The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR LINO GUTIERREZ

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Q: Lino, Good afternoon.

GUTIERREZ: Good afternoon, David.

Q: What's your full name?

GUTIERREZ: Well, I don't have a middle name, so it's just Lino Gutiérrez and Fernández on my mother's side. As you know, both the patronymic and matronymic are used in Latin America.

Q: When and where were you born?

GUTIERREZ: I was born on March the 26th, 1951, in Havana, Cuba, at the Catholic Hospital. My father's name was Lino too; he was a mathematician, professor at the University of Havana; my mother was a teacher, but she didn't work at the time of my birth; she was a housewife. In those days, in Latin cultures husbands didn't want their wives to work, so my mother stayed at home to raise me. But she had a teaching degree from a teacher's college. Both of my parents were born in Sagua la Grande, in the middle of the island, in Las Villas Province. They had met, and married after a five-year courtship. My father came to be a pretty well known mathematician and professor at the University of Havana. He had studied as a post-graduate in Princeton in 1944-45, so my parents had many memories of their time in the U.S. during World War II. And then in 1951, after I was born, we went to Chicago for six months for another post-doctoral course by my father.

Q: Let's talk a little bit more about your father and his side of the family. How many generations had your father's family lived in Cuba?

GUTIERREZ: Well, all my family came from Spain, from different parts of Spain originally -- some from the north, some from the south, others from the Canary Islands. I also had ancestors from Asturias, from Andalusia, and from the Basque country. In my father's case, his father was born in Cuba, but had gone back to Spain, so he had been raised in Spain. So my Grandfather Lino (same name -- I am the third Lino Gutiérrez) always spoke with a Spanish accent.

Q: From what Province?

GUTIERREZ: He was from Castile; he was from Burgos in Castile. But his father was from Spain, so if you go back a couple of generations, two or three generations, all of the roots go back to Spain. And one ancestor, actually my grandfather's father, was a lieutenant colonel in the Spanish army. He was originally assigned to Cuba as a member of the Spanish army, and actually was in the army when Cuba fought for its independence. So my great grandfather fought on the Spanish side in the war of independence.

Q Interesting. And on your mother's side?

GUTIERREZ: My mother's side also went back to Spain. My four grandparents were born in Cuba, but if you go back a couple of generations before that, they all came from other parts of Spain. There I have some blood from the Canary Islands and from the south of Spain.

Q: Do you know why they came to Cuba?

GUTIERREZ: Many of them came seeking opportunity. There was a big migration in the 19th century of Spaniards into Cuba. After the wars of independence in South America at the beginning of the 19th century, Cuba was the lone holdout of the Spanish-American colonies -- the only colony that stayed loyal to Spain during that time, and it attracted a lot more Spanish migration. I guess migration that would have gone to all the other South American countries came to Cuba in the 19th century. And they came seeking opportunities, seeking a better life, most of them. Or, in the case of my great-grandfather, assigned by the Spanish army.

Q: Can you still identify relatives in Spain?

GUTIERREZ: My grandfather Luis went back to visit, and I know what village they're from: a little town named Ujo, in Asturias. I could probably go back and find some third cousins; I haven't tried to do that. But if I gave it a little bit of research, I could probably do it.

Q: Gutierrez and Fernandez are both pretty common names.

GUTIERREZ: True enough. But my paternal grandmother's name was Novoa, which is gallego name from Galicia, and my maternal grandmother's name was Caubí, which was probably Catalan.

Q: I always hear that there is a very strong gallego component in Cuba.

GUTIERREZ: Right. In Cuba, as you may know, all Spaniards were called Gallegos whether they were from Galicia or not. It was just like all people of Arab descent were called *turcos,* because immigrants from the Middle East carried Turkish passports, when Turkey was the Ottoman Empire.

Q: Did your parents have any strong political leanings?

GUTIERREZ: My father was a liberal in the local context. He had supported Eduardo Chibas's party in 1948, the Orthodox Party, which was a party that ran on a very strong anti-corruption campaign. He was firmly opposed to Fulgencio Batista, who had taken over power illegally by a coup d'etat in 1952. My father became part of the civic resistance, a group of professionals who opposed the regime, and he gave money to the rebels for food and medicine. At that time he, like most Cubans, thought that Fidel Castro and his 26th of July Movement intended to restore democracy to Cuba. At that time, no one suspected what would come later.

Q: Was your father's father also an academic?

GUTIERREZ: My paternal grandfather, who was also named Lino, was a surveyor and cartographer, and taught the discipline in high school. He was also a poet, and published a number of poetry books. He had learned to be a surveyor, so he taught my father and his brothers how to survey land. In the 1930s, he participated in a nationwide teachers' strike against Machado, who was a dictator, and was fired. He then turned to surveying full time to be able to support his family.

Q: What about your mother's father?

GUTIERREZ: My mother's father, my grandfather Luis, was a self-made man. He had to quit school at age of 13 to sell newspapers to help his family, so he never completed middle school or high school. And yet he rose to be the president of an insurance company and to run a sugar mill. He was a self-made man who had been successful in the business world. He was more conservative, very Catholic and pro-business. Although he didn't like Batista, he wasn't very sympathetic toward Castro.

Q: Was your family, would you say, well-to-do -- upper middle class or how would you….

GUTIERREZ: My parents were definitely middle class. My grandfather Luis had done well in the business world, but he also lived in a middle class neighborhood. My father lived on a university professor's salary, which was not very much, but at the same time had to moonlight as a high school teacher, so he had to have a couple of jobs to make ends meet.

Q: Where did he get his degree?

GUTIERREZ: He got his degree at the University of Havana.

Q: But post-graduate, he…

GUTIERREZ: He did post-graduate work in the United States on two different occasions. He went to Princeton during World War II, and later to the University of Chicago in

1951. My father became a mathematician of some note, having published papers in mathematical journals, and was well known in mathematical circles.

Q: Is he still alive?

GUTIERREZ: No. He died in 1979.

Q: Is your mother alive?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, she is. She's 83 and lives in Miami.

Q: Do you have brothers and sisters?

GUTIERREZ: No, I am an only child.

Q: Did you feel the pressure that sometimes only children feel?

GUTIERREZ: It's very interesting -- everybody asks me what it's like to be an only child. I know nothing else. I always wished I had a brother or a sister. I suppose you get all the discipline and all the spoiling at the same time. On the other hand, you learn to be resourceful and to fend for yourself.

Q: Were you with your father abroad when Castro came into Havana, or were you in Havana?

GUTIERREZ: We were in Havana in 1959. I was seven years old, almost eight, and I remember it well. I knew my parents were against Batista. Before Castro came to power, I remember my mother telling me one day while we were walking downtown to hush up when I told my cousins that Batista was a bad guy, which is what I had heard at home. We were in a public place and I remember my mother said, "Quiet, don't say that." She was afraid some of Batista's henchmen might overhear me.

Q: You were not in Havana, though…you were…?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, we were in Havana. I was born in Havana and my father taught at the university. My parents were born in Sagua la Grande, in the middle of the island in Las Villas province, but they had moved to Havana years before.

Q: I see. What do you remember about Havana in those days? What was it like?

GUTIERREZ: I have fond memories of Havana. I remember having lots of fun going to the movies, playing with my cousins, visiting the zoo. There was considerable U.S. influence. We saw mostly American movies. We went to Woolworth's, which we called "El tencen," or the ten-cent store. We went to the ballpark to watch baseball and saw the local teams play. A lot of American players came and played in Cuba, including Tommy Lasorda.

Q: This was winter ball?

GUTIERREZ: Winter ball. And in the summer there was even an AAA team called the Havana Cuban Sugar Kings that played in the International League. I remember one year they made the playoffs, and my parents and I went to the stadium to see Havana play the Minneapolis Millers.

Q: Did you know any English?

GUTIERREZ: I did. I went to an American school, the Phillips School, since age three. I remember my mother telling me that she couldn't tell if I was learning any English until one day I wanted to go to the bathroom in the house. I said "May I be excused" in English, and then she could tell that I was learning.

Q: Was that an exclusively English-speaking school?

GUTIERREZ: No, it was English in the morning and Spanish in the afternoon.

Q: It had both.

GUTIERREZ: Yes.

Q: Had you traveled to the U.S. before your father went on a sabbatical?

GUTIERREZ: No. I had only been in the U.S. once, when I was six months old and I accompanied my parents to Chicago.

Q: Did you have any cousins or anyone in the States?

GUTIERREZ: I had an uncle who had taught -- another mathematician -- who was teaching at a U.S. university. But no, most of the family was in Cuba at that time.

Q: So why did the family decide to leave?

GUTIERREZ: Well, at the beginning they were very excited with Batista's fall, and I remember on January 1st, 1959, people taking to the streets and hugging each other. It was a great moment: the dictator has fled, a new era of peace and democracy was sure to follow. But little by little my parents started getting disillusioned with what they saw from the Castro government. I remember, as a kid, watching the public trials on TV of Batista's people that were pretty much a circus.

Q: They were taken off to be shot.

GUTIERREZ: Taken to the *paredón*, or the wall, to be shot. The fusilamientos, the executions, firing squads, became commonplace soon thereafter.

Q: Were you aware of those?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, we were very aware of them.

Q: Your parents surely were.

GUTIERREZ: They were. At first many Cubans were willing to give Fidel the benefit of the doubt, knowing that at the beginning of any revolution there are some excesses, but perhaps it's the necessary price to pay for whatever good and just things are to follow. But as time went on, the excesses continued. I think the straw that broke the camel's back was when Castro reached out to the Soviets. He received the Soviet Deputy Prime Minister, Anastas Mikoyan in Havana in 1960 like a teenager meeting a rock star.

Q: You were still in Havana, and you remember that?

GUTIERREZ: I remember that. I remember Mikoyan, in his bad Spanish, saying "Viva el pueblo Cubano" -- long live the Cuban people. I also remember watching Russian movies at the theater that used to show American movies. I remember seeing a Russian movie about the race to the moon. In the movie, the Americans were duplicitous and used all kinds of trickery to try to get there first. But in the end the "noble Soviets" rescue the Americans, whose spaceship had broken down, and get there first.

Q: You saw this on television?

GUTIERREZ: No, at the movie theater. By then, American movies had been banned and Russian movies were the only ones playing.

Q: How long was it after Castro came into Havana that you left Havana?

GUTIERREZ: We left Cuba two and a half years later. We left in June 1961, two months after the Bay of Pigs. I remember one of the big surprises for me was in April 1961, when the Bay of Pigs invasion took place. Schools were closed and kids were sent home. When I got home, I sensed that my parents were for the invaders and not for the government. This was surprising, because I had assumed up to then that we were still with Fidel.

Q: Were they speaking in very low tones about that?

GUTIERREZ: They were. They were hoping that the Bay of Pigs invasion would succeed at that point.

Q: So there was up to date news about the…

GUTIERREZ: The government's propaganda machine was operating at full strength. I remember watching TV and hearing an announcement, "We have caught an American

pilot, or the body of an American pilot, and his name is so and so, proof that the U.S. is behind the invasion," and lots of martial music, lots of patriotic music, and stuff like that.

Q: Did you have an impression of John F. Kennedy at that time?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. He was seen as many Cubans with much hope, as someone who would help us get rid of Castro. I remember my uncle, especially -- my mother's brother -- talking about him. He had been a classmate of Castro's in high school, and had never liked him. I remember him noting that Kennedy was a Catholic, which was a good thing as far as he was concerned, because my uncle was a devout Catholic. I remember my uncle said, when Kennedy was elected, "Well, I hope God inspires him to help us get rid of Castro."

Q: Castro went to a Jesuit school.

GUTIERREZ: Right. Both he and my uncle went to Belen Jesuit School.

Q: Was the school you went to religious at all?

GUTIERREZ: No. Mine was secular, the Phillips School, an American school. My father came from a secular tradition.

Q: Was he a Catholic?

GUTIERREZ: He was not a practicing Catholic. He had been baptized; he was more of a free-thinking -- in the European tradition -- liberal secularist.

Q: Your mother?

GUTIERREZ: My mother was more devout. She was born and raised Catholic, and practicing. She would take me to mass most of the time.

Q: Did you at the time you were in Cuba -- I know you were very young -- did you ever see any other Cuban Americans who came into the Foreign Service, Phil Chicola, or any of these guys?

GUTIERREZ: No, I didn't know any of them in Cuba. I do know that a couple of them knew each other; I think Enrique Perez and Phil Chicola were classmates, and knew each other in elementary school.

Q: I know Enrique…I know them both.

GUTIERREZ: But, no, I did not know them.

Q: Otto Reich was older, I guess.

GUTIERREZ: Otto Reich was older, yes. I believe he attended Baldor School, a prestigious private school.

Q: What were the circumstances of your leaving Cuba? Was it hard to get out?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. At some point in 1961, my family decided to leave. My father, by that point, had been made an offer he couldn't refuse from the government, to work for the central planning board, because of his mathematical ability, and because the university had closed. Because of his position, the Castro government would not allow him to leave.

Q: Did you have trouble making ends meet when your father was working for the government?

GUTIERREZ: Not yet. By 1961, Castro had not abolished private property nor moved totally against the middle class.

Q: When did your parents start really planning to move?

GUTIERREZ: I think when the Bay of Pigs invasion failed in April of 1961, they decided that the situation was unlikely to get any better.

Q: How long was your father working at the planning board?

GUTIERREZ: He'd been working there for a few months. When the government refused to give him permission to leave, my father decided to send my mother and me to Cali, Colombia, where his sister and brother-in-law lived. So my mother and I received permission to go on "vacation" to Colombia in June 1961…a vacation from which we never returned. My father's brother was in a similar situation of not being allowed to leave, so he sent his wife and my four cousins with us.

Q: Did you go by boat?

GUTIERREZ: No, we flew. I remember we flew KLM, the Dutch airline, from Havana to Kingston. I remember all the passengers clapped and sang the Cuban national anthem once we landed on Jamaican soil.

Q: They were all going the same way?

GUTIERREZ: They were all happy to leave Cuba. And then we went to Curacao, and Barranquilla, and from there we spent the night, and went to Cali the next day.

Q: And from Cali?

GUTIERREZ: We stayed in Cali for about a year -- 14 months. My father was able to leave six months later; he went to a mathematical convention, and there he was able to defect and join us.

Q: At that time no one was checking to see whether other family had left ahead?

GUTIERREZ: Well, I think in my father's case, his boss pretty much looked the other way. He knew what was going on.

Q: What did your family do in Cali?

GUTIERREZ: At the beginning there were seven of us who descended upon our relatives in Cali. My aunt and uncle in Cali had five children of their own, including twins who had just been born. We became a mega-family in Colombia under the same roof, and my generous uncle and aunt took us in.

Q: That's when you decided you might like siblings, or…

GUTIERREZ: Well, I had a good time with my cousins, but it was a bit crowded in the house. After two months my uncle was able to join his family in Cali, and the six of them left for the United States soon thereafter. They went to Los Angeles and one of them, my cousin Horacio Gutiérrez, became a famous concert pianist. My mother and I stayed 14 months; my father joined us after six months, and he got a job teaching mathematics at the Universidad del Valle del Cauca in Cali. My parents' objective had been to go to the United States, so my father started to apply to teach at some American universities. Soon he had received a couple of offers, one from the University of Southern California, and one from the University of Alabama.

Q: And his English was very good?

GUTIERREZ: His English was pretty good. He could certainly read English at a high level. He spoke with an accent, but he made himself understood, since he had been to the U.S. twice before. So my father picked Alabama, where my uncle Mario and another of my father's sisters lived. We left Cali, Colombia, for Tuscaloosa, Alabama in August 1962.

Q: What was that like? You went by plane?

GUTIERREZ: We went by Pan American Grace Airways (PANAGRA) from Cali to Miami, with a stop in Panama. We stayed a week in Miami, visiting relatives. My father bought a used 1955 Chevy for $300, and we drove from Miami to Tuscaloosa.

Q: Segregated Tuscaloosa.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. We arrived in Tuscaloosa just as the civil rights situation started to heat up. That was quite an eye-opener for me to see water fountains marked "colored"

and “white” and, you know, the contrast of southern people being so nice and so friendly -- I’ve never been in a place where people smile at you in the street and everything -- hospitable -- and at the same time this segregated society that existed.

Q: What did your parents tell you about that?

GUTIERREZ: Well, they pretty much said…they told me what to expect, that there was segregation there, something we did not believe in, we felt it was wrong, but to be prepared for that.

Q: You had a kind of middle class existence in Tuscaloosa -- a university professor’s family’s existence.

GUTIERREZ: Right. I remember my father’s first salary was $9,000 a year in 1962.

Q: That car would have cost $350 bucks or something…

GUTIERREZ: Yes, we had that car for a couple of years. We rented a house in a Tuscaloosa suburb, and started to make our way in the U.S. After a few months, my father surprised us one day by buying a black and white TV. This allowed me to watch baseball games and shows like Bonanza on TV.

Q: What did your mother think of that -- not of Bonanza, but what did she think about Tuscaloosa?

GUTIERREZ: We were so happy to be in the U.S. -- so happy to be able to be out of Cuba, to make a living and survive and get ahead. We were happy there, notwithstanding some of the contradictions of the place. I remember that in 1962 George Wallace stood in the schoolhouse door at the University of Alabama and prevented two African-American students from enrolling. Kennedy nationalized the National Guard, and Wallace stepped aside the next day. Tuscaloosa was in the national news. Obviously we were distressed by the situation. We were thinking, we have gone from Castro to Wallace! Sometimes we wondered “what’s next?”

Q: Where’d you go to school in Tuscaloosa?

GUTIERREZ: I went to Tuscaloosa County High School in Northport, Alabama, which was in a neighboring city of Tuscaloosa, across the river from Tuscaloosa. The school included a sizable rural population, so my classmates came from diverse economic backgrounds. I was the only foreigner, the only Hispanic, the only different person there.

Q: You kept speaking Spanish at home?

GUTIERREZ: I always spoke Spanish at home.

Q: Did you have any other people you could speak Spanish with?

GUTIERREZ: Not at my school, but there were some Cuban families and other Latins in Tuscaloosa. Tuscaloosa has a couple of state hospitals, so there were some Cuban doctors there. There were also some Cuban and Latin students and professors at the University of Alabama. I thought I could speak English until I went to school the first day in Northport, Alabama, and I couldn't understand a word that I heard.

Q: Did you pick up a drawl finally?

GUTIERREZ: Well, yes. After a while you can't help it.

Q: How long were you in Tuscaloosa?

GUTIERREZ: I lived in Tuscaloosa from 1962 to 1973, except for 1968-69 when we were in Miami. I did all of my junior high and high school years there, and college as well except for my freshman year.

When I graduated from high school in 1968, my parents told me that I was going to the University of Alabama, because that was where my father taught, and where he could get a faculty discount, and where we could afford it. I was quite happy with that decision, since many of my friends were going to go to the University of Alabama. Later did I learn that many American kids have a wide range of choices of where they go to college. I certainly learned that when my daughters became college-age.

Q: And that's what you did, attend the University of Alabama.

GUTIERREZ: That's what I did, although my father did take a sabbatical one year, to go to Miami, to the University of Miami, so I did one year at the University of Miami.

Q: That was what year?

GUTIERREZ: My freshman year, 1968-69.

Q: So you started there, really.

GUTIERREZ: I took a couple of summer courses at Alabama, then I went to Miami for the rest of freshman year.

Q: You finished in Tuscaloosa.

GUTIERREZ: Finished in Tuscaloosa, graduating in 1972.

Q: I guess the football was pretty segregated, lily-white football, I guess.

GUTIERREZ: It certainly was when we arrived in 1962. By my junior and senior year of high school, integration had taken place. I went to school with African-American kids in

high school in 1967-68. By the time I started college, there were a number of African-American students at the University.

Q: Did you like watching football games…a big deal.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, football is king in Alabama. I knew nothing about American football when I arrived, but I quickly became interested in the sport. Soon after I arrived, the 1962 football season began, and Alabama won its first two games 35-0 and 44-6. The Alabama football teams were among the best in the land, with players like Joe Namath and Kenny Stabler, and Alabama won some national championships while I was there. I became a devout fan, and to this day I bleed Alabama Crimson.

Q: Why is it called the Crimson Tide?

GUTIERREZ: Well, you know you have to go back to the 1920s or so. I guess the uniforms were crimson, and, if I'm not mistaken, a sports reporter described the Alabama team as a "red wave," and from there "Crimson Tide" developed.

Q: What did you major in?

GUTIERREZ: Well, my father being a mathematician, I kind of felt…not that he ever pressured me…but I felt an obligation to at least try to major in mathematics. And truth be told, I scored higher in math and science aptitude tests at that time than I did in any of the verbal skills. So, I started undecided, trying out majors in mathematics, psychology, and political science. Political science was what I really liked, because I liked politics and international relations. I was fascinated by international politics, domestic politics. I remember following the Johnson-Goldwater race in 1964 very closely, and in 1968, when Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy were killed, and then the presidential election with Nixon and Humphrey and Wallace.

Q: Did you have political leanings in college?

GUTIERREZ: We were a family that was grateful to the U.S. for taking us in, so we had sympathy for President Johnson. He was on the right side of civil rights, was fighting poverty, and was fighting communism in Vietnam.

Q: What was actually the mood of the campus before segregation, really when it was…?

GUTIERREZ: When James Hood and Vivian Malone were admitted as the first African-American students -- that was 1963, when I was only 12 years old,

Q: So you'd had the civil rights struggle …

GUTIERREZ: Right. It was an incredible period. I remember all the marches, the brave freedom riders and demonstrators, the Birmingham church bombings. But by the time I got to the university, by 1968, 1969 when I was there, things had calmed down, although

there wasn't much mixing: the blacks pretty much kept to themselves, and so did whites. But certainly when the football team was integrated, that really advanced the cause of integration considerably.

Q: Were there a lot of fraternities and sororities?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, the University of Alabama is a very Greek-dominated campus. I was not in any fraternity or sorority.

Q: Did you want to be?

GUTIERREZ: Not really. I preferred being an "independent."

Q: Were you involved in other activities?

GUTIERREZ: I was involved in a tutoring program at the university called the Tutorial Assistance Program, where we helped disadvantaged kids by tutoring them in math and science and other subjects. We took university students to the different junior highs and high schools to tutor kids. By my junior year, I was running the program. For my service in that program, I received an award in 1972 and a memorial scholarship, given to me by University president David Mathews.

Q: Did you organize this tutoring program?

GUTIERREZ: No, it existed by the time I got to the university. I took part and later was elected to be chairman of the program. I ran the program for two years.

Q: And what was your major technically?

GUTIERREZ: I finally decided to major in Political science. By my sophomore year, I said, "Dad, I like math, but I don't see myself being a mathematician all my life."

Q: There are different branches of political science. Was this orthodox?

GUTIERREZ: No, it was international relations. You could major in comparative politics, political theory, domestic politics or international, and I chose international.

Q: With an emphasis on Latin America?

GUTIERREZ: No, at that point I was taking some Latin American courses, but also some European and Asian courses, as I remember. I was not necessarily only interested in Latin America at that time, but international relations in general.

Q: Were you thinking about what you wanted to do when you got out of college?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. I had one professor who had talked to me about the Foreign Service, although he admitted that he had flunked the Foreign Service exam. So, I had thought about the Foreign Service or about working for the U.S. government in some capacity. That was my long-term goal.

When I graduated with my B.A. in 1972, I took the Federal Service Entrance Exam, the exam given to those who wanted to work for the Federal Government at that time. I scored high enough to be offered a couple of jobs by U.S. agencies, but the jobs were not a good fit for me. There was a job with GSA in Atlanta, and a job working for the IRS in Mobile, Alabama, as what the locals called a "revenooer" -- repossessing people's cars and property for not paying their taxes. I didn't like either option. Not excited by my federal options, I decided that I would follow the family tradition -- father, mother, maternal grandmother, paternal grandfather -- and teach. In order to do so, I had to stay in school for a few months in order to get a teacher's certificate.

Q: How long did it take you after you graduated?

GUTIERREZ: It took me a couple of semesters. I had not taken any education courses, and I had to do a whole semester of student teaching in a high school. But after a few months I had my teacher's certificate. So in May, 1973, I got in my 1966 Mustang and drove to Miami, Florida, to see if I could get a job teaching.

Q: Had you traveled to other parts of the US at this time?

GUTIERREZ: My parents and I traveled to Miami every summer to see relatives, so I was very familiar with the south Florida area. I had cousins and relatives there. At that point, my parents and I had traveled mostly in the South -- New Orleans, Atlanta, Memphis. We had not visited any of the big cities at that point other than Atlanta. My whole American world was the southeast United States at that point. Later that year I would visit the Carolinas, Washington, and Baltimore.

Q: So you taught a little while?

GUTIERREZ: When I arrived in Miami, I showed up at the Dade County School Board and was told that there were no teaching openings for the upcoming school year. I was disappointed, and didn't quite know what to do next, but one day I saw an ad in the paper that said that the Urban League needed teachers. I didn't know exactly what the Urban League was, so I went to the Urban League headquarters in Miami to check out the ad. I learned that the Urban League was opening a new experimental school called The Street Academy, funded by the federal government, which was to be a school for dropouts and suspended students.

Q: Black students?

GUTIERREZ: Ninety-five percent of the students were African-American. Much to my surprise, after an interview with the principal I was offered a job as the school's social

studies teacher. When I informed some of my friends and relatives about my new job, many advised me not to take the job because the school was located in a high-crime area, Liberty City in Miami. But I looked on it as a challenge, and I took the job.

Q: Was it a fun job?

GUTIERREZ: It was exhilarating and frustrating in equal degrees. It was at the time of the last stages of the Great Society, when the Federal Government put a lot of money into social programs. We had ample funds for supplies and classroom materials. But it was also a time when there was a lot of alienation in the African-American community. Martin Luther King had been assassinated, and there were a lot of drugs on the street. The drug problems in Miami were really starting at that time. Every day within a five-mile radius of the school there were at least one or two murders.

Q: What year was this?

GUTIERREZ: This was 1973 to 1975. I taught at the Street Academy for two years.

Q: Let's step back a year or two. Did you have any issues with the draft?

GUTIERREZ: I registered for the draft in 1969, when I turned 18. At that time we had a draft lottery, and I had number 121, which was not a very high number, but the year I became eligible -- because there was a college deferment in those days -- they drafted up to number 95. So I missed being drafted by 26 numbers. In my freshman year at the University of Miami, I did ROTC for one semester -- Army ROTC. After that semester, I decided the Army wasn't for me, and I decided not to continue in ROTC. Maybe the day I got my thumb caught in the M1 rifle I had been assigned was a turning point. From then on, I saw myself as more of a peace warrior than an actual warrior.

Q: I understand. Did you make enough working at the Urban League school to live?

GUTIERREZ: Well, I was shocked because they paid me $11,000, which to me was a lot of money in those days. My cousin was working as an accountant -- we were living together -- making about the same amount, so I was surprised to be making as much as an accountant, but our program was well funded by the federal government.

Q: In Miami you had one foot in the Cuban-American community and one foot in the well, the African American community you were working with. It was probably a pretty socially mobile place.

GUTIERREZ: Right. And had I stayed in Miami, I probably would have gotten into local politics, having contacts in both those communities. After a couple of years, I was offered a new job by the Urban League. A new school, another Street Academy, was scheduled to open in the Cuban community, and I was asked if I wanted to be the director of the school. I was only 24 years old at that time. But by then, the University of Alabama had offered me a partial scholarship for a Master's in Latin American Studies. That seemed to

me to be a more appealing option. After two years of teaching in Miami, I felt it had been a good experience, but it was time to do something else.

Q: How did they offer you this?

GUTIERREZ: I was in contact with my old professors. I went back and visited one time, and they said they were looking for somebody to do an assistantship the next academic year in Latin American Studies. So I said, “Let me think about it,” and later accepted.

Q: What did that entail? Were you an assistant professor actually?

GUTIERREZ: I didn’t actually teach, but I helped the department, writing some book reviews, helped with the curriculum, helped with the -- sort of a professors’ assistant -- a professor’s assistant. I did book reviews about recently-published Latin American texts, tutored some professors in Spanish, a bit of everything. I did whatever was needed in the Latin American studies department.

Q: How long was that?

GUITIERREZ: A little over a year; I was able to complete a master’s in one year, by going both summers.

Q: Did you write a thesis?

GUTIERREZ: No, we had a choice between writing a thesis or taking additional hours. I decided to take more hours.

Q: At this time had you traveled -- certainly not back to Cuba -- but had you traveled back to Latin America at all?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. I had met a young lady from Venezuela in college, and I had visited her there. So I had been to Venezuela a couple of times, but that was the only place. Of course, I had lived in Cuba and Colombia as a child.

Q: Were you starting to think about the Foreign Service?

GUTIERREZ: I did, and I had taken the exam, and had fallen just short of passing.

Q: Full disclosure: that was my situation, too -- I took it twice. It’s a tough test.

GUTIERREZ: But then I was finally -- after I graduated, after I got my master’s, I passed the oral and I was asked if I wanted to come in in January 1977.

Q: You had to take the oral exam, though.

GUTIERREZ: Yes. I drove up to Washington, DC for the oral exam. I think I took the written in Birmingham, Alabama, and the oral exam in Washington. I was told that I had passed the same day.

Q: What was it like?

GUTIERREZ: Well, it was certainly surprising and delightful and it gave me a great sense of accomplishment.

Q: What year was this?

GUTIERREZ: This was in late 1976.

Q: Was it…when I took the exam there was a panel of about three…was it the same thing with you?

GUTIERREZ: Three people, yes. I believe the chairman was an FSO named Eddie Egan. I had spoken to people who had taken the exam, trying to find out some of the things they ask. I knew that the panel often asked cultural questions, so I prepared to answer cultural questions in addition to the expected political science and history questions. I remember that I was asked, "What is the greatest American contribution to world culture?", and I chose jazz.

Q: What other questions -- do you remember?

GUTIERREZ: I was asked about general background questions. I remember that I spoke about Kennedy's foreign policy, and I spent some time talking about Cuba, including the Bay of Pigs, and the Cuban Missile Crisis. I had written about the Bay of Pigs in college, so I felt this was in my "wheelhouse."

Q: Did they seem to be probing whether you had any particular Cuba agenda?

GUTIERREZ: No, I did not feel that. As I recall, I steered the conversation toward Cuba as a response to a general foreign policy question. I do remember that in one of my security briefings, they knew -- the DS (Department of Security) people knew that I had a cousin who had stayed in Cuba and had become a member of the Communist Party. And that came up. Of course we'd had no contact.

Q: This was after the oral for the Foreign Service…

GUTIERREZ: Right.

Q: Because in those days -- I don't know exactly when -- I think it took me about a year to clear…It took a long time.

GUTIERREZ: Yes. It took me seven or eight months. I was supposed to come in in March of '77, but somebody unexpectedly resigned, or refused an offer to join, and there was an opening in January, so I came in on January 13th, 1977.

Q: And you had a pretty good idea of where you were on the roster at the time?

GUTIERREZ: No. At that time I did not know where I was on the roster. I was just told that it was likely to happen in March, and then I got a call a month before, in December 1976, "Would you like to come in next month?"

Q: At this time you were in Miami, or…

GUTIERREZ: No, I was in Alabama. I had graduated, had my master's, so I was substitute teaching at a local school, just waiting for the call.

Q: When you got the call, describe for us a little bit what it was like going into the A-100 class. What were your impressions?

GUTIERREZ: Well, once again I got in my '66 Mustang and drove up to Washington and went to the Holiday Inn across the street from the old FSI (Foreign Service Institute) in Rosslyn, which was one of the hotels they recommended. I found it, spent the night, and the next day I put on a suit and walked across the street to FSI. I found myself with 30 other people who had come from all sorts of life and all parts of the U.S. I had a beard at that time -- it was still the seventies -- there were two or three of us with beards. Most of the class was from the East Coast, but there were some from California. I was the only Hispanic -- a couple of African Americans, about five women. There were some very distinguished people in that class: people like Howard Jeter, who was ambassador two or three times in Africa; Nancy Powell, who's now going on her fourth embassy, Jimmy Kolker, who's been ambassador in Africa. Steve McFarland was the youngest member of the class. So, it was a good group, and we began training to become Foreign Service Officers.

Q: Did you have an idea of where you were headed, of what would be your first assignment…except at the end of the course?

GUTIERREZ: No. I had no idea. The State Department culture was a whole new experience for me. At the beginning, I was totally lost. For one thing, I didn't know what the acronyms meant. I didn't know what a DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) was, or a TDY (temporary duty) assignment, or what BA (Buenos Aires) or KL (Kuala Lumpur) stood for. But everybody else in the class was in the same boat, so we went through it together. Still, working for the Department of State was very exciting. There was a collective pride in representing the U.S. and working for Uncle Sam. I remember we proudly showed off our State Department ID's to relatives, friends, even people we met at social events. We thought we had arrived in a certain sense. I remember that, after being at A-100 for only a week, we were invited to the State Department to say goodbye to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who was about to leave office. Kissinger had only

a week left in office when we arrived, and he was receiving employees at his Seventh Floor office to say goodbye. So we showed up at his office, said we were members of the new class, and he spoke with us. I remember Joseph Sisco was also there, along with some others. It was quite a thrill to meet the Secretary of State the first week we were there.

Q: Was it in his office?

GUTIERREZ: In his office. On the Seventh Floor.

Q: Yes that was a thrill.

GUTIERREZ: We adapted quickly to the State culture. I quickly learned what a "visa mill" was. I learned that we were expected to do consular work the first two years. Pretty soon class members started jockeying for position to get the assignment they wanted.

Q: So, you were a single guy, you come out of the A-100 class, during the A-100 class you meet Henry Kissinger, you realize you're in a profession. You don't know what a DCM is yet, but you're starting to hear those kinds of things. Were there any particular impressions you took out of the A-100 course…anything that was particularly valuable, or mystifying, or anything?

GUTIERREZ: I started to learn the personnel system, and that helped me later in my career. Early in the A-100 course, we were given a list of vacancies that would be open at the end of the course, and from that list our assignments would come. Of course, the people who spoke Chinese all wanted to go to Hong Kong, the only available post where they could use their Chinese. Those who had Arabic wanted to go to Bahrain, and so on. There were plenty of Spanish-speaking posts, but not in Buenos Aires, Santiago, or Mexico City -- they were more in Central America and the Caribbean. There were also places like Frankfurt, Stuttgart and Naples, as I remember. Then we had to take the MLAT tests that determined your language aptitude, and I scored very high on that -- I got 75 out of 80.

After thinking about it for a while and talking to my A-100 classmates, I concluded that it made sense for me to learn another language and to be posted to a non-Spanish-speaking place for my first tour. When I submitted by bid list, my first choice was to go to Naples. When I had my first meeting with my personnel counselor, a guy named Beauveau (Beau) Nalle, I explained my rationale for wanting to go to Naples: I wanted to go to Europe and learn a new language. In that way, I would not be typecast as a Latin Americanist (a danger others had warned me about) for the rest of my career. Soon thereafter, the assignments were read out by the personnel counselors: I remember they read out your name and the assignment. They went in alphabetical order, so when I heard "Bellamy: Naples" I knew I wasn't going to Europe. A little later, I heard, "Gutierrez: Santo Domingo." A few days later, I met again with Beau Nalle, and I asked him why I had not been assigned to Naples. His reply was that, "Well, we thought that if you didn't want to go to Latin America, why did you major in Latin American Studies?" I guess he

had a point. But I learned then that your personnel counselor is not necessarily your advocate, but someone who has to fill assignments. He is not only "your" representative -- he represents your competition as well.

Q: So you learned early on that your career was too important to leave to your personnel counselor.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly! You are your own advocate, and I never forgot that.

Q: A valuable lesson. So you went to Santo Domingo.

GUTIERREZ: I went to Santo Domingo. You know, things worked out very well. Things happen for a reason, and I'm very happy I went there.

Q: Did you go to ConGen Rosslyn?

GUTIERREZ: I went to ConGen Rosslyn.

Q: Describe that.

GUTIERREZ: Well, it was strange, because, you know, the new technology was coming so we had taped sessions…

Q: Let me just interject that ConGen Rosslyn is a training venue of the Foreign Service for people who are going to go out and do consular work.

GUTIERREZ: It was like being back in college. We had taped lectures, so we had to take notes, while the lecturers taught us about consular work and about visas…

Q: Not live people?

GUTIERREZ: We had some live speakers, but we also had quite a few videotaped sessions. After a few weeks of ConGen Rosslyn, we were getting a little tired of the lectures, anxious to get out in the field and prove ourselves. I was one of the first to be shipped out, because I didn't have to take a language; as a native speaker, I had easily passed the FSI Spanish test.

Q: Were you coned? Were you in a cone?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, I was in a cone. We were one of the first classes to be coned.

Q: Describe that process. In other words, one of the four cones of the Foreign Service: there's political, economic, administrative, consular. What cone were you in?

GUTIERREZ: I was a political officer. Before I came on, I was asked what cone I preferred, and I said political. I was happy to be coned political, because that is the one cone where I felt the most comfortable, having majored in political science.

Q: That's a cone with less room at the top, too.

GUTIERREZ: I didn't think about it in those terms. I chose the cone which seemed the most interesting to me. I was very happy in the political cone.

Q: Was this after you had taken the test?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, after I had taken the test.

Q: And did you have a sense that if you had said economic, you could get economic.

GUTIERREZ: Economics was not my strong suit, so it was never a possibility. Had I not been a political officer, I might have picked consular affairs.

Q: Did you consider yourself a minority?

GUTIERREZ: I considered myself someone who was born in another country, but grateful for the opportunity of representing the United States, and proud to do so.

Q: Did you think that that gave you leverage in the system at that time?

GUTIERREZ: Not really. It was a mixed bag. In some ways it helped, and in some ways it hurt me. It was a time when the Department was beginning to recognize that the Foreign Service did not have many minorities and women in its ranks. Some of my fellow officers had a dim view of affirmative action and programs to help minorities, so they assumed that minority officers were not qualified. The Department had not -- and still has not -- done a good job in recruiting and promoting Hispanics. When I entered in 1977, Hispanics were four percent of FSO's. When I left 29 years later, they were still four percent. And by then the Hispanic population of the United States had significantly increased.

Q: So you went out to do consular work?

GUTIERREZ: I was assigned to the consular section in our embassy in Santo Domingo. That was quite an eye-opening experience for me. For one thing, I had never had to say no to anybody in my life, and I learned to say no to people on the visa line in Santo Domingo.

Q: That's a tough consular post.

GUTIERREZ: Very tough. The consular section in Santo Domingo is physically separate from the Embassy. It's in another building, two blocks away from the Embassy. We had 17 consular officers at that time. Now there must be 30 or 35.

Q: How long did you do that?

GUTIERREZ: We had a rotation program at that time, where junior officers could count on spending a quarter of their tours in another section. So, initially I did it for a year -- non-immigrant visas, immigrant visas. And you know, it was tough, because it consisted of interviewing a lot of people and unfortunately having to tell some of them, "No, you cannot travel to the United States; I'm sorry if you're sick or infirm or ill, or your parents are getting remarried, or…"

Q: You want to go to Disney World…

GUTIERREZ: …or you want to go to Disney World, or to see snow, or whatever." It was tough shattering people's dreams. Our refusal rate was about forty percent. On the bright side, the friendships I made in that first year in the Dominican Republic are some of my best friends today. People like Peter Romero, Mike Senko, Don Harrington, Lauri Fitz, Charlie and Marcie Ries …

Q: They were all colleagues out there?

GUTIERREZ: We were all colleagues in the Dominican Republic. We had tough jobs, but overall had a great time. The Dominican Republic was (and still is) considered a hardship post, but you couldn't tell it by us. We had a good group who did things together, commiserating when necessary, and exploring the country together on weekends. In my case, most of my work experience was very satisfactory. All first-tour officers had a rotation schedule, and I noticed that the Embassy plan was to rotate me into the administrative section. Since I was a political cone officer, I asked the DCM whether I could serve my rotation in the political section. His reply was, "Well, not everybody can go to the political section, and we have other political officers who will also be rotating to other sections."

Q: Who was the DCM?

GUTIERREZ: The DCM was Phil Axelrod, and the ambassador was Robert Hurwitch, who had been ambassador to Colombia, as well.

Q: He had been DCM in Bolivia.

GUTIERREZ: That's right, DCM in Bolivia, later Ambassador to Colombia.

Q: And there was an issue with him with a wedding reception for his daughter. Were you out there then?

GUTIERREZ: Well, yes; things got very complicated for Ambassador Hurwitch during my tour. He was somebody that I instantly liked. He had a friendly disposition, and looked like Hollywood typecasting for an ambassador, distinguished gray hair and all. He had had a distinguished Foreign Service career: he had been a member of the team that negotiated the return of the Bay of Pigs prisoners from Cuba, in the deal that the US sent Cuba tractors and medicine in exchange for the prisoners.

Q: What kind of contact would you and the others have with the ambassador and the deputy chief of mission in those days?

GUTIERREZ: We had some contact, but not much in the consular section. I don't remember Ambassador Hurwitch coming over to the consular section, or the DCM. But we would occasionally be invited to receptions or events which the Ambassador hosted. When I later rotated to the political section, I saw the ambassador and the DCM almost daily.

Q: Sticking now with the DCM and your request to maybe not go to the admin section. What happened to that?

GUTIERREZ: Well, in explaining why a rotation to the administrative section would be beneficial, the DCM said, "You're going to have to learn about other sections anyway, so this will be a good experience for you." I accepted his argument, and resigned myself to rotating to the administrative section later in the year, but I still wanted to learn more about how the political section worked. Since the consular section was open between 7 am and 3:30 pm., and the embassy closed at 5:00, after I finished my consular stint, one day I went to the political section. I introduced myself to the political counselor, and said, "I'm a political officer, and I'd like to learn what the political section does."

Q: Who was the political counselor?

GUTIERREZ: The political counselor was Leonardo "Nard" Neher, and the number two was Dan Strasser. They treated me very well. At the beginning, they let me read the files for my edification. Soon they figured out that I spoke native Spanish and had made some contacts in the local community, so they started informally giving me special projects. Then, as my rotation to the administrative section approached, the political counselor asked the DCM that I be sent to the political section instead of the administrative section.

Q: In your mind, was this a personal strategy or just an interest…you really wanted to see what they did?

GUTIERREZ: It was not a personal strategy, or a master plan. I just thought instinctively that by showing enthusiasm and showing an interest in what they did, and volunteering to do additional tasks, I might prove my value to the political section and eventually be able to do some political work. I did not expect to be able to serve a full rotation in the political section, but when they requested me, the DCM agreed. So I never set foot in the

administrative section, and I was able to serve for six months in the political section during a fascinating time.

Q: What was happening?

GUTIERREZ: This was the time of the 1978 presidential election in the Dominican Republic. The President of the Dominican Republic, Joaquin Balaguer, had been in power 16 years.

Q: Was he blind?

GUTIERREZ: He wasn't blind then, but his vision was failing.

Q: How old was he at this time?

GUTIERREZ: He was in his early seventies at that time. By then, Neher had left as political counselor, and John King had replaced him. King was not an FSO; he had been a political appointee under Kennedy who had stayed.

Q: As DCM?

GUTIERREZ: No, he was the political counselor. He had had an interesting career. He had been Department spokesman; he liked to tell Henry Kissinger stories.

Q: Still, that's unusual; he was not a career Foreign Service officer and he ended up political counselor.

GUTIERREZ: Right. He was not your typical political counselor. I believe his background had been in journalism. He liked talking to reporters. He certainly gave me lots of responsibility as a JO (junior officer). I enjoyed working for him, and he became something of a mentor to me.

Q: And Ambassador Hurwitch was there the whole time you were there?

GUTIERREZ: Ambassador Hurwitch was there for my first year, but he had run into some problems. Let me tell one vignette about Ambassador Hurwitch. Being a vice-consul in the Dominican Republic puts you on the spotlight, whether you want it or not. A visa is a very valuable commodity to many Dominicans. So the word quickly goes around about who the vice-consuls are, and whether they are "easy" or "hard" in issuing visas. The most important vice-consuls were those in the non-immigrant visa unit, since they adjudicated tourist visas. Many Dominicans knew who they were and where they lived. I was often recognized in public places, and approached by many who wanted visa advice or to plea about a particular case. Often vice-consuls are better known among many Dominicans than the ambassador.

During my tour, I met many Dominicans who invited me to their homes. In the building where I lived, there was a gentleman who was a doctor who became friends with me, and it turned out he said he was President Balaguer's doctor. One day he invited me to go shooting, so we went shooting.

Q: *Did you live in an apartment? In a secured area?*

GUTIERREZ: I would not call it a secure area. It was not part of a compound, but a regular apartment building. There was a buzzer to control who was allowed to enter the building. Embassy security teams patrolled the Embassy residences on occasion. But this was a different time. Today, the RSO (regional security officer) probably would not allow a junior office to live in such a building.

In any event, the president's doctor one day asked me if I would like to meet President Balaguer. I said, "Sure, why not?" Here I was, a first-tour junior officer, recently arrived, and I was already getting a chance to meet the president of the country! Well, the next day I was reading files in the political section and I ran into the ambassador. Hoping to impress him, I said (naively), "Mr. Ambassador, guess what? I'm going to get to meet the president." Ambassador Hurwitch took a good look at me and said, "Mr. Gutierrez, let me explain one thing to you. Only *I* get to meet the president. We cannot have different messages going to the president, so all the messages from the United States come through me." Somewhat embarrassed, I said I understood. I saluted, and that was that, and I declined the invitation to meet the president. I met the president later on, but not under those circumstances. With that incident, I learned about rank and hierarchy and mixed messages.

Q: What if you were Hurwitch and you were seeing yourself coming to Hurwitch, and saying, "By the way, I have a chance to meet the president tomorrow."? Would you have taken the same position as Hurwitch? Today…looking back.

GUTIERREZ: That would have depended on the situation. In some countries, where the relationship is delicate, obviously you need to control who from the Embassy has access to the president. On the other hand, if it's a friendly relationship with a very accessible president, I would like to believe that if a similar situation had taken place, I would have allowed it to happen.

