanted what Donovan was creating at Q-2 and allowed its development and construction to continue, albeit within the CCS building rather than as a separate facility. To develop the layout and arrangement of the new space, Donovan recruited three of the top industrial designers of the era—Henry Dreyfuss, Raymond Loewy, and Walter Dorwin Teague—with work beginning in April 1942.²⁴

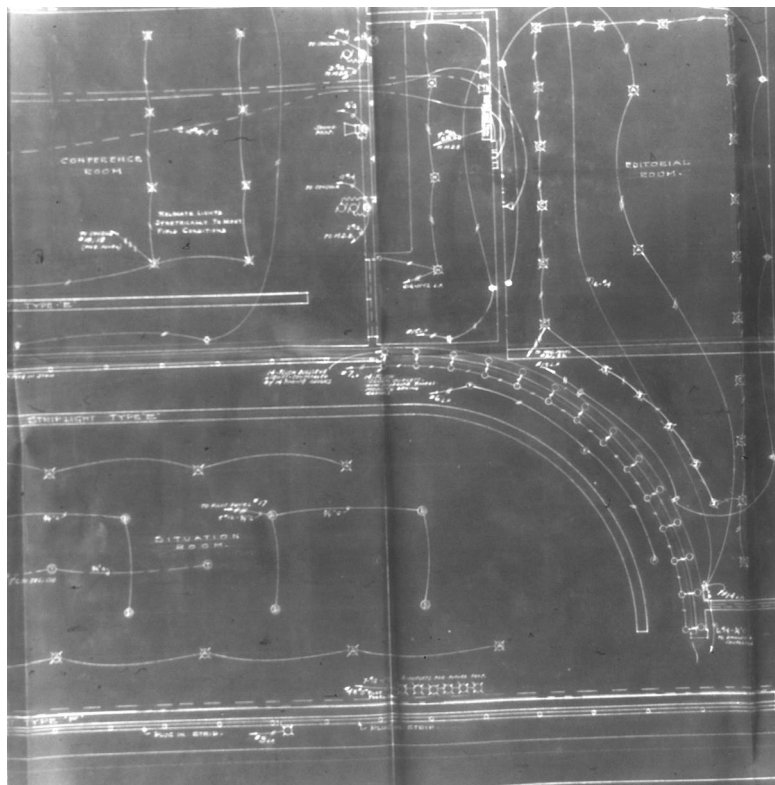
Reflecting on the project years later, Dreyfuss described the project as “one of the most interesting problems” he faced during his career.²⁵ There was, of course, the design to consider, but there was also the sensitivity. This new space was not meant to be a mere conference room, but a place where information could be presented in a manner that would ultimately give the United States an edge over its enemies, deliberations more fully informed, and decisions made faster. After Dreyfuss and his team traveled from their New York studios to Washington to assess the space within the CCS building intended for the “presentation room,” they returned to New York City. Measurements in hand, Dreyfuss’s team set up in a converted brewery where they constructed a full-scale mock-up of their proposed design. Security was a primary concern, and the use of the converted brewery was intended to help maintain secrecy.²⁶ As a further security measure, Marines were posted at the site to specifically guard against spies and ensure no listening devices or explosives somehow made their way into the materials.²⁷



Henry Dreyfuss in 1967. (Henry Dreyfuss Collection, Smithsonian)



Sketch for the Meeting Room. (Henry Dreyfuss Collection, Smithsonian)²⁸



Architectural schematic for the Meeting Room showing the curved wall displayed in the Oct 1942 photograph. (Henry Dreyfuss Collection, Smithsonian)²⁹

Donovan had an eclectic collection of associates. This included Francis E. Brennan, who served as editor for *Fortune* magazine and joined Donovan in government as head of COI's Visual Information Branch. While Dreyfuss and his team worked to design the space, Brennan was charged with ensuring that the room's aesthetics, form, and technical capabilities matched its desired function. Brennan collaborated closely with Dreyfuss' team, as well as Raymond Loewy, whose own team was working on the room's epidiascope. This was a device used to visually project a flat, opaque object, such as a sheet of paper, onto a wall or screen so that the object could be read by multiple people simultaneously.³⁰

