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

DEBORAH A. BOLTON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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Q: Today is the 21st of January 2010. This is an interview with Deborah A. What does the A stand for?

BOLTON: Anne.

Q: Bolton. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Do you go by Deborah? Debbie?

BOLTON: Debbie is fine.

Q: Debbie. Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

BOLTON: I was born on December 22, 1952 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with a twin brother, and raised and educated in Philadelphia.

Q: All right. Let's take on your father's side? Where did your family come from your father's side?

BOLTON: My father's side is Irish, my mother's side is German. As I say, my German gets me out of bed in the morning, and my Irish gets me through the day. My father's grandparents were born in County Mayo, and my mother's grandparents, one was born in Germany in Dresden, and my grandmother was born in Warsaw but of German family. Brandt was her surname.

Q: County Mayo. And they headed right for Philadelphia?

BOLTON: They took the boat right to Philadelphia as far as I know.

Q: Do you know much about them?

BOLTON: I barely remember them. They died when I was quite young as my parents married later in life. I think my grandfather was a pipe fitter and had a lot of personality. I think my grandmother initially was, as they say, "in service" in Philadelphia, but I don't really remember much more. My father used to take me down to see them on Saturday morning when I was little, so I got to know some interesting parts of Philadelphia.

Q: On your mothers side. Where did the German side come in?

BOLTON: Well, the story is as I understand it, my grandmother who was born in Warsaw but of German stock, she had emigrated to the States with her husband very young. He had died in the first year of tuberculosis, and they had had a daughter, so she went back to Poland. They were very middle class. They were full of artists and fresco painters and musicians, and they even had a car. My great grandmother had passed away and then within six months my great grandfather remarried, and that apparently inflamed my grandmother who got back on the boat after a year and took her daughter back to Philadelphia. She met my grandfather who was a steward on the boat, my German grandfather from Dresden and they settled in Philadelphia.

Q: Do you recall much about them?

BOLTON: Yes, because they lived nearby and plus my grandfather actually lived with us for a few years when I was in high school after my grandmother died, so we saw them frequently, and I still have memories of them, but they seemed always to have been elderly and very European. They both spoke English, but would sometimes use German between them.

Q: What did your father do? Did he go to school? How far up?

BOLTON: My father was a bricklayer. He left school when he was 13, went into World War II, Signal Corps as a Tech Sergeant, in the South Pacific. I think he was a bricklayer before the war then went back to being a bricklayer. Like any Irish person he read poetry to me. I could read before I went to school. He also read history to me because like anyone who could get through World War II in one piece, if you didn't get killed, you had a great time. That was a very fixating moment, so he was always reading histories of World War II and of course, we Irish descendants would have to hear about all the wrong Ireland endured as well as the poetry and the language.

Q: On your mother's side, what was she up to?

BOLTON: Oh, Mother was an interesting person, too. She was an acrobatic dancer. She was the first American performer in the Soviet Union after recognition, around 1933 as part of about a five-year "gig" in Europe. She grew up in Philadelphia, where she took ballet, tap, and gymnastics. Apparently to the point where it was the decision whether she trains for the Olympics or whether goes professional. The Depression took care of that decision, so she went professional because making $100 a week was pretty good money in the Depression when you were 16 years old.

There were four girls, four acrobatic dancers and a manager of the "Hazel Mangean Four". She spent five years in Europe having to come back only because of the war. They saw the war coming and thought they better get out on one of the last boats but performed in the U.K., France, and all over Germany, and she had run-ins with the Nazis because of her wearing her stage makeup on the street after rehearsal. She was blond and German

looking, given her parents. She spoke German. Some brown shirts were berating her because she had too much makeup for a good German girl and my mother gave them the "How dare you. I'm an American citizen." speech which perhaps counted for something in those days.

They were the first performers in the Soviet Union after recognition. Unfortunately, they signed an extended contract but for rubles, not hard currency (valuta). Once they figured out that they could not take their salary out of the Soviet Union and one could only take on so many sables and eat so much ice cream, they needed the embassy's help to break the contract. She recalled that Ambassador Bullitt was the chief of mission and talked of playing cards with "the boys" from the embassy who turned out to be our most renowned, future Sovietologists. Even though they were not dancing classical ballet, as dancers they still used a ballet base and had ballet items with them. Mother told me they gave their toe shoes to the "boys" in the embassy for their "girlfriends" in the Bolshoi. Eventually, they did get out of their contract, and the experience was written up in Variety as a cautionary tale for those taking bookings in Moscow. She has wonderful pictures from May Day which she spent at the British Embassy. They had bookings all over Europe. When she visited me in Budapest in 1984 we went to one of the clubs she performed in (reportedly the Duke and Duchess of Windsor were in her audience). I took her to a reception and left her with all the older German-speaking Hungarian diplomats who remembered all those pre-World War II haunts and they had a wonderful trip down memory lane. We took the train to Vienna and sat at the tea room in the Ambassador Hotel (where she had been in the 1930s) for hours while she told me about their adventures such as one of the girls getting caught smuggling watches in her girdle from Switzerland to England on the boat train. One having too much liking for German beer and having to diet because of the costumes and the fact they were acrobats who had to support and balance each other. They never went to Spain because as my mother put it, "They were always in revolution", otherwise known as the Spanish Civil War.