Q: *But the lesson you drew from this was that one message…the guy at the top is the one who should be able to see the president of the country, and that this makes sense to you.*

GUTIERREZ: It made sense. At the time I wasn't happy, because he was depriving me of a thrill, of an opportunity, but I understood it, and I accepted it. Moreover, Hurwitch did it in a way that was not offensive, but more as a teaching moment.

Q: What did you tell the doctor?

GUTIERREZ: I told the doctor that I was sorry, but I would not be able to meet the president. I explained that the embassy had rules about these kinds of meetings. The doctor understood. As to Ambassador Hurwitch, he ran into trouble shortly thereafter. He was accused by someone in the embassy of misappropriating embassy funds.

Q: Front page of the New York Times. I remember this.

GUTIERREZ: The wedding you mentioned was one issue, but as I recall there was also the accusation that his private beach house had been constructed supposedly with embassy funds.

Q: This was his private house?

GUTIERREZ: Allegedly. Years later I ran into his attorney -- I flew on the same plane with him. It was his attorney's opinion that had the case gone to trial, he was confident that Hurwitch would have not have been convicted. In order to convict, the government would have had to prove intent, but he claimed that Hurwitch always intended to pay the money back. I don't know if that's true, but I thought it was interesting that his attorney believed that.

Q: You know, one thing I noticed and maybe you did too over our careers was that there was a steady sort of tightening of rules and oversight on that kind of thing, and I think a growing awareness on the part of people who could possibly abuse the system that there was a line that overstepping that line would constitute abuse. And it wasn't so clear, I think, way back.

GUTIERREZ: Correct. The Hurwitch case was a good lesson of how you can get caught in a situation where everybody wants to please you as an ambassador. Everybody says "yes" to everything you ask for, and they want to cater to your every whim, but you can get caught in a spiral that is very negative and that could eventually harm you.

Q: In the political section, were you able to go to country team meetings?

GUTIERREZ: Occasionally. But there was a hierarchy there too.

Q: You were able to develop your own contacts though, at your level.

GUTIERREZ: I was, and not only that, I was able to travel. On occasion I was told to get on an embassy jeep and travel to different parts of the country to find out what was going on. One of my assignments was to travel to the eastern part of the island and do a report about the upcoming presidential election. I was to meet with mayors, businessmen and other local leaders, and do a report."

Needless to say, I thoroughly enjoyed that assignment. Here I was, a guy just out of college who just got his master's degree, calling on local mayors, representing the United

States of America. I was amazed how easy it was to get appointments with local officials when I explained that I was a U.S. Embassy representative.

Q: Was there a lot of development of the beach resorts in those days?

GUTIERREZ: Casa de Campo had recently opened. It was a resort built by Gulf and Western near the town of La Romana in the eastern part of the country. That was *the* resort, the only one pretty much in the whole island. Today there are dozens of resorts throughout the island.

Q: Did you travel to Haiti in those days?

GUTIERREZ: We traveled to Haiti, to visit our A-100 colleagues who were in Haiti, and at that time, '77-'78. Haiti, believe it or not, received more tourists than the Dominican Republic at that time.

Q: Were there trees in Haiti in those days?

GUTIERREZ: There were some trees. I was to serve in Haiti later; by the time I served in Haiti in the mid-'80s, deforestation was more pronounced. You could tell where the border began by flying over the border. Where the green ended and the brown began, that was Haiti.

Q: Driving from Santo Domingo to Port au Prince, was the road worse on the Haitian side?

GUTIERREZ: I never drove from the DR to Haiti, because there were so many complications…there was so much red tape. Both sides being suspicious of the other, the permission often would not arrive at the border, and you'd have to wait hours or days until the wire from the capital city gave permission to enter the country. At that time there was an Eastern flight from Santo Domingo to Port au Prince, so most embassy officers would usually fly rather than drive.

Q: But basically, when you did this it was to see friends; it wasn't an exchange program the embassy had, or anything.

GUTIERREZ: No, it was to see friends. The roads in Haiti, when I was there later on, were not that bad. In fact, some of them had been built by the U.S. Marines during their occupation, from 1915 to 1934.

Q: I was thinking, with the DR: how many months were you in the political section?

GUTIERREZ: I was there six months. The event that gained me some notice with the embassy hierarchy was a report I wrote prior to the 1978 presidential election about the situation in the eastern part of the island. I titled the report "The East is White," harking back to Chairman Mao's claim that "The East is Red." White was the color of the PRD,

the Dominican opposition party. Balaguer's Reformista party's color was red, and people would say "vote white," "vote red," etc. In a poor country where not everyone could read or write, people were able to identify political parties by their color.

Q: This report was a cable or airgram, or what was it?

GUTIERREZ: At first it was an internal memorandum to the political counselor. Later, the political counselor forwarded it to the ambassador, and eventually it made it to Washington. My prediction was that the opposition would sweep the eastern part of the island in the upcoming election. I had come to that conclusion because every impartial observer I talked to told me the voters were tired after 16 years of Balaguer, and most wanted change. Even the government people I talked to were not that enthusiastic. But when people read the report, there was much skepticism. The DCM was especially critical: he thought I was wrong, that Balaguer would win easily, as he had the previous elections.

Q: Through manipulation of the vote, or…?

GUTIERREZ: Balaguer had been able to win previous elections by opposition boycotts, or by his own popularity, especially in the rural areas. But after 16 years, many Dominicans had had enough. After my report, others in the political section began to cast doubt on the conventional wisdom, i.e. that Balaguer would be reelected once again. And then in May 1978, Balaguer was defeated. The PRD won big in the eastern part of the country, as I had predicted months before.

Q: You were in country then?

GUTIERREZ: I was in country, and…

Q: The line that the political counselor followed was your line or the old line?

GUTIERREZ: I wouldn't call it "mine" alone, but the line that Balaguer's reelection was in doubt.

Q: Your line. Took your line and got credit…you got credit because you called it.

GUTIERREZ: Well, subsequently I learned that political officers should never call elections, so I guess I was lucky. The political section received an award for its reporting during the election, and I was a part of that effort.

As the election approached in May 1978, I was back at the consular section, but the political counselor requested that I be "loaned back" to the political section during the election period. So I returned to the political section for a time. I had been asked to go to Santiago de los Caballeros, the country's second-largest city, on Election Day. The voting proceeded normally throughout the day; I visited a number of polling places without incident. That night, I watched the returns on TV, and learned that the PRD had

won the election. I went to bed at 2 a.m. The next morning I was having breakfast at the hotel, and the waiter said, “Oh, haven’t you heard? The military stopped the vote count last night and seized the ballot boxes.”

Q: The whole election was scrapped.

GUTIERREZ: The vote count was stopped, in the middle of the night. Martial music played, the arrest of the electoral officials was ordered. The question being asked was, is Balaguer behind the stopping of the vote count, or is the military acting on its own? That morning I called the embassy for instructions. Dan Strasser told me to call the local military commander (I learned he had arrested a number of people), and to tell him that the United States made him responsible for the lives of all the people in custody. So there I was, somebody with only a year in the Foreign Service, calling a general and telling him “I make you responsible for the lives of your prisoners.” In talking to the general, I sensed he was a reluctant participant in the current drama. He assured me no one’s life was in danger, and I so reported to Santo Domingo.

Q: He gave you those assurances, that the people were OK?

GUTIERREZ: He did and they were. I spent the rest of the day meeting with Opposition political figures, ensuring that they had not been arrested, and showing the Embassy’s interest in the situation. The next day I returned to Santo Domingo.

The next few days were fascinating, as the scene shifted to the tribunals. There was a public hearing of the national electoral council, in which the government and opposition were making their case for stopping or honoring the election. I was sent by the Embassy to observe the proceedings, so I went to the hearing and sat in the front row. When the press found out that a U.S. Embassy representative was there, they all came to where I was sitting and took my picture. The next day’s newspapers all reported my presence at the proceedings, and one paper had a big picture of me in their front page. That same day, a pro-government commentator went on television to denounce U.S. interference in the affairs of the Dominican Republic. He mentioned me by name, noted that I was born in Cuba, and soon was denouncing me as a “Cuban spy.” A “Cuban spy” working for the U.S. -- imagine that!

Q: You became famous. Notorious.

GUTIERREZ: Notorious, to the Balaguer government. By then Ambassador Hurwitch had left, and Ambassador Robert Yost had just arrived. I remember he had just arrived in country, and one of the first things he did was to show up at Balaguer’s residence the day after the election and ask to be received by the President. Balaguer kept him waiting for four hours, but the message from the U.S. was unmistakable: respect the vote count or face the consequences. President Carlos Andrés Pérez of Venezuela also threatened to cut off the D.R.’s oil supply. After a few days, Balaguer and the military gave up the farce, and the PRD was allowed to assume power on schedule in August 1978.

Q: The president was Jimmy Carter.

GUTIERREZ: Right.

Q: And there was a very big push for democratization.

GUTIERREZ: You will recall that human rights was a big part of President Carter's foreign policy. We had UN Ambassador Andy Young come to visit, Assistant Secretary Terence Todman, and a host of administration folks came down after the election.

Q: Was the Carter administration's push for human rights, was that uniformly accepted in the embassy as something that should be a U.S. priority; was there resistance to it?

GUTIERREZ: In the U.S. Embassy in the Dominican Republic, there was not much resistance to it. John King, who had been a Kennedy appointee, and the other officers in the section were deeply committed to human rights.

Q: What about the defense attaché -- people like that?

GUTIERREZ: People like that may have been a little more skeptical -- of course, I didn't have that much contact with the defense attaché. But the election was such a clear-cut result that I don't think anybody opposed what we were doing in pressuring the government at that time.

Q: Was there a lot of U.S. pressure on Balaguer?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. It started before the election, when a number of U.S. Congressmen and Administration officials started making statements about the election, some of them actually taking sides. I remember a Kennedy staffer was saying before the election that the PRD should win the election. So part of our job was to assure everybody that we were not taking sides -- the U.S. would support whoever the Dominican voters decided to elect.

Q: Carter's staffers?

GUTIERREZ: People from all across the political spectrum. The problem was that many Dominicans assumed that any U.S. visitor to the island spoke for the U.S. government, and it was difficult to explain how the separation of powers in the U.S. worked to a country where the party in power usually controls all institutions. I remember Mark Schneider, who later had a long career as assistant administrator for AID (Agency for International Development) for Latin America, was the Kennedy staffer who publicly said the PRD should win the election.

Q: What was the economy like in the Dominican Republic in those days?

GUTIERREZ: The Dominican Republic was -- and is -- a relatively poor country. In the late seventies they were not getting the revenues they now receive from tourism. In the nineties tourism exploded in the DR, and there was a significant assembly sector at that time. When I was there, the dollar and the peso were pretty much 1:1 or 1:1.20. Today it's something like 1:35.

Q: Did the electricity work in Santo Domingo?

GUTIERREZ: The electricity worked better then than now, although all Embassy homes had generators. The DR was a poor country, but one could feel -- in marked contrast with Haiti -- that things were getting better.

Q: How did you spend the remainder of your tour?

GUTIERREZ: I spent my last six months back in the consular section, running the investigations unit. Some of our investigators were former policemen. Fraud was a serious problem in the Dominican Republic, and particularly in the visa section. Our job was to investigate dubious cases, and our investigators were excellent at uncovering fraud. Some of the cases were mind-boggling: an 18-year old man marries 65-year old woman, and they claimed to be in love. Of course, the 65-year-old lady was usually a U.S. citizen or resident, and it was obvious the marriage was a sham, done only to secure a visa for the young man. The applicants would show you love letters and honeymoon pictures, but they were clearly staged. It was funny and sad, at the same time, because many Dominicans were desperately trying to get to the States by any means possible.

Q: But if it were a 65-year old man and an 18-year old woman, it would have been entirely legitimate, or not?

GUTIERREZ: Possibly. But we investigated most of these May-December cases in any event. Very few were legitimate. But I enjoyed the last few months of my tour. Running the investigation unit provided me my first management experience.

Q: Were you still a single guy?

GUTIERREZ: I was still a single guy, but a few months before I left I had met my wife, Miriam, or should I say my future wife. When I left post in 1979, I was still single. I had been assigned to Lisbon, and I left for language training in Washington. But as I began my home leave with my parents in Alabama, my father passed had a heart attack and died.

Q: Suddenly.

GUTIERREZ: He'd had heart problems before. Fortuitously, I was able to be with my mother during that time, to help her with all one has to do when a loved one dies.

Q: This was in Alabama?

GUTIERREZ: In Alabama. By then my mother had a teaching job, but we had to get her a new apartment, we had to take care of the insurance, and other things. I was able to see my father one last time; in fact, he had read my efficiency reports on the night before he died. The next morning he had a massive heart attack, and died.

Q: So what did you do next?

GUTIERREZ: After helping my mother for a month, I was off to Washington for six weeks of Portuguese and an assignment in Lisbon. Before I arrived, I was asked by the Embassy to do a TDY (temporary duty assignment) in the U.S. Consulate in Oporto, and I agreed. Before crossing the Atlantic, I visited Miriam in the Dominican Republic one last time, and when I arrived in Oporto, we decided to get married.

Q: I assume you are still married?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, 28 years and three daughters later, Miriam and I are still married.

Q: Tell me a little more about your wife.

GUTIERREZ: Well, Miriam's last name is Messina; her grandfather had come from Piedmont in Italy, and the other relatives were from Spanish-Dominican stock. Her father was one of these guys who didn't finish medical school, but became a businessman and traveled around the island, and she spent many years in Jimani, near the Haitian border. Miriam had studied in the U.S. on two different occasions, in Connecticut and at Siena Heights College in Michigan. When she returned to the Dominican Republic, the U.S. Embassy hired her.

Q: But she worked in the consular section?

GUTIERREZ: She worked in the consular section, and that is where we had met. When we decided to get married, I went from Oporto back to Santo Domingo, where we were married.

Q: So you were in Lisbon together?

GUTIERREZ: First we went to Oporto, where I completed my TDY assignment, and then we spent the remainder of my tour in Lisbon.

Q: Was it hard to get the assignment to Lisbon? Was it something you really wanted?

GUTIERREZ: I wanted to serve in Europe -- as you remember, Naples had been my first choice. I also wanted to learn a language other than Spanish. I got the impression the "system" (my personnel counselor) felt they owed me something for having served in a hardship post like the Dominican Republic. I never thought the Dominican Republic was a hardship post, but I did not dissuade them from that belief. My first choice was to learn

French, and I asked for Paris, but Paris went to somebody else. My personnel counselor asked if I would go to Lisbon, and I agreed.

Q: Did you know Portuguese?

GUTIERREZ: Not at all.

Q: Did you go to FSI?

GUTIERREZ: I went to FSI for six weeks only, what they call a conversion course, which in fact was not a conversion course, but accelerated Portuguese. And it was European Portuguese, not the Brazilian version.

Q: Was it hard to make the conversion?

GUTIERREZ: Not really. Spanish was my first tongue, so no other language would ever displace it. Some people have trouble if they learn both Spanish and Portuguese, since they are so similar, but that was not the case for me.

Q: Lisbon. So, it's 1978 now?

GUTIERREZ: 1979. It was another rotational assignment. I was supposed to do consular and economic this time. But things change; people resign, people leave unexpectedly, so I spent the first three months…or more than that, four or five months in Oporto. So I went off to Oporto, in northern Portugal.

Q: Is that closed down now?

GUTIERREZ: It has closed down.

Q: Who was the ambassador in Portugal?

GUTIERREZ: Richard Bloomfield, who had replaced Frank Carlucci. At first I worked for the consul in Oporto, who was Dick Harrington -- Richard Harrington. Portugal was an interesting assignment for me.

Q: Did Ed Rowell come out?

GUTIERREZ: Ed Rowell was the DCM. Ed and his wife, Le were very active, an outstanding Foreign Service couple. The political counselor was Datus Proper, and Wes Egan was there as the number two, later replaced by Ellen Shippy. I had replaced Joe Sullivan…

Q: Joe was out there?

GUTIERREZ: He had left by the time I arrived.

Q: Jim Creagan came out?

GUTIERREZ: Creagan came later as political counselor. I met him later when I was the desk officer for Portugal.

Q: What were your positions -- rotational officer, but you had to start again in the consular section?

GUTIERREZ: After arriving in Lisbon from Oporto, I had to do three months in the consular section. My consular stint was cut short because an opening came up in the political section, and they knew I had political experience, political cone, so I went to the political section. I was supposed to go to the economic section, but I was happy to go back to a political section.

It was a great time to do political work in Portugal. The "revolution of the carnations" had taken place in 1974, and there were still vestiges of the revolution, like the revolutionary council, which was still active. Elections were scheduled that year, and Washington was interested because of the previous concern that Portugal could leave the NATO orbit, although by the time I arrived the democratic forces had the upper hand. I was the fourth officer in a four-person political section, but I was given considerable responsibility. Between Ellen Shippy, Jeff Millington, and I we divided up the parties and the regions of the country, and we spent a lot of time in the field reporting

Q: Well, this is after, of course, the big Euro-Communism scare. After the cleansing of the embassy by the Kissinger regime things were, I guess, pretty settled.

GUTIERREZ: The legend there was that Henry Kissinger had written off Portugal in 1975, when Vasco Gonçalves, the military, pro-Marxist officer, became prime minister, and it appeared Portugal was going to leave NATO. Then Mario Soares and his Socialist Party took to the streets, and hundreds of thousands of people said, "No" to a Marxist dictatorship, and that was the end of Communism in Portugal. The Portuguese Communists, led by Alvaro Cunhal, were Stalinist and Marxist, not the of the gentler Euro-Communist variety. Ambassador Carlucci, to his credit, had persuaded Washington not to give up on Portugal. And thanks to Mario Soares and the Portuguese people who took to the streets and voted the Communists out, Portugal was saved from the communist orbit.

Q: When you were there, was the government what you would you describe as a democratic government?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. At that point you had some institutions, lingering institutions from the revolution, which had taken place on April 25, 1974. As I noted before, the revolutionary council was still there, but the democratic institutions were beginning to gain strength. Through free elections, the legislature gained legitimacy and began to assert itself. Pretty soon the revolutionary council was being shunted aside. President

Ramalho Eanes had been elected in 1976, defeating the Communist candidate. He was a former military guy, a moderate, center left politically and firmly in the democratic camp.

Q: In the consular section, I guess it was much more tranquil.

GUTIERREZ: Yes indeed. I did consular work in Oporto and Lisbon. In Oporto I was in charge of the visa section. Coming from a high-fraud visa post like the Dominican Republic as I did, I started looking for fraud in Oporto. I would question the authenticity of some documents, but my consular assistants explained that there was not much fraud in Portugal. Few visas were ever refused there. When I would refuse a visa on a rare occasion, I could tell from their reaction that few visas had ever been refused there.

Q: What was it like living in Oporto?

GUTIERREZ: Oporto was an interesting place -- very conservative. Many of the women, particularly widows, wore black. The people were very conservative and extremely religious -- the North was not a hotbed of revolutionary activity. Yet Oporto has a certain charm. It is the capital of port wines -- all the port wine comes from the area. The food was great. But it's a very insular place, as opposed to Lisbon, which is a lot more open and influenced by the rest of Europe.

Q: So you actually physically moved then from Oporto to Lisbon after a year?

GUTIERREZ: Six months.

Q: They put you in an apartment in Oporto?

GUTIERREZ: An apartment in Oporto; in Matosinhos, which is a suburb of Oporto, and we lived there.

Q: And you got up to Galicia and places like that?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, we managed to travel quite a bit in northern Portugal and crossed the border to Galicia, Spain on occasion. On one trip, we went to Viana do Castelo and Galicia. That border has a number of Rias, as you know like Norwegian fjords, and a lot of beautiful scenery. Great seafood, too. We also went to Santiago de Compostela and saw the Cathedral were all the pilgrims used to go.

Q: Did you see other areas in Spain, as well?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. We went to Spain seven times; got to know Spain quite well.

Q: Well, the consular business was more tranquil. And I guess the political business as well.

GUTIERREZ: The political business -- you know, there were still these lingering concerns about the revolution. What happened in 1978 was that for the first time the right, or center-right won an election. The Alianca Democratica, which was a center right coalition, united against the socialists, and they won the election.

Q: You were there '79-'80?

GUTIERREZ: 1979 to 1981.

Q: '81. So, you moved to the political section in 1980.

GUTIERREZ: I was in the political section from late 1979 to late 1980, for one year. The election was in the summer of 1980. It was a lot of fun, because like in the Dominican Republic, I did a lot of traveling. I got in a car -- not a jeep, but a Citroen this time -- and went to talk to the mayors and other local officials. Some of the socialist mayors at that time who were competing with communists for votes would tell me, "You know I can't tell them you're here, because you know they're going to say I'm talking to the Americans, and they will accuse me of selling out."

Q: Did you have much contact with the desk officer, or at that level?

GUTIERREZ: Some. But the desk officer probably wouldn't call the fourth person in the political section often.

Q: Did you have a sense that the European bureau was different from the Latin American?

GUTIERREZ: Not at first. I got that sense years later when I served in Washington. We had a very collegial atmosphere in Lisbon, and the Ambassador, DCM and Political Counselor were down-to-earth, easily approachable people. What became clear to me, especially back at the Department, was that Portugal was not considered to be in the mainstream of the European bureau. As one personnel counselor told me, "Lisbon is not really Europe, it is ARA (American Republics Affairs) east." That said, because of the fear that Communist Parties could manage to share power in Europe, there was still considerable attention being paid to Portugal by the Department.

Q: One issue that must have been brewing was the base renewal in the Azores.

GUTIERREZ: That's right. Our base in Lajes was still a key place. In 1973, we had re-supplied the Israelis at a critical time during their war with Egypt, and those flights had been staged from the Azores. I'll have more to say on that when I discuss my time as Portugal desk officer years later.

Q: Lino, I think we left off more or less at the time we were talking about the difference between the EUR bureau from your perspective, and the ARA bureau. You are in Lisbon;

is there something you want to talk about your impressions of being in the political section in Lisbon?

GUTIERREZ: Well, it was a very interesting time. It was a time when the government changed from a socialist government to a center right government, and the center right coalition, the Democratic Alliance, won the election. There were four of us in the political section, and three of us fanned out to all the countryside, to the different areas of Portugal, and that was a fascinating time. So we drove to the remote outposts in the mountains and talked to mayors and city councils and the local priests and everything. The revolution was still very fresh in their minds from 1974-75.

Q: At this point was Portugal part of the European Union?

GUTIERREZ: Portugal was not yet part of the European Union -- they joined in 1986.

Q: The U.S. base on the Azores: was that a very live issue when you were there?

GUTIERREZ: It was, because in 1973, during the Israeli war -- the second Middle East war, when Egypt came across the Sinai, the U.S. had resupplied Israel. You will recall that the Egyptians enjoyed some initial success when they attacked the Israeli forces in the Sinai. The Israelis had lost considerable military equipment, and had asked the U.S. to resupply them. We did so, by flying materiel through the Azores. Thanks to the U.S. assistance, the Israelis were able to turn the tide. Had Portugal not come through and agreed to the resupply of the Israelis through the Azores, it is doubtful that we would have gotten the overflight clearances we needed from European countries.

All this happened during the Caetano government. A year later, in 1974, the government fell, and that's when the "Revolution of carnations" took place. The concern in Washington was that, as Portugal moved left in '74-'75, could we still count on the Azores as a resupplying point for the U.S. At one point, Henry Kissinger said Portugal was lost to communism, but thanks to Mario Soares and others that did not happen.

Q: Did you get a chance to get out to the Azores?

GUTIERREZ: I did later, when I was Portugal desk officer from 1985 to 1987. I visited Ponta Delgada, the capital, and also went to Terceira Island, where our largest Air Force Base in the Azores is located.

Q: How did your wife like Lisbon?

GUTIERREZ: She liked it very much. This was our honeymoon post, because soon after I arrived in Oporto, Miriam and I decided to get married, and I crossed the Atlantic to the Dominican Republic to get married, and then we returned to Portugal to finish the rest of my tour. We remember Portugal very fondly; it's a beautiful country, the countryside is beautiful, and the food and the wine are outstanding. At that time, before Portugal joined the EU, it was the cheapest country in Europe, so the dollar went a long way. We were

able to travel extensively. We got to know Portugal very well, and also traveled to Spain on a number of occasions. Since my ancestors came from Spain, I took the opportunity to visit the areas where they had come from.

Q: Portugal's relations with Spain: did you get a good sense of that?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. The dynamic between the two countries was very interesting. The Portuguese are generally more low-key and sedate than the Spanish. When we crossed the border from Portugal to Spain, you could observe a different dynamic in the streets. Having been conquered and ruled by Spain on several occasions, the Portuguese were a bit wary of the Spanish. As to the Spanish, my impression was that some viewed Portugal not as an independent nation, but as just another Spanish province, albeit one that had refused to assimilate. So, there was no love lost, but then again, there wasn't the animosity either that you see in other parts of the world. What is fascinating is that even though the Spanish and Portuguese languages are similar, Portuguese is a difficult language for Spanish speakers to learn, while almost all the Portuguese I met seemed to function well in the Spanish language. Many Spanish tourists refused to even try to learn a few words of Portuguese. They just spoke Spanish and expected everyone to understand. Only the Galicians, or the Gallegos, whose language is more similar to Portuguese, were able to understand the Portuguese in their native language.

Q: How about Portugal's relationship with Brazil?

GUTIERREZ: That was another interesting relationship. The accent is altogether different. The Brazilians seem to speak in a looser, more relaxed way, while Portuguese speak with their mouths virtually closed. Even though Portugal is Brazil's "mother country," my impression is that the ties between Brazil and Portugal are not as strong as those between Spain and Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America. I haven't served in Brazil, but with many Brazilians I have known, it seemed that their relationship to their mother country was different than in Spanish-speaking Latin American countries. Many Brazilians seemed to feel that in many ways the former colony had overtaken the Mother Country. While we were there, the Portuguese had fallen in love with the Brazilian telenovelas, or soap operas. One of them, "Dancing Days" with Sonia Braga, was the most watched TV show in the country. The Portuguese are proud of their former colonies and what they have become, Brazil being the most important former colony, and like to claim that they are partly responsible for their success.

Q: What about Angolans and others?

GUTIERREZ: One of my responsibilities in the political section was to cover events in Africa. This was an active portfolio. Angola had become independent in 1975, and there was still considerable fighting in the country while I was in Portugal between UNITA and the MPLA. I met with a number of Angolans who would come through Lisbon. One of the more interesting visitors I had was a representative from the Cabinda Liberation Front (FLEC), a small armed group that claimed independence for the enclave of Cabinda, which is part of Angola but separated from the rest of the country by part of the Congo.

The FLEC representative told me that unless the U.S. recognized his organization, his group would blow up the Gulf Oil facilities in Cabinda that weekend. I quickly wrote an immediate cable to the Department dutifully reporting what my visitor had said. Nothing happened that time, but the FLEC representative would continue to come every month and issue the same threat. After a while we stopped taking him seriously.

Q: Going back to the comment that Portugal, and I guess Spain are sort of ARA east, or considered that way by the European bureau, what was the major U.S. interest in Portugal from that perspective?

GUTIERREZ: Well, there was preserving our base in the Azores, of course. Since Portugal is a NATO country, we had to keep all the NATO countries out of the communist bloc. We also had an interest in democracy; we had to ensure that post-revolution Portugal did not join the Warsaw Pact. There were people in Portugal like Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, who was one of the military leaders, who wanted to make Portugal a communist country. In the southern part of Portugal, the Alentejo region was a communist stronghold. In this area, there were privately-owned large estates prior to the revolution, and the peasants there had benefited from land reform. Those folks voted faithfully for Alvaro Cunhal and the pro-Moscow Communist Party at that time. The communists got a good percentage of the vote in Portugal, especially in the first years after the revolution. It was a tricky situation for U.S. interests.

Q: So when you were there the real threat of communist control of the government had receded.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, it had receded, because I got there in 1979, and by….all this was fought out between '75 and '77 and '78, although there were still remnants of the revolution and the revolutionary council, which had to approve all legislation after the assembly had voted it. It wasn't totally a fully democratic place yet.

Q: Did you have a sense that your career was on track at that point, that you were getting what you wanted out of Foreign Service life?

GUTIERREZ: Well, even though I hadn't served in Washington yet, I was satisfied with my career up to that point. I was really having a great time. I had gone from the Dominican Republic, where there had been an attempted coup and a significant political change, to Portugal, where, again, you had an election and a significant political change. My only disappointment had been that I had not been able to do political work for a full tour. My assignment in Lisbon was supposed to be a rotational one, political-economic, one year political and one year economic. But when I got there, because of the needs of the embassy and the needs of the service, I was sent to Oporto for TDY for three months. By the time I returned to Lisbon, the job in the economic section had gone to someone else, so I was assigned to the consular section for another three months. Following that period, I did my year in the political section. That was a lot of fun, and I learned a lot. When my tour in the political section ended, and since my original assignment had been changed, I was asked if I wanted to go to what was then called USICA -- the former (and

future) USIA (U.S. Information Agency). Under the Carter administration they had changed the name to Information and Cultural Agency. At that point I wasn't that interested, so I asked if I could curtail and go back to Washington, because I had been told that political officers had to serve in Washington early in their careers in order to know how Washington operated, how the Department operated, and in order to get yourself known in the corridors of State.

Q: Were you worried about a tenure clock at that point -- a five year timeline when you had to make tenure?

GUTIERREZ: No, I had gotten tenure right out of the Dominican Republic.

Q: What was your grade at that point?

GUTIERREZ: I was an FS-7 when I began, and I had made six, of course, and gotten tenured. I think I was a six, which then with the new Foreign Service Act a few years later, the Foreign Service Act of 1980, the FS-6 became FS-4, so I was an FS-4 at that time and didn't become a three until I went back to Washington.

Q: Did you have a mentor in the Foreign Service at that point?

GUTIERREZ: I had people I had worked for who were helpful, like John King, who was political counselor in the Dominican Republic. Ed Rowell, who was the DCM in Portugal, and Ambassador Dick Bloomfield shared their wisdom with me about their careers, and they were very helpful to me at that time. John King was back in the ARA bureau, and he helped me considerably. By March 1981, when I asked to curtail from Lisbon, the post agreed because there was no job other than the USICA job for me, and I started looking for jobs in Washington at that point. My personnel counselor then called me one day and asked if I would be interested in a desk job in the ARA bureau?

That offer exceeded my expectations -- in my experience desk officers had been more senior than where I was at that particular point in my career. I was very excited to be made responsible for a country and for your "own" piece of real estate. First I was asked if I was interested in being the Colombia desk officer. Again, I was amazed that I would be given responsibility for such an important country. But a few days later the word came back that the Colombia job had gone to someone else. But what about the Nicaragua desk? At first I thought that, as a small Central American country, Nicaragua seemed to be not as important as Colombia. In any event, I agreed to take the job. So we returned to Washington so I could be the Nicaragua desk officer. Little did I know that Nicaragua was going to be in the spotlight for the next couple of years, and would become a very important country for U.S. foreign policy.

Q: In fact, then, you did curtail a few months?

GUTIERREZ: I curtailed. We left post in March 1981, to come back to Washington.

Q: So that was a curtailment of several months?

GUTIERREZ: Six months. I wound up serving eighteen months in Portugal.

Q: And you went back to be the desk officer for Nicaragua. Who was the office director?

GUTIERREZ: The office director when I arrived was John Blacken, and the deputy director was Richard Brown. My predecessor was Anne Patterson, who had become pregnant and had to curtail a few months early, so everything fit perfectly with my timing. Actually, I overlapped with her for about two and half months, quite a long time. But we got along well and the arrangement worked for everyone.

Q: What was happening in Nicaragua at that point?

GUTIERREZ: This was in 1981 -- the Sandinistas had taken over in 1979 from the 43-year Somoza dictatorship. By 1981 we were still trying to woo them into the democratic camp, but the signs were already there that they weren't interested. Cuban advisors were starting to arrive, and the Sandinistas were using heavy-handed tactics against the opposition.

Q: This was March of '81. You had a brand new Reagan…

GUTIERREZ: And you had…

Q: A change in policy.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. Because under Carter, a $75 million dollar U.S. aid package had been approved, after much debate and controversy, to help the private sector in Nicaragua. When President Reagan was elected, it became clear that the policy was going to change. And there I was, at the beginning of the Reagan administration, in Washington, as the Nicaraguan desk officer. Nicaragua and Central America were in the front pages of the newspapers every day. It was a fascinating time.

Q: So you had to write papers that fed into the policy process that reflected what was going on in Nicaragua, but the interest of the new administration was in changing policy. So did you feel any particular pressure to shape the papers in a different than maybe your predecessor had done?

GUTIERREZ: Not really. The analysts had been consistent in describing the leftward drift of the Sandinistas. The debate was over what steps to take in response. The new administration brought in a number of political appointees, people like…

Q: Enders.

GUTIERREZ: Well, Tom Enders was a career officer.

Q: But he was the assistant secretary?

GUTIERREZ: Not yet. John Bushnell was acting assistant secretary in ARA when I arrived. When the new administration took over, Bill Bowdler, the incumbent assistant secretary, was told to clear his desk in 24 hours. Then Bushnell, who was the PDAS (Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary), became acting assistant secretary at that time. Soon folks like General Vernon Walters, General Gordon Sumner, Constantine Menges, a number of people who had definite ideas about Nicaragua and the Cold War started to assume important positions in the administration. Still, in the first few months of the administration, there were efforts to try to work out a deal with the Sandinistas.

The Reagan administration's main concern was that Nicaragua was providing arms to the guerrillas in El Salvador in the civil war that was taking place next door. The U.S. had solid intelligence information and testimony that showed without a doubt that Nicaragua was indeed helping the FNLN guerillas in El Salvador, but Nicaragua was denying it. So the Reagan Administration decided to send new Assistant Secretary Tom Enders to Nicaragua.

Q: When was that?

GUTIERREZ: Enders arrived after I became the desk officer, so it was probably around August 1981.

Q: He had been ambassador to Canada?

GUTIERREZ: He had been ambassador to Canada and the European Union. I believe he was coming from Brussels.

Q: But he was not an ARA-type person.

GUTIERREZ: No, he was not. In fact, he didn't speak Spanish. He spoke Italian, so one of the first things he did was to get a Spanish tutor. His Spanish was good, but often when he met with Latin Americans and spoke in Spanish, Italian words would come out. But anybody who met with him couldn't help but to be impressed by this well-dressed, elegant, Eastern establishment, larger than life at six feet eight inches, as their interlocutor.

Enders was a pragmatist; he was not an ideologue. He had been DCM in Cambodia during the Vietnam War, and had taken some very tough decisions there. So he had a reputation for being very tough, and I believe that's why Secretary Haig and the Reagan administration picked him for the bureau. Enders was very talented, a Yale graduate, international economist, and an excellent bureaucratic infighter. I have been in meetings where the meeting was going in one direction; Enders came in in the middle of the meeting and changed the whole dynamic and the direction of the meeting with people who were his peers or superiors. He certainly had gravitas. Others told me that even Secretary Haig found it tough to say no to him.

Q: Who was the ambassador in Nicaragua?

GUTIERREZ: At that time, Larry Pezzullo, who had arrived there shortly before Somoza fell in 1979, was still the ambassador. Pezzullo had been sent down, as he told the story, a few weeks before Somoza fell in order to persuade him to give up power and leave the country. Once the Sandinistas took over, Pezzullo had tried to persuade them to follow pragmatic policies, and not to be influenced by Cuba and the Soviet Union. He had had a very tough time of it, but had valiantly tried to do his job under very difficult conditions. I remember that I would often be instructed to call Ambassador Pezzullo, on a secure line to pass on instructions from the higher-ups. Pezzullo did not always take kindly to those instructions. There was considerable debate in 1981 in the administration and in the press about what path to follow in Nicaragua.

Q: In fact, when you were passing instructions as a third-tour officer to the ambassador, was that because the Ops director, or the deputy director, or the deputy assistant secretary didn't want to do it?

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. It was known that Pezzullo believed that patience was needed in dealing with the Sandinistas, and the Administration had concluded that the time for patience had ended. I guess no one wanted to engage in an argument with Pezzullo, so I was sometimes chosen to deliver the message. But Pezzullo was a pro, and it was a pleasure to work with him.

Q: Do you remember who the deputy was…the deputy chief of mission?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, it was Tom O'Donnell. I met him when I traveled to Nicaragua in June 1981 as part of my orientation trip. It was a very interesting trip. I was able to meet with Sandinistas and opposition officials. There was also an interesting dynamic in the embassy. The embassy was divided into those who thought we could still try to persuade the Sandinistas by promising carrots to come to our side, and others who thought it was a lost cause and that we should go into a confrontational mode.

Q: How was that reflected in Washington; were there two schools of thought around Central America?

GUTIERREZ: There was a new administration trying to figure out what to do about Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. While the Carter Administration seemed more concerned about human rights, the new Reagan Administration wanted to counter a Communist threat in the region. In Nicaragua, the Carter Administration had stayed away from supporting the anti-Sandinista armed groups that began to appear. Many of these were made up of former officers and men from Somoza's National Guard.

The military government of Argentina, which was worried about the Sandinistas aiding and providing sanctuary to Argentine urban guerrillas, began to support these groups. Soon, other groups, including Miskito Indians and former Sandinistas, began to take arms

against the regime as well. Eventually the administration decided to support the famous "Contras," or counterrevolutionaries.

Q: Did you have any sense of any U.S. approval…tacit or overt approval of what the Argentines were doing?

GUTIERREZ: As a desk officer, I had little or no information about what the Agency and others were doing. My impression was that they proceeded cautiously at first in helping the anti-Sandinista forces. The administration did not want to be tarred with the Somoza brush; no one wished to be associated with the former regime. When the nature of the opposition changed from former Somoza soldiers to other groups, then it became more palatable to support the Contras.

Q: Somoza was still alive and well in Paraguay?

GUTIERREZ: He had been killed in Paraguay, where he had gone into exile, in 1980 by a Sandinista hit team led by an Argentine Marxist revolutionary.

Q: In Paraguay…allegedly by an Argentine.

GUTIERREZ: An Argentine named Enrique Gorriarán Merlo. But that was before my time on the desk. Soon after I arrived, the office began to prepare for a trip to Nicaragua by the new Assistant Secretary, Tom Enders. Enders was supposed to go to Managua in August 1981 and try to strike a deal with the Sandinistas. The thinking in the administration was that a deal could be worked out whereby the Sandinistas would agree to stop supplying arms to the Salvadoran FMLN guerrillas, and the U.S. would leave them alone. At that point the goal was not regime change, but a modus vivendi. So Enders went down in August 1981; I helped put together his briefing book.

Q: Pezzullo was still ambassador?

GUTIERREZ: Pezzullo in August '81 was about to leave, as I recall. So Enders went, delivered his message, and returned. Later I learned that Enders and Daniel Ortega and the comandantes had has a very frank discussion.

Q: So Enders returns and the sense was that he had laid down this ultimatum, but Ortega was thinking it over, or he'd rejected it, or….

GUTIERREZ: The Sandinistas did not respond directly. They would always give out mixed signals. Their ambassadors were usually well-meaning private sector folks who had fought Somoza but were not necessarily anti-U.S. Our analysts were playing the Central American version of Kremlinology, trying to figure out who's up, who's down, who likes us and who does not. There were nine comandantes in the junta that ruled Nicaragua. Some were supposedly moderates, and analysts played a guessing game about who had the upper hand and where Nicaragua was going. But at the end of the day the people who counted were not interested in dealing with the U.S. By that time the

Sandinistas had cast their lot with Cuba and the USSR, and there was little Enders could have done to change that. Enders gave it the old college try, but I don't think there was any possibility of a deal at that time.

Q: So the U.S. policy began to toughen.

GUTIERREZ: The U.S. policy began to toughen. We started closing some of the Nicaraguan consulates in the U.S. It was up to me to inform the Nicaraguan embassy that we were doing all these things. We called in the ambassador a number of times, and the office director, Craig Johnstone, and I would meet with him and inform him of all the measures we were taking.

Q: This was no longer Ambassador Sevilla Sacasa?

GUTIERREZ: No, Guillermo Sevilla Sacasa was ambassador during the Somoza era. He was Somoza's son-in-law.

Q: And he left after many, many years.

GUTIERREZ: Right. Sevilla Sacasa at one point was dean of the Washington diplomatic corps. He used to come see me when he was no longer ambassador to try to get updates on what was going on. Nice gentleman -- I don't think he was ever involved in the worst aspects of Somoza's shenanigans, although he was married to Somoza's daughter. Arturo Cruz, who was a moderate businessman and someone who had worked for the World Bank and other international organizations, was the Nicaraguan Ambassador when I came to the Desk.

Q: Is his son the ambassador?

GUTIERREZ: Right, his son is the current Nicaraguan ambassador. His father, Arturo senior was the ambassador at that time. The father was a very reasonable guy, an international civil servant who loved his country. Cruz Sr. returned to Nicaragua and ran for president against the Sandinistas in 1984, and he had been a part of one of the original juntas as a moderate member. He was a center-left businessman, but definitely a democrat.

Q: Was there a contra office in Washington?

GUTIERREZ: Not at this time. That came later. The contras were just beginning in 1981.

Q: So there was no active except some Argentine support for some…

GUTIERREZ: Right, in Honduras.

Q: Was there at that point violence in Nicaragua…real pitched battles with guerrillas?

GUTIERREZ: Not pitched battles, but there were skirmishes, incidents, hit-and-run raids, and reports of groups organizing, some troops deserting. As the Sandinistas became more repressive, more and more Nicaraguans took up arms against them.

There is an area of Nicaragua, the central part, that has traditionally been very rebellious, starting with the civil wars of the 19th century, conservatives versus liberals. This continued during the early 20th Century with the U.S. Marines being deployed to Nicaragua, and fighting rebel General Augusto César Sandino. The Contras started recruiting in this area of Nicaragua in the north, with some success.

Q: What were the US business interests in Nicaragua at that time?

GUTIERREZ: There were very few at that point; there was an Esso refinery as I recall, and the Sandinistas allowed it to operate at that time, although there would be some restrictions later on; and some banana companies, some fishing interests on the Atlantic coast, but no mega US companies.

Q: Were you involved as a desk officer in briefing congressional staff?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, I remember I had to brief the majority leader of the House, Jim Wright, from Texas; and we had to brief many of the CODELS that were going down. We also had to prepare our principals for the Congressional debates that took place at that time, including whether to maintain U.S. aid to the private sector in Nicaragua. I remember going to a hearing where Deputy Assistant Secretary Stephen Bosworth testified. This was before Chairman Doc Long of Maryland's Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, where the aid package to Nicaragua was debated. We got to deal quite a bit with Capitol Hill at this time.

Q: It seems like the activity was probably picking up an awful lot for one desk officer.

GUTIERREZ: It was, for a relatively junior officer, at that time. Often I would go into meetings, inter-agency meetings where I was the only State Department representative, and often the most informed person in the room about our policy. Much more senior people to me from other agencies would defer to me, the State Department representative, and look to me to tell them what the administration's policy was…what was allowed, what we could not do in the current circumstances. There just wasn't a lot of information about what the U.S. government was doing or what our objectives in Nicaragua were. At least I had the talking points from Enders and my superiors of what we were trying to do. So people looked to me for guidance, and sometimes they were frustrated with our policy, or the lack of clarity. This was quite an experience.

Q: And you weren't second-guessed by somebody who would say…

GUTIERREZ: There would occasionally be someone who argued we should do more or we should do less or we should go in a different direction, but at the end of the day the State Department representative from the regional bureau (me) usually had the last say.

U.S. policy toward Nicaragua was decided not by inter-agency meetings, but by a cadre of officials which included Assistant Secretary Enders.

Q: Besides listening to or seeing Tom Enders influence events, as sort of a back-bencher, did you get in to see the assistant secretary to brief him?

GUTIERREZ: Sometimes I did, but more often my office director, Craig Johnstone, or Deputy Director Art Giese would brief him, and I would go with them. At the end of my tour I wrote a memo addressed to him on how I saw the current situation and what I thought was likely to happen. He read it and he called me up to his office to discuss it, so we had a one-on-one meeting on Nicaragua before I left. I thought that was very nice of him, to hear my views.

Q: During your tenure as desk officer…you were there two years? So from March of '81 until…

GUTIERREZ: It was around April of 1983. I went to the FSI (Foreign Service Institute) to learn French before my assignment to Haiti

Q: April of '83. And you must have really witnessed a fairly significant evolution of our policy. Enders' trip was in August of '81; he came back having delivered a kind of ultimatum, then the reaction to that ultimatum was being parsed and dissected for a while. When did it become clear that there was really a divide that couldn't easily be bridged between Managua and Washington?

GUTIERREZ: At that time we were getting all kinds of intelligence reports about Soviet materiel arriving in Nicaragua. There were reports that they were bringing in tanks; they were bringing in Cuban military advisers, not only teachers, but people like General Arnaldo Ochoa, who was the Cuban hero of Angola, and executed by Castro a few years later. He was in Nicaragua.

Q: Ochoa was executed for drugs?

GUTIERREZ: That was the alleged charge against him, but in fact it was for becoming too prominent a figure in Cuba. Fidel does not like competition. Cuban intelligence recorded conversations where Ochoa criticized the regime.

Q: OK. Well, back to Nicaragua. At this point was there concern about Nicaragua acquiring tactical aircraft for…

GUTIERREZ: There were rumors about Nicaragua acquiring MiGs, but the country did not have the runways that MiGs required to land. They did receive tanks and other Soviet materiel. But it wasn't as much the arms as their intentions. While they still paid lip service to democracy and allowing a mixed economy, they were harassing the opposition and putting them in jail. They continually censored and occasionally shut down La Prensa, the only opposition newspaper that remained. The Sandinistas were also

suppressing the Miskito Indians on the Atlantic coast, who had a very independent streak. They continued to ship arms to the Salvadoran guerrillas. Internally, they were moving toward a totalitarian system. The trends in Nicaragua were not good.

Q: And weapons were being passed through to El Salvador.

GUTIERREZ: Yes. The provision of weapons to the Salvadoran guerrillas was a major concern. We knew that it was happening from our intelligence, but we could not share what we knew because of sources and methods. Secretary of State Al Haig, for one, kept urging us to get the evidence out, get the evidence out.