Between April and May 1942, Brennan frequently traveled from Washington to the New York brewery site to view initial demonstrations of the displays in the room mock-up that Dreyfuss and his team had built.³¹ Brennan was often frustrated by what he saw, finding many of the components too complex and cumbersome. He noted problems with the size and colors on the globe, display symbology, the materials used to construct the wall display maps, the quality of lighting, and the blurry projection of paper documents via the epidiascope. All of it, he wrote later, meant the room failed to meet the basic requirement of "presenting visually facts and alternatives to aid in executive decision."³²

Dreyfuss made several revisions to address Brennan's concerns. On 1 July 1942, after months of work and refinement, the presentation room mock-up passed inspection. What had been the mock-up became the components of the new space. The room was disassembled, packaged, and shipped to Washington, where it was reassembled within the CCS building. In many ways, the new space that Dreyfuss and other had designed was a theatrical set. Suitably, the task of moving the components to Washington was given to Studio Alliance, Inc., a New York-based theatrical scenery company more accustomed to moving Broadway sets.³³

1942–46: The Combined Chiefs of Staff Building

Donovan's original plan had been to construct this new information facility in a purpose-built two-story building. The intent had been for there to be "two semi-circular auditoriums, a motion picture theater, and twelve category rooms."³⁴ When that plan had been subsumed by the JCS, the challenge was to fit Donovan's original concept into the approximately 2,000 square feet available in room 100 of the CCS building.³⁵ In order to adjust to the smaller size, builders chose to divide the room into three sections capable of operating independently: an editorial room with desks and chairs, a conference room with a U-shaped table and projection equipment, and a larger map room.³⁶ Collectively, these three distinct spaces retained the name of the singular Presentation Room.

The map room was arguably the most impressive of the three with charts covering practically the entire wall.³⁷ One side consisted of four sliding panels, each measuring ten feet high by four feet wide. These panels could be hidden and locked to ensure the security of what each depicted.³⁸ While useful as individual panels, they could also be arranged next to one another to reveal larger-sized maps.³⁹ There was an additional twenty-foot long metal world map that covered the entire curved end of the room.⁴⁰

This room was never to just show static information but was rather intended to dynamically present data as it were available. To that end, a ceiling-mounted projector was used to display weather conditions while telescope projectors—in essence overhead projectors—were used to superimpose specific depictions of operations directly onto the wall maps.⁴¹ To avoid permanently marking the maps, technicians used acetate sheets to mark changes in troops' positions.⁴² Below the map room in the CCS building's basement, a team of graphics experts used "drawing tables, air brushes, and artist materials" to prepare the maps for display.⁴³ This effort—from preparation to projection—provided the chiefs the ability to visualize geographic areas and disposition of military forces while they debated strategic plans. No longer bound by the limits of their own minds' eyes, the displays in the room provided the chiefs a common operating picture to anchor and synchronize differing perspectives.

The chiefs realized the advantages this space afforded them, and there was a desire, on their part, to message this capability publicly. It could not be lost on the chiefs that stories and images of this new space, to a domestic audience, would also reach America's enemies. Although treated as a closely-guarded secret during its development, the JCS granted permission to the Navy Photographic Section to photograph the Presentation Room, in October 1942, as part of a publicity campaign to illustrate how the war was being waged. It also provided an opportunity to at least depict, if not demonstrate, the breadth of information considered by the JCS.⁴⁴ One of the photos accompanied a brief, syndicated article about the recently established Joint Chiefs that appeared in newspapers around the country shortly thereafter. More striking, though, were full-color photos from that October session that appeared in the 22 February 1943 edition of *Life* magazine. Several photos showed the full expanse of the conference room, which was described as having been "built for strategical planning and work." The maps themselves were notably described as the "tools of war."⁴⁵



The Map Room, 1942. (US Navy photo)



