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David Laurence Aaron (1938-) served in several prominent positions in the U.S. Foreign Service and as Deputy National Security Advisor for Jimmy Carter’s administration. Born in Chicago, Aaron earned his bachelor’s degree from Occidental College in Los Angeles. In 1962, he graduated from Princeton University with a master’s degree in public administration from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. That same year, he started his first position in the U.S. Foreign Service, working as a political and economic officer in Ecuador. Aaron continued to work for the Foreign Service for over ten years. He served as a member of the U.S. Delegation to NATO, and in this capacity he was part of the organization’s Nuclear Planning Group and worked on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Aaron also worked for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, serving as a key member of the U.S. Delegation to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) with the Soviet Union.

From 1972 to 1974, Aaron worked for the National Security Council under Richard Nixon's administration, focusing on arms control and strategic doctrine. He took on a new position as Senator Walter Mondale's legislative assistant in 1974. The following year, Aaron became a Task Force Director for the Senate Intelligence Committee and was influential in shaping the Committee's recommendations.

Aaron served as Deputy National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981. In this position, Aaron chaired sub-Cabinet committees related to arms control and served as a trusted presidential representative to Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and China. Aaron is particularly known for his discussions with Israeli military leader and politician Moshe Dayan, which laid the groundwork for the Camp David Accords, and for his role in negotiating the deployment of U.S. Pershing Missiles and Ground Launched Cruise Missiles in Europe.

With the end of Jimmy Carter's presidential term in 1981, Aaron moved into the private sector, becoming Vice President for Mergers and Acquisitions at Oppenheimer and Co. and Vice Chairman of the board of Oppenheimer International. Though he left Oppenheimer in 1985 to focus on writing and lecturing, Aaron would later return to the company to serve on the board of directors of Oppenheimer's Quest for Value Dual Purpose Fund. He also remained involved in national politics, serving as senior consultant on foreign policy and defense for Walter Mondale's 1984 presidential campaign and as part of the foreign policy team for Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign.

Aaron served as Ambassador to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris during the Clinton administration, where he negotiated the Convention to Prohibit Bribery in International Business Transactions. In 1996, he was appointed the Clinton administration's special White House envoy for cryptography, charged with developing international guidelines for encryption technology in trade and communications. Aaron was also appointed Undersecretary of Commerce for International Trade in 1997, responsible for policies and programs that promote world trade and strengthen the international trade and investment position of the United States.

Upon his retirement from government service in 2000, Aaron became Senior International Advisor to the law firm Dorsey LLP. In 2003, he was appointed Senior Fellow at the RAND Corporation, where he currently serves as the Director of the Center for Middle East Public Policy. He is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and several other organizations related to international affairs.
Aaron is the author of three novels, State Scarlet (1987), Agent of Influence (1990), and Crossing By Night (1993). His nonfiction work In their Own Words: Voices of Jihad was published by the RAND Corporation in 2008.

Description

The David L. Aaron Papers primarily document Aaron's service as Deputy National Security Advisor under Jimmy Carter's administration, although records pertaining to his work for Walter F. Mondale and his activities in the private sector are also present. Aaron's chronological files, speeches, subject files, and writings from his White House years provide insight into the national security issues that dominated his term, especially U.S. relations with the Soviet Union. Of particular note are briefing papers, speech drafts and talking points, correspondence, and other materials created in the course of Jimmy Carter's 1980 re-election campaign. Materials that are more administrative in nature are also present in the form of invitations Aaron received, his schedules and appointments, and his telephone memorandums.

To a lesser extent, the collection includes records related to Aaron's work for Walter F. Mondale, both in his position as Mondale's legislative assistant in the U.S. Senate and as a foreign policy advisor for Mondale's 1984 presidential campaign. There is also a small amount of documentation on Aaron's tenure with Oppenheimer and Company and a number of his speeches and writings that postdate his tenure in the Executive Office, including a typescript of his first novel. Researchers should note that the collection contains almost no documentation of Aaron's career in the Foreign Service.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into two series.

