



Abshire, David: Files, 1986-1987

Finding Aid Type

White House Staff and Office File Collections

Subtitle/Office

Special Counsel to the President, 1986-1987

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Record Type

Textual

Biography

Biography

David Manker Abshire (April 11, 1926-October 31, 2014) was a soldier, academic, and public servant. Under President Reagan, Abshire served on the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (1981-1982), was appointed the U.S. Ambassador to NATO (1983-1987), and was appointed Special Counsel to the President regarding the Iran-Contra investigation.

Abshire was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee on April 11, 1926. He graduated from The Bright School in 1938 and Baylor School in Chattanooga in 1944. Abshire graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1951.

Abshire fought in the Korean War, 1951-1955, where he served as platoon leader, division intelligence officer, and company commander. He received various distinctions: the Bronze Star, Combat Infantry Badge, and Commendation Ribbon.

After the war, Abshire went back to academia, and received a doctorate in history from Georgetown University in 1959, where for many years he was an adjunct professor at its Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service. In 1962, Abshire and Admiral Arleigh Burke founded the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). In 1988, as President of CSIS, he merged the Hawaii-based Pacific Forum into his organization to give it more input from the Asia-Pacific region.

Abshire's public service began in 1970 when he became the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, 1970-1973. He then served as Chairman of the U.S. Board of International Broadcasting (1975-1977).

Abshire was Ambassador to NATO from 1983-1987. He oversaw the deployment of Pershing and Cruise missiles in NATO allied countries as a counter to Soviet SS-20 missiles in Warsaw Pact countries. Some allies and large parts of their public were opposed to this deployment so Abshire had to maneuver among these conflicting positions. For his service he was awarded the Distinguished Public Service Medal.

Abshire was recalled from his NATO post as the Iran-Contra Affair unfolded to serve as Special Counsel to President Reagan with Cabinet rank. His charge was to assure a full investigation of the sale of arms to Iran to help restore the confidence of the nation in the Reagan presidency. He was assigned to the Counsel's Office for administrative purposes and to work closely with the established White House Legal Task Force. As of now, the Library has found a single box of material generated while Abshire was at the White House. The material is primarily administrative in

nature. He concluded his service as Special Counsel after the publishing of the President's Special Review Board (the Tower Board) report.

For much of his career Abshire participated in efforts to reorganize foreign policy functions and intelligence gathering by the United States. He was a member of the Murphy Commission in 1974-1975. The Murphy Commission's task was to investigate the "organization, methods and powers" of our various foreign policy establishments, and to make recommendations "to provide a more effective system for the formulation and implementation of the nations foreign policy." The Commission investigated the CIA's role in foreign policy and the balance between Congress and the President on foreign policy leadership.

In 1980, President-elect Reagan asked Abshire to head the transition's National Security Group, which included the State and Defense Departments, the U.S. Information Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency. After these duties, Abshire served on the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB) from 1981-1982.

In 2008, Abshire was again called upon to advise and assist on restructuring of the United States foreign policy and intelligence gathering when he was asked to be a member of the Project on National Security Reform. The PNSR is a nonpartisan, non-profit organization mandated by the United States Congress to recommend improvements to the U.S. national security system. Among other advice, the PNSR focused on the need for our national security system to pivot away from Cold War structures and aim for more agile and efficient structures and methods to combat new threats such as terrorism.

Abshire had active occupations outside of government, working in the 1970s as administrator on the Advisory Board at St. Albans School, and on the Board of Advisors at the Naval War College.

Abshire was a member of the exclusive Alfalfa Club. He was a member of the advisory council of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. He sat on the advisor board of America Abroad Media and the President's Task Force on U.S. Government International Broadcasting (1991). In July 2002, he was elected President of the Richard Lounsbery Foundation of New York. In addition, Abshire served nine years on the board of directors for the Proctor & Gamble company. He is the author of seven books, the last published being *A Call to Greatness*:

Challenging Our Next President, published in 2008.

For his long life of service, Abshire was honored by his alma maters, received numerous honorary medals and degrees, and was honored by foreign countries. He was awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal by President Ronald Reagan in 1989.

Abshire was married to Carolyn Lamar Sample. They five children and 11 grandchildren.

Abshire died on October 31, 2014 of pulmonary fibrosis in Alexandria, Virginia.

Last Modified Date

2024-02-26

Box 14187

Status	Title
CLOSED	Admin - January
CLOSED	Admin - January [February]
CLOSED	Admin - January [March]
CLOSED	Chron Interoffice [January 1987-February 1987]
CLOSED	Chron Interoffice February 1987
CLOSED	Pageboys January
CLOSED	Talking Points 1987
CLOSED	Chron Interoffice March 1987
CLOSED	Personnel
CLOSED	Bazala, Raz Personal
CLOSED	Security February 1981