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An Interview with Thomas Lamont
Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Veterans Remember Oral History project

Interview # VRT-A-L-2018-004

Thomas (Tom) Lamont, a career lawyer and Army National Guard Officer who served as the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs for the President Obama administration, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember – War on Terror* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: January 30, February 13, 22, 26 & March 20, 2018

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Patty Maynor, ALPL volunteer

Edited by: Jan Culp, ALPL volunteer

Total Pages: 184 pgs Total Time: 1:47 + 1:15 + 1:59 + 2:26 + 2:44 / 1.78 + 1.25 + 1.98
+ 2.43 + 2.73 = 10.17 hrs.

Session 1: Early life, college during late 1960s, basic training and law school

Session 2: Career in law, government administration and military service

Session 3: U. of Illinois Board of Trustees, IL politics and IL Army National Guard

Session 4: Asst. Secretary of the Army for Manpower & Reserve Affairs experiences

Session 5: Asst. Secretary of the Army experiences & post Pentagon activities

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on May 15, 2018.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Tom Lamont, *Veterans Remember*, VRT-A-L-2018-004

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Thomas (Tom) Lamont was born in March 1947 in Virginia, Illinois and grew up there, graduating from Virginia High School in 1965. He then attended Illinois State University with the goal of becoming a lawyer. On December 1, 1969 the country held its first draft lottery, with Lamont's number being 213, high enough to avoid the draft. He decided, however, to enroll in the Army ROTC program and due to that, attended Army boot camp. He married Bridget Later in 1971. He attended law school at the University of Illinois, graduating and passing the bar exam in 1972.

His first job out of law school was with the Illinois Legislative Reference Bureau where he confirmed his interest in administrative and governmental law. In 1973 he joined the law firm of Presney, Casper and Helmich, and by 1977 had returned to a government job, working for the IL Capital Development Board. He then took a job with the State's Attorney's office, and by this time was involved with Democratic politics as well. In 1981, at the age of thirty-four, he decided to join the Illinois Army National Guard, taking a direct commission in the Judge Adjutant General's Corps. He was assigned to the state headquarters at Camp Lincoln as one of its staff lawyers. In the mid-1980s he worked for Attorney General Neil Hartigan, and by 1987 he was working for the Gordon and Glickson law firm, living in Springfield and representing the firm in governmental and administrative law. Staying active in politics, in 1992 he was a delegate for Bill Clinton at the Democratic Convention. In the 1990s he served on the University of Illinois Board of Trustees, which included a stint as its President. Over the next two decades he continued to add to his professional and political resume. He retired from the Guard in 2007.

In 2009 Lamont became the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs during the President Obama administration, working at the Pentagon during an era when the United States was involved in two protracted wars. Lamont's service also coincided during a time when the Army was experiencing significant change. Some of the many high profile issues Secretary Lamont was directly involved with included the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, the Ft. Hood shooting, unit deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, recruiting and retention challenges, military pension reform, base housing and medical facility upgrades, and integrating women into combat positions. All of this was done during a period of serious budget constraints. Following his retirement in October 2013, Lamont became involved in the American Battle Monuments Commission, and also served on the National Commission on the Future of the Army.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; Don't Ask, Don't Tell; integrating women into combat positions; unit deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan; American Battle Monuments Commission; Army recruiting and retention during Obama Administration; military pension reform; Walter Reed Medical Hospital; 1992 Democratic Convention; 1969 draft lottery; Secretary of Defense Robert Gates; Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta; legal duties in the IL Army National Guard; National Commission on the Future of the Army

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