Series 1: White House Years, 1976-1981
Series 2: U.S. Senate and Private Sector, 1959-1999

Access and Use

Access

Collection is open for research use.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information

Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. For quotations that are fair use as defined under U. S. Copyright Law, no permission to cite or publish is required. For those few instances beyond fair use, any copyright vested in the donor has passed to Princeton University and researchers are free to move forward with non-commercial use of materials without anything further from Mudd Library. For materials not created by the donor, where the copyright is not held by the University, researchers are responsible for determining who may hold the copyright and obtaining approval from them. In these instances, researchers do not need anything further from the Mudd
Provenance and Acquisition

This collection was donated by David L. Aaron in January 2015. The accession number associated with this donation is ML.2015.002.

Two additions to the collection, Aaron's 1976 campaign journal (Box 10) and his copy of the 1960 presidential transition briefing book (Box 13), were donated by David L. Aaron in December 2015. The accession number associated with this donation is ML.2015.040.

Two more additions to the collection, a copy of the foreign policy briefing book used for Carter's debate against Reagan (Box 16) and a proposal for an economic security council (Box 13), were donated by David L. Aaron in September 2017. The accession number associated with this donation is ML.2017.028.

Appraisal

Approximately two linear feet of materials unrelated to David Aaron's professional career were removed from the collection during processing in 2015.

Preferred Citation

David L. Aaron Papers, 1960-1999 (mostly 1976-1981), Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Rachel Van Unen in 2015 at the time of accessioning. Some materials were placed into archival housing and all materials were arranged into series and described in a finding aid. Materials from the December 2015 accession were added by Rachel Van Unen in December 2015.

Encoding

Finding aid encoded in EAD 2002 by Rachel Van Unen on June 3, 2015

Descriptive Rules Used

Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

Subject Headings

- Aaron, David, 1938-
· Carter, Jimmy, 1924-
· Mondale, Walter F., 1928-
· International relations.
· National security.
· Nuclear arms control -- Soviet Union.
· Nuclear arms control -- United States.
· Born digital.
· American history/20th century
· American politics and government
· Cold War
Series 1: White House Years, 1976-1981

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.

Description: This series contains the records from David Aaron's tenure as Deputy National Security Advisor from 1977–1981. Of particular note are briefing papers, speech drafts and talking points, correspondence, and other materials created in the course of Jimmy Carter's 1980 re-election campaign. The election campaign records detail the platforms of both major parties, especially their stances on foreign policy, and in particular highlight the national security issues emphasized by Carter's campaign, such as the MX missile project, defense spending, and improved relations with the developing world and with the Soviet Union and China.

Aaron's chronological files, speeches, subject files, and writings also provide insight into the national security issues that dominated his work under the Carter administration, especially the SALT-II agreement and U.S. relations with the Soviet Union more generally. Administrative materials that document the day-to-day responsibilities of the position and his travels abroad are also present in the form of invitations Aaron received, his schedules and appointments, and his telephone memorandums.

Chronological Files, Unclassified, 1977 January-1981 January
Size: 1 box

Chronological Files, Personal, 1977-1981 January
Size: 1 box
1978 May-1979 September, 1978 May-1979 September
Size: 1 box
Size: portion of 1 box

Correspondence and Christmas Cards, 1977-1981
Size: 5 folders

Memorabilia, 1977-1980
Size: 1 folder

Memorabilia (Buttons and Badges), circa 1976-1979
Size: 1 box

Invitations and Appointments: Chronological Run, 1978 April-1980 February
Size: 1 box
Series 1: White House Years ... (Continued)

Size: 1 box

Box: 6

Size: portion of 1 box

Political Trips and Conferences, 1977-1980
Box: 6

Size: 3 folders

1980 Presidential Campaign, 1980

David Aaron Campaign File, 1980
Box: 7

Size: 2 folders

Platform, Statement, and Background Papers, 1980
Box: 7

Size: 3 folders

Democratic National Convention, 1980
Box: 7

Size: 1 folder

Campaign Material (Defense/MX), 1980
Box: 7

Size: 1 folder

Assorted Campaign Material, 1980
Box: 7

Size: 2 folders

Campaign Briefing Book, 1980
Box: 7

Size: 1 folder

Campaign File, 1980
Box: 7

Size: 4 folders

Platform Statement, 1980
Box: 7

Size: 1 folder

MX (Democratic National Convention), 1980
Box: 7

Size: 1 folder

Campaign Binder, 1980
Box: 8

Size: 2 folders

The Advocates Election '80, 1980
Box: 8

Size: 1 folder

Foreign Policy and National Security Issues Briefing Book, 1980
Box: 16

accessionnumber: ML.2017.028

Size: 1 box
Description: Copies of the documents in this box were acquired by Ronald Reagan's campaign in the "debategate" controversy.

