The advisory staff was born out of a state of "national hysteria," as Killian put it, shortly following the successful launching of the Spacelab satellite for the Soviets in October 1957. The alleged missile gap and science gap that gripped the nation after Spacelab put pressure on scientists to work on advancing weapons technologies, and Killian explained that this led to the creation of an advisory staff to then-President Eisenhower.

"There was never any difficulty in seeing the President or advising him," Killian noted. He said PSAC was an effective agency, evolving to meet the needs of the times.

The effectiveness of PSAC and OST, however, declined over the years, and Dr. Edward E. David Jr., the last of the science advisors (1970-1973) said they were facing the same issues facing the two agencies in the early seventies, as more science policy was passed by Congress last year the "transformed. " Under legislation passed by Congress last year the National Science Foundation was "highly" transformed, and President Richard Nixon's science advisor by Wiesner, who said between 1964-1969, the split between the science advisor and the White House grew more prominent during his five years as it "became evident that the attention of the President turned to other matters."

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Counterforce in the President

All six former science advisors agreed that as the advisory mechanism aged, its advice was requested and heeded less by the president in power at the time.

Killian said the scientists had a constant rapport with Eisenhower, and that Dr. George B. Kistiakowsky (who served as science advisor from 1945-1949) and the characters of the advisory staff changed from skepticism in the early sixties to an "enthusiastic force within the Pentago," by the time it was dismantled.

"Kistiakowsky, a Harvard chemist and visiting scholar at the MIT Center for International Studies, was succeeded as science advisor by Wiesner, who said between 1961 and 1964 the role of the science advisor began to diminish as Presidents Kennedy and Johnson were preoccupied with pressing matters of state.

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