This led to a very famous incident in which I played a part, the Tardencilla affair. What happened was that the Salvadoran Army picked up a guerrilla fighter in El Salvador, a prisoner of war. When they interrogated him, they found out he was born in Nicaragua. Orlando Tardencilla was his name. When they questioned him further, he revealed, supposedly, that he had been trained in Cuba and had served in Ethiopia. The Salvadoran Army passed that information to us. Someone then decided that this was just the evidence that Secretary Haig was looking for: a Cuban-trained Nicaraguan who was fighting with the Salvadoran guerrillas. This would definitely prove Nicaraguan involvement in El Salvador. The decision was made to bring Tardencilla to Washington. As far as I know, our bureau was not consulted -- I don't know if the decision came from the White House or from elsewhere in the State Department.

So Tardencilla was flown to Washington, and a press conference was called to show off Tardencilla and to expose Nicaragua's involvement in El Salvador to the U.S. press and public. A few hours before Tardencilla was to be brought before the press, our bureau was informed that the event was about to happen. I recall that Enders sent Tony Gillespie, who was his special assistant, to be part of a group that questioned Tardencilla before he went before the cameras. I was not asked to participate, nor was anyone else in the office of Central American affairs invited. Apparently Gillespie was not too impressed with Tardencilla, but the train had left the station at that point and there was no way to put on the brakes. Sure enough, Tardencilla went before the TV cameras and the press, and when asked the question "Is it true you were trained in Cuba?" he totally changed his tune, saying "No, no; I've never been to Cuba." "What about Ethiopia?" "Where's that -- Africa?" "Well, aren't you a Nicaraguan?" "Yes, I'm a Nicaraguan who volunteered to help the glorious war of liberation. And I said what I said because I was tortured by the Salvadoran military and authorities."

You can imagine the reaction; the press had a field day ridiculing the administration. Not only that, but the U.S. Government had a total mess in its hands. They had this supposed…well, this guerrilla who had recanted on his testimony. By now, every news organ in the U.S. had the story. Congressional opponents of the administration were threatening to hold hearings about Mr. Tardencilla, and even asking him to testify. The administration then faced a dilemma: what to do about Tardencilla? You couldn't send him back to El Salvador after he alleged that he was tortured -- the human rights groups would have crucified us. Could you set him free on U.S. soil? Would he then apply for

political asylum? It was quite a mess: some in the administration foresaw at least a month of constant criticism in the press for its Central American policy.

After the press conference, at about 5 p.m., I was asked to go up to the Seventh Floor. One of the bureau DASes (Deputy Assistant Secretary) -- either Steve Bosworth or Ted Briggs (which was -- the unique thing about Enders was he operated with only two deputy assistant secretaries, unlike most other assistant secretaries) asked me “Would you attend this meeting with the lawyers who are deciding what to do with Tardencilla?” I remember that my wife was supposed to pick me up at 6 p.m. I went to the meeting, and when the meeting was still going on at 6, my wife had arrived, so I came out and said, “Would you wait for me in my office, because I think this is going to go a little longer.” Luckily my mother was in town, and she was staying with us and could watch our two daughters, Alicia who was 4 and Diana who was not yet a year old.

The lawyers were trying to figure out that the U.S. could legally do with Mr. Tardencilla. Should the U.S. send him back to El Salvador? Keep him in Washington? Try him? Their instructions had been to find a solution that would make the problem go away. Of course, every time lawyers get involved, things move slowly.

Q: Who did the lawyers represent, exactly?

GUTIERREZ: There were lawyers who were responsible for our Latin America policy, others from the human rights section, others who handled cases involving prisoners of war, all from different parts of (L) (office of the legal advisor).

Q: These were all internal U.S. government…

GUTIERREZ: Internal U.S. government lawyers who were in touch with counterparts at other agencies. I was the only regional bureau person there, although there were, I think, people from the Secretary’s office and other parts of the State Department. Even though the Salvadoran Government wanted Tardencilla returned to them, that option was ruled out because Tardencilla claimed he had been tortured by the Salvadoran authorities, so how could we explain the fact that we were sending him back to a place where he had been tortured? Returning Tardencilla to El Salvador was out of the question. But if we did not return him to El Salvador, was he a free man? Surely the opponents of our policy would then get a hold of him and parade him around town making speeches against our policy. There seemed to be no good solution of what to do with him.

Q: OK, so you’re meeting with the lawyers; what to do with Tardencilla?

GUTIERREZ: Right. And by then it’s like 7:00 or 8:00 at night. And I made the suggestion, what if we hand him over to Nicaragua? Some of the participants immediately rejected the idea. Surely Nicaragua would treat him as a hero and gain a propaganda victory. My response was, better to have a propaganda event in Managua than in Washington. But what if we turned him over to the Nicaraguan Embassy and they held a press conference? I knew the Nicaraguan ambassador, Francisco Fiallos, very well.

He had come from the private sector, and from some of his comments I suspected he was not as sympathetic to the Sandinistas as his office required (later he defected).

Q: Who replaced…

GUTIERREZ: Who had replaced Arturo Cruz Sr. I knew that I could trust Fiallos to a certain extent. So we kept debating for hours whether we should or could legally contact the Nicaraguan embassy or not. By 11 pm the participants agreed to allow me to contact the Nicaraguan Embassy to try to work out a deal: we would turn Tardencilla over to the Nicaraguans. They would buy a plane ticket for him to get him out of the country, back to Nicaragua as soon as possible, and they would promise not to hold any press conferences or make any propaganda statements here in the U.S. Many on our side were skeptical that the Nicaraguans would respect any agreement. All I could tell them was that I knew the ambassador, and I was pretty sure I could trust him to keep his word. So I called Ambassador Fiallos, late at night, got him of bed, and explained our proposal to him. He said he would get back to me. Within the hour, he had consulted Managua and called us back. He said, "If you turn him over to me, we will assume responsibility for him when he's transferred. I guarantee that he will be on the next plane out, and we'll make no statements here." Well, again the lawyers had to cross the t's, dot the i's, and inform their superiors. Everybody eventually agreed. So, about 3:00 in the morning, I went down to the C street entrance.

A couple of unmarked white cars drove up to the State Department entrance, out came Mr. Tardencilla and his U.S. Government escorts. He was dressed very "preppily," as I recall. I guess we had paid for a new wardrobe for him. Ambassador Fiallos arrived shortly afterward. We met in one of the conference rooms of the State Department, shook hands, and turned Tardencilla over to the Nicaraguans. He was happy to go, having no interest in staying in the U.S. under any circumstances.

Q: At 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning?

GUTIERREZ: At 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning. My wife had fallen asleep on the couch in my office. We did the hand-off inside the State Department, and they found a flight to Chicago early in the morning, and then Chicago to Mexico City, and then Mexico City to Managua, and he was out.

Q: And nobody said anything about it?

GUTIERREZ: Nobody said anything. It made the press a day or two later. "Tardencilla back in Nicaragua." And *there* he was given a hero's welcome, but we avoided more embarrassment for the administration.

Q: They didn't gloat in Managua?

GUTIERREZ: They gloated a bit in Managua once Tardencilla arrived, but we avoided a month of our critics gloating in Washington. We also avoided weeks of more adverse press, interviews, and Congressional hearings.

Q: At this time was there the public affairs office…Otto Reich was involved then?

GUTIERREZ: No, that came a little later. Otto Reich at this point was the Assistant Administrator for the Western Hemisphere in AID (Agency for International Development).

Q: I see. And Larry Tracy, also later.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, later, the public diplomacy office was opened.

Q: You had traveled to Nicaragua, I guess, to meet people. What was Nicaragua like? They actually have a small English-speaking population, do they not?

GUTIERREZ: Well, Nicaragua was a very interesting country. The countryside is beautiful; the land is very fertile. At one point it was the breadbasket of Central America. In 1981 there were many foreigners there who had come there to join the revolution. There were a lot of Europeans. Later on, some Americans, which were called the "Sandalistas," began arriving. Of course, the Sandinistas encouraged international cooperation. They emphasized cultural events, proclaimed revolutionary slogans; emphasized helping the poor … the place had the appearance of not being a very repressive place on the surface. At the same time, the regime had no patience for criticism or opposing points of view. Government-organized mobs began to appear, what they called the "divine mobs -- turbas divinas". Every time an opposition leader dared to speak out against the government, or every time the opposition newspaper would publish something against the government, these mobs would come to harass, throw rocks, beat up the opponents of the revolution. Homes were burned down, radio stations and independent newspapers were closed down. As a consequence, Nicaraguans began to depart the country for Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, or Miami at that time.

Q: At this time did you have the impression that the Sandinistas had -- that there were different strains of Sandinismo and moderates and radicals, wild people, and maybe people who didn't want to take the revolution as far as maybe Ortega did?

GUTIERREZ: There were three factions in the Sandinista movement. There were the original Sandinistas of the 1960's, led by Tomás Borge. They were the "Prolonged Popular War" faction, and they advocated a rural guerrilla effort and seemed to be Soviet-inspired. Secondly, there was the "proletarian" faction, which was a younger group led by Jaime Wheelock, which believed in taking the fight from the countryside to the cities. The third faction was the *Terceristas (third way),* led by the Ortega brothers, Humberto and Daniel, who believed that in order to achieve power, the Sandinistas had to align themselves with the private sector, the democratic opposition and others, not because of any shared ideals, but only as a tactic to achieve power. They seemed to be the

more pragmatic group. Some analysts mistook this pragmatism for moderation in dealing with the U.S., and that did not turn out to be the case.

Q: What was the role of the Soviets, compared maybe to the role of the Cubans? Were the Cubans acting as sort of the Soviet agents, or was there an active Soviet presence as well?

GUTIERREZ: The Soviets were very active in Nicaragua, but the Cubans were their stalking horse. The Cubans spoke Spanish, the Cubans were eager to gain a foreign policy victory. Up to 1979, the Cubans had not had a foreign policy success in Latin America. They had failed in their efforts to overthrow the governments of Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, Argentina, and others. They were providing arms and support to the Salvadoran guerrillas. And this was right after Cuban troops had met with some success in Angola in combat against the South Africans and against UNITA. Cuban troops had been sent to Ethiopia as well. So Cuba was flexing its muscles a bit, and the Cubans were providing intelligence support, military training, in addition to sending teachers and other civilian workers.

Q: And the Soviets would supply materiel and tanks and things.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, the Soviets would supply materiel: AK47's, tanks, helicopters, training -- those kinds of things.

Q: I see. Were there any other significant things you were involved in as the desk officer besides the Tardencilla case? I mean, where your profile kind of went up inside the bureau?

GUTIERREZ: My superiors were surprised that the Tardencilla affair had been resolved overnight, so I became the flavor of the day for a little bit. By the middle of my tour as desk officer, I had gotten to know the players, Sandinistas and opponents, pretty well, and the Desk became a repository of knowledge about the Sandinistas, as it should have been.

Q: Do you think we played it right?

GUTIERREZ: I think a moderate, democratic Sandinista government that peacefully undertook social reform, respected its opponents and left its neighbors alone was never in the cards. The Sandinistas were hard-core revolutionaries who admired Fidel Castro, and they wanted to turn Nicaragua into the next Cuba. They realized times had changed, and they had to do it differently. But people like Daniel Ortega and the people around him had no democratic leanings or desires.

Q: It was very much a Cold War context as well, with the Soviets.

GUTIERREZ: Right. I do think that we could have done it a little differently in really drawing a line of demarcation between us and the ex-Somoza folks who were trying to do the same thing, and maybe in the contra movement we could have ensured that there were

fewer of the thugs and the human rights violators in the contra ranks that later were exposed by the press. But it's hard to fight a war with only solid citizens.

Q: When did the contras gear up?

GUTIERREZ: I think by 1982-1983, you started to see a significant contra movement.

Q: And were you on the desk when we started to sort of back the contras?

GUTIERREZ: I was on the desk but, I was kept out of the planning and decision-making on this issue. Our official line then was first to deny, then neither confirm nor deny. Later, after I left the desk, the program became more overt, and there were debates in Congress about funding for the contras.

I left the desk in April 1983. After this fascinating tour dealing with Nicaragua, I was asked by the bureau where I wanted to go, and I remember there were good jobs opening in Mexico and Venezuela. I chose instead to go to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, for several reasons. First, I wanted to learn French, and I only spoke English and Spanish at that time. Second, my wife was from the Dominican Republic, and a tour in Haiti would bring her closer to her family. And third, the job was a "stretch assignment," at a level higher than my current grade. I would be the head of the political section, an important position in any embassy, and I was only an FS-03 at the time. So, I chose to go to Haiti from the Nicaragua desk.

Q: And did you learn Creole as well?

GUTIERREZ: Not in Washington, no. I made sure I had a good strong 3-3 in French, and then later I picked up some Creole in Port-au-Prince, but I've never had formal training in that language.

Q: But this is July or August of '83 you move on to…

GUTIERREZ: We arrived in Haiti in July 1983. In April 1983 I moved on to French language training, and by July we had arrived to Port au Prince. But the Nicaragua desk was a fascinating experience.

Q: Yes, it was good preparation for when you later went back as ambassador, as well. Did you have any contact yourself with Ortega when you visited as a desk officer; you didn't see him in action or anything like that?

GUTIERREZ: No. The people I had contact with were mostly people in the Foreign Ministry, but I also met Joaquín Cuadra, who was then the number two in the armed forces and who later became head of the Nicaraguan armed forces. I did not meet any of the nine comandantes. I remember one of the comandantes came to Washington, Jaime Wheelock, and he wanted to meet with the Secretary of State. We offered Tom Enders,

and they declined. So, there was no meeting while I was there with any of the Sandinista leaders.

Q: Why would he have wanted to meet with the Secretary of State? Did he have some particular policy change he wanted to talk about, or something like that…

GUTIERREZ: In their mind, Wheelock was one (of nine) of the heads of government, and merited being received by the Secretary of State. We thought Enders was the appropriate level to receive him. Wheelock did not bring any new policy initiatives during that trip.

Q: Well, the bureau must have been pleased that there was somebody volunteering to go to Port-au-Prince.

GUTIERREZ: In 1983 Haiti was an engaging place. I had visited Haiti when I was in the Dominican Republic my first tour, and had found it to be an exotic and interesting post. I remember that when I visited in 1978, Haiti received more tourists than the Dominican Republic. Haiti held a certain fascination for visitors: voodoo, Graham Greene's novel "The Comedians," the Oloffson Hotel, Habitation Leclerc and other exotic places.

Q: And the Club Med?

GUTIERREZ: The Club Med had not opened yet, but it would open during our tour.

Q: And Labadie…up by the Dominican Republic border.

GUTIERREZ: Right. There was also the Citadelle fortress in Cap Haitien.

Q: Was Baby Doc still there?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. Jean-Claude Duvalier was serving as the President-a-vie, president-for-life for Haiti when I arrived in 1983.

Q: I really want you to describe Haiti and your impression going into Haiti as a young Foreign Service officer in an important job; now you're head of the political section. Who was the ambassador?

GUTIERREZ: The outgoing ambassador was Ernest Preeg and the DCM was Gerry De Santillana, but they were both leaving that summer and a new team was coming in. Clay McManaway, who had been in the Executive Secretariat -- he was part of the trinity with Jerry Bremer and Al Adams at the beginning of the Reagan Administration, and the three of them had pretty much run the State Department. Ambassador McManaway had been with AID in Vietnam in the CORDS (Civil Operations and Rural Development Support) program, and a lot of his worldview had been shaped by Vietnam at that time. He had done a terrific job there, in the countryside.

Q: So he didn't want to lose Haiti?

GUTIERREZ: I didn't mean to imply that he viewed Haiti in a Cold War context. He saw what had worked in Vietnam and what had not worked. He admired strong, enlightened leaders like Lee Kuan Yew and Atatürk. McManaway had a reputation for being a very tough boss while running the State Department, so I didn't know what to expect working for him. I remember he had called me up one time to the Seventh Floor when I was the Nicaraguan desk officer and asked me to brief him on some event in Nicaragua. His name inspired terror in many of my fellow desk officers in the State Department. So, when I got to Haiti I expected a martinet. But that did not turn out to be the case. We got to be very good friends, and were able to work together very well, and I really like and admire him. He did a great job in Haiti.

Q: Well, sticking with the embassy: how large was the embassy?

GUTIERREZ: We had, of course, a sizable AID contingent. I remember there were supposedly only two political officers, but then we got another two positions during my tour, so there were four people in the political section by the time I left. There were two in the economic section, and a pretty large consular section. It was a mid-sized embassy.

Q: Under Jean-Claude Duvalier, I suppose you could say there was political stability.

GUTIERREZ: There was political stability, but you were beginning to see a bit of ferment. Jean-Claude Duvalier was a more benign version of his father Francois, "Papa Doc." His father had been ruthless and was not afraid to kill in order to remain in power and to achieve his political aims. Jean-Claude still had a lot of his father's people around him, but he personally had no appetite for murder and repression.

Q When was the transition? When did his father die, do you remember?

GUTIERREZ: Papa Doc died in 1971.

Q: So he had been actually president for life for about twelve years when you got there.

GUTIERREZ: He was 19 or 20 when he succeeded his father. At first he depended heavily on his mother, Simone, and his father's advisors. His father's militia, the Tonton Macoutes, made famous in Graham Greene's "The Comedians," by now had become institutionalized and had become the VSN -- the Volunteers for National Security, the paramilitary arm of the regime. The Papa Doc regime had faced some challenges; there had been a number of attacks by exiles. Some of these had been quasi-comical. I remember there was one attack in Isle de la Tortue, the northern island that Haiti controls; all the attackers had been found and executed. A few of these attacks had been beaten back, barely, so the regime was somewhat fragile. One such attack in Port-au-Prince involved eight Americans, including three former deputy sheriffs. They had been able to take over the Dessalines military barracks and arrest 50 soldiers. Papa Doc had heard of the attack, and reportedly feared for his life and was preparing to leave the country. But

the invaders made a fatal mistake: after seizing the barracks, they sent one of the captured soldiers out to buy them some cigarettes. The captured soldier immediately notified the authorities that there were only eight attackers. Papa Doc then put on a military uniform and ordered the Haitian Army to storm the barracks. They did, and all eight attackers were killed. But it had been touch and go for a while.

Jean-Claude himself had been something of a playboy, a happy-go-lucky guy who liked fast cars and good music, etc…not at all someone with the stomach to suppress his people and stay in power by any means necessary.

Q: What was it like living in Port-au-Prince? Did you live in Petionville? Where did you live?

GUTIERREZ: We lived in Turgeau, which is halfway up one of the hills.

Q: Was it safe?

GUTIERREZ: It was safe. At that time you could walk anywhere, go any place; my wife could go to the market by herself. There was a pickpocket or two, but you never felt you were in a high crime area.

Q: As safe as Santo Domingo?

GUTIERREZ: Yes.

Q: With more tourists than Santo Domingo.

GUTIERREZ: In 1978 that was the case. By 1983, the Dominican Republic was being discovered by international tourism, so it began to surpass Haiti as a tourist destination. Of course, a few years later, with political instability and the AIDS scare, Haitian tourism ground to a halt, and has never recovered.

Q: My impression when I first went to Port au Prince, considerably later around 1997, was it looked almost like Arizona. There weren't really any trees. Was that the case when you...

GUTIERREZ: It wasn't as bad then, but deforestation was beginning to be a major problem. I remember flying from Haiti to the Dominican Republic and vice versa, and you didn't need GPS (global positioning system) to figure out where Haiti began and the Dominican Republic ended. When green turned to brown -- that was where Haiti began.

Q: Of course Papa Doc ruled Haiti through voodoo a lot; Jean-Claude as well?

GUTIERREZ: No, although of course the houngans (voodoo priests) were an institution. Papa Doc was a master of manipulation and of understanding his people, and he would sometimes dress up in tails and a top hat. There was a god in the voodoo deity called

Baron Samedi, who wore a top hat and tails. So Papa Doc was trying to convince the Haitian people that he was Baron Samedi. Jean-Claude was too busy enjoying the good life to bother with voodoo or trying to manipulate the people.

Q: Was Jean-Claude -- Baby Doc -- was he politically capable?

GUTIERREZ: Well, that was a big question. The big question in the political section and the intelligence agencies was who runs Haiti, who has influence, who does Jean-Claude listen to, is the mother making the decisions? By 1983 Jean-Claude was more and more independent of the counsel of his mother and the people around him. There were reports that Jean-Claude had become estranged from his mother and his older sister, who had been more influential at the beginning of his presidency. There was always a coterie of people around him, and they made many of the decisions. In my time, in 1983, the key player in the government was the Minister of the Interior, Roger Lafontant. Lafontant was the regime's strongman. The Foreign Minister was Jean-Robert Estimé, who was a son of one of the Haitian heroes, Dumarsais Estimé, who had been president in the late '40s. Estimé the son was a very educated, refined, urbane fellow, and he was our main interlocutor. He had been educated in Europe, understood international finances, and had a vision for Haiti. But how much influence Estimé had within the government was something that was hard to determine. Some said Jean-Claude saw Estimé as a threat, since he too was the son of a Haitian president.

Q: Was the economy stable?

GUTIERREZ: The economy was pretty stable. At the time Haiti was opening itself up to the assembly industry, and there were U.S. companies like Rawlings making baseballs in Haiti, and GTE making electronic components. There were as many as 60,000 jobs, and the number was growing, in the assembly sector. So the economic situation was improving.

Q: Was there much out-migration?

GUTIERREZ: Not as much as would later come. The problem with boat people was beginning. One of our duties in the political section was to travel to the countryside -- and this is how we got another political position -- to check on the returnees (Haitian boat people intercepted at sea and returned to Haiti) to ensure they were not being persecuted by the government. An officer in the political section had the job of interviewing returnees. We had started to intercept Haitian refugees in the high seas and returning them to Haiti, as we still do today. We had to certify that the returnees were not being mistreated or persecuted for their political beliefs. What we found was that a vast majority of the people who emigrated were doing so for economic reasons, not for political reasons. In fact we saw some Tonton Macoutes, MVSNs, who would take off their uniforms and join the refugee boats trying to reach the U.S.

Q: Did you also interview them to find out how they did it, not just that they wanted to do it for economic reasons, but the networks and so forth, how these people knew where they were going and tried to get to people on the other side?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. At this point it was pretty much a home-grown effort, and people would just build rickety boats and leave from Port-de-Paix or La Gonave Island or some other port to try to make it to Miami. Most would not make it, either because they were intercepted on the high seas, or their boats capsized and they died in the process.

Q: Haiti is really fascinating; did you travel all over the country?

GUTIERREZ: I traveled the road that the Marines had built between 1915 and 1934 during their occupation, between Port-au-Prince and Cap Haitien on the north coast. I also traveled to Hinche with a Congressional delegation and to Jacmel on the south coast.

Another fascinating aspect of Haiti was how they viewed race. Most of the members of the elite were mulattoes, and most of the poor people were black. Papa Doc used the term negritude, which in Europe rejected colonial racism and promoted solidarity among blacks, to refer to promoting the cause of Haitian blacks vis-à-vis mulattoes. There was also the dynamic of the Catholic Church and the voodoo priests. As one Haitian said to me, "Haiti is 80% Catholic and 100% voodoo."

Jean-Claude's cabinet including blacks and mulattoes. Lafontant was a black, while Theodore Achille, another powerful member of the cabinet, was a mulatto.

Q: Right. I read someplace that Haitians can describe more than thirty different gradations of color relating to class, and so forth. It's really fascinating.

GUTIERREZ: Right. Haitians even referred to American blacks as "blancs" -- whites -- in Haiti blanc being a foreigner or "someone not like us."

Ambassador McManaway had a vision, and the vision was to try to persuade Jean-Claude Duvalier to democratize, to stop violating human rights, and to allow political dissidents to participate in the democratic process. That's what we tried to do for the two years I was there. Eventually these efforts -- and I don't think this was our intention, although of course we believed that Haiti had to change, and that Haiti had to join the family of democratic nations in the hemisphere -- but I think eventually our pressure led to Duvalier's downfall in 1986. We tried to persuade him to, for example, release people like Sylvio Claude, and Gregoire Eugene, dissidents who had been jailed, to allow an opposition to participate in the political process. Duvalier did hold elections, but banned the better-known dissidents from participating. Nevertheless, some independent candidates had surfaced, and we persuaded the government to allow these people to participate.

Q: You talked about this a little bit, but just to go over it again: my own experience in Haiti was that there were some very, very capable people, and that was yours as well,

because members of the cabinet and some of the educated upper class -- I mean some of these people had been educated in Europe and were very, very smart. But Haiti hasn't come together since 1804; it's just been one problem of social integration in part, but really in charting a destination for the country. Do you have any sort of lessons or conclusions you drew from your time there?

GUTIERREZ: Well, I certainly think that a lot of Haiti's misfortune was not Haiti's fault. The world did not welcome Haiti when it became a new nation in 1804. Haiti was essentially isolated by Europe, especially France, the United States and the rest of the world for over 60 years, until after the Civil War in the U.S. As a new nation, a republic founded by former slaves, it was forced to go it alone, with all that entailed. Had it been welcomed in a different way, history might have been different. And then the way Haiti developed wasn't conducive toward development; the fact that French remained the national language, for example, and even today, 80% of the people can't speak French. They speak Creole. I always wondered why not make Creole a co-national language -- make Haiti a bilingual country like Canada and have all the documents translated in French and Creole, and all the signs and everything. That might bring into the mainstream those Haitians that essentially live outside the system. Haiti needs a strong dose of education.

At the same time, Haitians are very independent, and proud of their heritage. Unlike other countries in the region, Haiti never had a land problem *per se.* Since they kicked out the French colonists, the former slaves had instant access to the land: there were no latifundia, or old colonial families who owned mega-estates, like the infamous "13 families" in El Salvador, for instance. But what happened was that, as the population kept growing, the land became more scarce. Trees were needed for fuel and they were cut, so there wasn't any land management -- no strong government presence in the countryside to help the citizens develop. Those who have tried to help develop Haiti in recent years have constantly run into historical and cultural problems that are very hard to overcome.

Q: Yes, one of the things, speaking of land, were the efforts to title land when I was the coordinator. One of the problems was that every president would make a grant of land to somebody on top of somebody else's titles, so they were stacked up back several generations with different owners for the same piece of land. But Haiti is certainly a fascinating place. Did you collect any art, for example?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, Haitian primitive art is beautiful. Everyone leaves Haiti with a few paintings, and we did too, but unfortunately because of my job we didn't have the time to research who the best painters were. Many of our colleagues did so, and spent considerable amounts of money on Haitian art. At this point Miriam and I were trying to raise a young family and my FS-3 salary was not that great.

Q: There was a nice differential in Haiti, wasn't there?

GUTIERREZ: Actually, not as much as you'd expect; I think it was only ten or fifteen percent when I was there. Later it went up to forty percent.

Q: Really.

GUTIERREZ: It really shot up after we left, but when we were there Haiti was pretty peaceful, for the most part.

Q: And an hour and a half flight from Miami, too.

GUTIERREZ: Hour and a half flight. But danger was never far from our reality. I remember one particular incident in Haiti… well, there were many because, as the political counselor I was of course in charge of keeping up with the dissidents and visiting them in their homes. When I visited them, often I was followed by the police or the VSN, and sometimes they would try to stop me from entering their homes, but I would just continue walking, showing my diplomatic ID and pointing to the diplomatic tags in my Embassy vehicle. So we had some interesting moments there.

But the incident that I remember the most took place on the Fourth of July in 1984. As you know, on the Fourth of July embassies worldwide host an event were they invite all the Embassy contacts to a reception honoring U.S. independence. In Haiti, different sections put together an invitation list of their contacts. In the political section list, I decided to include some of the dissidents I knew to the reception, including Silvio Claude, who had been recently released from jail. When the ambassador was told of this, he called me in, and asked me why I had invited the dissidents. I explained that in every place where I had served, the Fourth of July was the time when the Embassy opens its mission, its residence, to all citizens of the country. I remember escorting Alvaro Cunhal, the leader of the (Stalinist) Communist Party in Portugal in to the reception at the American ambassador's residence in Lisbon. So why not invite Silvio Claude and other dissidents to the Fourth of July? Ambassador McManaway accepted my logic and went ahead and invited Silvio Claude to the Fourth of July reception.

On the morning of the Fourth, the government had gotten the word somehow that Sylvio Claude had been invited to the reception. That morning -- and I think the ceremony was to begin at 12:00, the invitations were for noon or thereabouts -- Foreign Minister Estimé called McManaway and said, "Mr. Ambassador, we understand that you have invited Silvio Claude to the Fourth of July reception. We would like you to 'dis-invite' him." And Ambassador McManaway, who was not easily intimidated, said "That is out of the question. We cannot do that, because in the United States we have a tradition that on the Fourth of July we open our house to all Haitians." Estimé tried time and again to get the Ambassador to withdraw the invitation, but McManaway wouldn't budge. Well, Estimé called back in an hour and said, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, if you persist in inviting Silvio Claude, the government will not attend your ceremony." And to his credit, McManaway stuck to his guns and said "Well, that would be regrettable, and I hope you reconsider. You are cordially invited, and I hope that you come, but we do not 'dis-invite' people we have already invited."

Around 11 o'clock, on the government radio station, a message went out "To all members of the Haitian government: You are not to attend the Fourth of July ceremony at the American ambassador's residence." They put it on the airwaves. When the reception began, we noticed some government ministers had arrived. For a moment we thought the government had relented. But soon after their arrival, these ministers began to receive phone calls telling them to exit the reception ASAP. Obviously they had some spies at the reception who were informing them of any government officials who had shown up. I remember the minister of the economy, Merceron, had not gotten the word, so he came in and Ambassador McManaway greeted him effusively. Soon a call came in to the residence -- and this was before cell phones, so people had to scramble, move toward telephones -- and Merceron got the word: "Get out of there immediately." So Merceron apologized to the ambassador: "I'm sorry, I've been called out."

Silvio Claude did come, a short, humble man carrying a Bible. Many of the Haitians in attendance, upon seeing Claude, were surprised as to how inoffensive he looked. One Haitian society lady was overheard saying, "Is that him…that little guy who's caused all this commotion?"

At the Fourth of July reception, it is traditional for the ambassador to make a toast to the leader of the country, and to our president, and there's a response by the senior representative of the host government. Well, Clay McManaway raised his champagne glass and made his toast for the president for life, Jean-Claude Duvalier, for the American president, Ronald Reagan, and for the Haitian and American people, and no one responded -- there was no one to respond for the government. As the reception was winding down, we got word that the police intended to arrest Silvio Claude as he left the embassy premises. We decided that my wife and I would take Silvio Claude and his wife in our car, which had diplomatic plates, and -- presumably -- would not be stopped by the Haitian authorities. We were able to leave without being stopped, and after a long drive we dropped Claude and his wife off in a place where he felt safe. This was quite an interesting experience for me. I never thought when I put Claude's name on the guest list that it would result in such a commotion. The government looked extremely petty and insecure in not attending the reception, and by its actions it gave Silvio Claude far more importance and recognition that he ever would have gotten on his own.

Q: Well, in retrospect, it looks like you sort of engineered a kind of democratic opening by doing that. But at the time, what was the fallout inside, or was there any fallout in the Department? Did anybody say "Well, why did this guy Gutierrez insist on putting this guy on the list, why did McManaway accept it…that it's created waves that we don't need," or was it seen as really an important opening?

GUTIERREZ: To my knowledge, no one in Washington protested. There was no love lost for Jean-Claude Duvalier in Washington. We had reported how the government was repressing dissidents and opponents to the regime, so there was no opposition to what we had done that I recall. I remember Elliott Abrams was in charge of the human rights bureau at that time, and he applauded our actions.

Q: Sure. What about McManaway; how did he feel about it?

GUTIERREZ: Ambassador McManaway, to his credit, would not back down. I think he would have preferred that the government attend the ceremony, but he was not a guy who would back down easily when he had made up his mind and thought something was the right thing to do.

Q: Did things get back on track with the government pretty quickly?

GUTIERREZ: After a period where relations were kind of cool, relations eventually got back on track. But there were some tense moments. The Israeli ambassador told us that Lafontant had threatened to declare me *persona non grata*. Eventually, the Haitian Government moved on. Haiti depended on U.S. aid of $40-$50 million a year, so it was in their interest to keep the aid flowing in. Where were they going to turn? Unlike his father, who had expelled a U.S. ambassador, Jean-Claude was not very confrontational.

Q: What happened to Silvio Claude afterwards?

GUTIERREZ: Silvio Claude was arrested a number of times under Jean-Claude Duvalier's presidency. After Duvalier left, Silvio formed his own political party. In September 1991, when Aristide was president but was about to be deposed by the military, a mob of Aristide supporters tracked him down in Carrefour and killed him. Silvio Claude was just a Baptist preacher, not a very impressive-looking guy, but a very courageous individual. It's a shame that he was killed. Ironically, Lafontant, probably the architect of the government's tough line during the Fourth of July crisis, was killed in a Haitian jail at the same time. So, both Silvio Claude and Roger Lafontant, the two opponents during this Fourth of July crisis, were killed…I think either on the same day, or very close to each other. There are those who claim that Aristide ordered the executions before leaving office.

Q: Did you get Congressional visits?

GUTIERREZ: We had a number of Congressional visits. The Black Caucus was extremely interested in Haiti; Congressman Walter Fauntroy of the District of Columbia was there often. During a period when the government was being responsive to the international community, I remember taking Fauntroy and his staff to a Haitian jail to visit political prisoners -- in 1985, I believe. We also took Fauntroy to visit AID projects in the countryside. I remember on that trip that we had to cross a shallow river with our four-wheel-drive vehicles, and almost didn't make it across, but we finally did. Other members of the Black Caucus were also extremely interested. But there were not too many others who were interested in Haiti.

Q: This is August 29, 2007, interviewing Ambassador Lino Gutierrez. Lino.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, I forgot to mention that while I was in Port-Au-Prince, the Grenada operation took place in October 1983. A few days after the operation, I was talking to a

friend in the State Department who told me that there was a call for political officers to serve in Grenada. I thought about it for a while and decided it was a very good opportunity. So I called the then executive director of the Inter-American Affairs Bureau, Don Bouchard. In our conversation, I said, "I understand you are looking for political officers in Grenada." He said, "No, we have enough right now. Thank you for your interest." thought that was the end of it.

The next day I got a cable that ordered me to take a flight to Miami within 24 hours and from there fly to Barbados. There I would be met by an Embassy officer. From there I was to fly to Grenada! So something changed in the 24 hours since I had spoken to Bouchard. Later I learned that Tony Gillespie, Enders' former special assistant, who had been the senior State official in charge of the operation and was then Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, and with whom I worked together very closely in the past, had been informed of my interest and requested that I be deployed to Grenada.

I had 24 hours to tell my family that I would be leaving for Grenada. That was quite an emotional time with my wife and two young daughters, but they understood, and I took a flight to Miami the next day. One of the Marine security guards at the embassy had also been summoned to Grenada, so there were two of us on the flight to Miami. Then we flew to Bridgetown, Barbados. When I arrived in Barbados I was met by a Panamanian named Johnny Lloyd who was an FSN at Embassy Panama. He was apparently arranging all the transportation to Grenada. I got off the plane, but I didn't go through Barbados customs or immigration or anything. I went straight to a hangar where the Americans had set up a mini terminal. I then boarded a C-130 to fly to Grenada.

Q: How soon after the invasion was this?

GUTIERREZ: This was six or seven days after our troops arrived. It wasn't clear to me at that time from reading the press, which implied that fighting was still going on, but most of the fighting was pretty much over by then. There might have still been a few Cuban construction workers that hadn't been rounded up, but by then the bulk of the fighting was over. What was interesting was that when we landed at Point Salines Airport in Grenada, the airport was blacked out; I couldn't see a thing as I walked off the plane. It wasn't clear to me why -- maybe they feared a possible Cuban retaliation. So I got out of the C-130 in the dark, and blindly followed the passengers going to the terminal. As we approached, I heard some noises in Spanish, and I saw some Cuban prisoners of war that had been detained near where we had landed. Seeing the Cuban prisoners brought the reality of the situation to me right away. When I got to the terminal, there was nobody to meet me because they didn't know exactly when I was going to arrive.

I started talking to some of the military folks at the airport and I asked if anyone knew where the U.S. Embassy was. We had set up a mini U.S. embassy in Grenada shortly after the troops landed. But no one I spoke to knew where it was. Finally, someone in the 82nd Airborne told me that the Embassy had been set up at the Ross Point Hotel. I hitched a ride with a military APC flashing my State Department badge -- and being questioned, but eventually let through -- all the roadblocks. By then it was maybe 9:00 p.m. We got to

the Ross Point Hotel, and immediately after being dropped off, I ran into Larry Rossin, a fellow political officer who was actually one of the heroes of the operation. Larry had been aboard a U.S. helicopter that had been shot at while trying to land in the Governor General's home on the day of the invasion. His mission had been to persuade the Governor General, the Queen's representative on the island, to invite the Americans to come into Grenada. Larry took me to see Tony Gillespie, who was the Chief of Mission, and some of the other folks that I knew from the bureau.

Q: Had Tony been named Ambassador at that point?

GUTIERREZ: I know Tony had been sent down there to run the operation and eventually he was named ambassador. I don't recall if he had been named ambassador at the exact time I arrived. If he hadn't been, he would soon be named ambassador, because I do recall a meeting with the Soviet ambassador and they were both on equal footing at that time, referring to each other as Mr. Ambassador. If he wasn't ambassador then, he would be soon.

Q: What did you do?

GUTIERREZ: After a fitful sleep, I attended the daily staff meeting in the morning. Since I was bilingual, Tony had assigned me the task to be the point of contact with the Cuban Embassy. My job was to negotiate the evacuation of all of the Cuban diplomatic personnel from Grenada. So that very day I was instructed to drive to the Cuban embassy, introduce myself, and arrange for their departure from the island.

Q: All Cubans.

GUTIERREZ: Not the prisoners who had been captured during the fighting. These were the Cuban diplomats. Most of the Cuban "construction workers," who happened to be military reservists, had been captured by our forces, although some had managed to make it to the Soviet Embassy.

Prior to the operation, we had sought to avoid a confrontation with the Cubans on the island. We had delivered a demarche in Havana explaining to the Cuban Government that the operation was not directed toward the Cuban forces. The objective of our mission, we explained, was getting the American medical students out of harm's way. But apparently Fidel Castro ordered his forces to fight to the last man, so they started firing at our troops as they landed in Grenada.

Q: What did the Cubans think of you, a Cuban American?

GUTIERREZ: It was an interesting dynamic. First, it was quite an adventure to get to the Cuban Embassy. They gave me a Suzuki Jeep which was right hand drive, as befitting a Commonwealth country like Grenada. It was also a stick shift, so I had to drive, change gears with my left hand. Although I could drive a stick, it took some getting used to drive a right hand drive vehicle where everything seemed backwards. After a couple of fits and

starts, I managed to drive it. Somebody had given me a map to direct me to the Cuban embassy. I asked soldiers and passersby for directions, and finally found it. When I got there I found the place surrounded by 82nd Airborne forces, who had set up a perimeter around the embassy. I introduced myself to our guys, and they let me through. I knocked on the door. I said, "Hello, I am Lino Gutiérrez from the American Embassy and I am here to help you get home."

Q: They understood right away that you were a Cuban-American.

GUTIERREZ: I think they knew, the more I spoke. Eventually some of them asked me directly, and I told them. Most of them saw me as a conduit for getting home, especially the rank and file, the regular diplomatic officers who just wanted to leave, so they were not displeased to see me.

Q: Were there any defections from Grenada?

GUTIERREZ: I don't think so. Not at that time. At the embassy the Ambassador was Julián Torres Rizo, about 39 years old, with an intelligence background. In an ironic twist, his wife, whose name was Gail Reed, was an American. I was told she had been an SDS (Students for a Democratic Society -- an extreme left-wing group) student in the 60's who went to Cuba to support the revolution, married this Cuban diplomat, and there she was. She was more than a diplomat's wife, however. The Cubans had used her to give press statements and deal with the international press. I found it ironic that there were times when the media was allowed into the Cuban compound that I, as a Cuban American, was representing the United States, and the American-born Ms. Reed was representing Cuba before the journalists. The Cuban diplomats had no choice but to deal with me and they never expressed any reticence in doing so. They had requested a meeting with Tony Gillespie to deliver a note from their government, so I arranged for a military escort to take them to the U.S. Embassy. At the meeting Tony wasted few words, telling the Cubans that they had to leave. They agreed to do so. They asked to leave a chargé d'affaires behind for a period of time just to wind up their affairs after the departure of the rest of the Cuban diplomats. There was a rumor at the time that they had buried some of the weapons inside the embassy, and the soldiers in the 82nd Airborne who were guarding the embassy told me there had recently been a lot of activity at night, digging and covering with cement some holes they had dug. So presumably they had buried some of the weapons at the embassy compound.

Q: Presumably they had destroyed their sensitive documents and communications.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, exactly. So we finally arranged for a date to evacuate the Cuban diplomats with their belongings and everything. On the appointed day, I led a caravan of U.S. military trucks -- I'll never forget that some were driven by women soldiers, something that was not that common at the time -- ready to load up the Cuban diplomats' possessions and luggage to take them to the airport. When we arrived at the Cuban Embassy, the Cuban ambassador met me at the entrance. I got out of the car and he said, "Mr. Gutiérrez, as you certainly understand, we have agreed to be evacuated, but we

cannot allow our personnel or our luggage to be searched when we get to the airport." I replied that the evacuation would be conducted by the U.S. Air Force, and that they had certain rules and procedures that had to be followed. Air Force regulations specified that everyone who came aboard a U.S. aircraft had to be searched to ensure the safety of the aircraft and crew. When I had finished explaining our position, the Cuban ambassador said, "Well in that case we are not going." In that moment I sensed that the Cubans were posturing, and certainly not dealing from a position of strength, so I said, "Fine, if that's your position," so I ordered the trucks to turn around, and we left. I suspected the Cubans would come around soon. Having talked to some of their diplomats, I knew they were anxious to get home as soon as possible. The Cuban diplomats had little to no communication with the outside world. Staying in Grenada under a U.S. occupation force was not an option, so sooner or later they had to play by our rules. A day or two later I received word that they were ready to leave under our conditions. This time they agreed to be searched by our military personnel at the airport.

Q: Interesting. What other things did you do as political officer in Grenada?

GUTIERREZ: After we evacuated the Cuban diplomats, a Cuban chargé was left behind. I was his liaison with the U.S. Embassy. One of our tasks was to ensure that the remains of the Cubans who had been killed in battle and had been buried on the battlefield would be sent back to Cuba. So I escorted the Cuban Chargé, Gastón Díaz, to the site of the battlefield as corpses were being dug up. I wasn't there personally for the identification of the corpses, but I did visit the site where the corpses were being dug up and smelled the decaying human flesh, which is a smell you will always remember.

Q: You do. Were there a lot of Cuban dead to be repatriated?

GUTIERREZ: As I recall we lost about 18 dead and they lost about 30. So the remains of about 30 Cuban dead had to be repatriated.

Another job I was given was to contact third-country diplomats who were still on the island. There were some Venezuelan diplomats who had been stranded in Grenada after our operations and who had lost contact with their home country -- apparently their communication equipment had broken down. So I reached out to the Venezuelan Embassy and facilitated the Venezuelans' contact with Caracas. Of course these were the pre-Chavez days so these were very friendly Venezuelans. In fact they were very happy to see us. Later, they invited me and some other U.S. diplomats to a steak dinner once they were finally able to get some supplies in from Venezuela. The Venezuelan diplomats told interesting stories about their experiences in Grenada, including a funny anecdote. After the hostilities ended, some of the Venezuelan diplomats went to a supermarket, and the customers heard them speaking Spanish. Immediately a crowd started to gather saying, "Cubans, the Cubans are still here." The Venezuelan chargé tried to address the protesters, explaining, "Wait, we are not Cubans. We are Venezuelans." They said, "Same (expletive), throw them out." They were able to get out, but did not return to the supermarket anytime soon.

Q: What were the conditions like? Where did you live?

GUTIERREZ: It was a study in contrasts. On the one hand, we lived at the Ross Point Hotel, which had been a tourist hotel, but which now served as the temporary U.S. Embassy. We were in what had been a luxury hotel, but with no food or amenities. Later they moved us to the Spice Islands Hotel, which was right on the beach, so we had the luxury of beach-front rooms, but no hotel amenities and no food. We were all eating C-rations and K-rations and anything the military had brought. I do remember that MREs were starting at that time. The MREs were quite filling, but hardly a gourmet's dream. Some of our guys even started to fight for and hoard the tastier MREs.

Q: How long were you in Grenada?

GUTIERREZ: I was there three weeks. I returned to Haiti in time to spend Thanksgiving with my family. All in all, it was quite an experience. I was very glad to have done it. It was fascinating to be at the forefront of a foreign policy crisis like Grenada. It was very interesting to engage in diplomacy with the 82nd Airborne on your side and U.S. destroyers on the horizon; it is quite a comforting feeling.

Q: Did you deal with all the medical students?

GUTIERREZ: No, they had been evacuated immediately after our forces landed. Some of the last American citizens were being evacuated right as I was arriving. I didn't have contact with many Grenadians at first. The vast majority of the ones I saw were very happy we were there. Although, as Ambassador Tony Gillespie said, if it had been little green men from Mars who had removed Coard and the Cubans, they would also have cheered. Maurice Bishop had been pretty popular at the beginning. Bernard Coard, the Deputy Prime Minister who overthrew him and had him killed, was not liked. The Grenadians were very happy to get rid of Coard and his thugs.

Q: What about the Soviets? They, of course, stayed.

GUTIERREZ: They stayed. They were in a difficult position, because they had backed Coard. In addition, around 40 Cuban military reservists, including the Cuban commander, Colonel Pedro Tortoló, had sought refuge in the Soviet Embassy after the fighting.