Q: Civil war and all.

BOLTON: Exactly! She didn't follow the politics that closely. Then they came back to the States. They performed a lot in the U.S., too, and in Canada, and I think she was doing some modeling -- at least I have clippings from newspapers with her posing in a fur beside cars for sale, but then when the war came, she did war work. By that time she was not a spring chicken anymore; I mean, for that kind of tumbling and dancing. The act broke up although the manager stayed in New York and still continued in show business as an agent and manager. My mother never went back to show business, but she did work as a costumer for Van Horn’s which was a big costumer in Philadelphia that moved to New York and was actually the costumer for Saturday Night Live when that show started. Obviously I always grew up listening to old stories of travel, and my mother’s experiences in Europe. Again, for someone who left Philadelphia when she was 16, she knew Europe like the back of her hand and had a trunk that to me, was full of magic and siren songs.

I grew up with a historical interest from my father in foreign affairs and looking at his pictures from the war. From my mother the message was that living overseas can be a whole lot of fun. It was never like a conscious decision. I just always knew that I would travel. My twin brother's idea of traveling is to go down the shore, and that's it. He had no interest whatsoever, but I always, always knew that I would do something like this. When I started to talk about the foreign service, my mother told me sternly that "There are no women in the foreign service! I knew all those men overseas in the embassies. They're all men!" which they were in the '30s, and beyond.

Q: You grew up in Philadelphia. Where did you go to school?

BOLTON: Grade school was at a parochial parish school. I had eight years in grade school at Resurrection and four years at St. Hubert's. High School for girls. When it came time to look for university, my parents were not an enormous amount of help never having even graduated high school, so I was doing this on my own, and I remember looking at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service catalog in 1968 or so, and, I'll never forget this. It said, "The Department of State Foreign Service admits few women and therefore the Georgetown School of Foreign Service admits few women, and the competition for the available positions is quite difficult." I said that they're not getting my $10.00 application fee. I wound up going to St. Joseph's in Philadelphia. It was a Jesuit school, going co-ed for the first time. They had a new international relations program that seemed just what I wanted. They admitted a hundred women for 3,000 men. I lived on campus and I had a very good education as any Jesuit education is. After that experience, I fully expected to be a "pioneer" woman at every turn. I remember my freshman year macroeconomics class with a priest who called on me in every class -- I was the only woman as I was in almost every class in college. Clearly, I had to come prepared. At our one-on-one advisory session, he asked me if I noticed that he called on me regularly. I said yes. He said that he did it to prepare me for the future. He said that if I go off and do things in the world, I will likely always be the only woman and I had better get used to speaking confidently in front of men. He was correct through 2009 and
that is education.

Q: Let's go back to growing up in Philadelphia. In the first place, in your family were there just the two of you?

BOLTON: My twin brother and myself and my parents.

Q: What was family like? Were you a close knit family or going off in different ways?

BOLTON: I guess we were pretty typical for the day. We lived very much within our means, no debts but no luxuries. We never traveled. We went down the shore, that was it. We never moved. I only know one house. The neighborhood, it was the neighborhood kids. I still know some of those kids -- they even have grade school reunions! I was a swimmer. My brother did clarinet. I did some dancing and acrobatics, but was a competitor swimmer in high school, but this was before Title 9, so you couldn't take it to the bank as a scholarship like you can now. A few of us female swimmers worked out

with the male team in college at 6 a.m. because there was no female team. Our female basketball team when it entered division play caused a sensation because they refused to wear those silly jumper dresses girls had to wear and wore boys basketball shorts. Quelle scandale.

Q: Was the church important to you then?

BOLTON: Again, it was 1950s, 1960s. My mother was Lutheran, so there wasn't the full court press. It was always there, that kind of Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, Chicago cultural shaper. One benefit was being able to understand European art via the religious references, as well as the Roman and Hellenic world, via church history, as the base for our society and politics. While American Catholicism is quite secular, at least we have some access to understand the devastating impact of religion in other societies. The Jesuit version was much more sophisticated and challenging.

Q: Were the nuns a major feature in your early…

BOLTON: I never particularly liked the nuns much -- I was way too questioning and curious. Again, this was in the '60s back in grade school when the whole, our part of Philadelphia, was just exploding. It was a baby boom. All the schools were just exploding. They had trailers in the schoolyards for classrooms. I just remember a lot of kids in class.