The Joint Intelligence Committee Presentation Room. (Life, 22 February 1943)⁴⁶

By the time the Presentation Room was deemed operational, Roosevelt had redesignated COI as the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and formally directed that it become an entity of the JCS.⁴⁷ Since the OSS comprised a component of the Joint Intelligence Committee organization, and because the concept underpinning the Presentation Room originally was theirs, the OSS continued to provide the personnel responsible for operating the room, just as Donovan—now head of the OSS—and the JCS had previously agreed. The Presentation Room staff included a group chief, an artist cartographer, a chief projectionist, and a secretary assistant, each being permitted to include assistants as necessary.⁴⁸ Given the room's display capabilities, tight control over access, and the distinct absence of windows, leaders' initial expectation was that the intelligence committee would use the space to prepare and provide intelligence summaries and regular situational updates to the JCS and, when joined by their British counterparts, the CCS.⁴⁹

Once the Presentation Room's capabilities had been demonstrated, there was an increased demand for use of the space. Other than the JCS and CCS, the secretary of the Joint Chiefs of Staff chose to restrict the room's use to the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), a collective body of intelligence officers from each service. The JIC was permitted to hold its formal meetings in the space and further allowed for informal meetings of the Joint Intelligence Subcommittee, as that group prepared their daily intelligence summaries and other special reports.⁵⁰ Other JCS supporting committee members were authorized entry into the highly restricted space to view what was described as a "daily portrayal of [the] current enemy intelligence situation."⁵¹ In the spirit of allied partnership, Britain's Joint Intelligence Committee in Washington was granted similar privileges. As the war progressed, those permitted access to the space could monitor its daily fluctuations in real time as the flow of information permitted, a process that only improved throughout the conflict. The JIC also agreed that the space could be used for showing films of war activities.⁵²

The conference room, adjacent to the Map Room, doubled as a theater and it was in that space that up to fifty cleared personnel could enter for special JIC films or to attend sensitive, informational talks.⁵³ Over time, restrictions were lifted so that staff members working in the CCS building could go to this theater on Wednesdays and Fridays to watch commercial newsreels and films related to the war, showings that usually lasted no more than a half hour. On Thursdays, the Presentation Room staff offered longer format films. Saturdays were reserved for the secretary of the Joint Staff and his guests to view the “Staff Film Report and films of a special interest.”⁵⁴

While the room was used by the JIC and was gradually made accessible to others working within the CCS building, use of the Presentation Room by the JCS took precedence over all other activities. Weekly, the chiefs met for lunches within room 100, utilizing the secure, secluded space to privately discuss and work through disagreements prior to their formal meetings. Working away from Army and Navy offices—including the newly built Pentagon across the Potomac River and the Navy building across the street from the CCS building—the JCS were able to avoid prying eyes. The Presentation Room’s focus also forced a concentration on broader joint and strategic issues rather than the narrower service interests the chiefs managed at their respective headquarters.



*The Joint Chiefs of Staff at a luncheon meeting, November 1942.
Clockwise from left: Admiral Ernest J. King, General George C. Marshall, Admiral William D. Leahy, and Lieutenant General Henry H. Arnold. (George C. Marshall Foundation)*

It was clear to the chiefs that the Presentation Room was a unique space that could be more broadly leveraged. While there was certainly a focus on monitoring and tracking the war's progression, the chiefs' responsibilities extended well beyond decisions about where to move troops, ships, and aircraft. Much of their work focused on ensuring the flow of men and materiel from the United States, from the recruiting offices and factories to the battlefields. This required considerable work with civilian agencies across the federal government and beyond the War and Navy Departments. To that end, the chiefs invited the heads of such agencies to the Presentation Room, where they could also review the same visually presented information as the military. This allowed for discussions to begin from a common understanding, or situational awareness. The result was more productive, candid conversations.⁵⁵



*Joint Chiefs of Staff at weekly lunch in room where war maps of fighting fronts are kept, 1944.
(George C. Marshall Foundation)*



Army, Navy, and civilian chiefs confer at a luncheon meeting attended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to discuss a national draft, 8 December 1942. (National Archives photo)

Demise and Reincarnation of the Tank

At the end of World War II, the JCS relinquished the CCS Building and moved a short distance to the New War Department building located at 21st Street and Virginia Avenue, one block west and two north.⁵⁶ When they relocated, the JCS abandoned Room 100 and all the elements of the Presentation Room that had been assembled therein. A newspaper article written on 1 February 1946 described the vacated space as a sort of production set that a person would expect from Hollywood filmmakers, a tacit affirmation of the original 1942 design proposed by Cooper, Dreyfuss, Brennan, and their teams.⁵⁷ Abandoned in the vacated building, the closing of the Presentation Room marked the end of the original “Tank.”