I remember Ambassador Gillespie had a confrontation with the Soviet Ambassador during the evacuation of the Cubans. At first, the Soviet ambassador seemed to be delaying the evacuation, making last-minute demands that we could not agree to. Then there was the incident of the smuggled weapons. While we were evacuating the Cuban diplomats, we were also evacuated the 40 Cubans who were hiding out at the Soviet Embassy. As the evacuation began, Soviet Embassy personnel brought in some suitcases that reportedly belonged to the Cuban personnel who had been at their embassy. Our people who were screening the bags told Ambassador Gillespie that the Cubans were trying to smuggle weapons out of the country. Tony asked the Soviet ambassador whether the Cubans were attempting to smuggle weapons out, and the Soviet ambassador

assured him that the Cubans were taking no weapons. What the Soviet ambassador did not know was that by this time Tony knew that our folks had opened the Cuban bags and found the weapons. Tony invited the Soviet ambassador to follow him to the hangar. Once they got there, Tony showed him the weapons, which included AK-47s and all kinds of small firearms. When confronted with the evidence, the Soviet Ambassador exclaimed "God damn those Cubans they did it to me again!"

Among the Cuban passengers was Colonel Pedro Tortoló, who had been the military commander of the group. I recognized him while he was standing in line waiting to board, pretending to be just another Cuban private. I wanted to make sure that he knew that we knew who he was, so I went up to him and said, "Colonel, how are you?" and he nodded. Once he returned to Cuba, Tortoló was blamed by Fidel for the defeat and for disobeying Fidel's order to fight until the last man. He was court-martialed, busted to private, and sent to fight with the Cuban forces in Angola.

Q: So after three weeks you went back to Port-Au-Prince.

GUTIERREZ: Back to Port-au-Prince to a different reality. I was happy to see my family. At the end of my tour in '85 you started to see some of the riots that eventually caused the overthrow of Jean-Claude Duvalier. In places like Gonaives, a city north of Port-au-Prince city where many of Haitian revolts began, anti-government riots had begun, but it wasn't clear to me that Duvalier would fall as easily as he did a few months later. After all, between his father and him the Duvaliers had been in power for over 30 years.

Q: Did you have any trouble driving places like Gonaives?

GUTIERREZ: Not really. When I was there, you could drive anywhere in the country with little trouble on the Port-au-Prince-Cap Haitien road that the U.S. Marines had built during the occupation. Street crime wasn't a problem. There was little violence against foreigners, but you did start to see some of the discontent. I think a lot of the discontent was fueled by Duvalier's wife, Michelle Bennett, who was a very arrogant figure. She was very attractive, and Jean-Claude seemed always eager to please her. But she contributed heavily to his downfall. I remember Haitian TV would show scenes of government receptions where Michelle and members of the Haitian elite were wearing fur coats. Fur coats in Haiti why?

Q: Air conditioning.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. The resentment of the people started to be felt about that time.

Q: Wasn't her father a big actor in Haiti? I remember he was imprisoned by the Aristide cabal and kept in prison.

GUTIERREZ: Ernest Bennett, yes. He had influence. One of her brothers was arrested by the DEA in a DEA operation in Puerto Rico, so that family had a lot of problems.

Q: In Haiti you were working on your next assignment. Where was that?

GUTIERREZ: First of all, Ambassador McManaway had asked me to extend for a third year. While I loved the job, as my kids were getting older and advancing in their educations, my wife and I decided to move on to another posting where health and education conditions would be better for the family. A few months later, as the Haitian people forced Duvalier out, part of me regretted not having extended to be there for such an historic occasion.

Having led a four-person political section as a relatively junior FS-3, I was looking for more responsibility. But often in the Foreign Service one's career is not a steady climb up to a summit -- there are often plateaus. As an FS-3, the system would not let me apply for the same job I had in Haiti at a larger embassy, since I was still relatively junior and those positions were reserved for higher-ranking officers. Very few of the jobs at my grade interested me. Although it probably made sense to stay overseas another tour while the girls were young, the best job offer I had at that time would have us return to Washington. The European Bureau noticed that I had served in Portugal and spoke Portuguese, so they asked me if I would be the Portugal desk officer in the Office of Western European Affairs. The job was a "stretch assignment," or one usually reserved for an officer of a higher rank. So Miriam and I decided to pack up and go back to Washington. Miriam was seven months pregnant by the time we left, with Alicia, 8 years old, and Diana, 4 years old, in tow, so we knew it would not be easy to move to a new place with two small children and one on the way, but we returned to Washington in the summer of '85.

Q: Who was your office director?

GUTIERREZ: My office director was Marten Van Heuven who was a civil servant who came out of L, but he was in a policy position. He ran a pretty formal shop in EUR/WE affairs. I found the style in my new office to be not at all what I had been used to in the Inter-American Affairs (ARA) bureau when I had been Nicaragua desk officer. At ARA the atmosphere was more informal and less hierarchical. There was a lot of horizontal and vertical communication and interaction in the bureau -- I even got to see the Assistant Secretary, Tom Enders, on occasion. In EUR, by contrast, everything was more structured.

Q: Unusual too in a regional bureau to have a civil service person be an office director.

GUTIERREZ: True. Marten started out as a State Department attorney, and continued in policy jobs. Eventually he was National Intelligence Officer for Europe for the agency. He was born in the Netherlands, so of course he had the European perspective.

Q: What were the issues you were dealing with as desk officer for Portugal?

GUTIERREZ: At that time, other than the legislative elections that took place in 1985, many of the issues were NATO related, with the U.S. base in the Azores still being very

important for the U.S. military strategists. In 1973, when the Egyptians crossed the Sinai and had some initial successes against the Israelis, Portugal gave its permission for the U.S. planes that were supplying U.S. military equipment to the Israelis could transit through the Lajes base, a decision that was not popular in the Arab world.

The base had all kinds of problems that I had to deal with and become an instant expert on. To give you an example, the island of Terceira, where the U.S. base of Lajes is located, had been beset at the time by a plague of Japanese beetles. The Portuguese blamed the U.S military for bringing in the Japanese beetles, because historically there had never been any Japanese beetles present in the Azores until the U.S. military arrived. The Portuguese claimed that the Japanese beetles had arrived in the U.S. aircraft that landed in Terceira. The U.S. did not acknowledge responsibility for Japanese beetles, but since Portugal was an excellent U.S. ally who was providing us important access to a strategic base, we in the State Department believed that we had to do something as a good faith effort to try to combat the plague. However, there was no easy solution to the problem. Scientists had suggested as many as four different methods of attacking the plague, from spraying to finding other insects to attack the beetles. Each plan varied significantly in cost. As the Portuguese desk officer, I had to study these plans and make a recommendation for the State Department to support in our negotiations with the Defense Department, which was reluctant to spend much money or resources on the problem. The plan we decided to fund was the plan to introduce the milky spore bacteria, which the beetles would feed on in their larva stage, and hopefully die off. Eventually this option was approved, and it succeeded in containing the problem. These were the kinds of issues I had to deal with on the Portuguese Desk, very unusual issues for a political officer.

Q: What was the issue with the removal of the lease on the base or whatever … The Portuguese really wanted the base to stay but on better terms or was there a significant part of the Portuguese establishment that didn't want the base there at all?

GUTIERREZ: Certainly the Azoreans wanted the base to stay. The Azoreans prized their relations with the United States, and there is a significant Azorean population in the U.S., notably in New Bedford, Massachusetts, Fall River, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and all the way to California. There were Portuguese-Americans like Tony Coelho at that time, who was a Congressman from California who was very high up in the Democratic leadership, and who was very interested in Portugal. Other members of Congress with large Portuguese-American constituencies who occasionally called the desk included Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island and Congressman Barney Frank of Massachusetts.

The Socialist Party in Portugal was a pro-NATO party. It was strategically with us, but they always wanted a better deal than they got from us. They were always pushing for more aid. During lean budget times, all the U.S. could do was to promise its "best efforts" to bring about a "rising trend" of increased aid. These U.S. statements were constantly being brought up by the Portuguese, and future U.S. and Portuguese administrations differed on their interpretation of what the U.S. had promised and how much. We spent

years arguing about what "best efforts" meant. They interpreted it one way. We interpreted it another way.

Q: This was a NATO base and not a bilateral base.

GUTIERREZ: It was NATO base, but a bilateral issue.

Q: So NATO interests were engaged in the base as well. Were there other non U.S. elements co located with U.S. assets there?

GUTIERREZ: Other than the Portuguese military, there must have been but I don't recall hearing too much about third-country personnel.

Q: You flew out and saw the base.

GUTIERREZ: Yes. I saw the base. Then I flew to Ponta Delgada, where we had a small U.S. Consulate. There are nine Azorean islands. The capital of the Azores is on a different island, Sao Jorge, than the Lajes base, which is on Terceira Island.

Other than the 1985 legislative election and the election of Mario Soares as president in 1986, there weren't too many dramatic issues during my tenure. I do remember that in November 1985, when I visited Lisbon again for my initial trip as desk officer, on that day the famous Iran-Contra "arms for hostages" flight took place. There was a U.S. flight that went to Portugal with TOW missiles that were supposed to go to Iran that transited Portugal on that same day. Years later, the Iran-Contra committee questioned me to find out whether my trip to Portugal had anything to do with the shipment of the TOW missiles, which of course it did not.

Q: You never would have noticed…

GUTIERREZ: For the record, I never met or had anything to do with Ollie North.

Q: That is interesting. Were there any other big issues when you were on the desk?

GUTIERREZ: In our office, the Portugal account was the least troublesome. In Spain, we were sweating out Spain's nationwide vote on whether to join NATO. Part of my responsibilities included backing up the Spanish Desk, so I was partially involved in that effort.

Q: Would you compare the European bureau and the ARA bureau at the time?

GUTIERREZ: As I stated previously, it took me awhile to get used to the European Bureau because of its formality and relative insularity. Many European hands had never served outside of EUR. I remember one officer who had served 30 years in the Foreign Service and 28 had been in European posts. So Henry Kissinger's GLOP program had not affected him.

Q: This is a global outreach program. You might explain that.

GUTIERREZ: As I understand it, in the 1970's, right before I came to the Foreign Service, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger reportedly was receiving a briefing about the Panama Canal, and he asked his briefers how the Panama Canal compared to the Suez Canal. It turned out that Kissinger's briefers were regional experts, and none of them had a clue about how the two canals compared. That incident apparently brought home to Kissinger the fact that Foreign Service officers needed to have a broader perspective, a better geographical perspective. Kissinger thus initiated a "Global Perspective" (GLOP) program, whereby FSO's were ordered to serve one tour in areas where they had no prior experience. But I found few officers with GLOP experience in the European bureau, because many of the officers typically went from London to Paris to Rome to Berlin. Or so it seemed. Things are now different, of course.

Q: Right, and they wouldn't have it any other way.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. The argument the Europeanists made was that "only we (European specialists) can understand the intricacies of the Europeans, the subtle European mind." And service in Portugal apparently was not enough for one to acquire credentials as an Europeanist. When I pointed out to the personnel people that I had served in a European country, Portugal, they would counter, "Oh Portugal is not Europe, it is more like eastern Latin America."

Q: So what were you thinking when you were on the desk? Did you want a European tour after that?

GUTIERREZ: I did. I guess I wanted to prove myself in a bigger arena. As I was ending my tour, I told my EUR/WE Office Director Van Heuven and my DAS, Bill Bodde, who was very helpful and encouraging, that I wanted to serve in Europe and they said they would support me. There were a number of jobs open in EUR, but my first choice was Paris. The position I sought was in my opinion one of the best jobs for an FSO-2 in the Foreign Service. It was as chief of internal political affairs at Embassy Paris. Embassy Paris had a large and specialized political section that had four units: external affairs, internal affairs, labor, and Politico-military affairs. The head of internal affairs would supervise three other officers, a French Foreign Service National, and two other assistants. In addition to being in charge of the internal affairs of France, he would also be in charge of counter terrorism, narcotics and a number of global issues. So I thought that was a great opportunity to engage on important issues, report on political affairs, my first love, and gain additional management experience. The incumbent was Tony Wayne. I began talking to him by phone, asking about the job. As he described the job to me, I decided that it was exactly what I wanted, and that the Paris job would be at the top of my list.

It wasn't easy to get this job. There were a number of people in the Department and the Embassy who tried to steer me away from the job or to get me to accept a job at another

post or a lesser job in Paris. It was a very interesting process. My own personnel counselor tried to dissuade me from bidding on the job, and even proposed other candidates for the job, so he was absolutely no help.

Q: Was the job above grade?

GUTIERREZ: No, it was at grade, and I even though I had the support of the EUR bureau, that fact did not stop some people in the bureau from working against me. Some people at the embassy had another candidate for the position. The then-DCM called me on the phone and said, "Why don't you come in as one of the other officers of the internal unit, and in a year we will move you up to be the chief of the unit."

Q: Did they want to do an inside fill?

GUTIERREZ: They wanted to move up an officer who was already in the section.

Q: Promote somebody up from the ranks.

GUTIERREZ: That's right. If I had accepted the DCM's offer, it would have meant that I would be taking a job at a lesser grade. Apparently they thought that I wanted to get to Paris at all costs and would accept their officer. I told the DCM and my personnel counselor that I wanted the internal affairs chief job and no other.

As the process moved toward a decision on the job, suddenly, out of left field, the Inter-American Affairs bureau tried to force me to go to Panama as deputy political counselor, a stretch assignment. I had bid on some jobs in Latin America in case I did not get Paris, but it seemed that the Latin America folks (perhaps prodded by others in the personnel system) wanted to push through the assignment to Panama against my wishes. I thanked the Latin America folks for their interest, but reiterated that I still wanted to go to Paris, and so informed the personnel system. The European bureau continued to back my bid to be assigned to Paris. In order to solve the impasse, the personnel scheduled what they call a shootout.

Q: Could you explain a shootout?

GUTIERREZ: A shootout is when the State Department personnel panel that makes the assignments decides between two competing proposals from two geographic bureaus. In this case there was a proposal from the European bureau that I be assigned to Paris, and a proposal from the Inter-American Affairs bureau that I go to Panama. I thought it was ironic that the Inter-American bureau, where I had felt most at home, was ignoring my wishes, while the European bureau, where I had not felt at ease, was respecting my wishes!

At the end of the day, when arguments were made by both bureaus -- and I had provided the European bureau with talking points -- the EUR proposal won the shootout. So we went to Paris.

Q: Did you have to go through much language training?

GUTIERREZ: I had taken the French course at FSI before going to Haiti, so they gave me two weeks to brush up my French. While in Haiti the Haitian elite speak very good French, I didn't want to take any chances that the Parisians wouldn't understand my accent. After two weeks of language training, off we went, with my wife and three girls, to Paris in 1987.

Q: Did they give you a nice apartment?

GUTIERREZ: I took Tony Wayne's apartment which was nice, but small for five people. It had three bedrooms for the five of us. But its location was ideal. It was in the 8th arrondissement, two blocks from the Champs Elysees and walking distance from the Embassy. Paris was quite an experience.

Q: Who was the political counselor?

GUTIERREZ: The political counselor at the beginning of my tour was Peter Semler, an experienced Europeanist. He was replaced by Kim Pendleton the final year of my tour.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

GUTIERREZ: At the beginning of my tour, the ambassador was a political appointee from Tennessee, Joe Rogers. Later he was replaced by another political appointee, Walter Curley. The DCM, who arrived shortly after we did, was Mark Lissfelt.

Once I got to Paris, I was convinced I had the best job in the Foreign Service. Not only was I serving my country in the "City of Light" with an exciting job in an important Embassy. My contacts included French politicians, opinion leaders, journalists, pollsters, and many interesting people, whom I would take out to lunch to learn what they thought. At the same time, my daughters were learning French, and my wife, who is an artist, was living in the Mecca for artists. I learned a lot during my tour and enjoyed it very much.

Q: This was a very large embassy though.

GUTIERREZ: A very large embassy at that time and an embassy that received a tremendous amount of visitors, including the President of the United States every couple of years, the Vice President, certainly the Secretary of State.

Q: Did you have anything to do with a presidential visit?

GUTIERREZ: We all did -- as you know, when the President comes to post, everyone is mobilized. The most memorable visit for me was in July 1989 when the French celebrated the bicentennial of the French Revolution. President Mitterrand decided to invite the leaders of the G-7 -- it was France's turn to host the meeting -- to meet in Paris

to coincide with July 14, 1989 the bicentennial of the revolution. You can imagine the logistical challenge of taking care of our president during such a big celebration with many other leaders present.

Q: This is George H.W. Bush.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, President George H.W. Bush, 41st president of the United States. President Mitterrand decided to host multilateral and bilateral meetings between the G-7 leaders at the Elysee Palace. It was fascinating, because you had Felipe González (Spain had been invited as a special guest) meeting with Margaret Thatcher in one room, and Helmut Kohl and his Japanese counterpart next door. With more than eight international security teams trying to protect their principals, it was inevitable that there would be friction and incidents between our security personnel. There were also journalists around, adding to the confusion.

My job was to be the site officer at the Bush-Mitterrand bilateral meeting at the Elysee Palace. Everything was going well at the beginning: President Mitterrand welcomed President Bush to his office on the second floor of the Palace, and both delegations sat down for the meeting. The problems began when the French Prime Minister, Michel Rocard, arrived a few minutes late for the meeting. Rocard began to climb up the stairs that led to President Mitterrand's office when he was stopped by U.S. Secret Service officers. Either Rocard wasn't wearing the proper badge or his name was not on the list. When Rocard told the Secret Service officers who he was, they would not budge and blocked the Prime Minister's entrance. Rocard tried to force his way through, whereupon he was picked up by one of our agents -- Rocard was not a big man -- and gently deposited at the bottom of the stairs. After a few expletives in French and English were hurled, and French government representatives intervened, Rocard was let in. I was in an adjoining room at the time and did not witness the incident, but was told about it shortly thereafter.

The senior French diplomat at the Elysee then summoned me and related the incident to me, barely containing his anger. He said that the Prime Minister of France had been manhandled by the U.S. Secret Service and treated without the respect he deserved. This was unacceptable behavior, an insult to the French people, etc. He asked if I had anything to say. At that point I figured there was nothing to do but to take a bullet for the home team. I summoned all the authority I had (or didn't have) and said, "On behalf of the people and government of the United States of America, I humbly apologize to the people and government of the French Republic."

Q: And I bear full responsibility.

GUTIERREZ: That was understood.

Q: It didn't go beyond your level then with their complaints.

GUTIERREZ: It might have later, but at that time the French officials seemed satisfied and it defused the incident.

Q: Did you get a chance to shake hands with George H.W. Bush and talk to him at all?

GUTIERREZ: Only briefly. I got to spend some time with him a few years later. President Bush came to Paris a number of times. On a subsequent trip I brought my two oldest daughters, Alicia and Diana, to meet him at an Embassy town meeting to greet the President. There is a nice picture of him talking to my daughter Alicia and me at that time, and a group picture with the Embassy children that included Diana as well.

Paris was in the major leagues as far as U.S. interests, U.S. high-level visits, and important issues of the day. It was an excellent experience for me. It was a fascinating time when you had what the French called “cohabitation,” with a Gaullist, center-right prime minister, Jacques Chirac, and a socialist president, Mitterrand. It was my unit’s job to explain to Washington what this arrangement meant for U.S. interests. At that time the far-right National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen was making headlines. Counter-terrorism was a big part of my account as well. Pan Am 103 happened while I was there, and a French passenger plane was blown up over Africa. Qadhafi’s agents were planting bombs all over Europe. In the 1988 presidential election Mitterrand defeated Chirac, and then he called legislative elections and a socialist government came to power for the rest of my tour there. It was an extremely interesting time.

Q: Were you tempted to try and stay in the European bureau and at European embassies?

GUTIERREZ: I certainly considered it. I spoke Spanish, French and Portuguese, and had already served in Portugal and France. Spain might have been a possibility, or I could have tried to learn Italian or German to be assigned to Italy or Germany. But I came to the conclusion that I would have better opportunities for gaining additional responsibilities in Latin America. So I started looking at Latin American jobs. At that time I had gotten promoted to FS-1, so that allowed me to bid on some senior counselor jobs or even small DCM jobs. I had been lucky in Haiti to have been political section chief as an FS-3 and I had managed to do so because there were not enough bidders for the position -- few people wanted to serve in Haiti at that time. So I already had the experience of having led a political section.

One day, about a year before I was scheduled to depart, I received a call from Gene Scassa, the executive director of Inter-American affairs. Gene asked me if I was interested in going to Caracas as political counselor. This would have involved leaving Paris a few months early. It sounded like an opportunity to gain additional responsibility, to be a political counselor at an important South American post. So I talked to my family. My wife thought I was crazy to want to leave Paris.

Q: This is before the end of your tour?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, it would have meant leaving Paris a few months early. Our embassy in Caracas had lost its political counselor, and needed someone right away. I got permission to by Ambassador Curley, who was always very supportive, to apply for the job. The Inter-American Affairs bureau backed my candidacy (with my consent this time), and the ambassador-designate, a political appointee, interviewed me over the phone and backed me as well. Everything appeared ready for me to get assigned to Caracas. But just as they were about to assign me, the ambassador-designate ran into trouble with the Congress and withdrew his candidacy.

Q: Who was that?

GUTIERREZ: Eric Javits was his name, an attorney from New York and the nephew of Senator Jacob Javits. He later became an ambassador to a UN agency under President George W. Bush. The upshot was that with the departure of Javits, the assignment fell through, and to my family's relief, we stayed in Paris until the end of our tour.

Q: You stayed a third year.

GUTIERREZ: I stayed a third year and really enjoyed it.

Q: You know it is interesting listening to you and talking about your next assignment. I have the impression that some people in the Foreign Service simply want to go to certain places and don't really have enough eyes on their career. You seemed to always be thinking about the next challenging job and the next strategy or the next thing that will get you someplace you want to be in the system. Is that a fair statement?

GUTIERREZ: Maybe some of it is Monday-morning quarterbacking or rationalization after the fact. I never went into my Foreign Service career with a master plan, or anything like that. I joined the Foreign Service as an adventure initially, just glad to have such an exciting job that would take me around the world. After a few years, I did feel a need, as a minority Hispanic and Cuban American, to prove to myself and others that I could do anything any other officer could do.

Q: You were saying that something about being a minority, being a Cuban American. How do you think you were perceived as that? Do you think that it is something that you kind of had to prove something that others maybe didn't have to prove?

GUTIERREZ: Well, let me be clear. I was always welcomed by the vast majority of people I met in the Foreign Service, and I can't point to any overt incidents of racism or anything like that. But I did know that some people had commented at times about whether some of my assignments had been due to the fact that I was a minority, or implications I have an unfair advantage that others didn't have. Some Foreign Service officers were bitter about not reaching the highest levels, and a few blamed minorities and women for being "given" jobs that they should have had. Though I realized there was little I could do about people's prejudices, I tried to not give the slightest ammunition to the critics. I didn't want anyone to say that I didn't hold up my end, that I didn't give

150% at every job I had, and that I didn't produce like I was supposed to produce. I did have that inner fire in me to succeed and to excel, and to perform to the best of my ability. If I had to do it over, maybe I would have taken half a step back and smelled the roses a little bit more, but I think I always made time for my family and my kids, though I did keep some late hours. I did try to understand the culture of the Foreign Service, always talking to more serious officers and learning from their experiences.

Q: You didn't go to Venezuela as political counselor at that time; you spent your third year in Paris. What were you looking at as your next assignment?

GUTIERREZ: I decided there were better opportunities in Latin America. If I wanted to take the logical next step in my career, to serve as a political counselor at a larger post or as a deputy chief of mission in a small post, there were more opportunities in Latin America than in Europe at the time. I applied for the same job they had offered me three years before, in Panama. By 1990 the situation in Panama was markedly different, of course, after the U.S. intervention in 1989. I also applied to be DCM in Nassau, but I did not think I had much of a chance. The Nassau DCM job traditionally attracted from 90 to 100 applicants, since it did not require a foreign language. Gene Scassa, the Executive Director of the Inter-American affairs bureau, felt he owed me one, so to speak, for having agreed to go to Caracas when he called me. He said he would try to put me on a list of six or seven candidates that the bureau endorsed out of the list of 90 for Nassau. That list would then go to the U.S. Ambassador to the Bahamas, former Nevada Senator Chic Hecht. But I still did not believe I would get the job, although my odds had improved from being 1 of 90 to 1 of 7.

I didn't lobby for the job much, but I did ask Ambassador Curley, my ambassador in France, to call Ambassador Hecht in Nassau and recommend me. Ambassador Curley, always gracious, did so. Later I learned that the call had really impressed Ambassador Hecht, because Ambassador Curley was well regarded in the administration -- not everyone is named Ambassador to Paris. I know that some of the other people who bid on the job lobbied hard for the job, and Ambassador Hecht grew tired of their lobbying. I know that one candidate even got former Reagan administration officials to call Ambassador Hecht on behalf of their candidate. After a few weeks, Ambassador Hecht called me and to my surprise said that he had chosen me to be his DCM. I accepted, and my family and I prepared to go from Europe to the Caribbean, from a city of several million people to an island of 70,000, New Providence Island in the Bahamas, where Nassau is located.

Q: Interesting. It is the case, and I can attest to this, that it was a position, DCM Nassau, that was heavily bid, and many times strategically bid: people would say I will never get this, but why not put it in. I remember one time I put my name in for Nassau, and there were 105 on the list, something like that. So that is interesting. Was it worth going to?

GUTIERREZ: It was. It was a tremendous experience to be DCM in the Bahamas. You think of the Bahamas as a quiet, sleepy place for tourists, with palm trees and coconuts, beautiful beaches. It is all that and more, but at that time it was also a transit point for

most of the cocaine that was getting into the U.S.: over half of the cocaine that entered the U.S. was coming through Bahamian waters. The most important issue in the Bahamas was counter-narcotics. We had an operation there, still have it, called OPBAT, Operation Bahamas and Turks and Caicos. The U.S. had helicopters positioned in different Bahamian islands that would intercept the drug fast boats and follow them until others could stop them or arrest the perpetrators. Nassau, then, was not a traditional embassy, with a large State Department presence and a few representatives from other agencies. In Nassau there were only 17 State Department employees in the embassy out of a total of 150 Americans.

Q: As DCM were you the anti-drug coordinator for the embassy?

GUTIERREZ: I was, exactly. I coordinated the narcotics meetings. I don't remember if I had that formal title, but I did run the narcotics meetings every week.

Q: What did you think of being deputy chief of mission?

GUTIERREZ: Being Deputy Chief of Mission is the hardest job in the Foreign Service. I think it is difficult because you go from being "one of the guys," a colleague to most of your peers, to being someone who supervises them. Then you have to answer directly and daily to an ambassador. Coordinating those two relationships can be very difficult. The ambassador expects you to carry out his directives and his programs, and the rank and file expects you to represent them with the ambassador. This is difficult enough, but there's also the old Foreign Service saying, "A DCM gets none of the credit and all of the blame." If something goes right at post, the ambassador usually gets the credit. If there are problems, the DCM usually takes the blame. In addition, in a place like Nassau being DCM is especially difficult, because most of the people assigned to Nassau were from agencies that had little or no overseas or foreign policy experience.

Q: For example the ambassador.

GUTIERREZ: Let me address the ambassador a little later. In Nassau, the U.S. has a pre-clearance center at the airport, where travelers to the U.S. can be pre-cleared by U.S. Immigration and Customs before they arrive in the U.S. in Nassau. Since U.S. Immigration and Customs agents operate domestically, virtually none had ever served overseas or in a U.S. embassy. In the case of Nassau, many of our Immigration and Customs officers were sent to the Bahamas as something of a reward after distinguished service elsewhere. But that service often included postings at the U.S.-Mexico border, at places like Calexico and San Diego near Tijuana, or on the border patrol looking for migrants in the Arizona desert and taking them into custody. After such challenging and dangerous positions where they faced adverse conditions and danger, they were expected to turn into diplomats in the Bahamas. It was not the fault of the Immigration or Customs folks -- they received little or no training on how embassies operate before being deployed. The result was that we had a number of incidents with the Immigration, less so the Customs people, of being somewhat rough with the passengers as they were trying to get on a plane to the States. Often these incidents made it into the local press.

Q: Were these people coming from other countries passing through the Bahamas, or were they trying to get in illegally?

GUTIERREZ: We had a bit of everything. In the Bahamas there had been a significant exodus of Haitians in recent years. Many Haitians who tried to reach the U.S. by boat often did not make it all the way to the U.S. and landed and settled in the Bahamas. At one point, as much as a third of the population of the islands was made up of Haitians. There were also some Cubans who were also using the Bahamas as a stepping stone to get into the U.S. Occasionally there were Europeans or Middle Easterners who were trying to get in, but they were more of a rarity.

Another big problem for a DCM in Nassau is how to deal with nine or ten U.S. Government agencies, many of which have no overseas experience, and different rules and regulations. It is the DCM's job to ensure equitable treatment for U.S. employees and no favoritism for any agencies. This is hard to do when some agencies, like DEA, have considerable money and are willing to spend it on their people, while other agencies do not and cannot. If it had been up to DEA, all of their agents would live in palatial mansions by the ocean with a swimming pool. I'm sure many DEA agents -- who fought the drug wars and often risked their lives -- deserved it. Other agencies, like the Immigration Service, had virtually no money for their officers. They provided no amenities or special funding for living overseas, expecting their people to live on the local economy as if they lived in a U.S. city. The typical Immigration officer often lived in a Spartan one-bedroom apartment in a high rise with no view of the ocean. It was my job and the job of the Mission Housing Board to adopt an equitable housing policy for all. We tried to make the Immigration and Customs people, many of whom lived close to their job at the airport and had little contact with other Embassy personnel, feel like they were a part of the U.S. Mission.

Perhaps the hardest part of a DCM's job is to deal with personnel and family issues. In Nassau we had members of the U.S. Mission who failed drug tests, got in fights with their neighbors, had alcohol problems, and there were nasty divorces and accusations of child abuse. As DCM, I had to deal with all the family issues and personal issues, so alcoholism, spousal abuse, everything came across my desk.

Q: How did your own family like Nassau?

GUTIERREZ: Someone described the Bahamas as a place with first-world glitz and third-world services. It is a beautiful place for a vacation. If you like water sports and the ocean, there is no better place. But working as DCM to Nassau, with all the drug operations and management issues was no vacation. Crime was a big problem: three or four houses adjacent to the DCM's residence were robbed while I was there. Even the Ambassador's stereo was stolen from his residence, probably by construction workers. We had a policeman assigned to our house who was more of a deterrent than anything else. All in all, my family and I enjoyed it: it was a challenging job in a beautiful country.

We met many good, dedicated folks from different agencies, and made lasting friendships.

Q: All these different agencies was it a fairly cohesive embassy?

GUTIERREZ: Not as much as it could have been. Morale was generally low, especially with the folks who had never served overseas. That was a big surprise for me, because you figure you are in the Bahamas, a place where most people would love to go, but it was not to be.

Q: San Jose syndrome or the Paris syndrome.

GUTIERREZ: Yes -- often morale is lower at some of the nicer posts. In Paris, a big part of the problem was the language. Many people didn't speak French, and they preferred to live in the American compound rather than living in French society.

Q: But they went there thinking they would be very happy…

GUTIERREZ: Maybe some of them did. Some folks assigned to the Bahamas expected they would have first-class housing with an ocean view, a pool and a jet ski tied to the dock. When it didn't turn out to be quite that, many were not happy. In addition, if you were a Customs or Immigration officer and you are living in an apartment and somebody from another agency is living in a mansion, that of course leads to finger pointing and charges of favoritism. Then, when you try to enforce equitable housing for all, the haves resent you for trying to bring them down to the level of the have-nots. Some of the agency representatives had definite ideas of where their people should live, and could not understand that they had to adhere to a mission-wide housing policy. We were always trying to get everybody on the same sheet of music. It was a challenge, to say the least.

Then there was the problem of American prisoners in Bahamian jails. For many years the U.S. had urged Bahamian Prime Minister Lynden O. Pindling to crack down on narco-trafficking, with mixed results. Drug traffickers and cartel representatives often found the Bahamas, with its 700 islands, an ideal springboard to bring drugs to the U.S. Things got so bad by the late 1970's that Carlos Lehder, a Colombian member of the Medellín cartel, essentially took over a Bahamian island, built an airstrip, and ran drug operations to the U.S. from his island base.

Q: Was he caught in Colombia or there?

GUTIERREZ: Finally Pindling agreed to work with the U.S. and to go after him, and his assets were seized and island operations were shut down in 1982. Lehder fled to Colombia, but was eventually arrested and extradited to the U.S.

Q: How many years were you there?

GUTIERREZ: I was in the Bahamas three years, from 1990 to 1993.

To finish the story, in the 1980's we pressured the Bahamians to get tough on drugs, and eventually they did. The result of the get-tough policy was that many American citizens began to be arrested by Bahamian authorities on narcotics charges. When I was in the Bahamas we had as many as 90 Americans in Bahamian jails. The irony was that many of the Congressmen who had said to us in the 1980's, "You have to get the Bahamians to get tough on drugs," were now saying, "You have to get my constituent out of jail."

The Congressmen and families of the prisoners claimed that the U.S. citizens in Bahamian jails were held in harsh or cruel conditions. Many of these prisoners had been "mules," people who got caught transporting drugs through Bahamian airports. Some were pilots who had had to ditch doing a drug operation. Others were traffickers. The Bureau of Consular Affairs at State urged the Embassy to be very proactive and to try to improve the conditions of the American prisoners. When we tried to get the Bahamian Government to improve prison conditions, they pointed out that American prisoners were treated no worse and no better than Bahamian or any other prisoners. What we wound up doing was to start buying vitamins and water for the American prisoners to ensure they had ample supplies of water and vitamins, and to increase our visits to them and carry messages from their relatives and friends. Then the Bahamians were not happy, because the Bahamian prisoners complained that the Americans were being treated better than they were. Eventually we negotiated a prisoner exchange agreement with the Bahamas, whereby many Americans were able to serve out their sentences in U.S. jails.

Q: Not that that is any panacea. I should think that there must have been a lot of Congressional interest.

GUTIERREZ: Lots of Congressional interest, but not too many Congressional visits. I guess any Congressman who would visit the Bahamas would be accused of going on a junket at taxpayer expense. We did get lots of phone calls from Congressmen.

Q: Did you have the same ambassador for three years?

GUTIERREZ: Ambassador Hecht left after the election of President Clinton. For the last four months I was there I was chargé d'affaires.

Q: How was your relationship with Ambassador Hecht?

GUTIERREZ: We got along very well. Ambassador Hecht was a very interesting person. He was a self-made man from Missouri who had moved out to Nevada and became quite well-to-do through hard work. He began to dabble in local politics, and served in the Nevada state senate. In 1982 he was elected to the U.S. Senate, but was defeated in 1988 in his attempt for re-elections. President Bush (41) then made him Ambassador to the Bahamas.

Ambassador Hecht, who had been an army intelligence officer, had a sharp political sense, and was very personable. He sometimes had a problem communicating what he

wanted to say. I remember before he got to the Bahamas during his confirmation hearing he received press criticism for some statements he had made. Consequently, he was very suspicious of the press. He never wanted to meet with reporters.

Q: Was it a problem of talking points or just, that he just couldn't stay within the confines of the things he should say and just popped off or what, snapping that way?

GUTIERREZ: He liked to speak off the cuff, and occasionally he made statements that the press labeled as gaffes. He also was not used to working for the U.S. Government and its complicated bureaucracy. Part of my job was to convey the ambassador's wishes to the Country Team in a way that was more understandable and that took into account government procedures and regulations.

That said, as I said previously, Ambassador Hecht was very personable, and he got along very well with the Bahamians, especially on a one-on-one basis. As a former U.S. Senator, he could talk to the Prime Minister politician to politician. They understood each other very well. Ambassador Hecht paid a lot of attention to counter-narcotics, and defended U.S. interests very well.

Q: Did he leave the running of the embassy to you?

GUTIERREZ: He was more interested in dealing with Washington and the Bahamians than running the embassy, so he gave me a lot of leeway. I briefed him on everything I did. He preferred to concentrate on economics and counter-narcotics, and let me deal with administrative matters. At the same time, if we needed Ambassador Hecht to make a policy point to Washington, he could pick up a phone and talk to Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole and his good friends in Congress and the Administration when necessary.

As it happened, two important events took place in the Bahamas while he happened to be traveling in the U.S. and I was chargé. The first was the passage of Hurricane Andrew in August 1992. Hurricanes are pretty common in the Bahamas, and usually no one gets too excited in Washington about them. But before I left Washington, I was warned by the folks who handle evacuations in the State Department that they had been too lenient in the past in agreeing to the departure of personnel because of hurricanes. I was told not to ask for the evacuation of personnel from post just because a hurricane was approaching. Apparently there had been a couple of cases when the Department agreed to the evacuation of personnel as hurricanes approached, and then at the last minute the hurricane had veered in a different direction, and the State Department had spent considerable money for naught. So my instructions were clear: don't ask for the evacuation of personnel, because the Department will not agree to do so.

I didn't think too much about this, thinking that the odds that a hurricane would hit or come close to an island of 21 miles (length) by 7 miles (width) while I served there were infinitesimally slim. But sure enough, in mid-August 1992, Hurricane Andrew formed in the middle of the Atlantic and started moving west. At first, it was in the middle of the Atlantic about the same latitude as Nassau. Again, the odds that it would continue along

the same latitude seemed slim to me: how many hurricanes move in a straight line? Well, against all odds, every day it kept getting closer and closer and moving on a straight line. It started as a category three and then became a category four. At this time, with the hurricane still a few days away, we started our preparations in case it continued our way. We had a hurricane plan under which Mission personnel would go to designated shelters. Once we started the preparations, some people started getting nervous. Some of the people from non-State agencies just wanted to leave. The Department's position was that people could leave at their own expense, but the Department would not pay for an evacuation until it gave us the authorization. Although I had been warned not to do so, I did ask officially for the Department's authorized evacuation of non-essential personnel. By then some people decided to leave on their own. One particular agency, unbeknownst to me, sent a plane to take their people out. This was technically a violation of the Mission's policy -- we could not allow one agency to evacuate only its personnel while others, including American tourists, were left behind. This policy was set after the Lockerbie incident, where there had been accusations that the State Department had warned some of its employees of a possible terrorist incident, while ordinary Americans had not been informed. Our policy then was "no double standard": U.S. diplomats could not have any unfair advantage over the general American tourist population.

Q: In terms of information.

GUTIERREZ: In terms of information or in terms of evacuation. If we agreed to evacuate Mission personnel, we had to arrange the evacuation of all the tourists in the Bahamas which is an impossible task, since hundreds of thousands of Americans visit the Bahamas every year. As the hurricane drew closer, I spent most of a night on the phone with the State Department trying to get Washington to agree to an evacuation of dependents. Finally, late at night they agreed for authorized departure for dependents and non-official personnel from the Mission. But by the time the order arrived, the airport was closing down, so there was nothing we could do. We had to hunker down and face category 4 or 5 Andrew that was coming our way in 24 hours. So we ordered people to their designated shelters.

Q: Where were the shelters?

GUTIERREZ: The shelters were the larger residences. The embassy was one of the shelters. The embassy building was a very sturdy concrete building. We had about 40 or 50 people who left their homes and came to the embassy. I moved with my wife and kids and cat to my office, and we slept there that night.

Fortunately, Andrew did not hit New Providence Island frontally, but it passed 30 miles to the north. Still, there was considerable damage, a lot of trees and electrical wires down. Luckily nobody in the U.S. Mission was hurt, and there was no major damage to Embassy residences. But other islands in the Bahamas were very hard hit.

Q: How did you handle the issue of the agency that sent a plane for its people afterwards?

GUTIERREZ: I communicated what had happened to the State Department. I asked the agency head to come to my office and gave them a verbal reprimand, but I had no authority to do anything more. The Department did not wish to pursue it further. At the end of the day, we all decided to move on.

Q: It is interesting the issue the way you described it because it is clear that a DCM who becomes a charge doesn't have quite the real authority the ambassador has. These situations can arise when you would like to be able to do something in a very definitive way but you don't quite have enough authority to do it.

GUTIERREZ: Right. And to be totally honest, although I didn't agree with the offending agency's actions, I understood why they did what they did. Though these people were, yes, violating a Mission directive, at the same time they were trying to "save" their own people.

Q: Did it cause problems in other parts of the embassy or did they just say oh these people always have the assets.

GUTIERREZ: After seeing all the damage Andrew caused in other Bahamian islands and in South Florida, most folks were euphoric that we had escaped major damage in Nassau. Some people were upset, but had there been considerable damage and casualties, then there would have been more of a reaction.

Q: You said there were two things. That was the first.

GUTIERREZ: The other event took place a few days before Andrew struck. There was an election in August of 1992 in the Bahamas that resulted in an Opposition victory for the first time since the Bahamas obtained its independence in 1973. Prime Minister Pindling, considered by some to be the father, the George Washington of the Bahamas, had been defeated. Again, I was chargé when it happened. That was a very interesting and exciting time. Since Pindling's PLP party had won every election since Independence, almost no one expected an Opposition victory. When the returns started coming in, there seemed to be some hesitation on the part of the authorities to fully announce the results. At the end of the day, the Opposition's victory was announced and we did not have to act or pronounce ourselves during the vote count.

Q: How radical of an opposition was it?

GUTIERREZ: The opposition was more conservative than the PLP, Pindling's party. It was a pro-business group. At first the opposition consisted of the old, white Bahamian elite, but in recent years it had attracted many followers as many Bahamians became tired of Pindling's policies. They also had an excellent candidate for Prime Minister. Hubert Ingraham was very attractive figure, a former PLP official who had left the party, and had defeated Pindling at his own game by campaigning throughout the islands as a man of the

people. That said, the results had not been expected in Nassau or Washington. No one had expected Pindling to lose.

Q: Were you involved in the political reporting very much as DCM?

GUTIERREZ: When I took the DCM course, one of the things they preached to us was, "If you are a political officer throw away your typewriter." This was, of course, before computers, I guess. So as a political cone officer, I was very conscious not to try to duplicate the efforts of the political section or any other section. Believe me, there was enough to do with keeping up with the ambassador, fighting the drug wars, working on post morale, and managing the internal workings of the Mission to keep me occupied.

Q: Did the ambassador try to reach the diplomatic community, the American diplomatic community? Was he a touchy feely kind of guy, or did he just leave that to you?

GUTIERREZ: He was very personable, very effective one on one and with small groups, but he did not feel comfortable hosting a town meeting, or hosting large receptions, except the Fourth of July, of course. My wife and I tried to supplement what he did by hosting a number of events at the DCM Residence.

Q: Did you have a very formal relationship? Did you call him Mr. Ambassador?

GUTIERREZ: I always called him Mr. Ambassador.

Q: Even privately.

GUTIERREZ: It just felt right to me to call him Mr. Ambassador.

Q: So you were out in the Bahamas for three years. Hurricane Andrew, an election, managing up and managing down, a lot of work and drug work especially. What were you thinking about your next stop?

GUTIERREZ: As I was ending my tour in the Bahamas, I learned I had been promoted to the Senior Foreign Service. I felt very proud to have gotten this far. I thought a second DCM position would be the next logical step, so I bid on DCM positions in Venezuela and Argentina, but I was not selected for either one of them.

Q: This was 1993?

GUTIERREZ: 1993. After not being chosen for the DCM positions, I didn't know exactly what to do next, but soon thereafter I received a telegram from State saying that I had been selected to be a member of the 36th Senior Seminar, and that I should report to the Foreign Service Institute in September. I had not asked to be in the Senior Seminar. Throughout my career, my instinct was always to go on to the next great challenge and more important assignment rather than to take advantage of training opportunities. Many "water walkers" in the Service had told me to forget about training, just to go on to the

next assignment, or risk being left behind by our more ambitious colleagues. But the more I thought about it, the more I began to like the idea of spending a year at the Senior Seminar. After all, it was the most prestigious training assignment in the State Department. I had not attended the National War College, as many of my colleagues, had. Foreign Service officers who attended the War College had told me how much they had enjoyed it. I had just been promoted to the Senior Foreign Service, so I could probably afford a year of training without damage to my career. So I decided to accept the invitation. Ironically, after I accepted, I received two possible job offers. The first was from Bob Gelbard, who was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (PDAS) in ARA asking me if I wanted to be DCM in El Salvador, which of course at that time was a high-profile post. I thought about it long and hard, but by then I was just committed to doing the Senior Seminar. So I said thank you, but no.

Q: To Bob Gelbard. Saying no to Bob Gelbard was a challenge.

GUTIERREZ: He was a powerful guy with a long memory, so I wondered if doing so would effectively end my career! Then I got another call from a prospective ambassador asking me if I was interested in being DCM in Nicaragua, and I said no thank you. So that was that. I accepted the invitation to the Senior Seminar. So Miriam, the kids and I went back to Washington after six years overseas.

The Senior Seminar was quite an experience. At the time it was deemed "The senior executive training program in the Department of State." It was a very interesting time: it was the beginning of the Clinton Administration.

The way the program worked was to essentially put the students in charge of creating their own schedule for a nine-month period, with some guidance from a senior ambassador who ran the course. We organized our own trips and scheduled speakers. We had a tremendous amount of interesting speakers. People like Dick Cheney, George Shultz, Patricia Ireland, the president of the National Organization for Women, Senator Bill Bradley, Marian Wright Edelman, others. We were exposed to all kinds of issues, domestic and international.

Q: About the Senior Seminar how many people were in it? Besides the State Department there were some other agencies I imagine. Where did you meet? What was the equipment like?

GUTIERREZ: There were 30 of us, 15 State Department and 15 from other U.S. Government agencies including one each from the four military branches and the Coast Guard. We had people from EPA, AID, the FBI, and other agencies. The idea was for the seminarians to study important issues the U.S. was facing and to get reconnected to the country we represented. We traveled around the U.S. talking to farmers, teachers, academics, and normal, everyday people.

Q: What was your particular interest in the seminar? What did you want to do?

GUTIERREZ: For me, the Seminar was a godsend. I had arrived in the United States at age 11, and the U.S. I knew was pretty much the South and parts of the East Coast of the United States. I had never gotten to know the western part of the United States, so it was a great opportunity for me to connect to other parts of the U.S. and to get involved in issues that I didn't ordinarily deal with in the Foreign Service. At the end of the day, what I learned in the Seminar allowed me to be a better representative of the United States.