High school a little more interesting, but I was starting to outgrow the more narrow neighborhood orientation. I think I was a lot more interested in wider, broader things, so I was very happy to go to college.

Q: In elementary and then eventually in high school, first of all were you much of a reader?

BOLTON: Oh, yes. That's all I did was read. My heavens, I spent so much time in the library, read all the time. In fact, my father had me reading before I went to grade school.

Then in kindergarten all we did was play. I remember using red and blue counters, singing, art, milk break, and the nap. I mean, we didn't learn very much. They didn't have us do calculus or anything like they do now.

I was always a reader. My mother used to take me to the library before I was able to cross the big streets myself.

Q: Do you recall any of the books or series of books or any book that really impressed you?

BOLTON: I remember the first book I took out of the library. It was about a Siamese cat. And I remember a book about a dinosaur that got separated from his mother and had to find his way back. It's funny, one of the things I'm doing now is I'm going to be a docent

in the Natural History Museum at the Smithsonian, and I'm reading books about natural history. I was just reading a series of essays by Stephen J. Gould who was the curator in New York's American Natural History Museum. He's got a great series of essays called Bully for the Brontosaurus which explains how the brontosaurus lost his name to become apatosaurus. I wanted to know that because one of the first books I remember owning was about brontosaurus, and I never understood why they changed the name a few years ago. Book and his essay because he was all for not changing the name of the brontosaurus. But I read everything, mostly nonfiction, current events, science, biography.

Q: Why did they change the name?

BOLTON: They changed the name because it has to do with the naming protocols which keep changing. But sometimes a scientist will say, "Oh! This is a frog. Oh! This is a fish! Oh, wait a second. We know more now. This is an earlier version of a fish. So it has to be called a fish, not a frog," . The problem with the brontosaurus and the apatosaurus is that the brontosaurus was named first then the brontosaurus was named, but the brontosaurus was more popular of the dinosaurs. Everyone loved the brontosaurus. Later research indicated that the brontosaurus was actually a version of the apatosaurus. Since apatosaurus had the name first, brontosaurus lost its name. Although now the naming convention would hold that whoever had the more accepted name or known name would continue with it.

I remember the Nancy Drew books, of course. I used to do the summer reading club at the library, so that was a little more serious. I remember reading books about World War II, the holocaust. I was thinking I like science, but I didn't like math, so that was the end of that one.

Q: Did you get caught up in the Book of the Month Club, often the novel or something of these?

BOLTON: No, never, no. It was always to the library and not particularly directed. I don't remember anybody advising me on what books to get, but I would read books in categories -- I had my favorites in the Dewey Decimal System.

Q: You probably didn't have the greatest reading list as the church's interdictus. "Don't read this," which of course was a very good guide what you wanted to read.!

BOLTON: I never paid any attention to that. They always had the condemned list of movies. A, B, and C which was morally objectionable in whole for all. I remember in theology class at University, the professor was talking about a Brigit Bardot movie, I think it was called "The Virgin Spring". We're all sitting there looking at him like, "How are we going to see that? What do you mean we can see that movie? You couldn't see that movie!" Clearly, the Jesuits were in a much more interesting world than mine. There's a reason they kept getting thrown out of countries through history.

Q: Let's talk about your neighborhood a bit. You grew up in the same place. What was it like being a kid in your neighborhood?

BOLTON: It was fun. You know, it was a very safe neighborhood. We were out all the time playing. We had kids on the block, so we were always playing games. It was not so much in each other's house. We weren't over like play dates and playing at somebody's house. We had a lot of vacant space. I remember when they sold the last farm in Philadelphia, so we had a lot of space in our part of Philadelphia. Philadelphia had, I don't know if it still had, it had a top flight recreation program. We had incredible playgrounds and swimming pools. You took swimming lessons. You took water ballet. We had swimming teams. We had diving lessons, all for free. The centers had art, chess, crafts, and all sorts of sports and classes.. The summers were just full of activities. In the winter, we had free ice skating rinks, inside activities such as gymnastics so we were very, very busy. We weren't racially mixed. It was a very white neighborhood, but it was a Jewish-Catholic-ethnic neighborhood. I don't remember Protestants really. We all played together, that was for sure. It was fun. We had a corner store, the delicatessens, Woolworth's, all the small retail shops and services, and the supermarket and of course, all the wonders of Philadelphia in town, the museums, zoos, shows.

Q: Unfortunately it appears to have gone. I recall that your parents would say, "Okay, go out and play and come back. We eat at 6:30." In other words, you were feral. You thing was to get out of the house and get out. Today everything is so structured.

BOLTON: The girls would play with the boys and sometimes in summer would play doll house or whatever or we'd play school or something like that. I think there was an even number of girls and boys for the most part.