In late 1946, President Harry S. Truman directed that the State Department relocate to the New War Department building, displacing the JCS and the Joint Staff, who then moved to the Pentagon.⁵⁸ The move was complete by the end of the first week in April 1947.⁵⁹ While the Presentation Room may have been abandoned, much of what had worked so well during the war was retained and revised as the United States assumed a new role as the leading power of the post-war international system. That responsibility led to the creation of a National Military Establishment in 1947 (renamed the Department of Defense in 1949), headed by a secretary of defense. Recognizing the value of military advice to the secretaries and presidents, the Joint Chiefs of Staff structure was formally retained. Congress established the position of a chairman, who would serve as the senior officer in the armed forces, preside over the JCS, and present their views to the president and secretary. The first person to hold this position was General Omar N. Bradley.

Bradley and the JCS continued to require a space—now within the Pentagon—where they could meet and speak candidly and confidentially. A JCS conference room was prepared down the hallway from Bradley’s office. While aesthetically very different than the Presentation Room, it nonetheless retained its informal name, the “Tank.”⁶⁰ It remains so to the present day. While the chiefs had their privileged meeting space, there was no entity within the Pentagon that focused specifically on information presentation, especially the visual presentation of current operational information. In 1963, nearly two decades after the relocation to the Pentagon, the National Military Command Center was established. It would fulfill many of the roles of the original Presentation Room in the ongoing tracking and dissemination of relevant information to the chiefs and other senior leaders, yet it was—and remains—distinct from the Tank.

A particular gravitas has been associated with the Tank at the Pentagon ever since the chiefs began meeting there. The room as it currently exists sits behind an otherwise ordinary door, the plainness of which invites an imagination of the space far grander than the conference room that it is. That was also the case in the mid-1980s, when congressional staffer Ryan R. Locher III accompanied two senators to a meeting in the JCS conference room. Locher recalled that he was expecting to find “a space-age room equipped with high technology gadgets.” Instead, he found the opposite, with the JCS conference room “look[ing] like dozens of other nondescript Pentagon meetings rooms.” Yet Locher noted the contrast between the unpretentious appearance of the room and the weight of topics discussed therein, saying that “although the setting was ordinary, the atmospherics were extraordinary.”⁶¹

Role of The Modern-Day Tank

What occurs within the Tank has imbued the room with a sense of gravity and importance rather than the physical space itself. This began after the passage of the Department of Defense Reorganization Act in 1958 removed the JCS from the operational chain of

command.⁶² As a result, JCS deliberations focused primarily on military strategy and policy, rather than on operational responses to current events. Such meetings were sensitive and sometimes contentious, reinforcing the need for a private and highly secure space to host those meetings. In late December 1959, Secretary of Defense Thomas S. Gates, Jr. reinforced this when he informed the JCS that he intended to meet with them, personally, any time they could not agree on an issue.⁶³ An article written five months after he made that announcement indicated Gates joined the JCS in their conference room, usually during their weekly meetings, and together they discussed “problems that go to the heart of the nation’s defense policies.”⁶⁴

Later portrayals of the room captured this sense of import. A 1967 article, published by the Associated Press, dramatically described the room as the private domain of the JCS, where “the gods of peace and war make decisions affecting billions of lives or costing billions of dollars,” and that the room’s sole purpose was “decision.”⁶⁵ The discussions that led to those decisions were often tedious and contentious. Participants were often sequestered there, prompting CJCS General Earle G. Wheeler to describe such meetings as torture. The Tank, said Wheeler, was like a “modern black hole of Calcutta wherein the JCS meet at least three times a week.”⁶⁶ The *New York Times* captured the room’s role and reputation, describing it as a “sanctum sanctorum,” the location where those general and flag officers at the pinnacle of American military power debate and decide highly sensitive military policy, strategy, and operations.⁶⁷

In addition to their own meetings, the JCS also have used the Tank to host a wide range of distinguished visitors. By using the Tank in this manner, the JCS have leveraged its reputation to bestow an air of dignity and solemnity to such meetings in addition to providing a location to discuss high-level and sensitive topics.