In addition, it was a great opportunity to network and compare notes with 29 colleagues who were pretty much at the same stage of our careers, and to get to know a lot about our business, the United States and the issues of the day. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Among other things, we went to Chesapeake Bay to talk to "watermen" about the problems with pollution in the bay. We went to Boston Harbor to check out the pollution in the bay. We jumped off a 30-foot tower at Fort Benning for the U.S. Army infantry parachute training. We spoke to former Secretary of State George Shultz in Palo Alto, California. We went to Brooklyn to see a school in a low-income community that was sending many of its graduates to college. We traveled to New Mexico to talk to the laboratories that are working on artificial life forms. It was just a fascinating year.

Q: It is really a shame the Senior Seminar has disappeared. I guess it was very costly.

GUTIERREZ: I agree, it's a shame current Foreign Service Officers cannot benefit from it like I did. Although the Seminar had been around over four decades, apparently the powers that be at the time did not believe we should be training an "elite" group.

Q: Did you do any national security studies when you were in the Senior Seminar?

GUTIERREZ: Not really -- it was not structured in that way. We were given a month to pursue individual projects. I arranged to work for a month in the office of then-Congressman Robert Menendez of New Jersey. I had never worked in Congress nor had much exposure to what goes on in a Congressional office. Working in Congressman Menendez's office was a very useful and beneficial experience to me in my future career.

Q: Did you know Menendez before?

GUTIERREZ: I had not met him, but I knew people who had worked for him. So I wrote him a letter offering my services for a month and he agreed. I spent a month working for him with his staff in his Congressional office. In addition to working in his office, he invited me to travel with him to his district in New Jersey in Hudson County. I spent a day with him "pressing the flesh," going to all his appearances in Union City and Newark, having dinner at an ethnic restaurant with some of his constituents. In Washington I worked on proposed legislation, attended many hearings and other meetings in Capitol Hill. It was fascinating.

Q: Did you go out on a Cuban limb at all? I mean positions on Cuba or anything?

GUTIERREZ: Well his positions on Cuba are not too different from my own. But on Latin America he was at odds with some of the traditional positions of the State Department. On personnel issues, he criticized the State Department quite a bit for its lack of diversity. I worked on a bill that he had co-authored that would have earmarked money for Latin America specifically on the State budget, sort of like Africa has right now with the AGOA program, which earmarks money for Africa every year. Menendez wanted to do the same thing for Latin America but he never got sufficient support for it to get the bill passed.

Q: How did you work on that/ did you lobby around Congress?

GUTIERREZ: There were "Dear Colleague" letters we had to prepare. He had some draft legislation that we looked at. We debated over the figures that would be needed for aid to Latin America. I attended a number of meetings to discuss the project.

Q: This time you were living in your own house back in the States. Do you have a house?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, we have a house we bought in 1985 in Alexandria. We went back to the house when we returned from the Bahamas in 1993. My oldest daughter, Alicia, was able to graduate from a U.S. high school, Thomas Edison, and then started college at the College of William & Mary.

When I completed the Senior Seminar in 1994, I did not yet have an assignment. Many of my colleagues knew exactly what they were going to be doing after the Senior Seminar, but I was one of the last ones to be assigned. Miriam and I had decided to stay in the U.S. so Alicia could finish high school, so I was only interested in domestic assignments. The Latin America bureau didn't have any openings for office directors at that time, although they said they would consider me if one opened up.

Q: So you wanted a domestic assignment.

GUTIERREZ: We wanted to stay in Washington so Alicia could finish her senior year. Since there were no positions in ARA, Alec Watson, Assistant Secretary for Inter-American affairs, told me that if push came to shove he would assign me temporarily to the Office of the Summit of the Americas. President Clinton had invited the leaders of the Hemisphere...

Q: Tony Gillespie.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, Tony Gillespie was in charge of that office, and I would be working as his deputy. But as it happened, about a month before the seminar ended, Ambassador Bob Pastorino, who had been ambassador to the Dominican Republic, decided to retire, and he was scheduled to be Director of the Office of Policy Planning Coordination and Press. When he retired, I was offered the job and I accepted. So I went back to the Latin America bureau as the director of policy planning coordination and press because we had merged the press office with the policy planning office.

Q: That is a difficult office isn't it? I mean there is lots of paper that goes through that office.

GUTIERREZ: Correct. I was following in the steps of some of our more distinguished diplomats like Luigi Einaudi and Myles Frechette and others as PPC Director. The office is a bit of an anomaly because it is an office that is in a regional bureau, but it is not responsible for any real estate as far as any country in the Hemisphere. So it is a sort of functional office that covers all the global issues, counter narcotics, terrorism, human rights, labor, pol-mil, as well as coordinating tasks like Congressional reports, the budget, and speech writing. They were an odd collection of issues that nobody else wanted or that didn't fit anywhere else. So "policy planning" was a bit of a misnomer. Nobody had time to plan or to look ahead. We were reactive to the issue du jour. Do we sell F-16s to Chile and thereby end a 26 year policy of not selling arms to Latin America? Do we acquiesce in the decertification of Mexico for not cooperating with U.S. drug programs? These were the kinds of issues that we had to decide.

Q: The answers are yes and no.

GUTIERREZ: Well it is funny because Alec Watson was…

Q: With Chile they got the F-16s and Mexico was not decertified.

GUTIERREZ…was against it (selling of F-16s) at first but his successor, Jeff Davidow, came in 1995 and he felt differently. He went along with the rest of the Clinton Administration and the Congress and approved the sale.

Q: How did you like being back at the bureau?

GUTIERREZ: Well it was interesting and frustrating at the same time. There were a lot of things happening at that time. We had a Cuba migration crisis when Castro decided to tell everybody that wanted to leave Cuba that they were free to leave. We had the intervention in Haiti in '95 to restore Aristide. The bureau had lost some clout in the building because the Clinton Administration had given away these issues to special envoys.

Q: Well Haiti was dealt up to the seventh floor, Jim Dobbins at that time.

GUTIERREZ: Maybe I shouldn't say that because I know you were a special envoy for Haiti …

Q: No because when I had the position it came back to the bureau, but there was so much interest I guess that for some reason it went up to the seventh floor and it got out of the bureau. When I was there it came back under Jeff was there at that point.

GUTIERREZ: Right. And Cuba we had a special coordinator, Richard Nuccio. It seemed like the bureau was not as big a player in the building as it used to be. But it was a very interesting time as usual.

Q: Did you like being an office director?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. I enjoyed the management challenge and the fact you had to manage up and down. You had to know when to get your deputy assistant secretary involved, when to get the assistant secretary involved, how to deal with other agencies. Since I had a broad, hemisphere-wide perspective, I was the only office director invited to the daily meeting between the Assistant Secretary and his deputies. I also got to organize a number of chiefs of mission conferences.

We were all involved with the Summit of the Americas in 1994, which was a new concept and a way of following up on issues. Up to that time, a lot of these hemisphere meetings were nothing more than photo ops. And for the first time there was a summit that launched a process to follow up on issues in a meaningful way.

Q: this is tape 4, Lino Gutierrez, October 26, 2007. Lino when we left off you were in PPC. What does PPC stand for?

GUTIERREZ: It stands for policy planning coordination, but at that point it was called PPCP. In the bureau of Inter-American affairs, now Western Hemisphere affairs, there had been periodic attempts to merge a few offices. There had always been talk of merging the regional political office with the regional economic office, for example. Prior to my arrival, the Bureau had merged the press office with PPC, the traditional policy planning and coordination office. So it became PPCP for the time I was there, policy planning coordination and press.

Q: What was the time you were there? When did you start?

GUTIERREZ: I started in 1994 right after the Senior Seminar, in the summer of 1994. I left in December of 1996, so I was in that office for two and a half years.

Q: We began to talk about the Summit of the Americas. Was that the first big project you undertook?

GUTIERREZ: It was. When I arrived in the office, negotiations were already underway both with the Latin American countries and within the United States Government on the Summit of the Americas. The idea, as I was saying before, was to start a process, an ongoing process that would advance a number of issues in the Hemisphere. These included issues like anti corruption, human rights, and many others. For the first time, issues like energy were being tackled at a hemisphere level. And things that had never been discussed before, like the rights of women and the rights of indigenous groups. In all, there were about 28 initiatives that required a great deal of negotiation. The Summit set some goals that were very ambitious. You will recall that this was the first time that

the Free Trade Area of the Americas, FTAA, was discussed. Everyone was surprised when the leaders of the Hemisphere agreed to complete FTAA by 2005, an extremely ambitious goal. Up to that point, I believe the APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Community) countries had agreed that they would have a free trade area in Asia by 2025. So the leaders of the Hemisphere -- and it should be noted that the impetus came from Latin America more than the United States -- decided to do it by 2005. That required a tremendous amount of negotiations, not only with the other 33 countries of the Hemisphere, but within the U.S. Government, including the departments of Agriculture, Justice, the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and others.

Q: The summit coordinator was Ambassador Tony Gillespie.

GUTIERREZ: Right. Exactly.

Q: Did you have to work closely with him?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. Tony was an old friend, and I had worked closely with him in the ARA bureau and in Grenada. I had also worked with Rich Brown, who was his deputy, in Central American Affairs and in Haiti. We worked very closely, and as the time drew nearer for the summit, which was supposed to take place in Miami in December of 1994, a number of the issues had bogged down, endangering the Summit. It was decided to call a preparatory meeting, I believe in November, at Airlie House, a couple of hours from Washington DC. Those of us working on the Summit deployed to Airlie House with representatives from all 34 countries that would be attending the Summit. Alec Watson and Richard Feinberg of the NSC were there, and I was there pretty much to carry out their instructions and to negotiate with the other countries to advance these initiatives. I worked especially closely on the anti-corruption initiative. At that point Venezuela was a big supporter, so we worked on Venezuela to be as ambitious on anti-corruption as they could.

Q: Describe that setting if you could a little bit. Airlie House is an interesting venue. It strikes me as it might have been quite small for that many people.

GUTIERREZ: It worked pretty well. There was a plenary room, and the delegates had individual cabins. These weren't very big delegations. Some countries sent only one representative, particularly the Caribbean countries. Others sent more, especially Brazil and Mexico. But yes, it was a bit crowded at times, but it was a nice setting and it was a good way to get away from Washington or the OAS.

Q: This is out in rural Virginia.

GUTIERREZ: Rural Virginia, in Warrenton.

Q: How long did that preparatory conference last?

GUTIERREZ: As I recall it lasted three or four days. By the end with Alec and Richard Feinberg in the room sometimes, we were able to get approval to a number of initiatives. So a lot of progress was made at Airlie House and we were ready for the Summit.

Q: Did you begin with a draft document and then just try to get them to sign on, or how did you do the negotiations?

GUTIERREZ: Well, there were a number of documents. There was, as I recall, an exhortatory statement, or "chapeau," and then an action plan, so there were two separate negotiations. The action plan was where the rubber met the road, because it committed governments to do certain things by certain times. The first one which I believe was called the Declaration of Principles was mostly rhetorical. But the second one was where the tough negotiations took place.

Q: Was any country particularly helpful, lead countries there that were kind of allied with us and tried to get this thing done?

GUTIERREZ: That depended on the issue. As I said, on anti-corruption Venezuela was a big help. In some areas, Mexico would be of help, in others, Brazil. I don't think Brazil was very enthusiastic about the whole process but they didn't want to be left out of it either. Argentina was very helpful in a number of initiatives. In some areas like energy, Canada, Mexico, and Venezuela were the big players of course, and the ones whose agreement we had to secure.

Q: So going into the conference in December the big issues were substantially resolved.

GUTIERREZ: By the time the Summit began in Miami the big issues were pretty much resolved. Of course, free trade being the biggest of all. That was the sound bite for the Summit: nations of the hemisphere agreed to have free trade by 2005. I did not go to the Summit myself, but I sent members of my office. Everything went very well. President Clinton went down to Miami, and it was quite a moment. For the first time in memory, of the 34 leaders in the Hemisphere, not one was a military officer. Not one had reached power through means other than a free election.

Q: Basically every country but Cuba was a democracy.

GUTIERREZ: Cuba was not invited. Only members of the democratic club could attend. This was a time soon after the Berlin Wall had fallen, Soviet domination in Eastern Europe had ended, and South Africa had changed, so there was considerable euphoria in the room. The world had changed; the Cold War was over. The era of coups and military governments was over: no more civil wars, no more leftist guerrillas attacking established governments.

Q: I recall that coming out of the Summit the initiative for a free trade agreement in the Americas by the end of 2005 really became the template for our policy. If you had to say what is our policy, that is really what it was. Would you agree with that?

GUTIERREZ: I would. Even today…

Q: For years.

GUTIERREZ… I would say that the blueprint for Latin America for development progress is still free trade. We made a lot of progress. We didn't make it by 2005 because the countries of MERCOSUR decided at some point that they would not sign the agreement unless the United States lowered its agricultural subsidies. But at the same time, today 2/3 of the Hemisphere is under some kind of free trade umbrella. So we have advanced quite a bit. Eventually I think that dream will happen: free trade from Alaska to Argentina.

Q: After the Summit of the Americas did you have other big issues that you were tackling in PPC?

GUTIERREZ: There were a number of issues. There was the whole question of selling F-16s to Chile. The traditional policy of the bureau had been not to allow sales of sophisticated weapons to nations in the Hemisphere. I think the reasons were very well intentioned. These were fragile countries that sometimes engaged in arms races, so why contribute to that kind of dynamic? That was the thinking in the Inter-American Affairs bureau. (Assistant Secretary Alec) Watson was somebody who reflected that kind of thinking. But times had changed, and attitudes as well, not only in Latin America but also in the United States. Chile had undergone an impressive transition from a dictatorship to a democratic nation. They had solved their civilian-military dynamic. Chile was eager to buy F-16s for their legitimate defense.

Q: I remember that was related to a prior sale of A-4 aircraft and technology to Argentina was it not?

GUTIERREZ: True, but the A-4s had been there a long time, because in 1982 in the Falkland/Malvinas war, it was the Argentine A-4s that helped sink some British ships at that time.

Q: I think it had something to do with some upgraded technology or something.

GUTIERREZ: It could have been, but the F-16 sale represented a quantum leap. We were getting a lot of pressure from Congress. Senator Helms wrote a letter to the Secretary supporting the sale; the letter was signed by most of the Senate and a large part of the House. To no one's surprise, the Defense Department wanted to go ahead with the sale. A number of our commercial entities, particularly Lockheed Martin, had a lot at stake on this decision. When Jeff Davidow became Assistant Secretary, he took a whole different approach to the whole thing. He believed that Chile was a mature country that could handle this sale and should be able to purchase U.S. F-16s. So the bureau's position shifted, and we went ahead and supported the sale.

Q: The department swung Jeff on that?

GUTIERREZ: I don't know if Jeff was reading other tea leaves in the upper echelons of the Department, but this was under a Democratic administration.

Q: Were there other issues that you can recall besides that?

GUTIERREZ: Of course the whole inter-agency certification process was always a battle royal within the administration, whether to decertify certain countries for not cooperating on counter narcotics. All these debates took place with INL, the Justice Department the Pentagon and others in the administration. We often tried to negotiate with other bureaus to try to come up with a unified State Department position vis-à-vis the other agencies, but it was not always easy. I recall there was a big effort at one point to decertify Mexico, but we successfully defeated it. When Ernesto Samper was elected President of Colombia, he was found to have ties with narcotics groups. We decided to decertify Colombia and to have nothing to do with Samper.

Q: He was personally decertified.

GUTIERREZ: He was personally decertified but we continued some programs with the rank and file police and military.

Q: His visa was revoked, as I recall.

GUTIERREZ: It was. ARA Principal Deputy Mike Skol and INL Principal Deputy Cris Arcos had met with him when he was a candidate and laid down a couple of markers, but apparently Samper did not listen, and he received money from the cartels during the campaign.

Q: You know, I have worked with both Alec Watson and Jeff Davidow, the two secretaries you referred to, both very good men and great professionals. Did you notice any particular difference in their style of running the bureau?

GUTIERREZ: I think Alec was a more traditional diplomat, a true Latin Americanist. He had served in Brazil, Colombia, Bolivia and Peru, among others. He had been ambassador to Peru and DCM in Brazil. He believed U.S. Latin America policy should center on our relations with the big countries in South America. He was less interested in small country issues that made a big splash in the press, such as Haiti and Cuba. Jeff had served in Europe and Africa, and was more of a globalist.

Q: In fact Watson dealt Haiti away to the Seventh floor to a special coordinator I think.

GUTIERREZ: There was certainly an inclination by the Clinton administration to use special envoys in different parts of the world, and Haiti was one of the places where they wanted to name a special envoy. They also appointed Rick Nuccio as a special envoy for

Cuba, not necessarily to deal with the Cubans on the island, but certainly to deal with Miami and the exile community. I think Alec went along with that division of labor.

Q: You mentioned that Watson might have been more inclined to pay attention to some of the big countries. I suppose actually you could consider two ways of looking at the region in that respect. One way would be to rely on good relationships with key big countries and let those countries essentially organize the regions. The other is to build almost I shouldn't say equal relationships but lots of relationships all over the place and put a lot of, pay a lot of attention to those relationships. Which approach would be better?

GUTIERREZ: I believe in the second approach. I just don't believe most countries want to be under anybody's sphere of influence, be it Brazil's or Mexico's or Argentina's. We need to have good relations with everybody. There have been times where we have worked very closely, for example with the MERCOSUR countries. I remember that when there was a coup attempt in Paraguay against President Wasmosy, we worked very closely with Brazil, but we didn't completely let them take the lead. There were some who would have preferred that we work through Brazil. We certainly coordinated our efforts, but we played as important a role in solving the crisis as the Brazilians. I remember Wasmosy hid out in Ambassador Service's residence for a time. We made calls from Washington and from the Embassy to all our contacts in Paraguay urging them not to support the coup and to support President Wasmosy. Our efforts were successful, and the attempted coup was beaten back. In these situations, I don't think the United States should abdicate responsibility or influence to other countries -- we can be as effective as anyone, and our words and actions carry considerable weight. At the same time, we can work with the realities of the situation. One reality is that Paraguay is very important to Brazil, very important to Argentina. It is a neighboring country to them, so we worked with them as equal partners in this situation, but we did not step back and let them handle the situation by themselves.

Q: Alec probably would have done the same thing.

GUTIERREZ: Probably. You will recall that Alec was picked when the original nominee for assistant secretary, Mario Baeza, a political appointee, had run into problems in his confirmation, and his nomination was withdrawn. Alec was supposed to be Ambassador to Brazil, and he very much wanted to go. He had packed his bags, but then he was told to stay behind and become assistant secretary. He was not the administration's first choice, and being assistant secretary was not Alec's first choice either. But being the good soldier that he was, and a respected diplomat who the administration knew would get confirmed very easily, he agreed to take the job.

Q: Was Mack McLarty at that point over at the White House…

GUTIERREZ: He was at the White House in the beginning.

Q: He was in the administration as a special envoy for Latin America.

GUTIERREZ: Mack was President Clinton's chief of staff at the beginning, and then he became the Envoy for the Americas.

Q: Did you have access to people like Strobe Talbott? Strobe Talbott was the deputy secretary.

GUTIERREZ: The Deputy Secretary. At that time I did not have much access to Strobe. Later on, when I was Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, I did have much more access to him. But at this time I was an office director, so I wouldn't have had too much access to Seventh Floor principals.

Q: Did you have the impression that Secretary of State Albright paid much attention to the region?

GUTIERREZ: She was secretary from 1997 to 2001. Warren Christopher was still Secretary during my time in PPC. So the question is did Secretary Christopher devote a lot of time to Latin America, and my impression is that he did not. You have to remember that during President Clinton's first term he did not travel to Latin America. The Summit of the Americas was a big event and a very important event for Latin America during his first term. As I recall, President Clinton's focus was essentially domestic during his first term. Certainly Latin America was not a big priority during that time.

Q: Do you remember when the Washington consensus was agreed to when it came in?

GUTIERREZ: I think that was a little after that time.

Q: After the summit.

GUTIERREZ: The summit was a large part of the Washington consensus in that the FTAA was agreed upon, and free trade was seen as an order that would promote growth in the hemisphere. So there was a good sense about that. And implied in that was the market. The free market had to be followed and the neo liberal policies that were consistent with the free market. I don't remember it being called the Washington consensus at that time. I think that came later. I may be wrong.

Q: All right. Other things that happened while you were in PPC.

GUTIERREZ: During this time we had one of the periodic attempts at reforming the State Department. I believe it was '95 when Secretary Christopher announced the strategic management initiative, SMI, which was going to cut down on the number of layers, bureaucratic layers that existed in the department. I remember the secretary called a town meeting in one of the auditoriums and announced that all deputy director positions were going to be abolished in the Department; that regional offices in regional bureaus like the one I was heading, PPC, were going to be abolished, and that the Department was going to become a more efficient place. He appointed some people to get it done. They

drew their staff from the bureaus, so I was sent as the representative for Inter-American affairs to the SMI initiative.

Q: To be in on the abolition of your own job.

GUTIERREZ: Actually, I was there to represent the interests of the bureau. Regional bureaus were not too excited about SMI -- which, if implemented would abolish a number of key management and staff positions in the bureaus. By appointing me to the task force, the director of the office in the bureau which would be most affected, I believe Watson was counting on my self-preservation instincts.

The task force began with a mandate from Secretary Christopher to change the State Department, but pretty soon it became clear that some of the ideas that were being called for were not practical. It was a time when Senator Helms had forced the merger of USIA with State. USIA and ACDA, and the broadcasting board of governors, all came under State control. Helms' big target was AID but I guess it was too big a target. The Congress and the Administration would not go along with merging AID with State.

Q: It was also a time of enormous technological change and acceleration of the way people could communicate, at least horizontally with E-mails and so forth. It was also the time of a very strained budget in the State Department so there was a sense that we couldn't do as much as we used to do. We would have to do less with less basically. So what happened to the Strategic management initiative finally?

GUTIERREZ: It became apparent that some of the things the Secretary had announced were premature, and could not be carried out. Abolishing deputy director positions and offices like PPCP would result in longer delays for cable clearance or less thoroughly vetted products. Slowly, some of the ideas were abandoned. We made some cost-saving recommendations that were not followed, but we saved the deputy director positions and the regional offices, which we confirmed provided value added. So at the end of the day some cosmetic changes were made to the Department, but the structures remained essentially in place as they were before. A few years later one bureau, I remember the European bureau under Richard Holbrooke, did try to eliminate deputy director positions. They named FSO-1 office directors, and they tried to radically change the way business was conducted. My impression is that the experiment did not work very well, although some of Holbrooke's changes remain in EUR.

Q: Do you think things went back to the way they had been before because that was empirically the best of available structures, or was it just the State Department not being comfortable changing?

GUTIERREZ: A bit of both. We had some very knock-down drag-out discussions in the task force about the mission of the State Department. Where does the Department add value to the U.S. Government effort? We were forced to look at who we were and what we did well. There were some who argued that we should radically alter the structure of the state department and make it a more functionally oriented institution, give more

power to functional bureaus like INL, (Narcotics and Law Enforcement) or PM (Politico-Military Bureau), and less power to regional bureaus. We argued the opposite. Other U.S. agencies can bring in the functional expertise, the Department of Justice, the Department of Defense, Treasury and others, but no other U.S. department can tell you how to get things done in Ouagadougou, or Buenos Aires or Managua like the State Department. History has shown that the U.S. can get a lot accomplished through diplomacy. And to do diplomacy, you have to know your friends and adversaries in other countries, and no one does that better than State. At the end of the day, that was the argument that carried the day. The conclusion we reached was that our value added is in knowledge of countries.

Q: At this time were you content with your job and how things were going, or were you restless? How did you feel about it?

GUTIERREZ: I liked being an office director in a regional bureau. I had good people working for me, and worked on interesting issues. I was a little apprehensive about PPC in the beginning, because its function was not always clear. As the name implies, the office was supposedly in charge of policy planning coordination. But did we sit back every day and think great thoughts about grand strategy and problems that were coming down the line? No. There was simply no time: there were too many real time problems to be taken care of. There were too many meetings to attend, too many inter-agency task forces that had to produce reports. So the name is a misnomer because we really didn't have the time to be strategists and plan policy. I think I must have written two or three policy planning papers in 2 ½ years. This was not only a problem in our bureau, but in the Department as a whole. We just don't do planning well. But PPC was a very necessary office, because someone had to be present at inter-agency meetings to do battle with DOD or other agencies and represent the interests of the Department and the bureau. And someone had to be in charge of issues that were region-wide, and not particular to a single country or sub-region.

Q: Were you assigned to your next job when Alec Watson was there, I heard that he was very influential, but then Jeff Davidow came in, you had to establish a new relationship with a new guy.

GUTIERREZ: Well by then I had…

Q: You knew where you were going.

GUTIERREZ: I knew where I was going, yes. That was under Watson.

Q: Where were you going?

GUTIERREZ: I was very fortunate that Alec put me on a list to be chief of mission to Nicaragua, and the D committee approved my nomination. By the summer of '95 I knew that I was the Department's candidate to be chief of mission in Nicaragua in 1996.

Q: Describe a little bit the process of being named an ambassador. To a lot of people it seems like a black box.

GUTIERREZ: It was a very murky process to me in the beginning. I knew vaguely that the D committee decided whom to recommend to the Secretary. I didn't know exactly who the members of the D committee were. Of course, the undersecretaries had to be there. But these rules vary from administration to administration. The Assistant Secretary for Inter-American affairs, who had proposed me for the job, was not a member of the D committee. He just provided the Bureau's recommendations for the ambassadorships. Then the D Committee decided who would get what.

Q: So you knew you were going to go to Nicaragua, and I guess you are happy about that. It seemed like a very exciting challenge.

GUTIERREZ: Yes. When somebody first mentioned Managua to me, of course it wasn't a very attractive city, but certainly the job was an extremely challenging one because Nicaragua still had tremendous problems. It was one of the countries that occupied a great deal of the assistant secretary's time. It was also one of the countries that the Congress followed closely, because as I was soon to learn a number of the Congressional staffers seemed to still be fighting the 80's wars over our policy with respect to Nicaragua. So yes, I was very pleased and honored to have such an opportunity. Then I was told to keep quiet for the next few months and not say anything and continue to do my job, which I did.

Q: How was your hearing?

GUTIERREZ: My hearing was in June 1996. There were no problems during the hearing itself. Before the hearing I had been called in by Senator Dodd's staff. A couple of nominees were called in to review their record, I guess to see whether Senator Dodd would oppose or support these nominations. Senator Dodd was in the minority, since the Republicans controlled the Congress. I was questioned about my background and particularly about my time as Nicaragua desk officer in the 80's. I remember one other question was, "Were you the desk officer when Corinto harbor was mined?" I said, "No, I was gone by then." Like I said, some Congressional staffers were still very much fixated on the 1980's. After interviewing me and examining my record, the staffer said OK, "We have nothing against you."

Q: Was Helms' staff supportive?

GUTIERREZ: At that point Senator Helms had not expressed any opposition to my nomination. Later on, however, after I was confirmed by the Senate, an idea started percolating in Capitol Hill that I should be held back and not sent to Nicaragua until after the Nicaraguan presidential elections of November of 1996. The idea first came from Senator Torricelli, but Senator Helms and his staff quickly embraced it. As they explained it to me, the idea was to ensure that the Clinton Administration followed through in commitments it had made to Republicans about the election. Thus, according

to this scenario, my predecessor, John Maisto, who had been confirmed as Ambassador to Venezuela, would not leave and I would not arrive until after the elections. I did not like this arrangement, which delayed my arrival in Nicaragua by a few months, forced my daughters to start the school year in the U.S. only to leave a few months later, and generally disrupted our plans. But there was nothing I could do, so I agreed to stay as PPC Director for a few months.

Q: Maisto had already been confirmed?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, he had already been confirmed.

Q: So what was the leverage of Senator Helms to hold you back? Did he hold you back?

GUTIERREZ: They sent a letter to the Administration asking that Ambassador Maisto stay in place until after the elections, and the Administration decided to comply. That is what happened: I didn't get to Managua until December.

Q: You finally got to Nicaragua in December?

GUTIERREZ: December, 1996.

Q: Before Christmas?

GUTIERREZ: Before Christmas, in early December. I arrived alone. My daughters were finishing their semesters in elementary school and high school, and my wife and I would bring them later. Upon arriving, I presented my credentials to Doña Violeta Chamorro, although by then she was a lame duck. Arnoldo Alemán had been elected president. And thus I began to be a part of the fascinating but crazy world of Nicaragua, Nicaraguan politics and relations with the Congress.

Q: Embassy Managua was a large embassy.

GUTIERREZ: It was a moderately sized embassy. It had a large AID mission. It wasn't as large as our embassy in Honduras, which had grown tremendously during the contra years and had not been downsized totally during that time. We were not as large as some of the other Central American embassies, but we were a significant embassy. I believe there were 120 direct-hire Americans and maybe four or five hundred Nicaraguan employees.

Q: What was it like being an ambassador just going out for the first time as ambassador.

GUTIERREZ: It was a tremendous honor, and it represented a major change at a personal level. It required a lot of adjustment on my part, because nothing prepares you for being an ambassador. There is nothing that the Foreign Service can tell you to fully prepare you for the "fishbowl" existence of being an ambassador, especially in a Latin American country. The U.S. had been a major player in Nicaragua for many years. In Nicaragua the

United States ambassador is a major player, at times as important as the president of the country. Everyone watches what the U.S. ambassadors says and does, and the influence that he or she commands.

What really surprised me was the amount of scrutiny an ambassador faces in the host country. Sometimes the U.S. ambassador going to the supermarket becomes a media event. You might be able to accept it intellectually but when it actually happens, it is difficult to accept.

Q: Did you find yourself inadvertently making news you didn't want to make?

GUTIERREZ: It was an extremely delicate time in Nicaragua, and I was very careful not to become the main story. I knew Nicaragua's history fairly well, having been the Nicaragua Desk Officer from 1981-83. For example, I knew that Ambassador Larry Pezzullo had moved the embassy residence from the Casa Grande, the nine-bedroom massive house on the hill that overlooked the city, in 1979 because he thought that that residence was not the proper place for the United States Ambassador to live, especially at a time when we were lowering our profile and urging the Nicaraguans to solve their problems themselves. The Casa Grande carried the symbolism of the U.S. ambassador looking down from the hilltop, and in the view of some perpetuated the proconsul mentality that existed. I made it a point to support those who were trying to establish a democratic system with democratic institutions, and determined that the most effective way of doing so was by not becoming the main story and working effectively behind the scenes. Of course, a high profile cannot be avoided in Nicaragua, but I was careful to project the image of someone who supported the process of democratization and development in a country that had suffered tremendously in the 1980's and had become the second poorest country in the Hemisphere. Our objective was to push the Nicaraguans toward reconciliation and institutionalization of their democracy.

Q: Did you, how long were you there before the new president Alemán took over from Chamorro?

GUTIERREZ: The inauguration was in January 1997. Two or three weeks after I arrived we began to receive a number of CODELS.

Q: CODELS are Congressional Delegations.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. We also had official visitors from the Executive Branch. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt led the U.S. delegation for the inauguration of President Alemán. He was accompanied by his wife, Hattie Babbitt, who was the U.S. Ambassador to the OAS. Senator John McCain came a few days after the inauguration, and Congressman Cass Ballenger and other Congressmen came in right after that. The first few weeks of my tenure in Managua were a baptism by fire on being an ambassador and dealing with Washington and Congressional delegations in Nicaragua.

In addition to calling on outgoing President Chamorro and President-elect Alemán, I had already called on Daniel Ortega as the leader of the Opposition. Within three or four weeks, I knew a lot of the key players.

Q: Before we get to U.S. relations with Nicaragua, who was your DCM?

GUTIERREZ: Prior to my arrival at post, I was given a list by the State personnel system of possible candidates for the DCM position. I knew some of the people on the list, but I thought that the critical situation Nicaragua was facing as it attempted to strengthen its democracy called for an experienced hand to back me up as DCM. I proposed to go outside the list, and recommended Rick Becker for the position. Rick was the current political counselor in Managua, and had already been two years in the country. I had met Rick, and thought he and I would work well together. But first I had to persuade the State personnel system -- which does not always like creative solutions in personnel assignments -- to move Rick from political counselor to DCM.

Q: Was that spot vacant or did someone have to leave?

GUTIERREZ: The DCM slot was vacant because Ambassador Maisto's DCM, Heather Hodges, was leaving in the summer of 1996, and would leave at roughly the same time as the ambassador, after three years. Rick Becker had not bid the position, since he had another year to go as political counselor, but I asked him if he were interested in moving up to DCM, and he was. The system finally agreed to move Rick Becker to DCM.

After Rick's assignment, I took an active role in finding good candidates for other positions. I brought in a very talented couple, Kevin Whitaker as political counselor right behind Rick, and his wife Betsy Whitaker as Public Affairs Officer. Both were, and still are, very strong officers, and I thought that they would do a great job, and I was right.

Q: So you had staffed yourself with a good staff.

GUTIERREZ: I did indeed.

Q: What was the relationship of the United States and Nicaragua like with President Alemán coming in?

GUTIERREZ: A lot of progress had been made in the six years since the Sandinistas had left power, but Nicaragua was still a very poor country and major problems remained. The Sandinistas still wielded considerable power. They controlled a number of key positions in the judicial system especially. The army was still essentially the same Sandinista popular army, although the numbers had been reduced substantially from 90,000 to 20,000 or so. It still was a volatile situation, and Daniel Ortega would announce every once in a while that he would bring the country to its knees by calling for general strikes or threatening violence, warning that he would go back to the mountains if necessary to fight for power. Even after six years of democracy, it was a tense atmosphere.

Q: So you called on Daniel Ortega before the Alemán inauguration.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, but first I had called on the outgoing and incoming presidents. I presented my credentials to Violeta Chamorro, and paid a call on Alemán. Then I called on Ortega. He had just lost the election convincingly to Alemán, but still commanded 35% of the vote. Despite his election loss, he was a key player and a leader of the Opposition.

Q: Did you have a substantive conversation with him or was it just a courtesy call?

GUTIERREZ: That first meeting was mostly a courtesy call, sort of a break the ice conversation, but I made a few points. I made it clear that the U.S. was prepared to work with him as long as democratic rules were respected, and that we stood ready to cooperate.

Q: Did you have regular contact or intermittent contact with him afterward?

GUTIERREZ: We always had open communication channels, and the Embassy staff had a wide range of Sandinista contacts, but I had intermittent contact only with Ortega, mainly because his rhetoric was always very negative. It seemed that every chance he got he would praise Castro, Qadhafi, and other U.S. enemies. It was clear to me that he was not a convert to democracy or the democratic system. My impression was that he would have much preferred to be fighting in the hills or running the country as a dictator.

On one occasion, I tried to speak very frankly with him. This was months later. I said to him, "You are the leader of the Opposition, but your party is called the Sandinista Front, not the Sandinista Party. This creates the image of a military organization, not a political party. But if the Sandinista Front renounced violence, and become the loyal opposition, which respects the democratic system, it could re-invent itself. Look at the former Communist parties in Eastern Europe. Some of them have come back to power after a few years by respecting the democratic rules of the game. You all could do the same." Ortega listened to me, but he clearly was not interested in the approach I suggested to him.

Q: There was a Cuban embassy in Nicaragua.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, there was a Cuban embassy. That never changed.

Q: A large embassy?

GUTIERREZ: Certainly bigger than needed for a country the size of Cuba. The Cubans had a long-standing relation with Nicaraguan intelligence, the Nicaraguan military, the Sandinistas, and some other institutions in Nicaragua.

Q: What about with the Alemán government, was it completely separated from any Cuban influence?

GUTIERREZ: Pretty much. Arnoldo Alemán had made his political career by fighting the Sandinistas. In the 1990's he was the mayor of Managua, and when Violeta Chamorro became president, she controlled very little. The Sandinistas controlled all the institutions, the police, the military, the judiciary. Alemán had been elected the mayor of Managua about a year after the Presidential elections. He had taken on the Sandinistas frontally, firing city workers put in place by the Sandinistas, and ending some of the sinecures. He and his Liberal Party competed with the Sandinistas for votes in poor neighborhoods. The Sandinistas had placed giant letters, F, S, L, N, which were the initials for Sandinista Front of National Liberation, on a hill that overlooked Managua for all to see. Alemán took out the S and the L and put in an "I" in the middle so it said FIN, which means "the end," in Spanish, telling the population the Sandinista rule was over. He was a very active mayor of Managua, undertaking a lot of social projects and construction projects. In the 1980's, when the Sandinistas were in power, they had thrown Alemán in jail. Even while his wife was dying of cancer they would not let him out of jail to see her.

Q: He has a history of going to jail too because later he was jailed for corruption.

GUTIERREZ: That came later. When I arrived in 1996, Alemán was not known to be especially corrupt. He was a popular candidate, and that is why the Nicaraguan people elected him in 1996. There had been some rumors, however, that some of the people around him had dubious reputations. During my first meeting with him before he took office, I expressed some concern about some of the people around him. At that time he told me, "If you have evidence against any of my people you let me know, and I will turn them over to you," or in other words, he would extradite them to the U.S. He assured us from the beginning that his government was not going to be a corrupt one, although he clearly did not fulfill that pledge.

As president, Alemán cooperated with the U.S. and the IMF on economic policy. He took on Castro directly and firmly at the Ibero-American Summit and at other places where they ran into each other. At one point, Stu Eizenstat, who had coordinated U.S. economic policy, came down so see him.

Q: He was the trade representative at that point?

GUTIERREZ: At one point he had been Undersecretary for Economic Affairs. Later he was given certain responsibility for policy toward Cuba. He came to Nicaragua because he saw Alemán as someone who would cooperate with the U.S. on Cuba policy.

The Sandinistas hated Alemán. Every chance they got they would try to weaken him. I remember I had been there six months or so when the Sandinistas called a big national strike. Sandinista demonstrators started stopping traffic on the main roads. The Alemán government had an internal debate as to how they would respond. Some of his advisors

advocated ordering the police and the army, both of which had Sandinista roots and sympathizers, to break the roadblocks. Others thought that they should negotiate with Ortega. Many newspapers were predicting that Alemán would resign, and some were putting together lists of the composition of an interim government. At the height of the strike, I went in to see President Alemán to express our support for democracy. I told the press that Alemán was the democratically elected leader of Nicaragua and that the United States would support whatever democratic action he decided to take.

Q: So the political balance in the country was pretty precarious with Alemán as president, Ortega who had lost the election, actually who had got beaten pretty soundly but still controlled a chunk of the congress, and controlling the military or not?

GUTIERREZ: No, he didn't control the military, but he retained considerable influence among his former colleagues in the armed forces. The military had cleaned up its act considerably by then, had become more professional or got rid of a lot of its more ideological officers, but you could not say it was fully under civilian control. The first civilian minister of defense had been appointed by Alemán, but the rank and file took their orders from Joaquin Cuadra, the commander of the armed forces. So the question was, if Alemán gave the order for the army to repress their former brethren, would they follow that order or would it cause trouble? Would they react professionally and respect civilian control, or not?

Q: Had officers at the top of the hierarchy, had a lot of them either Soviet or Cuban training?

GUTIERREZ: All of the senior leadership had received Soviet or Cuban training during the Sandinista years in power.

Q: Had they had any training from us?

GUTIERREZ: No. Zero, because we had no relation with the military at that point. There were a number of roadblocks to full U.S. engagement with the Nicaraguan military. One of them was property. The military still owned some properties that were once owned by U.S. citizens, and had been confiscated by the Sandinistas.

Q: That was Jesse Helms' issue as well.

GUTIERREZ: Yes it was. The U.S. Congress had passed a law that would have stopped all aid to Nicaragua unless the Nicaraguan Government made progress in solving U.S. property claims. The President of the U.S. had to grant a waiver that would allow aid to proceed until all U.S. property cases had been resolved.

Q: Including the mainstream USAID large aid mission.

GUTIERREZ: Yes. I believe some humanitarian aid would have been exempted, but certainly the bulk of our aid would have been affected.

Q: Did you have frequent visitors from Congress, staff CODELS?

GUTIERREZ: We certainly did. In addition to regular CODELS, there were frequent STAFFDELS, frequent phone calls from Congressional staffers about particular cases. We had an officer in the embassy that did nothing but the property cases of former U.S. citizens. It was a very important issue for the embassy at that time.

Q: Did you feel you were on a hot seat with the Congress very much? Did they feel that you were doing what you should do?

GUTIERREZ: We certainly had to dedicate considerable time to explaining our actions to members of Congress and their staff. Often I had to sit down with STAFFDELS, sometimes for three or four hours, bringing in all my team to explain everything that we were doing or any particular aspects of our programs to which they objected. Even a minor action, such as hiring a security guard who happened to be a former Sandinista for an AID warehouse in Tipitapa, would cross the radar of some member of Congress and could become a bone of contention between us. So yes, we were under constant scrutiny from Congressional staffs from right and left.

Q: This was a divided U.S. government between the Clinton presidency and the Republican controlled congress.

GUTIERREZ: Yes. By 1994 the house was under Republican control and I think the Senate too for the most part.

So back to the challenges that Alemán faced at the beginning. Faced with a nationwide strike and the blocking of traffic by demonstrators, Alemán decided not to call the army or the police to clear the roadblocks, but to negotiate with some of the protestors. I believe most Nicaraguans appreciated his approach because they didn't want a confrontational situation so early in his presidency. But the Sandinistas continued to apply the pressure. When Alemán had to give the Nicaraguan equivalent of the State of Union speech a few months after taking office, the Sandinista deputies started disrupting the proceedings, shouting him down before a national television audience. Undeterred, Alemán continued speaking, and could be heard by the television audience because the TV microphone was on, but you could not hear him in the Legislative Chamber. It was quite a spectacle -- Sandinista deputies would scream a few feet from his face.

Q: Were you there?

GUTIERREZ: I was there as part of the diplomatic corps. In sum, Alemán did not have a very easy situation.

Q: It is interesting how similar the different countries are with respect to this. I remember what you said about negotiating with protesters which was pretty much my experience in

Bolivia. Recently, they did the same thing to President Felipe Calderón in Mexico -- he was not allowed to give his normal speech to the Congress. Interesting.

GUTIERREZ: I believed Alemán was someone we could work with at that time. Under Alemán, property cases were being solved, trade disputes were solved amicably, Nicaragua supported us in international fora, had good relations with the IMF, and we believed democracy was advancing and institutions were gradually getting stronger. After I left, corruption and Alemán's "pacto" with Ortega put many democratic gains at risk. But under my tenure we never found a smoking gun that tied Alemán to a major corruption scandal. We did start hearing some things, and he started buying some properties for his personal use. I asked all our agencies to look at whether the president himself was involved in corruption, and no "smoking gun" was found. At that time we had no conclusive evidence that he was personally involved in corruption.

Q: Was there a lot of interest by U.S. investors in Nicaragua at that point with the Alemán government?

GUTIERREZ: U.S. investment to Nicaragua was starting to come back. Hotels were being built. Roads were expanded. Nicaragua's main export product is coffee, but there was also a lot of U.S. interest in ecotourism, and increased fishing in the Atlantic Coast. There was a U.S.-owned fishing fleet on the Atlantic coast, owned by Gulf King. And of course there was the century-old idea of building an inter-oceanic canal through Nicaragua. There were numerous projects being proposed, with all kinds of schemes, including a dry canal, a rail "canal" between the two coasts. There were a number of American investors promoting these new ideas for a canal, and many came through my office. They were an interesting group of folks.

Q: The idea of the canal of course goes way back to when the Panama canal was being constructed, but while you were there was there any real prospect for them actually doing either a dry canal or a wet canal?

GUTIERREZ: There were a number of studies about the possibilities for a canal. I remember the U.S. Travel and Development Agency was going to do a study, and a number of serious people were convinced that a canal could be built. The geography has always been there: you can take the San Juan River from the Atlantic to Lake Nicaragua and to the City of Granada, and that puts you a couple of hours from the Pacific coast. So one project had barges that would carry merchandise by water but then you would have to build a rail to the Pacific, maybe from Granada. Some were more ambitious, proposing a canal that went coast to coast. But nothing materialized while I was there. There was no ground breaking, no project approved.

Q: What were the big export industries, coffee, tourism, bananas?

GUTIERREZ: Also shrimp. On bananas, Nicaragua is not as big a producer as Honduras is. There is a banana industry in the western part of Nicaragua. Sugar was still important, and having access to the U.S. sugar quota was crucial for them. There was a cotton

industry in the 1980's, but by the time I was there it was no longer profitable, so there was not much going on in cotton. AID was trying to look for new exports for the country, some of the non-traditional fruits and things they grew there. They are also a beef producer and exporter. There were a variety of things, but coffee was the main crop. At that time coffee prices were not too bad. A few years later, with Vietnam entering the coffee market, they took quite a big hit.

Q: How was regional integration doing?

GUTIERREZ: In the 1960's, Central America was well on its way to becoming well integrated. They had formed a Central American bank, the CABEI (Central American Bank for Economic Integration). All of the countries publicly pledged their support for the eventual establishment of a Central American union. During the UN General Assembly, the five Central American presidents would reaffirm their pledge to eventually unify their countries. At the same time, they would periodically engage in absurd border disputes with one another. Nicaragua and Costa Rica fought about the navigation rights in the San Juan River. Nicaragua and Honduras and El Salvador argued about the Gulf of Fonseca. Nicaragua and Honduras quarreled about the Atlantic coast and their territorial waters.

Q: Was that a necessary ingredient of their internal politics?

GUTIERREZ: Nicaraguan leaders could always count on raising their approval ratings by a couple of points by blasting Costa Ricans or Hondurans in the real or imagined defense of national territory. So yes, it was a weapon that could be used by governments to boost their popularity.

Q: Nicaraguans play baseball.

GUTIERREZ: They play baseball, and baseball is the national pastime. On one occasion, I remember a U.S. national team, made up of minor league players, came to Managua to play the Nicaraguan national team. President Alemán invited me to his box to watch the game. The Nicaraguans were ahead until the bottom of the ninth when a U.S. hitter hit a home run to tie the game. I automatically stood up and cheered, but I soon noticed that I was the only one doing so in the presidential box. I don't think the president and his cabinet appreciated my display of emotion, but they smiled politely.

I attended some baseball games in the Nicaraguan league. One time I was asked to throw out the first pitch. I agreed to do so, but no one informed me that unlike the U.S., where the first pitch is a ceremonial toss to the home team catcher, in Nicaragua the first pitch is thrown from the mound, with the home team on the field and the opposing batter of the visiting team at the plate.