Publicity and Research Papers, 1977-1980
Size: 3 folders
Box: 8

Speeches, 1977-1980
Size: portion of 1 box
Box: 8

Telephone Memorandums and Schedules, 1977 March-1981 January
Size: portion of 1 box
Box: 9

Photographs, 1977-1981
Size: 2 boxes (1 partial)
Box: 9
Box: 15

Subject Files, 1976-1981
Payroll Debacle, 1977
Size: 1 folder
Box: 9

SALT Cartoons, 1979-1980
Size: 1 folder
Box: 9

National Security Council Appointment, 1976
Size: 1 folder
Box: 9

Size: 1 folder
Box: 9

National Security Council Staff, 1977-1978
Size: 1 folder
Box: 9

State of the Union, 1981
Size: 1 folder
Box: 9

Size: 1 folder
Box: 9

SALT-II Summit, 1979
Size: 1 folder
Box: 9

Allegations Against David Aaron, 1980
Size: 1 folder
Box: 10

Bilderberg Meetings, 1977
Size: 1 folder
Box: 10

Diary, 1977-1978
Box: 10
Series 2: U.S. Senate and Private Sector, 1959-1999

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.

Description: This series is composed of records that were mostly created after David Aaron's tenure in the Executive Office. The materials in this series mainly relate to Aaron's work for Senator Walter Mondale, both in his position as Mondale's legislative assistant in the U.S. Senate before joining the Carter administration, and later as Senior Consultant on Foreign Policy and Defense for Mondale's 1984 presidential campaign. The campaign materials mainly document Mondale's foreign policy stances on the Soviet Union, the Middle East, and Latin America, as well as his platform on military preparedness and arms control. The series also includes records from Aaron's tenure with Oppenheimer and Company and a number of his speeches and writings that postdate his White House years, including a typescript of his first novel. Additionally, there is a very small amount of information on Aaron's early life and documentation related to his Foreign Service career.


Size: 1 box

Description: This box contains some speeches and other materials that predate the actual campaign, likely used as reference by Aaron or other campaign staff.

Subject Files, 1984-1988

Star Wars, 1985-1988

Size: 1 folder


Size: 1 folder

[Arms Control] Verification, 1987

Size: 1 folder

Speeches and Lectures, 1984-1987

Size: 1 folder
Size: 1 folder
State Scarlet Book Tour, 1988
Size: 1 folder
"P", 1986-1987
Size: 1 folder
Size: 1 folder
Overseas Development Council, 1987-1988
Size: 1 folder
State Scarlet Manuscript, undated
Size: portion of 1 box
Materials from Senate Office, 1975-1976
Size: portion of 1 box
Early Biographical, circa 1959, undated
Size: 1 folder
Description: Includes early photographs of Aaron with his family.
Correspondence, 1976 November-December
Size: 1 folder
Memos to Mondale/Letters for Mondale, 1975-1976
Size: 1 folder
Mondale Speeches/Press Conferences, 1974-1976
Size: 1 folder
Speeches and Press Conferences for Mondale, 1975-1976
Size: 1 folder
Personal Chronological File, 1960-1974
Size: 1 folder
Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Certificate, 1970
Size: 1 folder
Size: 1 folder
Size: 1 folder
Research Papers by Others, circa 1983-1984  
Size: 1 folder

Oppenheimer and Co. Correspondence, 1984  
Size: 1 folder

Book Party List, 1993  
Size: 1 folder

Press for "Miracle on 44th Street", 1991  
Size: 1 folder

Size: 1 folder

Size: 1 folder

Presidential Transition Briefing Book, 1960  
accessionnumber: ML.2015.040  
Size: portion of 1 box  
Description: Authored by Richard Neustadt

Proposal for an Economic Security Council, 1992  
accessionnumber: ML.2017.028  
Size: 1 folder  
Description: Paper prepared for Robert Rubin during the transition to the Clinton administration