President Ronald W. Reagan meets with the JCS, Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger, and others in the JCS conference room, 22 June 1984, the first time a president met the JCS in their conference room. (Ronald Reagan Presidential Library photo)



Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., second from right, leans toward his former adversary, Marshal of the Soviet Union Sergei Fyodorovich Akhromeyev, second from left, during a meeting at the Pentagon on 10 December 1987. (DoD photo)



President George H. W. Bush, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin L. Powell (seated, 2nd from right) Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral David E. Jeremiah (seated, right), the JCS and the National Security Council discuss Operation DESERT STORM on 18 January 1991. (DoD photo by Helene C. Stikkel)



Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, left, hosts a meeting with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak, right, and some of his senior advisors in the JCS Tank on 12 October 2011. Panetta is joined by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michèle Angélique Flournoy. (DoD photo by R. D. Ward)

71

¹ “Minutes of Meeting Held in Room 100-A, The Combined Chiefs of Staff Building, on Thursday, April 29, 1943, at 1400, reprinted in Lt Col Barry D. Watts, *The Foundations of US Air Doctrine* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, December 1984), 133.

-
- ² Daniel Z. Henkin, "The JCS in Action," *The Journal of the Armed Forces* Vol. 102, No. 1 (5 September 1964), 16; Bernard Trainor, "Inside the 'Tank:' Bowls of Candy and Big Brass," *New York Times*, 11 January 1988, A16.
- ³ US ABC-4/CS-4, Washington War Conference, Post-Arcadia Collaboration, Memorandum by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 14 January 1942, 1.
- ⁴ Barry Katz, "The Arts of War: Visual Information and National Intelligence," *Design Issues* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1996), 5; Thomas F. Troy, *Donovan and the CIA: A History of the Establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1981), 108.
- ⁵ Troy, *Donovan and the CIA*, 24; Julie K. Brown, *Health and Medicine on Display International Expositions in the United States, 1876-1904* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2009), 7-9.
- ⁶ "Chains Will Now Court Public Opinion in Earnest," *Printers Ink*, vol. 149, no. 1 (3 October 1929), 34; "Boro to Honor GOP Nominee at 'Donovan Day' Wednesday," *Brooklyn Times Union* (30 October 1932), 7.
- ⁷ Frank Knox, letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 15 December 1939, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, reply letter to Knox, 29 December 1939, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President: The President's Secretary's File (PSF), 1933-1945, Series 4, Box 62, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/psf/b-psfc000116.pdf
- ⁸ William J. Donovan, Memorandum of Establishment of Service of Strategic Information to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 10 June 1941, 1, FDR Library, "Coordinator of Information" Presidential Subject File, accessed 19 Sep 25, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/psf/psf000509.pdf.
- ⁹ President Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Designating a Coordinator of Strategic Information," 11 July 1941.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Arthur Krock, "The War in Pictures," *New York Times*, 8 October 1941.
- ¹² Ibid.; Donovan, Memorandum of Establishment of Service of Strategic Information, 3; "Presentation History," File 44a, Box 76, Entry 99, Record Group 226 [hereafter RG 226], National Archives and Records Administration-College Park [hereafter NARA-CP].
- ¹³ History Project, Strategic Services Unit, *War Report: Office of Strategic Services* (Washington, DC: War Department, July 1949), 67; "The Rise and Fall of Q-2," p. 110, in "History of Presentation Division," Folder 815, Box 136, Entry 99, RG 226, NARA-CP.
- ¹⁴ Graphic and text from "The Rise and Fall of Q-2," p. 113, 116, in "History of Presentation Division," Folder 815, Box 136, Entry 99, RG 226, NARA-CP.
- ¹⁵ US ABC-4/CS-4, Washington War Conference, Post-Arcadia Collaboration, Memorandum by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 14 January 1942, 1.
- ¹⁶ Henry L. Stimson Papers, "Notes after Cabinet Meeting," 30 January 1942, Document 240, Reel 127, Yale University Library (accessed through the Library of Congress [hereafter LOC]).
- ¹⁷ Postcard: "United States Public Health Service Building, Washington, D. C." Card. Pub. by Atlantic News Co., Washington, DC, [ca. 1930-1945]. Digital Commonwealth, <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/r781wh098>
- ¹⁸ Troy, *Donovan and the CIA*, 133.
- ¹⁹ Vernon E. Davis, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II – Organizational Development*, Vol. II, Development of the JCS Committee Structure (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1972), 317; Office of Government Reports, *Information Digest*, No. 323 (27 October 1941), 7.
- ²⁰ Troy, *Donovan and the CIA*, 133.
- ²¹ Ibid., 136.
- ²² Ibid.; William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President, No. 434, 21 April 1942, Frame 120, Reel 23, Microfilm M1642, NARA-CP.
- ²³ Office of Strategic Services (OSS), *Some Facts about the Presentation Room in the Combined Chiefs of Staff Building* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1943), 4.
- ²⁴ "The Rise and Fall of Q-2," p. 131, in "History of Presentation Division," Folder 815, Box 136, Entry 99, RG 226, NARA-CP; Raymond Loewy, *Never Leave Well Enough Alone* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1951), 150; History Project, Strategic Services Unit, *War Report*, 68; William J. Donovan, Memorandum for the President, 21 April 1942, Frame 120, Reel 23, Microfilm M1642, NARA-CP.
- ²⁵ Henry Dreyfuss, *Designing for People* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1955), 162.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 163.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 164.