Q: Did you reach the plate?

GUTIERREZ: Well, you had to ask that. I didn't have any chance to practice before hand, so I threw a 59-foot fastball that hit the ground a few inches from the plate. Thankfully, the opposing batter was a very generous guy, swung and missed.

Q: You had a batter?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. There was a batter, a catcher an umpire, an infield behind me, everything. It was ironic, because some of the players were from Cuba. Cuba was exporting its players at that time.

Q: These were players that would go back and forth?

GUTIERREZ: At that time Cuba had allowed some of its players, usually older ones with no realistic shot at the major leagues, to play in Nicaragua. Of course, most of their salary would go to the Cuban regime. But they certainly had a better life playing baseball in Nicaragua than they would have in Cuba.

Q It sounds a little dangerous to throw out the first pitch.

GUTIERREZ: I didn't know what to expect. But it was all in fun.

Q: What was the police like? If the military was filled with Sandinista officers, was the police different?

GUTIERREZ: Most members of the police had Sandinista roots, but they had received less indoctrination, so we felt we could work better with the police. We were able to provide aid to the police through regional law enforcement programs like ICITAP. So we had a closer relationship with the police than the military. They did cooperate on issues like counter narcotics, money laundering, and finding fugitives. Nicaragua had the lowest crime rate of any Central American country. Whether that was because of previous Sandinista repression or not, I don't know.

Q: The church, the Catholic Church had a cardinal.

GUTIERREZ: Cardinal Obando y Bravo, who at that time was the most popular person in Nicaragua. He had fought against Somoza and against the Sandinistas. He had maintained a very consistent position, fighting dictatorships from the right or the left. Every Congressional delegation that came to Nicaragua wanted to meet with the Cardinal. We saw him early and often. After my departure, he became a more controversial figure because he supported Alemán after Alemán had become involved in corruption scandals. Later, the Cardinal and Ortega had a rapprochement, and Ortega took communion and started denouncing abortion and taking pro-Church positions. So go figure.

Q: Right. Politics. Was the Church influential in politics?

GUTIERREZ: The Church was influential. Before the 1990 election, Cardinal Obando y Bravo gave a famous homily where he retold the fable about a traveler who meets a snake in the middle of the road and stops in his tracks. The snake says, “I know you fear me, but I have changed. I can be your friend now.” Of course the traveler moves closer to the snake and the snake bites him. The snake in the Cardinal’s homily was clearly Daniel Ortega, who portrayed himself during the 1990 election as a good democrat who would respect individual rights. In essence, Obando was saying to the Nicaraguan people not to be fooled by Ortega’s pronouncements, and do not vote for him. Many observers credit Obando’s homily with helping Violeta Chamorro to defeat the Sandinistas in the 1990 election. Every time there was a strike or a political dispute, all the players went to see the Cardinal to get the Cardinal to be on their side. So he was very influential at that time.

Q: Which countries were the major influences on Nicaragua? I suppose Mexico was a big player.

GUTIERREZ: Mexico is always a big player in Central America, but Mexico didn’t have a lot of money to give out at that time. They had cultural and political influence, but they couldn’t turn money on or off like others could, like the European Union and the Scandinavian countries, who were major aid contributors. Norway and Sweden had significant assistance programs. A number of countries established embassies and missions in Nicaragua after the triumph of the Sandinistas in 1979 to help the revolution. Others, like Japan, had made Nicaragua a centerpiece of their foreign aid to the region. The major donors had a lot of influence on Nicaragua, and they often acted as a group in order to pressure the government. Given our particular history with Nicaragua, I resisted donor efforts that attempted to micromanage Nicaragua to get them to change particular officials or policies; I did not believe that big countries twisting Nicaragua’s arm was a good way to promote democracy and to give the Nicaraguan government self-confidence. We liked to say at that time that Nicaragua’s problems should be solved by Nicaraguans, not foreigners. I did support coordinated donor efforts up to a point, especially anything that had to do with support for democracy or support for strong institutions. But when they wanted to pressure the government to fire an official or hire another one, I refused to participate; I did not think that was a proper role for a donor.

Q: You didn’t see that tendency within your own government, within AID for example?

GUTIERREZ: There were some in AID who had grown accustomed to these strong-arm tactics, but I made it clear that we would not use those tactics. I was following my directive from Washington to let Nicaragua solve its own problems in order to help institutionalize democracy in Nicaragua. Micromanaging every decision and attempting to remove officials who did not fully agree with our point of view was not the way to do it. Now, if some official had a drug trafficking or criminal past, that was different. In that situation, of course we would bring that fact to the attention of the authorities and say that we would not be able to work with any official with drug or criminal ties.

Q: When you called on Alemán at the beginning, you did express concern about some people who might be around him.

GUTIERREZ: I did, yes.

Q: And those people were people that we suspected of criminal activities?

GUTIERREZ: Right criminal, drug activities, those kinds of things.

Q: So basically you established yourself as ambassador, you met everybody. Alemán is the president. There is a certain amount of turbulence on the streets with Ortega being on the outside. What is the next big thing that happens? Was it Hurricane Mitch?

GUTIERREZ: Hurricane Mitch took place in 1998, two years into my tenure. We certainly had a number of mini-crises during my stay, but nothing that placed democracy in danger. The country continued to make progress. The economy was recovering. Nicaragua signed an agreement with the IMF. With our help, they were approved for the HIPC initiative, the highly indebted poor countries, under which much of their massive external debt accumulated during the Sandinista years was forgiven. Things were moving reasonably well until the fall of ’98, when Hurricane Mitch struck. In addition to the devastation Mitch caused and our efforts to help, the hurricane raised our profile in Washington, and we went from being another sleepy Central American country to being the flavor of the month as far as U.S. official visits were concerned.

Hurricane Mitch was not a typical hurricane, which usually blows through a country in a day or two, wreaks devastation, and departs quickly. Mitch was a hurricane that lingered for four or five days, stationary off the Atlantic coast of Honduras and Nicaragua, and poured historic amounts of rain into Honduras and Nicaragua. Given the fragile infrastructure that exists in these countries, thousands of houses were swept away and many people were killed. There was a Nicaraguan village called Posoltega where over a thousand people were buried in a mudslide.

Q: Did you have advance warning that this would be a different kind of hurricane?

GUTIERREZ: No, not at all. At first it seemed like just another hurricane. We were in Managua, many miles away from the Atlantic coast, so we had no idea of the devastation caused by the incessant rain. When we found out about all the damage, we cabled Washington, formally declared a disaster, and asked for emergency U.S. aid. But one problem we had in Nicaragua on receiving aid was that Honduras was affected a lot worse. They had more dead and more homeless. The initial efforts of the U.S. government were understandably designed to help Honduras first. So we had to explain the magnitude of the damage that we had as well in order to get some help.

Q: The assets that were deployed to Honduras to assess the damage, did they also come to Nicaragua?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, we had our own OFDA person, from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, to assess the damage.

Q: Somebody who came down?

GUTIERREZ: An OFDA official who came from Costa Rica, where they had a regional office. The official happened to be the daughter of former U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica Frank McNeil, Kathy McNeil, who lived in Costa Rica. She immediately did a preliminary assessment of the damage by flying by helicopter to the affected areas.

Q: You as ambassador were able to declare a disaster, get some initial funds.

GUTIERREZ: Right. At that time ambassadors had immediate access to $25,000 for relief efforts.

Q: Not very much money.

GUTIERREZ: True enough. We immediately bought boots, water bottles, and shelter materials for people who had lost their homes. Then OFDA provided plastic sheeting, water purification tablets, and some of the things they bring from the warehouses in Costa Rica and other places, so we were able to provide some initial relief. But what they really needed was helicopters, because there were a lot of people who had become stranded by the flooding. There were people on rooftops awaiting rescue. Homes and whole communities were flooded. These people had to be rescued right away. The Nicaraguans had their own Soviet-built helicopters but they didn't have enough to cover all the territory that needed to be covered to help people.

I decided to call the CINC at SOUTHCOM, General Wilhelm, whom I knew. I told him we needed helicopters, and asked if he could spare any. He told me he did not have any helicopters he could spare at that time, but said he would try to find some. At that point there were U.S. helicopters stationed in Panama and in Honduras. Unfortunately, for the first few days we did not get any helicopters; Honduras got them all. This was understandable, since Honduras took the greatest hit from Mitch.

I remember that one morning a few days after the hurricane, Nicaraguans looked up at the sky to see U.S. helicopters overflying Nicaragua; they thought help had arrived. As it turned out, these were U.S. helicopters from Panama on their way to Honduras. Many Nicaraguans had their hopes were dashed when they realized the helicopters not landing in Nicaragua. But a couple of days later, General Wilhelm was able to find some helicopters and dispatched them to Nicaragua.

Q: How much time elapsed between when the hurricane was really doing damage and you were able to learn the extent of the damage?

GUTIERREZ: It may have been around 48 hours after the hurricane. There was little damage in Managua, only some rain. But then news reports started coming in. The mudslide in Posoltega made us realize how serious the situation was.

Q: You started to get the TV images and so forth.

GUTIERREZ: TV, news reports of people hanging from the rooftops of homes near the Atlantic coast. You became aware that it was something more than just a run of the mill hurricane.

Q: Did you start to get crews coming in from the outside at that point?

GUTIERREZ: Some, but again Honduras was the focus of most of the news activity.

Curiously, when those U.S. helicopters came to Nicaragua in 1998, it represented the first official contact between the U.S. military and the Nicaraguan military in over 20 years. Since 1979, over 19 years since the Sandinista Revolution had taken over, until 1998 there were no official military-to-military contacts. It took Hurricane Mitch to normalize relations. Soon, the total of U.S. helicopters deployed to Nicaragua increased from three to five and then ten. U.S. and Nicaraguan military planners had to sit down and divide responsibility for the country for rescue and relief operations. We would say, OK we will take this area, you take that area, and a relationship of cooperation was created between the U.S. and Nicaraguan military.

Cooperation was so good that General Wilhelm and the Pentagon, who were anxious to normalize relations with the Nicaraguan military, offered to bring in more U.S. assets to help. Some of these assets included an engineering battalion that would come in to rebuild some roads, restore some bridges, and rebuild schools. The Nicaraguan Government accepted our offer, but the Sandinistas were not very happy about the idea and attempted to sabotage the effort. Daniel Ortega warned that U.S. troops were going to bring AIDS into the country. Later he said that the U.S. troops were going to look for military targets in Nicaragua, like they were doing in Bosnia and Serbia, "so they could bomb us later." He started a public relations campaign in the media against the presence of U.S. troops in Nicaragua.

We decided to fight back in the press. After accepting our offer, the Nicaraguan government was nervous about Sandinista-led protests about the presence of U.S. troops. I remember the day before the engineering battalion landed, headlines in the Sandinista press were "The Marines are coming!" evoking the ghosts of interventions past. These reports augured badly for our effort.

In consultation with the U.S. military commanders, we devised a plan to win over the Nicaraguan people to our side. The first thing we did was to ensure that the arriving U.S. troops would not carry their weapons -- the weapons would arrive separately in crates. We assured our military that there would be no problem if they were to get off the plane unarmed. They could bring their weapons in in crates, and they agreed. What the Nicaraguan TV viewers saw were unarmed U.S. troops getting off the plane.

Then we persuaded the military commanders to allow the Nicaraguan military to provide force protection. At first our military resisted: their first instinct was to provide their own

force protection for their troops, and they did not have a relationship with the Nicaraguan military. After some mil-to-mil discussions, both sides agreed that the Nicaraguan military would provide perimeter security for our troops.

The other thing we did was to make the troops available to the press, so the reporters could see for themselves that the people we were bringing in had come to help. The Nicaraguans were expecting gigantic blonde and blue-eyed gringos who spoke no Spanish and looked menacing. What they found instead when the press started interviewing our troops, was quite a diverse lot. Many of the soldiers were reservists who came from civilian jobs. Many were women, and there were quite a few Hispanics and other minorities. Many spoke to the press in Spanish. The TV images of the interviews went a long way toward shattering all the Sandinista-proclaimed myths that our troops were invaders, the heirs of the U.S. troops who had fought against their national hero, Augusto César Sandino. Nicaraguans saw that our troops were people just like them who wanted to help. The interviews did the trick: we had tremendous amount of goodwill after that. Ortega soon stopped the public relations campaign against the soldiers because he knew it wouldn't get him anywhere.

Q: How long were the U.S. soldiers doing this?

GUTIERREZ: They remained in country for months. One National Guard outfit would finish a job, and then another one would come in and take its place. Then as part of the regular SOUTHCOM programs and exercises we managed to continue with the relief effort for more than a year.

Q: Now the relief efforts for the area Central America that had been affected by Hurricane Mitch were coordinated out of Washington as I recall. Was that process smooth? How was the process from your standpoint?

GUTIERREZ: Washington and the Pentagon tried to maintain control by centralizing the process, but at the end of the day they had to decentralize it. I think the embassies and the local commanders had as much or more to say than Washington at the end because they knew what was needed, what would work, and what wouldn't work. I remember that our local commander, Colonel Allan Rasper, who was in charge of the engineering battalion, was first told that he would have to report to centralized command in Guatemala. That lasted only a few weeks. Then the Pentagon coordinated directly with him and we met every day with him and coordinated our efforts as well.

Q: Do you remember what the death toll was with Mitch?

GUTIERREZ: More than 11,000 dead and 11,000 missing, with over two million homeless in Central America. There were nearly 4,000 dead in Nicaragua.

Q: Most of them from mudslides and..

GUTIERREZ: Mudslides and drowning. After the initial rescue efforts, largely aided by our helicopters, the relief stage came next. Once the relief effort began, and with the presence of U.S. soldiers and national guardsmen in country, we started getting our collection of high-level visitors coming to the country. All of a sudden we were receiving visits from members of the executive and legislative branches. One of the first was the second lady of the United States, Tipper Gore, who came to Central America on a tour. She was followed by First Lady Hillary Clinton and a few months later, President Clinton. There were also countless Senators and Congressmen. Cardinal Law of Boston came -- I remember Senator Kennedy called me to ensure that we took care of him. Former President Carter came. Nicaraguan major league pitcher Dennis Martínez. Mick Jagger's former wife, Bianca, who was born in Nicaragua. And many more.

Q: Did you get any help from Washington, personnel to help you handle all these people.

GUTIERREZ: Not much. The visitors usually visited a number of countries. Honduras had the most damage, so they were the number one stop. We were second and Guatemala was third as far as the damage. That was really an interesting time for us. We went from an embassy that was not on most of Washington's radar screen (except for some Congressional staffers) to the "flavor of the month" as far as official visits were concerned.

Q: What effect did Hurricane Mitch have on the local politics?

GUTIERREZ: Unfortunately it may have speeded up Alemán's journey toward corruption. At first, the government received a boost from all of the international aid received. Some people were calling Hurricane Mitch jokingly "Saint Mitch," because it brought in a tremendous infusion of aid into the country. We were very careful with our own aid, but there were a number of stories of aid from other countries being diverted to the pockets of local officials. There were times when aid shipments would arrive in Nicaragua, and before the recipients arrived, corrupt officials would try to commandeer it for their own purposes. Cognizant of the local practices, we had enough safeguards in place to ensure it wouldn't happen. I can only imagine what happened with all the individual donations from people and all the donations from other countries that didn't have the safeguards that we did.

Q: Hurricane Mitch apart, did you in your tenure as ambassador travel around the country much?

GUTIERREZ: I did. We went a number of times to the Atlantic coast, which was only accessible by plane at that time, as the roads were not very good and were virtually impassable during the rainy season. The defense attaché in Honduras had a C-12 plane, and they made it available to us to travel around the country. Whenever there were local or regional elections, we observed them in Managua and the countryside. AID often provided ballots and election materials, so we delivered them by plane, helicopter or even by mule in some cases. I had to show the flag in the country's interior, so I traveled to all regions.

Nicaragua is a beautiful country but there were still a lot of problems. There was still a lot of violence in the countryside, and a lot of the AK-47s from the war were still around and were being used by bandits.

Q: How about tourists, did you have backpackers and bikers and surfers?

GUTIERREZ: Tourism was beginning to pick up. Nicaragua is a beautiful country with lakes and volcanoes, and it is ideal for eco-tourism. It didn't have the infrastructure at that time to accommodate large numbers of tourists -- it was not too well developed. That has picked up in the last few years. Costa Rica is a big tourism destination, and everything you find in Costa Rica you also have in Nicaragua next door.

Q: Your family finally joined you after…

GUTIERREZ: My family arrived in late 1996, a month after I arrived. My wife and two youngest daughters that is, since my oldest daughter was in college and she only came during holidays and the summer. We enjoyed our Nicaraguan experience. My wife and daughters got to meet President Clinton, the First Lady, and many other important visitors. But alas, Nicaragua is a country with a lot of problems and a lot of divisions. It will take a long time for Nicaragua to regain its previous status as the breadbasket of Central America, one of the relatively rich countries in the region.

Q: Well you had a relatively productive tour and you went through this great disaster of Hurricane Mitch, and I know you did very well in that. Where did you go next?

GUTIERREZ: Well, after Nicaragua I started to take a look at my life to see what I wanted to do next. (end of tape 4)

Q: Lino, you left as ambassador to Nicaragua in what month and year?

GUTIERREZ: I left in July, 1999, after about two years and eight months. At one point the previous January I was asked by Washington if I wanted to stay until 2000. I declined, wanting to try something different in 1999. So I was programmed to leave after two years and eight months in Nicaragua. Nicaragua had been a very interesting experience, but for me it was time to do something else. I pondered what I would do after being an ambassador. A number of my colleagues had either retired or gone on to the private sector to do other things, and I wondered whether I should do the same. I had not turned 50 yet, the retirement age for the Foreign Service, but there was a provision in the regulations that you could retire before 50 after being an ambassador. I think Jerry Bremer and others had taken that step. So I actually looked for jobs outside of the service. But nothing really excited me. I still wanted to do other things in the State Department. Then Pete Romero called me from Washington. Pete had been principal deputy in Western Hemisphere affairs, and when Assistant Secretary Jeff Davidow left, he had been nominated to succeed him as assistant secretary. But up to that point he had not gotten a hearing because the Helms staffers and others were opposed to the

administration's Cuba policy and to Pete personally. So Pete was the Acting Assistant Secretary. He called and asked me if I wanted to be his PDAS, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary. After thinking it over, I thought it would be fun, so I said yes. So my family and I left Nicaragua in July 1999 for Washington.

Q: Had you ever worked for Pete at a post?

GUTIERREZ: No. Pete and I were first tour officers together in Santo Domingo. We had worked together in Central American affairs: I had been Nicaragua desk officer, and in fact I helped recruit him for the El Salvador desk officer job. Through the years we had remained very good friends, followed each other's careers. Then it was an opportunity to work together. Even though we were very good friends, I had to adjust to the fact that I was going to be working for him. But that was never a problem between us.

Q: As principal deputy assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere affairs, what was your main focus?

GUTIERREZ: Every assistant secretary has his or her own management style. Pete wanted me to be more of a manager of the bureau and an alter ego rather than someone with very distinct and concrete regional responsibilities. So the portfolio we carved out for me included direct supervision for three offices, the executive office which handled all the management and personnel issues for the bureau; the office of policy planning, PPC, which I had led a few years before, doing all the regional issues; and my geographic responsibility was Mexico, which of course was the most important relationship in the Hemisphere. While I didn't have day to day responsibility for other very hot issues like Cuba, Haiti, Colombia, or the Andes, I had to be prepared to step in in Pete's absence.

I was quite pleased with my new responsibilities. Mexico certainly involved a lot of work and many inter-agency meetings. I soon realized that the Mexican portfolio was as much domestic as it was international. There were a lot of issues, border issues, treaties, water issues and environmental problems on the border, and of course immigration, that had domestic as well as international players. We had to deal with governors and sheriffs and all kinds of state officials and congressmen from the border states. So it was a very active portfolio.

As PDAS I served as a designated problem solver for the Bureau. I did my requisite travel to Mexico, but I was soon asked to take other trips to countries that were not part of my day-to-day responsibilities. Whenever there was a problem or a meeting that required Pete's presence and he could not be there, I would go in his stead. If there were posts that were having problems, I would often be sent to as a fireman to put out the fire. So I traveled to places like Haiti, the Bahamas, Panama, Barbados, and others. These were short trips to attend meetings, counsel ambassadors who were having difficulties, and at times to deal with immediate problems.

The most important issue I faced in my first year was the Mexican presidential election of 2000. For the first time there appeared to be a real possibility that what the Peruvian

Nobel Prize winner Mario Vargas Llosa had called "the world's most perfect dictatorship," the 70-year reign of the Institutional Revolutionary (PRI) party in Mexico, might actually come to an end. I traveled to Mexico to determine whether in fact this was possible and whether we had any faith that the election would be free and fair. After meeting with government, opposition and election officials, traveling around and talking to the interested parties, and especially IFE, the electoral institute, I was impressed by the safeguards that the Mexicans had put in place. Even though corruption is quite prevalent in Mexico and elections had allegedly been stolen in the past, I thought there was a good chance that Mexican officials would conduct a free election and that the person who received the most votes would be declared the winner. Now, there were all kinds of shenanigans going on before the actual vote. We had reports that the political campaigns, particularly the PRI campaign, would supply food baskets and drinks to potential voters, and even give them money. That was something that was difficult to control, but I remained convinced that the actual vote count would likely be a fair one.

Q: Did you meet Vicente Fox?

GUTIERREZ: I had met Vicente Fox in Washington. He had come a few months earlier to the State Department. Of course, the opposition candidates in Mexico had traditionally never gotten a lot of attention, and this time it was no different, because nobody thought they were going to win after losing presidential elections to the PRI for 70 years. But you could tell Vicente Fox was a different breed of candidate. He was a tall, flamboyant guy. I remember he was wearing cowboy boots when he came to the Department. When he sat down, you could see that the boots spelled out his name: one boot had "Vicente" inscribed on it, and the other one said "Fox." He was a very colorful guy. Fox was not received by Secretary Albright or Strobe Talbott, but by Ambassador Thomas Pickering, the Undersecretary for Political Affairs. I'm sure if we had thought he had a chance of winning the Secretary of State, or maybe the President, would have received him. I was present at the meeting, and was impressed by Fox. Still, it was impossible to know whether Mexicans would respond to his brand of politics.

After I returned from my trip to Mexico, I had to testify before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. One of the duties of the principal deputy is to substitute for the assistant secretary when he is out of the country or unable to testify. I remember Congressman Menendez asked me, "Do you have any faith that the Mexican election will be free and fair?" I replied that I had been impressed with the electoral institute in Mexico, the IFE, and I was convinced that they had adequate safeguards in place.

The next day, my remarks were widely covered in the Mexican press. I was blasted by some in the Mexican opposition press, especially on the Left, by the newspaper "La Jornada." They said something like, "Gutierrez is the most naive American official who has ever been here." They almost accused me of being brainwashed by the Mexican government.

When Election Day finally came, the first reports indicated that Fox was ahead. We had reports that some in the PRI leadership were moving to take action, probably to try to

steal the results. But then President Zedillo, then president of Mexico from the PRI party, appeared on television to address his countrymen. He spoke with a big portrait of Benito Juarez, Mexico's most famous patriot, behind him. He said, and his message was pretty much directed to members of his own party, something like "It is over. Fox has won the election, and we will respect the vote of the people." Sure enough, the electoral institute soon called it for Fox, and Fox was proclaimed president. Zedillo's gesture was a patriotic, historic act that changed the course of Mexican politics.

Q: Did you go down with the delegation?

GUTIERREZ: No, I did not. I believe Pete went to that one. But certainly I was very happy that my faith in the electoral institute had been rewarded and that I had called it right. In fact we had an inter-agency meeting a couple of weeks before the election with NSC, White House, State Department, DOD and other agencies. Only two people had called the election for Fox at that meeting. I was one of them.

Q: When was the election, what month?

GUTIERREZ: It was in July 2000. Fox was not inaugurated until December.

Q: Then when he was inaugurated he knew that Bush had won our election.

GUTIERREZ: Our election might still have been in the courts at that time.

Q: But there was great interest about the possible good relationship between Fox and Bush since they had both been governors, I guess. Fox had been a governor of...

GUTIERREZ: Fox had been the governor of Guanajuato.

Q: Guanajuato, and they could work out some thorny issues including immigration.

GUTIERREZ: Yes. The press was making a big deal of the fact that, as Governor of Texas, Bush spoke some Spanish, knew a lot about Mexico, and had dealt with border issues. There was a lot of speculation that the relationship would improve with these two governors from border states. But that would come later.

My first year and a half on the job was under the Democratic Clinton Administration under Secretary Madeleine Albright and Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott. The one time I got to travel with Secretary Albright was to do a trilateral meeting. We had this mechanism in place whereby the foreign ministers of Mexico and Canada met with the Secretary of State every year. The time I went the meeting took place in New Mexico, so I flew with Secretary Albright to Santa Fe to meet with Rosario Green, who was the Mexican foreign minister, and Lloyd Axworthy, the Canadian foreign minister. That was an interesting trip in Santa Fe. There we negotiated issues, not only multilateral issues that interested us, but border and bilateral issues as well.

Q: You said earlier that our relationship with Mexico was the most important relationship we have with Latin America. That is certainly the case. I have heard other people say it is even the most important relationship we have in many ways in terms of the potential for either a productive relationship or problematic relationship. But do you think the Clinton administration paid enough attention to Mexico?

GUTIERREZ: I suppose so. U.S. Presidents are periodically accused of not paying enough attention to Mexico or Latin America, especially in recent years. I remember that a Latin American foreign minister once said, "The U.S. is not paying enough attention to Latin America … and that is a good thing."

The Clinton administration took office in 1993, when I was in Nassau, and later in the Senior Seminar. I became director of PPC in 1994 until 1996, so I was in Washington for most of the first term. In his first term, Clinton did not travel to the region at all. He might have done a border trip to Mexico, I can't recall. My recollection is he didn't take a significant trip to Latin America that whole first term. He had been elected on domestic issues, "It's the economy, stupid." Foreign policy took a back seat in general. Then in the second term, once he was re-elected, he did pay a lot more attention to the whole region including Mexico.

The one big Latin America-related event in the first term was the Summit of the Americas, which was held in Miami. This was a very significant event. The Clinton administration could point to that event as being worth many trips. But certainly there was a bit of frustration in the first term among those of us who worked on Latin America that more attention wasn't paid toward the region. During the second term, we did have a very able ambassador, former Assistant Secretary Jeff Davidow, in Mexico and a lot was done to improve cooperation, and to continue to resolve continuing problems there are between our law enforcement agencies, like U.S. Customs and DEA, with the Mexicans.

Q: I remember one interesting anecdote on customs. I think it was before you came on. I was still the Haiti coordinator. Sitting in the front office listening to Jeff Davidow while he was still assistant secretary talking about a visit by Rosario Green and dealing with Madeleine Albright, and the toast that she gave. At the very end of the toast she said something like it reminds me of movie. This should be the start of a beautiful friendship. And it kind of resolved the Casablanca issue, which was a very bad confrontation between Mexico and the U.S. over the way one of our agencies operated.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. In the case of DEA, the issue was the fact that DEA agents carried weapons on Mexican soil, and the Mexicans did not want them to carry weapons. What existed was sort of an agreement to disagree which translated to DEA agents being told they could carry weapons, but not to get caught. There were some agents in Mexico near the border who got caught with weapons and that became a big bilateral issue that required quite a bit of negotiation.

We paid a lot of attention to Mexico in the State Department. There was an annual bilateral commission meeting, which we organized, and often five or six U.S. cabinet

officers would attend. Especially when the meetings weren't held in Washington -- sometimes they were held in Mexico City or Cancun or other places. But once a year we had high level meetings with the Mexicans covering the waterfront of issues.

Q: This time when you came in on the end, a year and a half of the Clinton administration and then the administration of George W. Bush. Did you ever brief President Bush?

GUTIERREZ: Not personally, though we did brief him in the State Department soon after he took office.

Q: What about you mentioned earlier the interest of governors in the relationship, frontier governors in the relationship with Mexico. Did you ever brief any of the governors?

GUTIERREZ: Not governors specifically, but a number of mayors and state officials. I remember Arizona officials complained that there were no controls along the border. This was before the vigilantes had appeared.

Q: The minutemen.

GUTIERREZ: Right. But you saw the precursors to the minutemen appearing every once in a while. There were lots of concerns. You had attorneys general and all kinds of state officials coming by and the Congressman from San Diego who was worried about environmental problems in Tijuana having an effect on his district.

One of the issues we had to deal with had to do with water. Under the provisions of a bilateral treaty, Mexico had to make water from its rivers available to Texas ranchers for irrigation, and we had to return the favor along the Colorado River. When drought conditions hit, both sides had trouble meeting their commitments to the other side. I had to testify once before a water committee in the Congress.

Q: It was heavily salinized or something.

GUTIERREZ: There were all kinds of problems. But the one the Congress was interested in was that the Mexicans were holding back the water a bit in Texas because they were facing a drought. So we had to keep pressuring them to release more water, and those were very emotional issues.

Q: Did you have any issues with the natural gas or how that worked at that time?

GUTIERREZ: Those problems were mostly handled by other agencies. As I recall, the Department of Energy was very active. There was talk about energy cooperation. Mexico was involved in an energy initiative for the Summit of the Americas. We mostly monitored the situation, as we did not have primary responsibility for the issue.

Q: Did you do Canada as well?

GUTIERREZ: Not directly, but because of the trilateral connection I was involved with a number of Canadian issues. These were very important relationships during that time. I believe Canada became our number one trading partner during that time and Mexico was number two. I did travel to Ottawa a couple of times, particularly after 9/11.

Q: What about the Mexican military? I remember that there had always been the Mexican military always had refused to have a relationship with SOUTHCOM at that time. Was that an issue?

GUTIERREZ: The military-to-military relationship was always an issue. The Mexican constitution says the Mexican military cannot deploy outside of the nation's borders, so that made any joint exercises problematic. In addition, Mexicans will never forget that 40% of their territory was in their mind taken away by the gringos, so that made any military cooperation with the U.S. very difficult to set up. I remember that the Pentagon had a number of initiatives that had to do with Mexico. One of them was to provide the Mexicans with used U.S. helicopters to fight drug traffickers. Once they received the helicopters, however, the Mexicans complained that over half the helicopters didn't work or had broken down. Of course, the Mexican military was very reluctant to be seen as being too close to the Americans.

I remember the story that a U.S. military officer who served in Mexico once told me. This U.S. officer had met and befriended a Mexican counterpart while the two were students at the Inter American-Defense College in Washington. The two became great friends. They attended classes together, and met with their families at each other's homes on social occasions. After they parted company, they promised to meet in the future.

As it turns out, the American was assigned to the Defense Attaché's office at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico. One of the first things he did upon arrival was to try to get together with his friend, who was now a Mexican general. The friend would not agree to meet with him informally, and he was told to request an appointment in writing. He never saw his friend while he was in Mexico. So that was the reality of dealing with Mexico. The Mexicans were also very rank-conscious. The U.S. Defense Attaché had to be a general officer if he expected to get appointments. On the other hand, the Mexican Navy was less formal and was quite willing to work with us on counter drug operations in the Pacific.

Q: So Mexico did require a lot of your time as deputy assistant secretary. I don't know if you have any more to say about Mexico.

GUTIERREZ: Only that once Fox was elected, that put the relationship on another plane. In those first months of 2001, U.S.-Mexico relations became quite intense.

After being elected, President Bush's first bilateral trip was to Mexico. I think his first trip was to the Quebec Summit of the Americas, which was a multilateral event, but the first bilateral trip was to Mexico to Guanajuato, to Fox's ranch. As you noted previously,

a tremendous amount of expectations was created about U.S.-Mexican relations when both Bush and Fox assumed office.

Once President Bush's trip was announced, Secretary of State Colin Powell arranged for the President to come to the State Department for a briefing about Mexico. But Powell tried to do something different this time. The new wrinkle was that Powell did not want the assistant secretary or anyone in the senior leadership to brief President Bush. Powell pointed out that in the military, senior officers are briefed by the middle ranks of the military leadership. For President Bush's briefing at the State Department, Secretary Powell wanted the desk officers to lead the briefing for the President of the United States. In the military, captains and majors brief four-star generals, but this is something that had never been done at the State Department. The Mexico desk had maybe four or five mid-level Foreign Service Officers. The plan was for these four or five mid-level FSOs to brief the President of the United States prior to his trip.

Q: With power point?

GUTIERREZ: No, the State Department doesn't do power point very well, as you know. As you can imagine, Powell's plan caused considerable nervousness in the senior ranks of the Department. Here we had an opportunity to brief a new President and a new Secretary of State, and the briefing was to be conducted by mid-level desk officers. Some of these desk officers were very good, but most were inexperienced. The assistant secretary, the country director, the new NSC director and I were all somewhat apprehensive about the briefing. Since I had the responsibility for Mexico in the WHA Front Office, it was my job to ensure that the briefing would go well.

I decided to organize a dress rehearsal with the desk officers prior to the briefing. We ran through the briefing, went over the topics to be covered, and the Country Director and I made some suggestions. After the trial run, I felt much more at ease. I was convinced that the desk officers would acquit themselves well.

The next day President Bush came to the State Department, and we proceeded to the Secretary of State's conference room, where the briefing was to be held. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice was there, as was John Maisto, who was the new NSC Senior Director for the Americas. Of course, Secretary Powell was there. Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Mary Ryan attended, as did INL Assistant Secretary Randy Beers. In addition to Pete Romero and me, Country Director John Dawson was there for WHA. I still have a photograph that was taken at the beginning of the meeting, when the President had first arrived. In the picture you see the desk officers all smiling, and the Department and NSC senior leaders (except for Powell) looking nervous and wondering, what are these desk officers going to say? Are they going to say the right thing?

The briefing went very well. The desk officers covered all the points and answered the President's questions accurately. The President surprised us with his knowledge of Mexico and the bilateral issues. He knew quite a bit about the water issue: he actually

knew how many cubic feet of water were to be provided by Mexico under the treaty. The level of detail that he knew about Mexico was impressive.

Q: Did this practice of desk officers briefing the president continue?

GUTIERREZ: That was the only time our bureau got to brief the President while I was there. I don't know if the practice was continued in other bureaus. Certainly after 9/11 there were not too many opportunities. But word got around that the desk officers' briefing of the President had gone well, and our bureau's prestige rose in the Department and with Secretary Powell. It was quite a gamble, but typical of Secretary Powell. He wanted to shake things up a little bit and change things around, and to draw from his military experience. In his experience, the people who are most involved in the issue were the ones who were most logical to brief the principals, so that is exactly what we did on that occasion.

Q: Can we talk just a little bit about the transition from the Clinton administration to the Bush administration, the way it was seen from where you were sitting in the State Department. Madeleine Albright goes out. Colin Powell comes in. I remember there was great expectation that he could bring resources with him and he in fact did. Do you have any sense, can you tell us a little bit about how you viewed that transition?

GUTIERREZ: First let me say a word about Secretary Albright. When Madeleine Albright was named Secretary of State, I identified with her. I thought she had a great story, someone who had gone from being a refugee from Czechoslovakia to becoming Ambassador to the UN and then Secretary of State. As a former political exile from Cuba, I saw parallels between her journey and mine. Unfortunately, I never got to know her well. On the occasions I was with her in 1999 and 2000, she was extremely busy and surrounded by a staff that did not encourage anyone from approaching her.

Q: Quite junior.

GUTIERREZ: Some were younger officers who saw their job as protecting the Secretary's time very jealously. It seemed to me that her staff could have gotten her more involved on management and internal issues from time to time. Instead, it seemed that she had become a little isolated from the building. Maybe she was in victory lap mode by the time I worked with her, at the end of her tenure. She was extremely capable, very smart and terribly tough, especially on issues like Bosnia and the Balkans. And as in any administration, there were inter-agency tensions. I remember I was briefing Secretary Albright before a trip to Brazil at one point, and I mentioned that National Security Advisor Sandy Berger was going to be in Brazil the week before her arrival. The moment I said that, I could tell by her reaction this was the first time she had known about Berger's trip. The room became silent the moment I said that. You could sense there was tension between the NSC and the Secretary's staff. But at a personal level, Secretary Albright was always very nice to me, and I believe she was generally liked by most in the State Department.

Enter Colin Powell, and you could tell he would be a different kind of Secretary of State. It was immediately evident that he cared about those who worked for him, just by his first few actions. In his acceptance remarks when President-elect Bush announced his nomination, he said, “I want to tell the men and women of the State Department that I am honored to work with them.” I don’t recall any Secretary of State saying anything about the rank and file upon being nominated. Powell exemplified the best of our military, someone who cared about his troops and would take care of the troops. This was very unusual in the State Department. I had never seen a Secretary of State, with the possible exception of George Shultz, who paid genuine attention to the people who worked for him.

Powell made it a point to respect the traditions of the State Department. He presided at swearing-in ceremonies for ambassadors and new officer classes. Most of his predecessors had been too busy to preside over ceremonies that would not make the evening news. There was immediately a tremendous amount of anticipation in the building about Secretary Powell and what he would bring to the State Department. A lot of the things he said and did were unprecedented. I remember at one point, he put out a message to all State hands that, if you are at your desk after 6:00 p.m., you’d better be working on a crisis. If not, you should go home to your family. No one had ever said at the State Department. We all knew that if you wanted to advance at State, you had to work long hours and had to be seen late in the evening and on Saturdays in order to stand out from the crowd. Powell’s message was to do your job, but do not neglect your family.

Q: When did he go home?

GUTIERREZ: I believe on most nights he tried to go home at around 6:30 or 7:00. Of course, this didn’t always work out.

Q: So you didn’t have a seventh floor busy operating at 8:00 or 9:00 at night.

GUTIERREZ: I’m sure his staff continued to work long hours, but he tried to set an example for the rest of the building. World events did not always cooperate. But it was nice that he cared about employees and their families.

Q: What time did the WHA front office close down?

GUTIERREZ: Not before 7:00 or 7:30 p.m. depending on what was going on. Sometimes we had issues that kept us there very late.

Q: Did Colin Powell pull resources out of the Congress?

GUTIERREZ: Colin Powell brought tremendous credibility to the State Department. He fought very hard for more resources. In those first years he did get more resources for the State Department. He had a good relationship with Congress on both sides of the aisle. He wasn’t averse to twisting arms and calling senators and congressmen and wheeling and dealing to get what he wanted.

Q: Now this is before September 11, 2001. But did you notice any change in focus or interest concerning our relations with Latin America with the change in administration?

GUTIERREZ: Yes indeed. The Bush administration started off like gangbusters on U.S.-Latin America relations.

Let me go back to one other thing about Colin Powell. Secretary Powell set up a meeting every morning at 8:30 a.m. where all the assistant secretaries and their equivalents would brief him. This was something else that was unprecedented in recent memory. Assistant Secretaries seldom, if ever, had daily access to the Secretary of State in my experience. Madeleine Albright had no such meeting. I can't recall other secretaries being briefed by assistant secretaries every day. This was new. Here was the leadership of the career State Department getting an opportunity to talk the Secretary of State every morning at 8:30. And Powell would be there 90% of the time unless he was traveling. In the Clinton administration, Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott ran the meetings. This was another example of Secretary Powell showing his confidence in the career State Department.

But getting back to the beginning of the Bush administration: as I said, the president's first trip was to Mexico. As a former Governor of Texas, President Bush was deeply interested in Mexico. Soon after he assumed office, President Bush came to the State Department and spoke to the employees. Close to half his speech was about Latin America, and how the 21st Century would be the "Century of the Americas." President Bush highlighted the importance of our relations with Mexico and the countries of the region. I could almost feel the collective jaws of the Europeanists in the State Department dropping while the President spoke.

Those of us who worked in Western Hemisphere affairs were ecstatic about President Bush's emphasis on Latin America. A number of presidents and presidents-elect from the region soon started coming to Washington, and President Bush met with all of them. At these meeting in the White House, some of which I attended, the president liked to use the Spanish that he knew. Sometimes the president would break into Spanish in the middle of the meeting. This would force Patsy Arbizu, the President's interpreter at the meetings, to interpret for the Americans who didn't speak Spanish what the president was saying in Spanish in addition to translating what the President's foreign interlocutors said.

It seemed like a new era had begun in U.S.-Latin America relations, and I was excited to be a part of it. President Bush was interested in Latin America and seemed to want to engage with the leaders of the Hemisphere. Many presidents and presidents-elect came to Washington to meet with the President.

After his visit to Mexico, President Bush and President Fox agreed to set up a commission to look at the immigration problem. Secretary Powell and Attorney General Ashcroft started to look at ways to deal with the illegal immigration problem. Secretary Powell began to advocate a temporary worker program, and he tasked some of us to

begin to explore how such a program would work. Secretary Powell was very involved in the immigration issue. Time and again he would remind all of us of his Jamaican ancestry, and that his parents had been immigrants.

There was a lot of momentum to the negotiation. It seemed that we were moving toward approval of a temporary worker program. But some of us were worried that the Mexicans seemed to be getting a little ahead of themselves. I remember Foreign Minister Castañeda had said in a speech, at one point, "We want the whole enchilada," i.e. a temporary worker program and a path for citizenship. I guess they wanted amnesty or legalization for all. Given the politics, they weren't going to get that, but certainly the President was willing to meet them halfway, and there was a lot of progress.

On September 7, 2001, Mexican President Vicente Fox came to Washington on a state visit. By then, I was Acting Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, and I was invited to a ceremony in the White House to welcome Fox. At the ceremony, Fox tried to put pressure on the negotiators, proclaiming, "We expect an immigration deal by the end of the year." In retrospect, given Castañeda and Fox's comments, it seems the Mexicans overplayed their hand a bit.

Q: Were there structured immigration talks with Attorney General Ashcroft or how did that work?

GUTIERREZ: I believe Ashcroft and Powell were the co-chairs on the U.S. side. I attended a number of inter-agency meetings to see what the traffic would bear as far as temporary workers and other proposals. The Mexicans would have their own internal meetings, and then we would meet and compare notes.

Q: When did you become the acting assistant secretary?

GUTIERREZ: Pete Romero stayed on until late May, so he stayed four months. By then President Bush had selected Otto Reich to be Assistant Secretary. I became Acting Assistant Secretary in Late May of 2001. My first act was to travel to Nicaragua, which had upcoming presidential elections. The democratic forces were divided, and there was a danger that our old nemesis, Daniel Ortega, would be elected. Ortega, as he usually did when elections approached, was reinventing himself as a peaceful democrat and trying to minimize his differences with the U.S. He implied in his speeches that the U.S. was not worried about the possibility of his being elected president. This was not true, for we knew that Daniel Ortega was not a true democrat and never would be.

My job was to encourage the two democratic candidates to combine forces. In Managua, I gave a speech that, without criticizing Ortega by name, made it clear that we did not believe he was a democrat. I said that democracy was more than dressing in white (which Ortega was doing) every five years before an election; it had to be a lifelong vocation. I reminded the audience that Ortega still called Castro "the shining light of the Hemisphere" and considered Qadhafi and other dictators his best friends. Behind the scenes, I met with the opposition candidates and urged them to work together. After

considerable effort, we persuaded the democratic forces to work together, and Ortega was defeated.

I was Acting Assistant Secretary for about eight months. The Democrats, especially Senator Chris Dodd, had made it clear that Assistant Secretary-designate Reich would not get a hearing form the Democratic-controlled Senate Foreign Relations Committee. So Otto Reich was left hanging, and I continued to run the bureau.

Q: He was described as the low hanging fruit.

GUTIERREZ: There were concerns about Deputy Secretary-designate Negroponte and others being held up as well. About that time Senator Jeffords of Vermont left the Republican Party to become an independent voting with the Democratic Party. By doing so, Jeffords gave the Democrats a senate majority, and Senator Biden became the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. This confirmed that Reich would not get a hearing.

Q: So he got a recess appointment.

GUTIERREZ: In January 2002.

Q: Which went for one year I suppose.

GUTIERREZ: It went for a year and a half.

Q: It went for one year and a half, to the end of the congressional session.

GUTIERREZ: I was Acting Assistant Secretary from May 2001 until January 2002.

Q: When was the abortive coup against Chavez?

GUTIERREZ: That was in April, 2002. By then Otto was assistant secretary. I stayed on for four or five months as his Principal Deputy, so I was there during the coup attempt.

Q: I would like to get back to that. Before when you were acting assistant secretary before Otto Reich came on board, besides the steady concentration or focus on Mexico, you dealt with a lot of other issues including Haiti. What was going on with Haiti at that time?

GUTIERREZ: With regard to Haiti, the Clinton Administration was committed to President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott, Tony Lake, and Sandy Berger had been very instrumental in the return of Aristide. You know more about that period more than me. But certainly with Bush’s election I think the opposition believed that the new Republican administration would be hostile to Aristide and might even send troops to remove him. One issue in the final days of the Clinton Administration had to do with a promise that Strobe Talbott and Tony Lake had made to Aristide. They

had promised that some documents that U.S. troops had seized would be turned over to Aristide. The problem was that these documents incriminated opposition figures, and it was feared that Aristide might use them to imprison his opponents. Talbott and Lake decided that we should turn over the documents the day before Bush's inauguration.

Q: Did you return them?

GUTIERREZ: Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott instructed our ambassador to Haiti, Dean Curran, to turn over the documents to Aristide, and he did so.

Q: There was always an issue about the integrity of the judicial system in Haiti. What about the Andes? How did it look for the Andes?

GUTIERREZ: There was bipartisan consensus in many areas. Plan Colombia was started by the Clinton administration and supported by most Republicans. At that point the Andes were not the major area of disagreement between the parties.

Cuba, of course, was an area of disagreement. Otto Reich's nomination certainly led to a lot of speculation that U.S. policy toward Cuba was going to get a lot tougher. Clinton did sign the Helms-Burton Law during his administration after Cuban MIGs shot down unarmed planes piloted by Cuban exiles over international waters in 1996. But the whole Elián González episode had soured a lot of Republicans and Cuban Americans on the Clinton Administration.

Q: Elián González was a child of course that was picked up at sea. His mother had drowned, and this became a very hot political issue because he also had relatives in Miami. The father in Cuba wanted him back in Cuba and the relatives in Miami didn't want to give him up. Were you involved in the discussions in the U.S. government about how to handle the Elian Gonzalez case?