-
- ²⁸ Microfilm V-1088, Reel 19, Henry Dreyfuss Collection, 1927-1972, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- ²⁹ Microfilm V-1088, Reel 19, Henry Dreyfuss Collection, 1927-1972, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- ³⁰ "CV," Folder 17, Box 19, Collection MSS61784, Francis E. Brennan, Jr. papers [hereafter Brennan Papers], LOC; "Summation of Duties of Art Director," Folder 15, Box 19, Brennan Papers, LOC; Diary Entries, 7 March and 30 March 1942, Box 2, Brennan Papers, LOC.
- ³¹ Diary Entry, 20 April 1942, Box 2, Brennan Papers, LOC.
- ³² Diary Entry, 22 May 1942, Box 2, Brennan Papers, LOC.
- ³³ Dreyfuss, *Designing for People*, 164; Harry Sims Bent, "Authorization Memorandum No. ASRB-101," 3 June 1942, Folder 369, Box 49, Entry UD-144, RG 226, NARA-CP; Diary Entry, 1 July 1942, Box 2, Brennan Papers, LOC; "Studio Alliance, Inc." in Division of Planning, *Industrial Directory of New York State* (Albany, NY: Department of Commerce, 1946), 236; "G. Bradford Ashworth" in Bobbi Owen, *Scenic Design on Broadway, Designers and Their Credits, 1915-1990* (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1991), 13.
- ³⁴ History Project, *War Report*, 67.
- ³⁵ Brigadier General W. B. Smith, Memorandum for the Secretary, Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), "JIC Map and Presentation Room," 19 July 1942, Folder CCS 371.2, Box 289, Entry UD-1, CCS 334, JCS Central Decimal File 1942-45, RG 218, NARA-CP; "The Rise and Fall of Q-2," p. 134, in "History of Presentation Division," Folder 815, Box 136, Entry 99, RG 226, NARA-CP; George Shor, Memorandum for Atherton Richards, "Situation Room B," 11 June 1942, Folder 362, Entry UD 144, RG 226, NARA-CP.
- ³⁶ Smith to Secretary, JIC, "JIC Map and Presentation Room."
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Commander H. L. Vanderford, USNR, Memorandum for Information, "Facilities and Services Provided by the Presentation Unit and Its Administrative Procedures," 13 December 1945, 2, Box 28, CCS 310, JCS Central Decimal Files 1946-47, RG 218, NARA-CP.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Ibid; OSS, *Some Facts about the Presentation Room*, 11.
- ⁴³ OSS, *Some Facts about the Presentation Room*, 7.
- ⁴⁴ Brigadier General James R. Deane, USA, Memorandum for Admiral Leahy, General Marshall, Admiral King, General Arnold, "Photographs of Joint US and Combined Chiefs of Staff," 17 October 1942; folder CCS 062, CCS 334, JCS Central Decimal File 1942-45, RG 218, NARA-CP.
- ⁴⁵ "U.S. High Command Plans Strategy in Map Filled Sanctum," *Life*, Vol. 18, No. 8, (22 February 1943), 73.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ JCS, "Functions of the Office of Strategic Services" (JCS 155/4/D, 23 December 1942), 1, reprinted in History Project, Strategic Services Unit, *War Report: Office of Strategic Services* (Washington, DC: War Department, July 1949), 380; President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "Military Order – Office of Strategic Services," 13 June 1942, reprinted in History Project, Strategic Services Unit, *War Report: Office of Strategic Services* (Washington, DC: War Department, July 1949), 282.
- ⁴⁸ Smith to Secretary, JIC, "JIC Map and Presentation Room."
- ⁴⁹ Colonel Ludlow Lee Montague, Memorandum for the Secretary, Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), "Presentation Room Personnel," 6 February 1943, Box 201, CCS 334, JCS Central Decimal File 1942-45, RG 218, NARA-CP.
- ⁵⁰ Smith to Secretary, JIC, "JIC Map and Presentation Room."
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Vanderford, "Facilities and Services Provided by the Presentation Unit and Its Administrative Procedures."
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ In addition to the Joint Chiefs, attendees included Paul V. McNutt, chairman of the War Manpower Commission, Donald Nelson, chairman of the War Production Board, Admiral Emory S. Land, head of the US Maritime Commission, Harry Hopkins, chairman of the Munitions Assignment Board, and Elmer Davis, director of the Office of War Information. "McNutt Confers on Army, Navy Needs To Decide Draft," Vol. 41, No. 117, *Imperial Valley*

Press (El Centro, CA), 8 December 1942, 1, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=IVP19421208&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN----->; Caption, photograph 165142, NARA-CP.

⁵⁶ Brigadier General Andrew J. McFarland, Joint Secretariat, JCS Memorandum for Information 470, "Change in Location of Office, Joint Chiefs of Staff," 11 January 1946, Central Decimal Files 300, JCS Central Decimal Files 1942-45, RG 218, NARA-CP.

⁵⁷ "Staff Chiefs 'Victory Chamber' Loses Aura of Super Secrecy," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), 1 Feb 1946, 16.

⁵⁸ William E. Reynolds, Commissioner of Public Buildings, Memorandum to Brigadier General H. I. Hodes, War Department, with copy to Colonel Andrew J. McFarland, JCS, 12 September 1946, CCS 680.341 sec 2, Entry UD-5, RG 218, NARA-CP.

⁵⁹ Captain William G. Lalor, Deputy Secretary JCS, Memorandum for Commanding General, Military District of Washington, "Move of the Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff to the Pentagon," SM-7904, 1 April 1947, Section 2, CCS 680.341, Entry UD-5, RG 218, NARA-CP.

⁶⁰ Major Herbert H. Smellie, Administrative Secretary for the Joint Staff, Memorandum for the Secretary of Each Committee, Group, and Head of Each Section, "Move of the Offices of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," 28 September 1949, Section 2, CCS 680.341, Entry UD-5, RG 218, NARA-CP; Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Telephone Directory* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff), September 1961, 1.

⁶¹ James R. Locher III, *Victory on the Potomac* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 7.

⁶² Public Law 85-599, "Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1958," 6 August 1958, 72 Stat. 514, 518.