GUTIERREZ: Although Cuba policy wasn't one of my responsibilities, I did attend a number of meetings on the Elián González case. Fidel Castro saw an opportunity to embarrass the United States, and mounted a national and worldwide campaign to bring Elian home. The Clinton Administration's position was that the child, Elián, should be reunited with the father. I pointed out to my colleagues that but there were other considerations -- such as Cuba exploiting the return of the child and embarrassing the Cuban-American community in the U.S. -- that should be discussed.

Q: Now also we had an immigration agreement with Cuba at the time I think so there was a kind of structure to or method in handling this kind of thing.

GUTIERREZ: We had an immigration agreement, but once Cuban refugees made it to U.S. soil, we normally did not send them back. Under the agreement, if Cuban rafters were intercepted by the Coast Guard, they were interviewed. If we determined they had escaped for economic reasons, they would be returned to Cuba with a caveat that officers from the U.S. Interests Section would interview them after they were repatriated to

ensure that they weren't being persecuted. But certainly if we determined that there was a credible case for Cubans who claimed they had left because of persecution or for political reasons, they were allowed to claim political asylum and state their case before a U.S. judge.

Our 1995 immigration agreement with Cuba resulted in what became known as the "wet foot dry foot" policy. If the Cuban refugees made it to U.S. soil, very rarely would they be returned to Cuba, because the political pressure by the Cuban-American community to allow them to stay would make that very unpopular. On the high seas, most of the intercepted refugees were returned to Cuba as economic refugees. But in the case of Elián, he had made it to the U.S. shore, so ordinarily he would have been allowed to stay with his relatives in Miami. But the case became a cause célèbre because Cuba made it a melodrama about a child being taken away from his father. If Elián's mother had not died on the high seas and had arrived safely in Miami, there would have been no issue.

Q: But the closest relative was the father who was in Cuba and wanted him back and was part of the system in Cuba.

GUTIERREZ: Right. I don't know if the father had a government job, or whether he was part of the system, but he quickly became very important to the Cuban regime. Fidel Castro sensed a great opportunity to embarrass the U.S., and master propagandist that he is, he immediately made the return of Elián González Cuba's number one foreign policy priority.

Q: So with your background you told Assistant Secretary Romero that you were looking at it through a different prism.

GUTIERREZ: I did. I made the case that it would be a tremendous propaganda victory for Castro if we were to return Elián to Cuba. I pointed out that Elián's father had been aware of the mother's plan to leave the island, . Elián's relatives in Miami claimed that the father had planned to leave himself at a later date. But once Castro made the case Cuba's number one priority, the father became the most revolutionary of revolutionaries and a symbol of the system, perhaps after government pressure or incentives to cooperate.

The case pitted the Cuban American community on one side and Castro's Cuba on the other. Many U.S. officials who advocated returning Elián were well meaning and thought the right thing to do was to return the child to his father. Some were swayed by Castro's promise that if Elián were returned, Cuba would not exploit him for propaganda purposes and would allow him to lead a normal life. Not surprisingly, this did not happen. Since his return, the Cuban regime has exploited Elián to the maximum, and he has become a symbol for the Cuban Revolution. Curiously, then-presidential candidate Al Gore did not favor returning Elián, but called on the Florida courts to decide the case.

So the Elián case was one issue where I disagreed with the Department and U.S. policy. It could have been handled a lot differently. And it did not end well, with an INS SWAT

team with bulletproof vests and automatic weapons storming the relatives' house and forcibly seizing the child so we could accede to a dictator's wishes.

Q: Other issues in the hemisphere that you might have been involved in as acting assistant secretary.

GUTIERREZ: The most important event that took place while I was acting assistant secretary, of course, was September 11. At the time I was with Secretary Powell in Lima, Peru.

Q: Wow, that's right. This was an OAS meeting of some kind.

GUTIERREZ: Secretary Powell was visiting Peru and Colombia. As Acting Assistant Secretary, I traveled with him on this trip. In Peru, we were attending a special ministerial meeting of the OAS General Assembly, where the Inter-American Democratic Charter was going to be signed. This was an important document that had been negotiated for months. It would establish that all OAS members had to have democratic systems or be expelled from the organization.

We had arrived in Lima the night before, on September 10. Secretary Powell attended a reception for the delegations upon arrival, and we also had a meeting with the foreign ministers from the Andean countries, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. The main topic of discussion at this meeting was Venezuela's request not to be excluded from the Andean Trade Preferences Act. The decision had already been made, because of Chavez's behavior, and the Secretary so informed his Andean colleagues.

The next morning we had breakfast with Peru's President Alejandro Toledo. There were about ten of us at the table, including Senior Director John Maisto from the National Security Council, and other State and Peruvian officials. Soon after the breakfast began, the Secretary's special assistant, Craig Kelly, came into the room and passed on a piece of paper to the Secretary. Secretary Powell immediately announced that an airplane had hit the World Trade Center in New York. I immediately thought that this could not be an accident, since the World Trade Center was probably not on the flight path of planes landing at New York airports. It had to be an act of terrorism. Five minutes later, Craig Kelly came back and passed another piece of paper to the Secretary, who announced that a second plane had hit the other World Trade Center tower. By now none of us had any doubt that this was a terrorist act. At this point, Secretary Powell told Craig to tell the pilots to get his plane ready to return to Washington. Ten minutes later, as we were wrapping up the breakfast, we learned that a third plane had hit the Pentagon. As we were walking out of the building, I saw a TV that was carrying a CNN report. It was announced that a bomb had exploded in the State Department. This, of course, turned out not to be true.

Q: After the first plane hit you continued with the OAS related discussions.

GUTIERREZ: The breakfast was a bilateral meeting with President Toledo rather than an OAS discussion. By the end of the breakfast, it was clear that we were in a state of war and we were going back. While the plane was being readied, the Secretary explained to President Toledo why he had to leave.

Since it would take an hour or so to get the plane ready, the Secretary decided to go to the OAS plenary meeting. When we arrived, all the OAS delegations had received the news from New York. The Secretary asked to address the forum, and was given permission to do so. The Secretary spoke extemporaneously, without any talking points, but it was one of the finest speeches I have ever heard. He said, "We will go after these perpetrators and not rest until they are brought to justice." He assured the delegates that our republic would survive and emerge strong from this tragedy. He thanked the 34 nations present for their expressions of support. He highlighted our shared values going forward. It was an incredibly moving scene. I remember the Argentine foreign minister and others had tears in their eyes at that point. I really admire the Secretary for the way he spoke that day. He said exactly what needed to be said at that time.

At the end of the speech, the delegates stood and gave the Secretary a standing ovation. Secretary Powell then explained that his presence was required in Washington, and that he would regrettably have to leave the proceedings. He asked that the Inter-American Democratic Charter be accepted by acclamation so he could sign it before departing.

The OAS delegates voted to accede to the Secretary's request. But as you might expect, things in the OAS do not normally work very fast. All the foreign ministers asked to speak to express their solidarity with the U.S. at a difficult moment. As the speeches continued to go on for a considerable period, the Secretary said to me that unless the Charter was signed in the next few minutes, he would have to leave.

Roger Noriega, the new U.S. ambassador to the OAS and I went around behind the scenes to pass the word that the Secretary had to leave quickly. The delegations quickly assented, and the speeches were cut short or not given at all. The final speech was being given by the Foreign Minister of Honduras. Apparently the Honduran Foreign Minister did not get the message, because he kept talking. Secretary Powell turned to me and said he had to leave right away. I quickly went to the Honduran delegation and wrote in a piece of paper in Spanish, "Secretary Powell has to leave NOW." The Honduran got the message: he ended his speech quickly, and called for a vote by acclamation to approve the Charter. The delegations then voted to approve the charter by acclamation.

Q: They got that done.

GUTIERREZ: We made sure they did. Then we flew back to the U.S.

Q: Were you on the plane with Powell?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, I was on Powell's plane. I had gone to Peru on the plane with him and I went back with him. Most of the delegation that had arrived with him went back on

the plane, including John Maisto and myself and some others. We had to call Colombia to tell the government that we would not be visiting Colombia after all. Even though President Pastrana had invited a thousand people to a reception that night, he understood.

On the plane ride back, reports of what had happened were a bit sketchy as first. Rumors were all over the map -- some had as many as 50,000 people dying. Secretary Powell was able to reach Deputy Secretary Armitage by phone, and the picture began to get clearer. By the time we arrived, we were the only plane flying into Washington, except for the F-16s that escorted us in.

Q: That's right; they closed down all the airports. So you landed at Andrews, the only plane flying. The president is not yet back to Washington I imagine.

GUTIERREZ: I believe he might have been back by then. We arrived about 10 hours after the event.

Q: You got off the plane; you found your way home then.

GUTIERREZ: We landed, and there was no public transportation to speak of. The State Department had been evacuated, so there were no vehicles available other than the ones sent to pick up the Secretary. Luckily I had driven to Andrews and had parked my car there, so I had transportation to get home. Some members of the delegation had no means of transportation, so those of us that had cars gave others a ride home. Traffic was extremely slow, at times at a standstill, that night.

After we left the breakfast, by a stroke of luck I was able to get through to my wife in Alexandria. I told her we were all right and that I would be coming home. She assured me all of our daughters were fine. It was probably as traumatic a day as I have ever been through.

The next day, our task was to obtain the Hemisphere's support for what we were trying to do to strike back at the terrorists. At the OAS headquarters in Washington, the Brazilian delegation called for the invocation of the Rio Treaty.

Q: The RIO treaty was a mutual defense agreement.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. The Rio Treaty, the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, specified that an attack on one country was an attack on all the countries which had signed the agreement.

Coincidentally, during his U.S. visit a few days before September 11, President Fox of Mexico had called for the abrogation of the Rio Treaty as a document which had served its purpose during the Cold War, but was now anachronistic. I'm sure that the Brazilian suggestion to invoke the treaty, while immensely useful to us, was also meant as a dig toward Mexico.

Following up on the Brazilian ambassador's suggestion, I called a meeting in my office with the ambassadors of Brazil and Argentina to the U.S. and the Brazilian and Argentine ambassadors to the OAS. Our ambassador to the OAS, Roger Noriega also came. We all came up with a draft resolution that we thought would be approved by OAS members, and sure enough, it was. The Mexicans had no choice but to sign it at that time, although a year later they withdrew from the treaty.

It quickly became apparent that the Rio Treaty was tailor made for the aftermath of September 11. The invocation of the Rio Treaty established a useful mechanism that paved the way for cooperation with the countries of the Hemisphere. Later, we persuaded OAS members to ratify all UN conventions on terrorism. These measures allowed us to share information more freely with the countries of the Hemisphere and to seize a number of suspected terrorists.

Q: What was the attitude of Venezuela at that point?

GUTIERREZ: At that time, Venezuela did not present any obstacles to our efforts. Given the worldwide sympathy and solidarity the U.S. received after 9/11, Chávez probably concluded that to oppose the Rio Treaty was big a mountain to climb. Of course, this all took place before the 2002 coup attempt, after which Chávez became even more radicalized.

Q: In the streets and certain places in Latin America there were almost celebrations about this attack I understand. I shouldn't say celebrations but some people were not so sad about it.

GUTIERREZ: I know this happened in the Middle East, but frankly I do not recall hearing about any celebrations in Latin America. What I recall was that there were a number of public events in support. I know that in Canada and in Argentina there were public displays of support. There were a lot of expressions of support, a lot of them spontaneous.

Q: I was in Paraguay at the time and there was an awful lot of support for us and a very moving mass and so forth in the cathedral. One sense we got out of the reaction is that people thought that whatever happens in other countries this kind of thing doesn't happen to the United States, and it almost gave them a sense of feeling more vulnerable because it happened the way it happened.

GUTIERREZ: Right.

Q: But certainly a very traumatic day and aftermath. How did it change the agenda with respect to Latin America after the smoke cleared?

GUTIERREZ: As you might expect, counter terrorism became the number one priority. I remember at one of the 8:30 morning meetings in the Seventh Floor, Deputy Secretary Armitage saying, "Now is the time to find out who is with us and who is against us." I

believe he was talking specifically about Pakistan, where he was about to go, but the statement applied to other parts of the world as well. Our priority was to get Latin American and Caribbean countries to help in the worldwide counter-terrorism.

A consequence of September 11 was that our immigration initiative with Mexico ground to a halt. It was discovered that the perpetrators had all gotten visas at U.S. embassies and consulates, and the public concluded that our borders were not protected. As I recall, a suspected terrorist was arrested at the Canadian border shortly thereafter. No immigration initiative was likely not to prosper after that.

The new focus on counter-terrorism, fighting Bin Laden and the Middle East and South Asia also effectively marked an end to the "Century of the Americas" that President Bush had proclaimed. The President's attention turned almost exclusively to Afghanistan and the Middle East for those first few months. It doesn't mean that we stopped all bilateral or multilateral initiatives with Latin America. There was still an active agenda, a lot going on, but counter terrorism was at the top of the priorities.

Q: You had been acting assistant secretary for several months at that point. And as the principal deputy assistant secretary you had in your portfolio a host of other issues. As acting assistant secretary, how did you shift your priorities? What happened?

GUTIERREZ: Since as acting assistant secretary I was responsible for 33 countries, I had to do a bit of everything at that point. We brought up an office director to the Front Office as an acting Deputy Assistant Secretary to cover some of the portfolios that I had been covering, but I kept my hand in on Mexico issues, and continued to do the day-to-day management of the bureau and personnel issues. As acting assistant secretary I had a lot more face time with the Seventh Floor. It was very exciting to deal directly with Secretary Powell on a daily basis -- he was a tremendous leader. I also enjoyed working with Deputy Secretary Armitage and Under Secretary for Management Grant Green.

After 9/11, the U.S. Government went into a frenzy of activity. This was exactly what was needed to go after Al-Qaeda, but some U.S. officials had some misguided ideas about what needed to be done. We pledged to fight terrorism worldwide, and that included fighting terrorism in the Western Hemisphere. But what did that mean? The Colombian guerrillas, the FARC, had been designated a terrorist organization. Did that mean that the U.S. should launch a counter-insurgency campaign? Some in the Pentagon started drawing up plans to do just that. Our job was to be the reality check to some of the more harebrained initiatives. There were some Pentagon officials who were looking for "targets" in the Western Hemisphere to strike.

Q: I know. I know who they were.

GUTIERREZ: They started looking at the tri-border area of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, an area with a large Arab population and known for money laundering.

Q: Right, and fund raising for Hezbollah, Hamas and so forth.

GUTIERREZ: Correct. But what were the targets? Are you going to attack banks, financial institutions? Of course not. So we had to provide a reality check and find smarter ways to fight terrorism.

Q: That must have been the period from September 11, 2001, until, when did Otto Reich take over, January was it?

GUTIERREZ: In January 2002. I was coming back from Nicaragua, where I had been part of the U.S. delegation for the inauguration of President Enrique Bolaños, who had defeated Daniel Ortega. I had just arrived at Andrews, feeling quite good about the trip, and was in the State Department car that had met me to bring me back to the Department. My secretary called me on the phone and said that the President has just appointed Otto Reich as assistant secretary with a recess appointment. This was a surprise to me, since no one had informed me that a recess appointment was in the works. So I had about 20 minutes to recondition myself from being the number one guy in the bureau to being the loyal number two.

Q: We should explain that a recess appointment is when you are not confirmed by the Senate but during a senatorial recess the President can appoint a person to a normally confirmable position but only until the end of the session. Did you know Otto Reich from before well?

GUTIERREZ: I had known Otto since the 1980's, when I had been the Nicaragua desk officer and he had held a number of positions in the Reagan Administration.

Q: Had you known him through any Cuban connection?

GUTIERREZ: Not really. When I first met him, he had been the Washington representative of the Council of the Americas. Then he was appointed to be the assistant administrator for Latin America for AID in the Reagan administration. Later he was named ambassador to Venezuela. I remember him as a very hard working, dynamic, and with a good sense of humor, and someone who was very combative.

Q: He was also in the State Department office of outreach after the…

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. After being assistant administrator for AID he ran what was then known as the public diplomacy office, which was our attempt to do outreach and explain our policy toward Central America. I believe Pete Romero worked for him at one point, and others. Otto and I had talked, and I had asked him for career advice, what it was like working in the private sector and things like that. So we knew each other.

When Otto was first announced as the assistant secretary-designate, I told him I was prepared to stay with him for about a year, and then do something else. When he assumed the office, he told me I could stay at his deputy as long as I wanted. I said that I would

stay until the summer and then move on. So I returned to the job of Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary until the summer of 2002.

Q: Helping him out, did you step back into the same kind of responsibilities you had as a focus or what did you do?

GUTIERREZ: Not exactly. Otto had a different style than Pete Romero, and he was not a career Foreign Service officer, so a lot of my time was spent in meetings with him, and whoever he met with. Pete and I had had a clear division of responsibility: we pretty much went our own ways, and met at the end of the day to compare notes. With Otto, I had to be more hands on with him in those first few days in getting him into the routine of the building, introducing him to the right players, providing institutional memory, and so on. I made sure he attended all the key meetings and subbed for him when he couldn't.

Otto came with a huge Rolodex, a tremendous amount of contacts in the White House, in the government, and outside of government. He would get a huge amount of phone calls every day. Keeping him on schedule was a challenge to his office management assistant and me. We did a lot of managing up with him. I kept my old portfolios, but relied more on the office directors to do the day-to-day issues. I felt I had to stay close to Otto in the beginning, plugging each hole when there was a leak, like the little Dutch boy.

Q: Coming in did Otto Reich take a particular interest more than the other secretaries did in either Cuba or Venezuela?

GUTIERREZ: Cuba and Venezuela were certainly two of his top priorities. Being a Cuban American, having been involved on Cuban issues, and having been ambassador to Venezuela, he was very interested in those two portfolios.

Q: What was the attitude toward Hugo Chávez and what was Chávez's attitude toward us back in January of 2002, before the abortive coup?

GUTIERREZ: Chávez had polarized the country. He had shown that he didn't have democratic instincts. He had proclaimed that "all I have to offer my opponents is lead," as in bullets. He had intimidated the media. He certainly was not our cup of tea. President Bush had met with him in a group setting in Quebec during the Summit of the Americas, and the meeting had not gone well. They had bad vibes from the beginning.

Q: Was Chavez at that point calling him Mr. Danger?

GUTIERREZ: No, that came later. He was a bit less confrontational at the beginning. By 2002 the opposition was really gaining momentum with lots of street demonstrations, and was uniting against Chávez. Chávez had used heavy handed tactics against them, and some demonstrators had even been shot.

Q: In those days some in the military were also prepared to stand up.

GUTIERREZ: There were divisions in the military. As the opposition to Chávez grew stronger, a parade of Venezuelan oppositionists came to Washington to see us. There were all kind of coup rumors, and we had all been very careful, both in Washington and in Caracas under Ambassador Hrinak and then Ambassador Shapiro in saying that we would not support or condone a coup under any circumstances.

Q: People came up to see you actually using the coup word or were they just simply saying really that we have a very burdensome president or what.

GUTIERREZ: There were Venezuelans of all kinds of folks passing out information and asking us what we thought. Some would say that the military was ready to move, and implicitly or explicitly asked for our support. At every meeting where I was present we made sure that we always said that we would not support a coup under any circumstances.

Q: That was established policy. The talking points would be very clear on that. And also in Caracas.

GUTIERREZ: Ambassadors Donna Hrinak and Charles Shapiro had religiously adhered to that policy.

Q: What about other countries? I am thinking about Spain now. Because Chávez had accused Spain at the Ibero-American summit in Chile of knowing about a possible coup.

GUTIERREZ: No other country was as big a player as we were. I don't think there was any country that I knew about that was actively supporting a coup. Someone might have conceivably lent a sympathetic ear to Venezuelan interlocutors, because there was a lot of talk in those days, and a lot of people said many things.

Q: How did the events unfold, if you can recall what happened?

GUTIERREZ: Well as it happened, that day…

Q: Which was in March?

GUTIERREZ: It was in early April of 2002. As it happened, that very morning I got a call from my wife saying that she was leaving for the hospital. She had been suffering from abdominal pains, so I left at about noon on the day of the coup to meet her at the hospital. After hours in the emergency room, it was determined that my wife had an appendix that had just ruptured and needed surgery right away. The surgery went well, but I stayed with her throughout the day and night and was not present for most of the events of the day of the coup. Before I left, we had received information that there had been a coup and that Chavez had been arrested by the military.

Later I learned more about what had happened. Pedro Carmona, a business leader, had been named the interim president. Carmona had addressed the nation surrounded by

members of the Venezuelan elite with their Armani suits and talking on their cell phones. Carmona then quickly announced the dissolution of the Congress and the Supreme Court. These images and proclamations were not well received in the poorer sections of the country. Elements of the military that had wavered and were uncertain about whether to back the coup decided to rally around Chávez. Carmona went too far too quickly.

Q: This was how many hours after?

GUTIERREZ: I believe it was the following day.

Q: The following day. By this time they had tried to reach out to us or had we been in touch with anybody?

GUTIERREZ: As I recall, Ambassador Shapiro had instructions, to urge Carmona not to dissolve the Supreme Court or the Congress. Obviously, Carmona did not listen to us. At the OAS, countries protested because, even though he was not a democrat, Chávez had been democratically elected.

Q: There was a meeting at the time, I believe, of Latin American presidents.

GUTIERREZ: That was the Rio group. I believe they met in Costa Rica.

Q: The Rio group, but there was a meeting. They unanimously came out condemning the coup. I remember the president of Paraguay was there at the time.

GUTIERREZ: Right. Although privately a lot of them were expressing different opinions.

Q: Right, but publicly they were supporting democracy. They didn't want to be seen as winking and nodding at the coup. What was the public affairs posture of the U.S.?

GUTIERREZ: Some mistakes were made. The NSC came out with a press communiqué which made it clear that we were happy that Chávez had been removed. They did not clear the language with the State Department. Then Assistant Secretary Reich called a meeting with all the Western Hemisphere ambassadors to discuss the events in Venezuela. I was at the hospital with my wife, but I am told he said something like "the people have spoken in Venezuela," to which the Brazilian ambassador replied, "In my country when the people speak, that is called an election."

Q: We could have used that guy in October, 2003 in Bolivia when the people spoke there on the streets and kicked out Sánchez de Lozada. Nobody said anything except us.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. At first, it appeared that Chávez had been removed for good. I was shocked when I turned on the TV the following day and saw that Chávez was back. This was the worst-case scenario. I think Fidel and Cuban intelligence may have helped

rally some of the pro-Chávez elements there. The result was that Chávez came back stronger than ever.

There was speculation in Latin America and on Capitol Hill that the U.S. must have been involved in supporting the coup. Senator Chris Dodd asked the General Accounting Office to conduct an investigation of the State Department to see if we had been involved. The investigation found no evidence that the State Department had either fomented or supported a coup, so Otto and the bureau were exonerated by the investigation.

Q: Did you see certainly that after Chávez took hold again, I suppose there was an immediate toughening of his attitude towards the U.S.

GUTIERREZ: I don't think it was immediate, because Chávez at first was still not sure whether he controlled the situation. But as soon as he started consolidating his power, he became a lot more strident against us. Later the opposition tried a recall election. By then I had left the bureau.

Q: At the time of the abortive coup, was Chávez really making these overtures toward Cuba, was he providing the oil and things like that, or was that a little bit later?

GUTIERREZ: Castro was always his spiritual leader. He had taken him in after he was released from jail, and established close ties with him. Chávez always praised him publicly, calling him his leader and guiding light. Most significantly, under Chávez Venezuela began to provide Cuba with oil subsidies, which arguably saved the Cuban economy after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Q: But the whole idea of the Bolivarian republic was pretty well developed.

GUTIERREZ: Yes. The Bolivarian circles, attacks on the media and opposition were pretty well developed before the coup.

Q: Well what about developments with Cuba? Was there any particular change with Otto, of course, Otto Reich being there, there was legislation that really controlled our relationship with Cuba. It wasn't as if there was flexibility in moving policy one way or the other I suppose.

GUTIERREZ: A change had taken in 2000 before the Bush administration came to power. There was pressure from senators from farm States that wanted to sell agricultural products to Cuba, so Congress voted to allow food sales to Cuba for the first time since the embargo was put in place. The only provision was that Cuba had to pay cash on the barrelhead, in other words, there would be no credits. This led to some press speculation that the Clinton administration would seek to lift the embargo. As principal deputy and later acting assistant secretary, I had to make a number of speeches reassuring folks, especially in Florida, that, even though food sales to Cuba were now legal, the embargo would remain in place. But if Cuba wanted to pay cash for U.S. food and agricultural

products, they were free to buy it. And they did. The United States soon became Cuba's third or fourth major trade partner. This frustrated European countries, who liked to complain that Cuba had not paid them. They would ask us, "How can you get the Cubans to pay you when they owe us billions of dollars and they won't pay us?" The joke was they had only one credit card that worked and used it with the U.S. and not with the Europeans, who had been trading with them for 40 years.

Q: Looking at this from the Cuba side, was it a straight commercial deal or did they want to develop a relationship through that?

GUTIERREZ: I believe they certainly wanted the propaganda value, so they went out of their way to buy U.S. agricultural products even when they may have been more expensive. Cuba had access to U.S. agricultural products, but could still claim that the embargo was choking them economically, even though they could buy food and medicines from the U.S. and trade with the rest of the world. They also cultivated some friendships with members of Congress from farm states who were calling for a lifting of the embargo and changing our policy to Cuba.

Q: During this period, did you ever get back to Cuba?

GUTIERREZ: No. The only time I have been on the island since my departure was when I was DCM in the Bahamas, and Ambassador Hecht and I went to the Guantanamo base for some counter-narcotics meetings there. I haven't been back, and don't plan to be back until there is a change of government.

Q: You could go back as a journalist or professor, adjunct professor.

GUTIERREZ: I would rather not. Moreover, the Cubans probably would not give me a visa. In fact, an article in "Granma," Cuba's official newspaper, once identified as "public enemy number two" of the Revolution. Otto was number one.

I worked in the bureau for a few more months before leaving in the summer of 2002. At the end of the day, Otto Reich and I got along well. He is a very personable guy, and he was good to the people in the bureau, the desk officers and others. He certainly had this combative streak that he never backed off from a fight, and this made him some enemies in the press and Congress, but he was much different at a personal level.

Q: OK, well during this time you were chosen to be the ambassador to Argentina.

GUTIERREZ: That did not happen right away. After Otto received his recess appointment, it was widely assumed that I would not stay around as his deputy for long. Deputy Secretary Armitage, the Director General and others had asked me what I wanted to do after leaving Western Hemisphere affairs. I told them I was willing to stay in the bureau until the summer of 2002, and then wanted to leave to do something else.

When President Bush had assumed office in 2001, there were a number of embassies in the Hemisphere that had to be filled, especially those occupied by political ambassadors from the Clinton administration. Before he left the bureau, Pete Romero and I went to see Secretary Powell soon after he assumed office to propose that we fill these ambassadorial positions with career Foreign Service officers. Since the Bush administration had been a bit late in organizing itself because of the Florida vote and the Supreme Court decision, it did not have a list of candidates for ambassadorial positions ready by the early days of the administration. We stressed to Secretary Powell that our relations with Brazil, Chile, Panama, Venezuela and Ecuador were too important not to have an ambassador in place for many months. We put together a list of candidates for these jobs and presented it to Secretary Powell. The Secretary accepted our argument, and went to the White House with a list of five State candidates for these jobs. Since the White House appointments office did not yet have its act together, and had not yet prepared a list of political ambassadors, they acquiesced to the Secretary's request.

On the list approved by Secretary Powell, I had been named the candidate to go to Brazil. I had been an ambassador previously, spoke Portuguese, and had been in a Front Office position, so the Secretary and the Bush White House accepted me as a candidate to go to Brazil. This, of course, was a tremendous honor, as Brazil is the most important country in Latin America and one of the largest in the world.

Powell gave us the green light on a Friday afternoon. But when I went home to discuss with Miriam and my youngest daughter, Susie, who was a junior in high school, of the possibility of going to Brazil, I began to have second thoughts. It seemed that we had just gotten back from Nicaragua, Susie was doing well in her new high school, and it just did not feel like it was the right time to go out again.

So on the following Monday morning, I had to tell Pete Romero to let Secretary Powell know that I would not be going to Brazil. My concern then became "saving" the Brazil slot for the career service. The only other career person, in my opinion, who had the experience and language to go to Brazil was our ambassador to Venezuela, Donna Hrinak. Donna had served in Brazil, at the consulate in Sao Paulo, and was on her third ambassadorial assignment. The only problem is that she had only been in Venezuela for only a year. But when I called her on the phone to ask if she were interested in moving over to Brazil, she said she was definitely interested. Secretary Powell approved the move. The White House submitted the names of the five career officers to these embassies, including Bill Brownfield for Chile and Charles Shapiro for Venezuela, and the Senate confirmed all of them.

As I was about to leave the bureau in 2002, Susie still had a year of high school left, and there were not many embassies available, so I decided it made sense for us to stay another year in Washington. There was a slot open at the National War College as the International Affairs advisor and Deputy Commandant. This was a prestigious position that George Kennan had filled years before. Kennan wrote his famous "Mr. X" article from the National War College. I spent a very interesting and fulfilling year at the National War College 2002 to 2003. I taught three courses there, some of the core

courses and a Latin America course. This was the time when we decided to invade Iraq, so there were some fascinating debates that took place.

Q: I want to hear about your experience at the national War College. I think we are almost out of this tape, but when you went to the War College did you have an agreement with the department that you would be then considered for another post?

GUTIERREZ: Since Deputy Secretary Armitage had inquired about my assignment preferences, I had the impression that he and Secretary Powell would support me for another ambassadorial posting. After being in charge of a major geographic bureau for over seven months and staying on to help the new political assistant secretary, I believe they were appreciative of what I had done.

When I looked at what embassies were coming open next year, Argentina stood out as the most attractive. Secretary Powell and Armitage probably remembered I had been unable to go to Brazil a year earlier. No one actually promised me anything, but I let it be known that I was interested in going to Argentina. The selection of the next ambassador would not be made until later in the year. As the time for selecting the new ambassadors approached a few months later, I reiterated my interest to Armitage. Armitage and others were supportive. There was fierce competition for Argentina, but I was fortunate and quite happy to be selected as the next U.S. ambassador to Argentina.

Q: That is a very nice post and a very nice house. People always talk about the house.

GUTIERREZ: Tell me about it. When the Washington Post's "In the Loop" column listed a number of new ambassadors, including myself, all they could say about me was not "Gutiérrez is being rewarded for his outstanding performance" but "Gutiérrez will be going to one of the finest ambassadorial houses in the Foreign Service." I guess it comes with the territory when you are named ambassador to Argentina.

Q: Ok, I think we are really out of tape now, and we can pick this up with National War College and talk about that a little bit.

GUTIERREZ: OK, thank you.

Q: This is Friday, December 28, 2007, interview with Ambassador Lino Gutiérrez. Lino, so in 2002 in December you went off to the War College.

GUTIERREZ: I did. As we discussed, I stayed in Washington after being acting assistant secretary for a time and staying with Otto Reich for a few months as his deputy. At the National War College I would be the international affairs advisor, effectively the deputy a commandant, in a position that George Kennan held originally when the National War College was set up. I sat in a wonderful office at Fort McNair where Kennan wrote the famous Mr. X article. It was quite an exciting time for me.

Q: What was your role exactly?

GUTIERREZ: The international affairs advisor is the senior State Department officer over there, the number two in the command structure. If the commandant of the National War College isn't there, the international affairs advisor fills in for him in all the important meetings and ceremonies. In addition, as the senior State representative, you ride herd over the five State Department officers assigned to the faculty and the seventeen State Department students who are there for the academic year.

Q: Did you teach a course?

GUTIERREZ: I taught three courses, two core courses on how the Washington inter-agency process works and international affairs strategy, and one elective on U.S.-Latin American relations. I also did a couple of lectures on how the State Department works to the whole student body.

Q: Who was the commandant?

GUTIERREZ: The commandant was General Reggie Clemmons, a two-star army general, an artillery officer. General Clemmons and I got along very well. He was very supportive and friendly to me.

Q: Did you have a lot of interaction with him?

GUTIERREZ: I did. Every day there were meetings, and of course we had all the assemblies in the auditorium. When he wasn't there, I represented him as the acting commandant.

I was expected to attend all the lectures at Arnold auditorium. We had some world-class academics in the faculty. Guest lecturers included most of the Pentagon brass, including combatant commanders, chiefs of staff of the different services, civilian leaders, and even President Bush came once. I learned a lot about Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, and all the military theorists.

Q: Describe a little bit the difference in cultures between other agency people and the military.

GUTIERREZ: I found the cultural differences between the military and civilians, and even between the military services, to be fascinating. First, there was the difference between the State Department culture and the military culture. This difference was reflected in the Myers-Briggs personality test. Foreign Service officers generally fit the same personality profile, and the military profiles were usually complete opposites. I guess if I had to summarize it would be that the military is always prepared to accomplish the task at hand. If the order is "Take that hill," the correct answer is "Yes sir." If a State Department officer is asked to take a hill, he might ask, "Why that hill? Why not this other hill? Is this the best hill to take?" I exaggerate a bit for effect.

Foreign Service officers are usually comfortable in ambiguous situations: the world is gray, not black and white. They know the world is not perfect and they make the best of it in order to advance U.S. interests. Military officers often seem to be frustrated that the world is not black and white. For the military, if the rules are not clearly defined, then they will cease to be effective and might run into trouble. So it was fascinating to see, and you could see it with the students. The military presentations of the officers and the students were very well organized, very well thought out with power point, the latest charts and graphs and everything. The State Department officers would give you a brilliant lecture as well, but often improvised of the cuff, with few visual aids and lots of nuance.

You could see the differences in interagency meetings in Washington. I could see how Pentagon officials could get frustrated at these meetings. They would come with clear instructions from their superiors about what the White House wanted done and how the military proposed to do it. Then they would run into a "weenie" (that's what some of them call us) State Department officer whose job seemed to be to tell the military why their brilliant plan would not work. "If you do A, then B, C or D will happen, and you will be worse off than when you started." The inevitable conclusion many military officers reached was that the State Department was "not with the program." The year that military and civilian officers spend at the War College helps them understand their counterpart's culture and objectives in a way they had not thought about before.

The year was also fascinating because it was the year when the whole Iraq invasion was being organized, planned, and took place. It was eye-opening to see the students' reaction to the Iraq invasion. We also had about 25 foreign students in the class, including some from the Middle East, and their reactions were also extremely interesting.

Q: Did you go on a field trip?

GUTIERREZ: Yes I did. Faculty members were expected to lead a trip of about 10 students to a geographic region. I had wanted to go to a place where I had no previous experience, but they did not have many faculty members with Latin American experience, so I was asked to lead a trip to Latin America. So I took my students to Brazil and Chile.

Q: They behaved themselves I am sure.

GUTIERREZ: For the most part they did. When they discovered Pisco sours in Chile I got a bit nervous. But they were officers and gentlemen.

Q: While this was happening, while you were at the War College, you were treading water bureaucratically waiting for a post?

GUTIERREZ: No, I was lucky enough to have been told by Deputy Secretary Armitage that they would back me for an embassy after having been acting assistant secretary. As I said previously, I had told Armitage that I was interested in going to Argentina. In 2000,

after I returned from Nicaragua, I had been on a list for possible ambassadorial candidates for Argentina, but at that time I had just returned to Washington and was asked to stay longer. I had always been interested in Argentina. I had turned down Brazil for family reasons in 2001. So thanks to Secretary Powell and Deputy Secretary Armitage, I had the peace of mind of knowing what my next assignment would be if all went well with the Senate. Of course, one can never count on being confirmed. Anything could happen.

Let me say one more thing about the different cultures at the National War College. Another fascinating aspect of the college was to see how the different branches of the military interacted with each other and with the civilians. The different branches had very different cultures, and they did not necessarily fit with the clichés we often hear about. The Marines are supposedly the most hard headed and not the brightest, but we had some brilliant Marine officers in the class. The Air Force officers are reputedly the most technically adept and comfort-seeking; the Navy officers are not team players, as they'd rather be out to sea, and so on. Sometimes the stereotypes rang true. Within the Navy, for example, I did find the aviators to be more gung-ho and the submariners often shy and withdrawn. The inter-service rivalries were often brutal, particularly when the Army-Navy football game approached. All of this was fascinating to me, and helped me to explain why military officers often acted as they did.

Q: The National War College is an important ticket for some of these service members. Sometimes some of the navy people like to go to the naval war college, but the National War College is very prestigious and a lot of these people went on to flag rank.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, and of course Colin Powell got his start at the National War College. The National War College highlights Powell's participation and considers it one of their success stories. Secretary Powell himself said in his autobiography that his rise to the top began at the National War College, when he first started thinking about strategy and international problems.

Q: Did you stay in touch with the State Department? Did you go over very much or did you stay pretty much at the War College?

GUTIERREZ: For the most part I concentrated on the National War College, but one of my jobs was to help the College get senior speakers from State, so I was in touch with people like Armitage and others to try to get them to come to speak at the War College. I would go over to State every couple of weeks to see people, but for the most part I stayed at Fort McNair, especially when I started teaching courses. Teaching and preparing the classes took a lot of my time.

Q: When the Iraq operation began, did the College pay special attention to what was happening or was it business as usual fine?

GUTIERREZ: It was certainly a topic of conversation and considerable discussion. The students were debating military theory and foreign affairs strategy, how to formulate

policy, ends, ways and means, all the different strategic models. Iraq was a perfect case to apply what the students were learning. Of course, the military is always concerned that whenever troops are deployed, there has to be an exit strategy, and no exit strategy seemed apparent in the case of Iraq. Moreover, no one could articulate the goals and objectives very well. Was the objective to find and destroy weapons of mass destruction? Was it regime change? Was it to bring democracy to Iraq?

The diplomatic strategy was also debated. It was interesting that the Middle Eastern students, military officers from Arab countries friendly to the U.S., were unanimous in opposing any operation even some who were no friends of Iraq or Saddam Hussein said, "You don't understand what this will do to the Middle East." So I from a foreign policy standpoint it was the place to be to observe what was happening in Iraq. It was a bit frustrating in not knowing how it was all going to turn out.

Q: Was there much thinking about the balance of power in the Gulf area? What happens when you get rid of Saddam Hussein who had opposed Iran so strongly? What happens with the vacuum?

GUTIERREZ: Most people expected a tougher war and an easier peace, but it turned out to be the other way around. The war was relatively easy and the peace turned out to be harder. There seemed to be little or no coordination or planning about what we were supposed to do once the fighting was over. I would hear stores from State Department counterparts, Middle Eastern experts saying they had not been part of any of the planning or the preparations of what to do after the victory. Many experts warned that we were not going to be greeted as liberators, although if we were efficient about it, there might be some grudging respect. But of course when all the looting began to take place after our victory, our troops were told that they were not a police force, and stopping looters was not in their job description. Such a policy did not win us many friends in Iraq.

In addition, respected military officers like General Eric Shinseki, the Army Chief of Staff, were warning that a lot more troops were going to be necessary to keep the peace. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his staff pooh-poohed those assertions. There was much talk about "shock and awe" and how the new military could fight more efficiently with fewer casualties, but almost nothing on what comes after the fighting. At the end of the day, I believe people like Shinseki were vindicated, and many more troops were needed.

Q: Did the Defense Department people talk much about the improvements in technology and how to apply this technology to war fighting? Did they think it would be a cakewalk in terms of the military prowess of the U.S.?

GUTIERREZ: That information came mostly from Pentagon briefings. At the War College I don't think anybody expected it to be that easy, remembering the last Gulf War and the fact that Saddam had kept a substantial army, and of course there was the fear of Saddam using chemical and biological weapons. So there was considerable uncertainty going in.

Q: You had Gulf War veterans I imagine.

GUTIERREZ: Yes. There were Gulf War veterans and Somalia veterans. That was one of the great things about the National War College. You could discuss any military operation or foreign policy issue, particularly recent ones, and there was usually somebody in the room who had been there, adding a personal vignette or two. In the case of Iraq, that was often the case.

Q: When did you know that really Argentina was where you were going to go, and when was it announced?

GUTIERREZ: As I recall, the D Committee met and selected me in the fall of 2002, shortly after I arrived at the War College. Then the process began, and I had to fill out the mounds of paperwork that an ambassador-designate needs to complete. I had done it once before, so it wasn't that difficult for me. After the paperwork had been completed and approved by the State Department and the White House, the Bush Administration announced my appointment in February of 2003.

The Senate confirmed me in April. The incumbent ambassador, Jim Walsh, and I worked out a schedule whereby he would depart in late July, and I would arrive in September. My daughter Alicia had scheduled her wedding in September, and Miriam and I wanted to be here for the event. I arrived in Argentina in September of 2003.

Q: You mentioned the D Committee. How does the D Committee work? The D is the deputy secretary.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. There are slight differences between the various administrations, but usually ambassadorial candidates are chosen by a committee of senior State Department officials chaired by the Deputy Secretary. The process is not totally transparent, so information is not immediately forthcoming.

Q: Candidates come from a short list.

GUTIERREZ: Right. In the Bush/Powell administration, Deputy Secretary Armitage would chair the meeting and the undersecretaries, all of whom were political appointees except for Marc Grossman, would be there. The Director General of the Foreign Service would be there, as well as the Executive Secretary. I believe that was about it. The regional assistant secretaries, who are responsible for geographic areas of the world, would never be present. There might be three or four career people in the room out of ten or eleven attendees. The members of the career service carried considerable clout, because often the political appointees might not know all the candidates.

When I was principal deputy and acting assistant secretary in the WHA bureau, I became familiar with the process. Before D committee meetings, we would prepare a memorandum in Western Hemisphere affairs putting together our preferred lists of

candidates for the various slots. We would submit the candidates' biographic profiles and reasons why we thought they were qualified for the job. At WHA, Pete Romero and I decided to individually lobby the members of the D committee on behalf of our candidates. Generally, the views of the regional bureau carried a lot of weight. But on some occasions the advice of the regional bureau is not heeded, and candidates whose names were submitted by other bureaus might be named.

Q: The deputy secretary certainly has a lot of clout in the committee.

GUTIERREZ: Certainly, the deputy secretary could usually persuade the rest of the committee if he chose to or if he favored a particular candidate. I was not there, but my impression was that Deputy Secretary Armitage and the Powell appointees for the most part followed the advice of the career officers in the regional bureaus. And even after the D committee selected a candidate, the decision would go to the Secretary of State, who had the final word before the nomination went to the White House. Although it was rare for the White House to overturn a State Department candidate for a career slot, it was known to happen. The White House initially decides which jobs are going political and which are going to members of the career service. Then it has the final word before the announcements are made public.

Q: Not a transparent process but an interesting one and one where there are many players.

GUTIERREZ: A very interesting process indeed. Candidates for embassies are sworn to secrecy. No one wants to offend the U.S. Senate or the host country by prematurely announcing an ambassadorial candidate before he or she is confirmed.

Since members of the D Committee are told not to divulge what goes on in the meetings, it is difficult to know what happened after the fact. If you are running a regional bureau at State, it might take some detective work to piece together what happened at the D committee. There were times when we submitted names of three qualified officers to the D committee, and then someone who wasn't on the list emerged as the selection. This left us to wonder, how did this happen? But most of the time the D Committee selections came from the regional bureau list.

Q: OK, so you finished up at the War College shortly after your hearing.

GUTIERREZ: I stayed at the War College until July, about two or three months after my hearing.

Q: And you were living on the campus of the War College.

GUTIERREZ: No. I know in the past State Department representatives assigned to the War College had stayed at some of the houses on the campus, but when I got there all the houses were occupied by senior military officers. I don't think we would have moved from our Alexandria home even if a house had been available.

Q: Right. I think we actually talked about this on a previous tape. So your daughter got married in September.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, Alicia and her husband James married in September.

Q: Who was the DCM or the chargé when you went down there?

GUTIERREZ: There were two. The outgoing DCM, Milt Drucker, stayed on as chargé for a couple of months, and then the DCM I picked, Hugo Llorens, took over for a couple of weeks until I arrived.

Q: He came from the NSC.

GUTIERREZ: He had been serving in the Latin America directorship at the National Security Council. Hugo is a very talented officer. Since he is an economic officer, I thought he would be a nice complement to me, since I am a political officer. Since Argentina had gone through the worst economic crisis in its history in 2001-2002, I thought I needed some very good economic expertise, which Hugo provided.

Q: When you arrived, who was president of Argentina?

GUTIERREZ: Nestor Kirchner had been sworn in as president in May of 2003. Argentina, as I said, had gone through the worst economic crisis in its history in 2001-2002. It had gone from being the richest country in Latin America to a country where over 60% of its population was below the poverty line. Its default of over $90 billion had been the largest sovereign default in history by a state. Its national currency, the peso, had been devalued to 25% of its former value. Factories had been closed, foreign capital had been withdrawn, and investment had virtually halted. All these measures severely affected the Argentine middle class.

Q: When you arrived, had they already defaulted on the debt?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. I arrived in September 2003, and they had defaulted in early 2002.

Q: The 90 billion dollar haircut.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. And what added fuel to the fire was the fact that the Argentine Congress had stood and cheered when Argentina declared the default. The images that were transmitted worldwide of Argentina not only not paying its creditors, but then its Congress giving the default a standing ovation, were not the kinds of images that Argentina wanted to present to the world. In addition to the default and the devaluation, President De la Rúa had been forced to resign by riots near the presidential palace. This led to a period of instability. The presidency became a hot potato that nobody wanted, and there were six presidents in 18 months. The popular motto at the time was, “Que se vayan todos,” or “throw the rascals out.”

Q: Did you have any particular instruction when you went down, something that you were specifically told to do beyond the obvious things of try to maintain good relations and try to inculcate responsibility?

GUTIERREZ: Of course we wanted a stable, pro-Western Argentina with a thriving democracy and respect for the rule of law, a market economy and a partner on the war on terrorism. The Treasury Department wanted Argentina to work out a deal with its creditors, to re-negotiate its debt. Homeland Security and the intelligence agencies wanted to maintain the counterterrorism cooperation, especially in the tri-border area with Brazil and Paraguay. The U.S. military wanted to keep up its exercise program with the Argentine armed forces. Our narcotics bureau, INL, pointed out there had not been a counter-narcotics agreement in ten years. The Department of Commerce told me American businesses were suffering. U.S. banks like Citibank and Bank of Boston were being sued by creditors because of the default and were demanding to be paid in dollars, and so on. A number of U.S. agencies and U.S. industries were concerned about intellectual property violations in Argentina. There was a wide range of issues that concerned U.S. government agencies and where we were seeking Argentina's cooperation.

Q: You, of course, had known Argentina in better times as a visitor, I am sure.

GUTIERREZ: I had visited Argentina in the mid 1990's, when Carlos Menem had been president. It was very different then.

Q: When you arrived in Argentina, what did you see in the streets? Did you see people living in boxes and things like that?

GUTIERREZ: Buenos Aires was still one of the world's greatest cities. Its magnificent architecture, wide boulevards, and world-class restaurants reminded me of Paris. But if you looked more closely you would see signs of people suffering. You could go to a fashionable restaurant at night, and look around the back of the restaurant and see people going through the garbage dump, trying to find recyclable materials, cardboard, or something that they could sell. These were the "cartoneros." Many of these were middle class folks who had thrived in the 1990s, but had found themselves without a job as factories closed down and capital fled. There were more beggars in the streets than before. Shantytowns, called "villas miseria" had sprung up near the city. There was certainly more palpable poverty that had been the case.

Q: Were there great concerns about security?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. Crime had increased significantly. When I arrived, there was a serious problem of what became known as express kidnappings, in which people were kidnapped, usually in the morning. The victims were usually well-to-do Argentines. The kidnappers would then call the family, work out a deal, and by the afternoon the person

was returned in most cases after their relatives paid a considerable sum. In some cases, they were killed even if the ransom had been paid.

Q: It seems almost frivolous to talk about it, but I would like you to say something about the residence you lived in because it is so famous in the Foreign Service lore.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. As I said before, I remember when the Washington Post reported my nomination in Al Kamen's "In the Loop" column, and the report was not what a great nomination this is, or what an honor for diplomat Lino Gutiérrez to be named U.S. Ambassador to Argentina. It was more like, "he will get to live in the famed Bosch Palace, one of the best ambassadorial residences in the Foreign Service."

In truth, the Bosch Palace is a marvelous building. It was built in 1917 at a time when Argentina was one of the richest countries in the world. It was built by a French architect, Rene Sergent, in a classical French style, and it is a very impressive structure. It is a French mini palace, with beautiful rooms, majestic staircases, and spacious rooms with gold leaf painting. It was purchased by the U.S. in 1929 from then-Foreign Minister Ernesto Bosch. It is said that when Mrs. Bosch heard about the sale, which she had opposed, she was so furious she took several items from the residence, including the fireplace, which she dismantled and recreated at her new residence.

By the 1990's, the cost of keeping up such a magnificent structure became prohibitive to the State Department, and it was decided to sell the property.

Q: Then Congress stepped in.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. Many Argentines, including Julio Wertheim, complained to U.S. members of Congress, including Senators Ernest Hollings and Chris Dodd, to complain. The Argentines argued that the U.S. would lose prestige if the Bosch Palace was sold, and the property would lose value and importance if it was no longer the residence of the U.S. ambassador. Some were afraid that the residence would be demolished to build one of the new high-rise apartment buildings that were popular in the Palermo neighborhood at that time. Senators Hollings and Dodd stopped the sale, and I believe passed a law which says that the executive has to obtain Congressional permission before selling the property. Since the Department could not sell it, they decided to restore the Bosch Palace, and the restoration was completed in 2000. It really looks nice now, but the upkeep is quite expensive.

Q: I recall visiting the residence when Jim Walsh was ambassador and seeing the ambassador's quarters upstairs. It is like the apartment over the palace. I had the impression that actually going down to the library of that place or into the public rooms that it was so big and so overwhelming it seemed to lack warmth. Did you ever use the other spaces of the building?

GUTIERREZ: We certainly did a lot of entertaining, and used the representational rooms extensively. No more than a couple of days went by without an official event at the

residence. On weekends, I almost never got down to the representational areas. We stayed in our apartment upstairs, which is quite nice and comfortable. We also spent a lot of time in the beautiful parks that are nearby, some of which remind one of Central Park in New York City.

At the end of the day, the United States has gotten considerable bang for its buck from the Bosch Palace. It is very well located in the Palermo section of Buenos Aires. It is an ideal place to host dinners and receptions, to entertain our contacts and official visitors, including Congressional delegations. We also receive many visitors from the United States, host musical events for the community, and the Fourth of July reception, which is usually attended by over one thousand guests. We have even held negotiations with the Argentine government there. Even though at times it felt like we were living in a museum, it was an honor for my family and me to have lived there.

Q: Staying with the embassy structure, how large was the U.S. embassy?

GUTIERREZ: In terms of staff, as I recall it was about one hundred and fifty Americans, and about twice as many Argentine Foreign Service Nationals.

Q: Was morale good? Did people like being in Buenos Aires?

GUTIERREZ: Traditionally morale fluctuates in Buenos Aires because of the fluctuations in the exchange rate, occasional political turmoil, and the crime. When I was there the dollar was strong, and crime had not yet affected most of the families. So morale was generally good at the time I was there. Buenos Aires is a wonderful city, and Argentina has many travel opportunities within the country.

According to public opinion polls, Argentina has traditionally been one of the Latin American countries with the highest levels of anti-Americanism. We had some of the lowest approval ratings when I was there, about 20-25% of Argentines approved of U.S. policy. I often asked myself why. Traditionally, Argentina viewed U.S. as a rival, whether for trade markets in Europe during the last century, or for international prestige. Since the U.S. economy has done very well through the years, and the Argentine economy has suffered massive fluctuations, many Argentines blame the United States and the richer countries for their woes. During World War II, Argentina did not sign the Rio declaration after Pearl Harbor, which stated that the attack on the U.S. represented an attack against all the nations of the Hemisphere. Argentina was the last nation in Latin America to declare war on the Axis powers.

During the Perón years, there was certainly tension between our countries. There was a U.S. Ambassador to Argentina, and later Secretary of State, Spruille Braden, who had accused Argentina of harboring Nazi fugitives after World War II. In the 1945 election campaign, Braden encouraged the opposition against General Juan Perón. Perón then turned the tables on Braden, and his campaign slogan became “Braden or Perón?” Braden has since become a symbol of U.S. interference in Argentine affairs. When I arrived, an Argentine journalist even asked if I was the new Braden.

In recent years, many Argentines were opposed to the use of force by the U.S. The Argentines' anti-American impulses were exacerbated by the Iraq War. Argentines were not very comfortable with the use of force under any circumstances. This might be partly a reaction to the dirty war of 1976 to 1983, when from 8-30,000 Argentines were killed by the military government.

After September 11, however, there was a lot of sympathy for the U.S. in Argentina, but that faded somewhat after we went into Afghanistan to hunt for Bin Laden. A majority of Argentines opposed our use of force to go after Bin Laden. I don't know what they expected us to do, ask the Taliban to extradite him?

At the same time, at a personal level, Argentines are very warm and welcoming to Americans. American tourists and Americans who lived in Argentina repeatedly told me they were always made to feel welcome. I asked every American I met if they had ever seen any incident of anti-Americanism, and not one had. Of course, in political discussions, many Argentines would express their opposition, often passionately, to U.S. policy. But I believe Argentines differentiate between the U.S. and its people, and its government. In fact, there is a fascination in Argentina with the U.S. Many Argentines traveled to the U.S. at the time when there was a visa waiver in Argentina in the 1990s. They are always keeping up with the latest discoveries in the U.S. and trying to gauge how Argentina is doing vis-à-vis the U.S. It is something of a love-hate relationship. Most don't like our politics, but they are fascinated by our culture and our people.

Q: When did you present your credentials?

GUTIERREZ: Right away, within a week of my arrival, but there is a funny story about that. President Kirchner is someone who does not adhere to the rules of protocol very well -- in fact, he disdains anything that has to do with traditional protocol. He sees himself as a man of the people, and he is convinced that Argentines do not like protocol, so he decided to be a president who does not follow protocol. In addition, since President Carlos Menem was his nemesis -- and Menem was so good at it between 1989 and 1999, and Kirchner ran pretty much as the anti-Menem -- he figured he was going to do the opposite that Menem did.

When I arrived, I asked the Embassy protocol secretary to ask for a meeting so I could present my credentials. The next thing I knew she said that President Menem would receive me a few days later. I knew that in the past the presentation of credentials in Argentina had been an elaborate, traditional affair, with pomp and circumstance. The ambassador was taken in a horse-drawn carriage escorted by the granaderos, or traditional cavalry, in the same uniforms they had worn when San Martín commanded them during their War of Independence. Kirchner had pretty much done away with that ceremony, so I was not expecting it. But I did bring my letters of accreditation and letter of recall for my predecessor, the two documents ambassadors traditionally present to the chief of state during the credentials ceremony.

So I arrived at the presidential palace with the two documents. I was received by President Kirchner and Foreign Minister Rafael Bielsa. Rather than engage in pleasantries, Kirchner got right to the point and started discussing issues of bilateral interest. I soon realized that as far as my Argentine hosts were concerned, we were having a working meeting, not a ceremony of any kind. We reviewed the state of our relations and talked about all the substantive issues for about an hour.

Q: Who was with you on your side?

GUTIERREZ: I was alone. There were some colleagues who had accompanied me to the event, but we thought we were going to a presentation of credentials ceremony, so they did not go in with me. Usually at a credentials ceremony the ambassador goes in by himself, is received by the president, presents his letters, the two make small talk for a few minutes, and then the ambassador comes out and that is that. The meeting I had walked into was a work session. After almost an hour, I realized the meeting was coming to an end and the president had not asked for my letters. I turned to Foreign Minister Bielsa and said, "Mr. Foreign Minister, I have my letters of credentials and recall here. What should I do with them?" Bielsa said, "Give them to me," so I provided the letters to the foreign minister. After the meeting the foreign minister and I held a brief press conference, committed to working together and improving relations, and I returned to the residence, thinking I had fulfilled the requirement of presenting my credentials, if not directly to the chief of state, to his subordinate sitting next to him, in the chief of state's presence. As it turned out, this was not the case.

The next day I received a call from the Argentine Chief of Protocol (who probably had the most difficult job in the Kirchner administration) in the foreign ministry. The Chief of Protocol said, 'Mr. Ambassador you have put us in a very difficult situation." I said, "Oh, how so?" He explained that, since taking office six months ago, President Kirchner had not received any other ambassador for a presentation of credentials. There was a long line of ambassadors waiting to present their credentials. They had heard that Kirchner had received me, and were now asking the foreign ministry why the U.S. ambassador had been received and not them.

My meeting with Kirchner had forced the issue, the Chief explained, and the Argentine government had decided that the Vice President of Argentina, Daniel Scioli, would receive the credentials of foreign ambassadors, since President Kirchner did not want to do it, and conduct the credential ceremonies. I found the whole thing incredible and amusing at the same time, and said, "Well, how can I help you?" The Chief asked me to wait a few days for my turn in line, and when it came, to attend a ceremony with the vice president where he would receive my credentials. I said, fine, but there was one problem -- I had already presented my credentials to Foreign Minister Bielsa, and the Argentine government was in possession of them. Don't worry, we'll take care of that, he said.

A few days later I attended a second credentials ceremony, or the first real one, this time presided by the Vice President. When I arrived on the designated day, I followed another ambassador, I believe the German, who had just presented his credentials and was

walking out. I was met by the chief of protocol, who presented me with my own letters of credential and recall, so I could re-present them to the Argentine government, this time on a more traditional basis. I took the documents back, walked a few feet, and presented them to Vice President Scioli, who was friendly and polite. I sat and chatted with Scioli for a few minutes and then left, and that brought to an end the story of my presentation of credentials to the Argentine government.

Only in Nestor Kirchner's Argentina did a president not receive foreign ambassadors. As I pointed to my Argentine friends, every U.S. president, in times of war and peace, receives credentials from foreign ambassadors, even from small island nations in the Caribbean or Pacific. But true to form, President Kirchner never received the credentials of an ambassador in the three years I was in the country. That is too bad, because at least on that one occasion ambassadors can report back to their home country that they had a conversation with the chief of state of the host nation, and that opportunity was taken away. The only time President Kirchner met with the vast majority of ambassadors was the one time he held a New Year's reception for the diplomatic corps.

Q: You did not see Kirchner again substantively.

GUTIERREZ: No, I did, he received me on a number of occasions. I saw him when there was a need. He never turned me down for an appointment. He did not see many ambassadors -- I think on occasion he saw the Israeli ambassador, and probably the Venezuelan. In general he did not receive ambassadors, but I did have a line open whenever I needed to see him.

Q: You had more regular contact with the foreign minister?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, I saw the foreign minister frequently. We had some after hours working dinners at the home of a mutual friend. When I needed to do a demarche, I usually presented it to him. He would also call me whenever there was a dispute or a press article that was unfavorable or critical, knowing that there would be a reaction from his boss, and we would try to manage the problem together, so we were in very close contact. I also had good access to all the other ministers.

Q: How would you describe the relationship with Argentina under Kirchner?

GUTIERREZ: For the first two years of my tour, I would say relations were cooperative. We thought we had a good modus operandi. It worked in this manner: Argentina continued to cooperate with us on counter terrorism, nuclear non-proliferation, and counter narcotics. In fact, we negotiated and signed the first counter-narcotics agreement between INL and the Argentine government in over a decade. Behind the scenes, U.S. - Argentine cooperation was good and strong. As he consolidated his power -- Kirchner was elected with 22% of the vote when his main rival, Menem, withdrew from the runoff election in early 2003 -- Kirchner's rhetoric became more populist and critical of the West. In his speeches, he started blaming the large industrialized countries for the

world's problems. While he would take third world positions in international meetings, for the first two years of his term he refrained from criticizing the U.S. by name.

Q: He criticized the IMF and the World Band a lot, I guess.

GUTIERREZ: That's right. But in his first few months, Kirchner had had a couple of meetings with President Bush, and they had gone reasonably well.

Q: Those meetings were where?

GUTIERREZ: The first meeting had been at the White House in July of 2003, prior to my arrival in Argentina, but I was invited to attend that one, along with my predecessor, Ambassador Jim Walsh, as the ambassador-designate. Then they met again in Monterrey, Mexico, during a special Summit of the Americas in January of 2004. I did not attend that one, since it was at a multilateral meeting and the bilateral ambassadors did not attend. Those two meetings had gone pretty well, even though some of our delegation members reported to me that President Bush had not liked Kirchner's speech in Monterrey, which had been by all accounts a traditional third world speech, blaming the West for most of the problems of the world.

At the Cop 10 meeting in Buenos Aires on the Kyoto accord in December 2004, which I attended, Kirchner gave a speech blasting the industrialized countries, saying they were the cause of global warming, and that they had to make reparations to the poorer countries. By putting Argentina squarely in the poorer countries category, Kirchner was trying to have it both ways. He wanted to be a third world leader, but wanted Argentina to have a seat at the table when the world's leading counties met.

So his rhetoric was troubling, his attacks on the IMF concerned us, but the cooperation continued, particularly on counter terrorism. I believed we could continue that working arrangement to our mutual benefit. Until 2005 he had not criticized the United States by name.

One problem we had when I first arrived was that Kirchner canceled a scheduled multilateral military exercise, which included SOUTHCOM, on Argentine soil. That happened within a week of my arrival, when the Argentines canceled a large SOUTHCOM-organized air force exercise that had been scheduled for many months. The exercise required approval by the legislature, but when some legislators expressed their opposition, the government did not try too hard to change their minds. Without legislative approval, the Argentines informed us that the exercise had been canceled. At first we were not sure if the cancellation of the exercise was just a blip or whether it was a new policy. After the exercise was canceled, Kirchner had continued the policy of allowing Argentine troops and ships to participate in SOUTHCOM exercises outside of Argentine territory.

Q: Why did he cancel the exercises that had been scheduled?

GUTIERREZ: It was one of his first official acts. He was already throwing bones to his leftist supporters as he was consolidating his position after the election. He probably would have allowed the exercise to proceed if there had been less opposition in the Congress.

Q: This happened post-Iraq invasion.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly, post-Iraq invasion. Some in his administration made an effort to save the exercises. Kirchner sent his foreign and defense ministers to negotiate with the Argentine Congress for enabling legislation to save the military exercises. This negotiation took place publicly, and the press highlighted the opposition from some congressmen. Kirchner took the easy way out by canceling the exercise and not spending political capital in the negotiation.

Q: Now Argentina enjoyed a special status as a major non-NATO ally of the United States. Did they value that status?

GUTIERREZ: The Argentine military certainly did. The military had become thoroughly discredited as an institution after the “dirty war” under the military governments of 1976 to 1983 and after the failed invasion of the Falkland - Malvinas Islands in 1982. Public opinion polls showed that the public didn’t trust the military. The military’s budget had been cut substantially since 1983, so they were desperate for more contact with the U.S. military -- which would result in training opportunities and perhaps some equipment -- in order to remain relevant as a force. The major non-NATO ally designation, which had been accorded to Argentina after their support during the first Gulf War, facilitated training and donations of excess military equipment from the U.S. to Argentina. The military remains pro-U.S. to this day.

But President Kirchner had no affection for the military. He took advantage of numerous opportunities to put the military in its place, and even to humiliate the institution. One of the first things he did was to effectively fire the top 30 army officers by appointing someone junior to their rank as head of the army. The law required that the head of the army by definition would be the highest ranked officer in the institution, so anyone senior to him would automatically be dismissed. That appointment forced the forced retirement of 30 senior officers. Moreover, Kirchner cared little about the military’s modernization efforts or peacekeeping capabilities, and his military budgets reflected that.

As a former *montonero* sympathizer, Kirchner was interested in reviewing past human rights violations by the military. Even though Kirchner’s predecessors, Presidents Alfonsín and Menem had pardoned or amnestied many in the military and anti-government groups for past human rights abuses, Kirchner insisted that the military crimes had to be revisited, but said nothing about the kidnappings and killings by the guerrillas. He obtained legal backing for his efforts, so the trials of former military officers for past crimes began anew. In a symbolic gesture that caught the public’s imagination, Kirchner closed down the Navy’s mechanical school on Libertador Avenue,

where many detentions and human rights violations had taken place during the dirty war, and turned it into a human rights museum.

Q: From his standpoint, Argentina's standpoint, what was the most important relationship? Was it more Brazil than the U.S. or were they on the same footing?

GUTIERREZ: From the beginning Kirchner made it clear that Brazil would be a key relationship for Argentina. Kirchner fully embraced the Brazil-led economic bloc Mercosur, and agreed to follow Brazil's lead on many issues. For example, on the Free Trade Area of the Americas, Kirchner stated categorically that Argentina would fully support the Brazilian position, which was that FTAA would not be completed until the U.S. eliminated agricultural subsidies to U.S. farmers. That had not been Argentina's position in the past, or at least there had been some wiggle room there. Under Kirchner, there was no wiggle room. That said, the U.S. is still the 800-pound gorilla in the region.

Q: I have heard it said that the deal with Mercosur has been that the other three countries (Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay) had agreed to give Brazil the political leadership in exchange for access to the Brazilian market. I suppose the Argentines would describe it that way.

GUTIERREZ: An Argentine scholar once explained to me that the real value of Mercosur for the Argentines was that it was an organization that forced Brazil and Argentina to sit at the same table. Its value is more political than economic. As the Argentines saw it, it was a way of keeping Brazil in the box. Brazil has been a traditional rival of Argentina for many years, as the two countries fought for dominance of the South American continent. By joining Mercosur, Argentina would ensure that Brazil would not be a threat to Argentina, that the two nations would be tied politically.

Mercosur was originally set up as a customs union, but there have been so many exceptions allowed that the free movement of goods and services within the borders of the countries has never worked very well. Brazilian exporters constantly complain that their products are often banned from entering Argentina. Argentine presidents do not want to be accused of putting Argentines out of work, so they find it easier to bow to demands from the Argentine Industrial Union than to strictly adhere to the Mercosur agreement. Better to have the Brazilians mad at you than unemployed Argentine workers protesting in the street.

Moreover, Mercosur's consultative mechanisms have not worked too well. When Brazil devaluated its currency in 1999, it did not consult with its fellow Mercosur nations. Brazil's action was a surprise to Argentina, and probably hastened the Argentine economic crisis that was to follow. So while everybody pays lip service to Mercosur, the fact Chile hasn't joined, for example, tells you a lot. Chile prefers to sign free trade agreements directly with China, Japan, the European Union and the United States rather than joining Mercosur.

Q: Well, I guess we should describe Mercosur a little bit more fully. Mercosur consists of four countries, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay. Chile has associated itself as an associate but not a full member. When I was in Chile what people always said that Chile was way ahead of where the Mercosur was: why should it go backwards to join Mercosur? But it is a big market, Brazil, Argentina.

GUTIERREZ: It is indeed a big market, but it really hasn't worked as it was envisioned. Mercosur has been trying to negotiate a trade agreement with the European Union for many years without success. Their position that all agricultural subsidies must be eliminated before an agreement can be signed is currently a non-starter for the U.S. and the European Union. Obviously the French are not going to stop their subsidies to their farmers, and it will be a long time before they are eliminated in the U.S. My opinion is that Mercosur's value is more political than economic. It is a forum that allows the member countries to discuss common problems and to speak with one voice.

Q: Let's go back to Kirchner. Kirchner was presiding over an economy that was debt-free since they decided they weren't going to pay their international debt anyway. So the economy was starting to improve.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, in 2003 the economy started to improve. With the devaluation of the Argentine peso in 2001, Argentine exports became a lot more competitive. Argentine soybeans, wheat, and beef became a lot cheaper to purchase. It was agriculture and tourism, with the cheap peso, that drove the recovery in 2003.

Q: They were selling Argentine beef into the U.S. market as well.

GUTIERREZ: Soon after I arrived there was a problem with Aftosa, or foot-in-mouth disease, which had been found in an Argentine farm. This effectively stopped most Argentine beef exports to the U.S., although the cooked beef was allowed in. If you buy beef jerky today, it probably came from Argentina. But Argentine beef continued to be exported to Europe and Asia and Africa and other places.

Q: Argentina was a major producer of soy.

GUTIERREZ: They were the third largest soybean producer in the world after the U.S. and Brazil. The Chinese were buying up huge quantities of soybeans. So the Argentines started planting more soybeans and shifting some of their land to soybean crops.

Q: Did you note during your time that the Argentine public was becoming more optimistic, that people were moving out of poverty?

GUTIERREZ: Certainly. This was a key to Nestor Kirchner's popularity, and when I left in 2006 he still had a 60% to 70% approval rating. Kirchner benefited from the fact that the Argentine public sensed that there was finally somebody in charge and that things were getting better. The Argentines were willing to give him the benefit of the doubt for a

time. After six presidents in eighteen months, they were happy to have someone in charge of the country.

Q: Did you or others in the embassy have contact frequently with his wife Cristina Kirchner?

GUTIERREZ: Cristina was an important player. When I was there, she was still a senator in addition to being first lady. I invited her for lunch at the Residence on a couple of occasions, and I would see her at receptions, where we would talk.

During the time Kirchner was negotiating with his creditors, he periodically threatened to break with the IMF and the world economy. U.S. policymakers became increasingly concerned that this would happen. At one point, a special envoy was sent from the U.S. to Argentina to carry a message to the President's advisors urging them to negotiate an agreement and to continue working with the IMF and foreign investors. The envoy asked me, "Well who does Kirchner listen to? How do we get to him? How do we explain to him the world economy?" Our answer was, "He listens to no one. He pretty much keeps his own counsel. He has a coterie of advisors but they are mostly yes people. His wife is in that group of advisors, but he doesn't take advice from his wife on economic matters." So there was no *eminence grise* to go to in order to influence Kirchner. You had to talk directly to him. Cristina was someone with whom Kirchner consulted, but not on economic matters, mostly on political matters.

Q: He ended up in a way facing down the IMF.

GUTIERREZ: He made the IMF the country's number one enemy. He refused to meet with them whenever they sent a delegation to Buenos Aires. He would go public with his criticisms, and his popularity would go up every time he criticized the IMF. It seemed that Kirchner's hatred for the IMF was visceral. He had a very able and crafty finance minister, Roberto Lavagna, who managed the economy very well in the early years of his administration. Argentina finally was able to make an offer to creditors in 2005 which was far from perfect as far as the IMF was concerned. They presented the offer to the creditors pretty much as "take it or leave it."

Q: And the creditors mostly took it.

GUTIERREZ: Seventy-six percent accepted it.

Q: Do you remember how much it was on the dollar they paid?

GUTIERREZ: It was about 30 cents to the dollar, or something like that.

Q: Did a lot of Italian pensioners and others…

GUTIERREZ: About a quarter of the debt holders refused to accept the offer -- they were the "holdouts." Some were Italian pensioners, there were Japanese, there were Germans,

a few Americans, all were part of this group. IMF and U.S. Treasury officials expected Kirchner to work out a deal with the remaining creditors who had not taken the offer, but Argentina's attitude toward them was to refuse to talk.

Q: How would you describe Peronism, it seems like a pretty lasting political entity in the sense that it seems to be able to accommodate the kind of fascist approach and a kind of left wing socialist approach. Where would you put Kirchner in all of this? How did he evolve into the kind of politician he is in that context?

GUTIERREZ: I think Peronism today is a convenient logo, a useful symbol for many politicians. The fact is that Peron has been dead for over 30 years, and Peronism continues to dominate politics in Argentina. This is partly because Argentina's other major party, the Radical Party, has been thoroughly discredited because its last two presidents have not been able to complete their presidential terms. Raúl Alfonsín and Fernando De la Rúa were elected presidents from the Radical Party who had to leave office before their terms were over.

So Argentina today has only one major political party, the Peronist party, and a number of smaller parties. But Peronism is not monolithic. Within Peronism there are many factions, many "currents." There are people like Eduardo Duhalde, who was the traditional boss of Buenos Aires province. There are left-wing Peronists like the Kirchners. Kirchner in the 1970's was a student and later a young lawyer. He sympathized with the leftist Peronist guerrillas, the *montoneros*, although he was not active in their movement.

Q: He was from Patagonia.

GUTIERREZ: He is from Santa Cruz province, which is in Patagonia, a very rich province because they have oil and gas. It is where the famous glaciers are located, so they get a lot of tourists. He studied in La Plata near Buenos Aires. He sympathized with the *montonero* left wing urban guerrillas who were trying to overthrow the government and then the military regime. But as far as is known, he never engaged in acts of violence. He was more of an intellectual supporter. So his background is as a leftist Peronist. But Peronism is a unique movement in Latin America. In some aspects Peronism took the place of communism and socialism in many other countries in that it controlled the labor movement. A lot of the labor laws were changed by Peron, so many workers associate Peron with the raising of the minimum wage in Argentina and the lowering of the number of hours workers had to work. Peron also brought the vote to women. So he was the first Argentine leader to identify with and pay significant attention to the workers. He used the workers as his own constituency.

Q: A kind of corporatist.

GUTIERREZ: Right, for the sake of power. So it is a very curious movement. Peron was much influenced by Mussolini and Italian fascism when he served as a military attaché in Italy. But then he surprised his fellow junta members by turning to the workers as his

main base of support. When he was overthrown by the military and sent into exile, his constituency did not forget him. That is why he was able to come back after 18 years and return to the presidency. Many workers remembered Peron as the only Argentine leader who had ever cared for them. So for workers there was no need for a communist movement or a big socialist movement in Argentina. Peronism filled that vacuum.

Q: Describe a little bit the gas policy, natural gas policy of Argentina.

GUTIERREZ: Gas prices were subsidized and kept artificially low. Kirchner had been impacted by what had happened to President De la Rúa. De la Rúa had been forced out of office by popular demonstrations, and had been forced to resign and escaped from the rooftop of the presidential palace by helicopter after resigning. I think Kirchner saw that happen, and when he became president he decided that he would not be another De la Rúa. So he went out of his way to keep the disaffected masses happy so they would not overthrow him. He struck deals with the street protesters, the *piqueteros,* and agreed to subsidize them in return for their support. His method of governing was to throw bones to the workers, to the poor whenever he could. One of these bones was to keep gas prices artificially low. That meant that the utility rates of the poor and the unemployed would not go up while he was in power. That meant that a lot of the taxi drivers and people who had cars would reconfigure their cars to run on natural gas because it was a lot cheaper than gasoline. That was a way for these people who had been affected by the economic crisis to survive. I think he took it too far in that, even today, when the economy has been growing at a 9% clip for four or five years, gas prices are still artificially subsidized. Utility companies have not been allowed to raise their rates for the most part. Not surprisingly, investment in the gas and oil sectors has substantially decreased.

Q: Argentina has become the most gasified economy in the world.

GUTIERREZ: It is a gasified economy. It was a net exporter of oil when I arrived and a net importer when I left. It has stopped gas shipments to Chile on occasion even though it had signed contracts to provide Chile with much needed gas. They are also buying gas from Bolivia.

Q: They might be able to fulfill their contracts, but meanwhile there is not investment in exploration for gas in Argentina proportionate to its consumption.

GUTIERREZ: Right, and that is an issue that Cristina Kirchner government will have to deal with in its administration.

Q: Now very topically in the news these days is the case of the $800,000 that was apparently on its way from Venezuelan sources to the campaign of Cristina Kirchner. Did you see a lot of Venezuelan influence while you were there?

GUTIERREZ: I earlier described our modus operandi for the first two years we were there. I thought we had a good working relationship with Argentines on many issues. We got them to do certain things. For example they joined the proliferation security initiative.

They were the first, country in South America to sign a container security initiative with the U.S. We were progressing on a number of fronts. But where the relationship started to deteriorate was over their relationship with Venezuela and Hugo Chávez. Chávez began to visit Argentina on a number of occasions to woo Kirchner.

Kirchner had invited Fidel Castro to his inauguration. Castro had come to Argentina for the inauguration in 2003, and had given a speech at the University of Buenos Aires. But it seems that Kirchner and Castro had not gotten along very well since then. There was the case of a Cuban dissident, Hilda Molina, who had a son who had settled in Argentina and married an Argentine citizen. Kirchner had asked Castro to allow Molina to come visit her grandchildren in Buenos Aires. Castro had refused. Kirchner was not used to being rebuffed, and he later decided to cancel a scheduled trip that Kirchner had wanted to take to Cuba. Kirchner never visited Cuba while he was in power. At the same time, Kirchner and Chávez had hit it off, and Chávez had sweetened the pot by investing petro-dollars in Argentina. This was a time when oil prices were going up, and Chavez had money to spend. Chávez would come to Buenos Aires and promise to build ships in Argentina's shipyards, for example. This was music to Kirchner's ears.

After Argentina made its first debt offer, Chávez bought some Argentine debt and continued to give Kirchner money to finance some projects. As a result, Kirchner's relationship with Chávez grew progressively warmer. At the beginning of his administration, Kirchner and Bielsa would meet with the Venezuelan opposition when they traveled to Venezuela. Even during the recall referendum called by the opposition, Kirchner was careful not to take a position. But once Chávez won the recall referendum, that accelerated the pace of engagement with Venezuela. Argentina soon became of the big proponents of Venezuela joining Mercosur. At the same time, Vicente Fox and Mexico actually submitted an application for Mexico to join Mercosur as well. But it was clear there was little interest by Argentina and Brazil in Mexico joining, but there was a lot of interest in Chávez and Venezuela joining Mercosur. Soon Argentina and the U.S. started to differ privately and publicly on Chávez and what was happening in Venezuela.

Q: Were you ambassador when President Bush went down for the OAS summit?

GUTIERREZ: Indeed I was. This was the Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata in November 2005.

Q: Summit of the Americas, sorry.

GUTIERREZ: The Summit marked the moment when our relationship changed for the worse. The modus operandi we had established for the first two plus years of my tenure would no longer work after the Summit.

As you know, the visit of a U.S. president is no simple event, with tremendous logistical and diplomatic challenges. President George W. Bush's visit to the Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata would be further complicated by the fact that there would be 33 other leaders of the Americas attending the same event. The Summit would not be

held in Buenos Aries but in Mar del Plata, a city that is 500 kilometers (300 miles) away from the capital. So our embassy had to set up a platform in Mar del Plata to be able to facilitate the visit of President Bush. I decided to send my DCM, Hugo Llorens, and close to half of the embassy employees to Mar del Plata to help set up this visit. When President Bush travels, he brings hundreds of people with him, not only security but transportation, communications…

Q: Black Hawk helicopters.

GUTIERREZ: Black Hawk helicopters, and many other modes of transportation. This was a mammoth logistical challenge for us. Of course, during a presidential visit the White House staff will demand the best rooms, the best access, the best position for the President, as it should, and it was our job to make sure the White House staff met its needs. This included deployment of U.S. Air Force One elements, U.S. military personnel, and the like.

Despite the fact that our relations were getting worse, the Argentines met every single one of our requests, from securing the best local hotel for our personnel, to meeting every logistical and security requirement that was needed. The Secret Service often requested that President Bush be the first to arrive or the first to leave a meeting. In a country and a region where sovereignty, seniority and protocol often rule -- and with 34 regional leaders vying for attention -- this was no easy task. But after often tense negotiations, the Argentines at the end of the day met our every request, and prioritized our needs over those of the other 33 leaders. Thus, I can say with conviction that the logistical aspects for the visit were a resounding success.

The substantive side of the visit did not fare as well. The visit was further complicated by the fact that, in a time of much criticism of the U.S. for the Iraq war, President Bush's presence in Argentina became a catalyst for leftist Argentines to vent their feelings. These groups saw an opportunity to gain some air time, get some exposure for their views. As soon as the president's visit was announced, most of these groups, including unions, started to denounce President Bush's visit to Argentina. Some called for general strikes. Leftist newspapers started popular campaigns calling for massive demonstrations, "Say no to Bush" and the like. This was not an Argentine phenomenon. We knew that these days, any time you have an international meeting, like an IMF meeting or World Bank or UN meeting, it attracts all the environmentalists, anti-war folks, and other protesters. We have had the battle of Seattle. We had street fights in Genoa. So we knew what to expect going in. What we had not expected was that the attitude of the Argentine government started to shift a bit. For example, we learned that the Argentine Government had made a venue available to anti-summit protesters to demonstrate against the summit that they were hosting. It started to become clear that the government wanted to have a foot in both camps. Of course, they were the organizers of the Summit of the Americas, they were the hosts. But at the same time they allowed a "counter-summit to be held." When we asked for clarification, the way they explained it to us was, "We need to let these people vent. Better to have them in a stadium shouting anti-American epithets than in the streets throwing rocks."

As the official opening of the Summit approached, while Argentine officials were orchestrating the opening ceremonies, other Argentine government representatives were attending the counter-summit. Moreover, some heads of summit delegations, like Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, attended the counter-summit. Evo Morales of Bolivia, not yet president of his country, also attended the counter-summit, as did Diego Maradona, the soccer star, and anti-war U.S. protesters like Cindy Sheehan. There were rumors that Fidel Castro planned to come. He didn't come in the end, but Cuba sent a high-level official, Ricardo Alarcón, to the counter-summit. It became a cultural event, a who's who of leftist protest in the Hemisphere.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, the 34 delegations were negotiating the final declaration and action plan of the summit. I was not directly involved in the negotiations -- the White House was in charge -- but I received daily briefings on their progress. It was not unusual at these summits that there was wide disagreement for a time, and things came together at the end, usually with the help of the hosts, and a final document was hammered out, so I was not overly concerned when I was told that delegations were still far apart on the final document. Argentina had demanded, for example, that mention be made of what they referred to as the British colonial presence in the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands. The United States had never agreed to support such language at an international meeting, and we were not going to do so now. The Argentines later said they were supposedly upset by this. This surprised me, since their very capable foreign ministry knew what the long-standing U.S. position was.

Another point of contention was mentioning the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in the final document. The Mercosur countries did not want the FTAA mentioned. Not to mention the FTAA would have been a major departure from past summits, since the FTAA was the main reason why countries got together in 1994 to begin the summit process. The Mercosur countries, and mainly Brazil and Argentina, threatened that there would be no declaration and action plan if FTAA was mentioned. Of course, all the other countries, led by the United States said, "How can you have a summit and not mention FTAA?"

Q: It was the cornerstone of the summit process.

GUTIERREZ: True enough, the cornerstone of the summit process. The Mercosur countries' reply was that the theme of this summit was labor, and we should only refer to labor in the final documents. At this point the White House asked me to reach out to the Argentine government to see if there was any give in the Argentine position. I called the Ministry of the Presidency, Alberto Fernández, to find out, and found him in no mood to compromise. So the summit official ceremony began with no consensus over the final document. I still expected that a consensus would be worked out in the next few days, as often happens, since usually countries do not want these summits to be regarded as a failure, especially the host government.

So President and Mrs. Bush, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice arrived directly at Mar del Plata airport, and Miriam and I met them there. We then took the President's helicopter, Marine One, to the Sheraton Hotel. On the short flight over, we talked about the situation in Argentina and President Kirchner. President Bush had already heard President Kirchner give an "anti-imperialist" speech at Monterrey, and he was under no illusions that this would be a trouble-free summit, but we had not realized how troublesome this summit would become.

The next day the Summit of the Americas at Mar de Plata began with the usual pomp and circumstance, as was the norm at these meetings. After the leaders were introduced and sat on the stage, President Kirchner delivered his opening speech. At that precise moment, with the eyes of the world watching, and in the presence of President Bush and the other leaders of the Hemisphere, Nestor Kirchner decided to publicly criticize the United States by name for the first time. He said, "The United States should recognize the fact that its policies have caused poverty and weakened institutions in the region." I was seated next to National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, and this was a big surprise to us. I frankly did not expect the President of Argentina to make such a statement, and much less during an opening ceremony to an international meeting that he was hosting. Kirchner did say later in the speech that Argentina would continue to stand side by side with the U.S. on the war on terrorism, but the tone had already been set for the rest of the summit.

Later, President Bush had a bilateral meeting with President Kirchner. Kirchner asked President Bush to support Argentina publicly in its negotiations with the IMF. This was a surprising request, since no country had been more helpful in the G-8 and international institutions than the U.S., but it was unrealistic for Argentina to ask the U.S. to stand publicly against an international institution where the U.S. played a major role.

Thinking back on it, it now seems clear that Kirchner decided at Mar del Plata to play to his domestic audience. His remarks were well received by his most extreme supporters in Argentina and in leftist circles in the Hemisphere. By his actions, Kirchner asserted his independence from the United States and established himself as a populist, leftist leader in the region. Unfortunately for Argentina, Kirchner's actions set him and his country on a collision course with international financial institutions and the G-8. Investment would slow down, the debt problem became more complicated -- and relations with the U.S. would never be the same.

Kirchner's speech was not well received in Western Hemisphere capitals. The Argentines were perceived as rude hosts, and that perception was strengthened by Kirchner's actions during the rest of the summit. There were no more incidents while President Bush was present, and the President left the proceedings a day early to visit President Lula in Brazil. President Kirchner thanked President Bush for coming and tried to make up a little bit for what he had said at the opening ceremony, but the damage had been done. After Mar del Plata, the White House did not want to hear about any possible meetings with President Kirchner or Argentina.

Once President Bush left, Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Tom Shannon took the U.S. chair, and Kirchner's rude behavior continued during the plenary discussions. At one point Kirchner came up to me to complain about remarks by President Fox of Mexico, and asked me to get Fox to "back off." I reminded Kirchner that I represented the United States, and not President Fox. He was not happy. Later, Kirchner directed his wrath at other speakers, including Tom Shannon.

There came a point when a number of nations decided enough was enough, and their representatives stood up and demanded that FTAA be mentioned in the final communiqué. Leaders like President Alejandro Toledo of Peru, President Leonel Fernández of the Dominican Republic, and Prime Minister P.J. Patterson of Jamaica all stressed how important FTAA was to their countries. Some of the countries demanded a vote on whether FTAA would be mentioned in the final documents. The Mercosur countries did not agree to a vote, since they probably would have lost 29 votes to five (the four Mercosur countries and Venezuela). At the end of the day Argentina was forced to compromise and the countries drafted paragraphs laying out the two positions. As the Summit ended, the Argentines realized they were getting negative publicity throughout the world for being rude hosts and accomplishing little. Even papers that had sympathetic to President Kirchner criticized him for the handling of the summit, his speech, and his rudeness. Then the government got into damage control mode, and some began to blame me for "not briefing President Bush properly."

Q: For not telling him that Kirchner was about to insult him?

GUTIERREZ: The Argentine Foreign Ministry and Economic Ministry knew perfectly well that there wasn't a chance that the U.S. would abandon policies that had been set in stone for decades, such as not taking sides in the Falklands/Malvinas conflict, or not publicly criticizing the IMF. I believe Kirchner knew that as well. His speech was a calculated move to distance himself from U.S. policies and to curry favor with Chávez, his leftist allies, and the populist leaders of the Hemisphere.

At one point during a conference call a few days before the summit, a White House official, noting the disagreement on the final documents, asked me if President Bush should come to Argentina at all. I said that he should. If he hadn't come, it would have marked the first time that a U.S. president had not attended the Summit of the Americas. His absence would have been the main story. While the summit was not a policy success, the fact that President Bush came to Argentina and stood steadfastly for free trade and democracy in the Hemisphere was much appreciated by our allies. I still believe it was the right decision for President Bush to come to Argentina for the Summit of the America.

For the last eight months of my tenure, the relationship was cooler, much cooler than in the first two years, even though cooperation behind the scenes continued on almost all the fronts that I had mentioned before. High-level visits from U.S. government officials had ground to a halt. There was zero chance of another meeting with President Bush during the Kirchner presidency. At the same time, Kirchner's relations with Chávez continued to

pick up steam. When Argentina paid off its debt to the IMF in December 2005, Kirchner publicly thanked Venezuela for its help, but did not mention the United States even though the U.S. had helped Argentina within the G-8 on many occasions.

Early in 2006, Assistant Secretary Tom Shannon visited Argentina. Shannon had not requested a meeting with President Kirchner, but I sent a message to the Argentines that it might be a good gesture for President Kirchner to receive him. President Kirchner agreed to receive Shannon. During the meeting, he offered a version of an apology, essentially saying he had gotten carried away in the moment. But the die had been cast.

Q: The last eight months of your tenure as ambassador was a cooler relationship.

GUTIERREZ: Indeed it was, at the higher levels, although as I said day-to-day cooperation continued on many fronts. We did some good things. Argentina was still on the UN Security Council, and they were very cooperative on a number of issues. They had sent troops to Haiti as part of the MINUSTAH multinational force. They renewed the mandate of their troops so that they could remain in Haiti, and we thought that was a very positive action by Argentina. We also cooperated behind the scenes on many issues. But at the level of personal relationships and the level of rhetoric, there wasn't a very warm and fuzzy feeling.

Q: You decided the end of your tenure in Argentina that this was time to retire or what was your thought?

GUTIERREZ: I decided I had accomplished what I had set out to do in my career, and I was curious about trying other things outside of government. I just thought that after completing my second ambassadorship it was a good time to call it a career and do other things. I had been asked a year before I left by the Western Hemisphere bureau if I was interested in another ambassadorial posting to a particular South American country. I said at that time that I was not. As I was getting close to departing, I was offered the vice presidency of the National Defense University, traditionally a State Department slot at the NDU. That would have been an interesting assignment, but I said I was not interested. I received some feelers from the Seventh Floor at State, but I had pretty much made up my mind to leave at that point. The other reason for leaving was that I wanted to control when I left the Foreign Service and not let others control it. So I decided to retire in September of 2006.

Q: How many years?

GUTIERREZ: 29 years for me, two months short of 30. Some people said that I should have stayed for the full 30, but for me it was 29 years and 10 months.

Q: Well, we are almost to the end of the tape. Is there anything you want to go on to add? We have gone through six or seven tapes.

GUTIERREZ: Serving our country as a Foreign Service officer was a tremendous opportunity for me. The Foreign Service was a great career. Only in America can someone born in another country get to be an ambassador of his adopted country. For me it was a great honor to represent the United States. I worked for six presidents and eleven secretaries of state. I served in eight countries and in Washington in 19 different jobs. Thanks to the Foreign Service, I am a better person, and so are my wife and daughters. We are all the better for having represented the United States and lived in other countries. It was a great experience for us.

Q: Looking back is there anything you would have changed in your career the way you approached it or where you went?

GUTIERREZ: I had to work hard in my career, with late hours and many weekends. I always tried to make time to spend time with my family and attend my children's activities, but I certainly could have done more in that respect.

Q: More time in Paris?

GUTIERREZ: "We'll always have Paris," as Humphrey Bogart told Ingrid Bergman in *Casablanca.* Maybe I should have extended for a fourth year in Paris, but I was always looking for the next challenge in my career. Maybe I should have smelled the roses a little bit more. Maybe I should have tried to achieve more geographic diversity in my career, with tours in Asia or Africa or the Middle East. Maybe I should have learned a hard language, a language that was not a romance language.

Or maybe my career was just right, at least for me. We had our share of the exotic places, like Santo Domingo, Port-au-Prince and Managua, the glamorous, like Paris and Buenos Aires, and interesting places like the Bahamas and Portugal. At the end of the day, I cannot complain. It has been a good career.

The best thing about the Foreign Service is the friendships one makes. I am probably closer to the people I served with in my first tour in the Dominican Republic, than to any other group. Through the years we have made great friends, in the Service and in the countries we served. There is nothing like going through a foreign policy crisis or adverse conditions with a friend. After the experience, you are friends for life.

I hope I have been able to contribute to our foreign policy effort. I certainly gave it my best. As a Cuban American and a Hispanic, I hope my story can inspire others to join the Foreign Service and make their own contributions. The Service certainly needs more diversity in its ranks.

As I left, part of me thought that I could still make some contributions to our foreign policy. But another part realized that it was time to move on. I have also realized that I can continue to contribute to the Foreign Service and our diplomatic effort even though I am retired through teaching, speaking, and participating in projects. That I will continue to do.

Q: All right this concludes the oral history of Ambassador Lino Gutierrez. It is December 28, 2007.

GUTIERREZ: Thank you very much.

Q: Thank you.

End of interview