⁶³ Thomas S. Gates, Jr., Memorandum for Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Relationships with the Office of the Secretary of Defense," 29 December 1959, reprinted in "Department of Defense Appropriations for 1961," Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, Part 1, 86th Congress, 2nd Session, 13 January 1960 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1960), 37-38.

⁶⁴ Hanson W. Baldwin, "Gates Takes Decisive Role In Joint Chiefs' Deadlocks," *New York Times* (1 May 1960), 1.

⁶⁵ Sid Moody, Associated Press, "From the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Just One Product: Decision" reprinted in *St. Petersburg Times* (15 January 1967), 55.

⁶⁶ General Earle G. Wheeler, "The View from the Tank," address at Washington Institute of Foreign Affairs, Washington, DC, 11 April 1967 in *Addresses by General Earle G. Wheeler*, vol. II, 7 July 1964 – 2 July 1970 (Washington, DC: 1969), 145.

⁶⁷ Bernard Trainor, "Inside the 'Tank': Bowls of Candy and Big Brass," *New York Times*, 11 January 1988, A16.

⁶⁸ Photo from Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, 40-whpo-c22774-08; Caption derived from: "Schedule of the President," 22 June 1984 (Case File 292187), Box 45, Presidential Briefing Papers, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library; Diary Entry, 22 June 1984, accessed 22 August 2025, <https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/white-house-diaries/diary-entry-06221984>. Presidential meetings with the JCS prior to this 22 June 1984 meeting occurred in the White House or in the NMCC. Working backwards from Reagan's administration: a review of President James E. Carter daily diaries revealed only a meeting in the NMCC, and President Gerald R. Ford's daily diaries indicated his meetings with the JCS were conducted at the White House. President Richard M. Nixon visited the Pentagon on 1 May 1970 and 27 January 1969, but the meetings with the JCS on both those dates occurred in the NMCC (Lt Col Robert H. McCully, Memorandum for Chief of Staff, US Air Force, "Joint Staff Briefing of the Single Integrated Operational Plan, 27 January 1969, accessed 22 August 2025, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB173/SIOP-1.pdf>); Martin Schram, "Nixon Follows Decision with Visit to the Pentagon," *Newsday* (Suffolk Edition) (Melville, NY), 2 May 1970, 3. President John F. Kennedy's meetings with the JCS on 30 May 1962 and 26 April 1963 occurred in the secretary of defense's office (UPI, "Kennedy Makes Pentagon Visit," *The Akron Beacon Journal* (Akron, OH), 30 May 1962, 50; UPI, "Kennedy Visits Pentagon to Talk with Defense Aides," *The Record* (Stockton, CA), 26 April 1963, 1. President Dwight D. Eisenhower appears to have made only one visit to the Pentagon and that also was to the office of the secretary of defense (Dwight D. Eisenhower, daily diary, 27 May 1953, accessed 22 August 2025, <https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/research/online-documents/presidential-appointment-books/1953/may-1953.pdf>). President Harry S. Truman reportedly met with the JCS for the first time at the Pentagon and not at the White House on 25 April 1945, and his visit also occurred in the office of the secretary of defense (Bertram D. Hulen, "President Visits Pentagon Offices," *New York Times*, 26 April 1945).

⁶⁹ Caption derived from: Trainor, "Inside the 'Tank'"; Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr. *The Line of Fire* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 273-275.

⁷⁰ Caption derived from: General Colin L. Powell, *My American Journey* (New York, NY: Random House, 1995), 484; *Public Papers of George H.W. Bush*, Book I—January 1 to June 30, 1991 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992), 742-743; Daily Diary for the President, 18 January 1991, Office of Appointments and Scheduling, Box 59, [OA/ID CF01787], George H. W. Bush Presidential Library.

⁷¹ Caption derived from DoD caption for 111012-D-WQ296-084 and “Lee gets briefed at Pentagon in show of closeness,” *Korea Joon Gang Daily*, 13 October 2011, <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2011/10/13/politics/Lee-gets-briefed-at-Pentagon-in-show-of-closeness/2942777.html>