Q: Was there any racial mixing?

BOLTON: No. It was all white. There was some Hispanic and Asians. We had contacts with them through the Department of Recreation programs. I remember there were none in grade school, and in high school it was the first time I had African-Americans but again, it was a predominantly white high school, too. It was not a diverse neighborhood at all, but we had lots of different religions and ethnic groups.

Q: On Saturdays did you go to the movies?

BOLTON: Oh yes. We saw the double feature, 25 cents, so every monster movies that came out and all those B movies. We had lots of movie theaters, of course, up and down the avenue. There were big movie houses, the Tyson, the Castor, the Benner, and some with lovely murals. We could walk to any of those. Saturdays were usually the double header. Usually music lessons or swimming or whatever it was in the morning, lunch, then 1:00 to the movies for 25 cents double header and 10 cents for popcorn. Of course, a real treat was to get dressed up and go the Fox Theater in downtown.

Q: In high school, was your sport swimming?

BOLTON: Yes, I swam. The high school didn't have a girls swimming team. Basketball was the big sport. Field hockey. But I swam a year for the Philadelphia Aquatic Club and then for a couple of years for the Northeast YWCA. We went all over Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware on Saturdays for league competition.

Q: Were family politically oriented at all?

BOLTON: Not particularly. I remember the Kennedy campaign. I think anybody does. I actually saw him when he came down Castor Avenue -- I remember the back of his head. I was eight years old. They were somewhat conservative even as democrats.

Q: Did you follow the news either by paper or radio or …

BOLTON: Oh, yes! I used to read the Philadelphia Bulletin. I started with the cartoons. The Bulletin would come at 4:00. I could handle that. We didn't do the New York Times. That wasn't until college. And of course the evening news. I remember thinking the Speaker of the House was the man that answered the door in the White House. I remember seeing Eisenhower on TV playing golf.

Philadelphia Bulletin which was the better newspaper than The Philadelphia Daily News. We never got that. That was a tabloid like the New York Daily News. And the Inquirer was a morning paper which we didn't take.

Q: In high school what was the dating pattern?

BOLTON: It was a girls high school of 3,000. What do you think? My brother was at the boys high school. I was also involved in dramatics, so that was always good because you got to meet boys in that. Swimming was fun but it was a girl's team, no boy's counterpart. For the most part you'd meet boys at dances because these schools would have them weekly. I had some boyfriends but nothing serious. I knew that I wasn't staying in Philadelphia.

Q: I don't know in Philadelphia… There has to be a downtown.

BOLTON: A wonderful downtown! It was great! It actually has had quite a renaissance.

Q: Did you go down there much?

BOLTON: All the time! My father used to take me to museums: Franklin Institute, Natural History Museum, Museum of Art, all the other, there are lots of museums. We'd go to the waterfront. This is before the Bicentennial; after '76 they made it into a "destination". There was a time that I thought the waterfront was a waterfront. I mean they had ships, chandlers, tattoo parlors and things like that, and Seaman's Institute, and the Philadelphia Naval Yard -- large coils of rope for sale, that's my idea of a waterfront.

I know downtown quite well though it's changed so much. The Philadelphia College of Physicians and Surgeons, it's down 22nd Street, has a great museum. It's got like the liver of the original Siamese twins, Florence Nightingale's nursing bag, George Washington's teeth, Grover Cleveland's cancerous jaw.

My mother used to take us sometime and we would go the Robin Hood Dell which was the Philadelphia Orchestra Children's concert series in the summer. Kids in the neighborhood would go together with our lunches. In fact Andre Watts, an American pianist from Philadelphia, very well known. They had him in Madrid, and I was at dinner with him at the Residence after the performance and mentioned that I had seen him Robin Hood Dell concert when I was about eight or nine, and he was only a little older. Philadelphia's fine!

Philadelphia's a lot more cosmopolitan than it was. We've got five medical schools, we've got Penn and all that, but it's a city of neighborhoods. You had to explain why you go out of your neighborhood let alone why you leave Philadelphia. And if you're from Philadelphia, it stays with you. We used to go down to Connie Mack Stadium for baseball games. I remember my first twilight double header. I was seven years old. I did not last obviously though both games with San Francisco. Being from a baseball city was useful in the Caribbean, in Cuba and Curacao.

I was very much a city kids, so I've always been very comfortable in cities. I did some political work, Philadelphia ward work. If you work Philadelphia ward politics, you're not surprised at anything that goes on overseas. You're a step ahead of them, believe me! I can tell you all about dirty tricks.

Q: What about the world beyond Philadelphia? Did that intrude much?

BOLTON: Yes. Being composed of ethnic groups, ethnic politics and the overseas counterparts were always in play. Whether it was Israel or Northern Ireland, problems were evident. I was in the World Affairs Club at my high school; in fact, I was president of the World Affairs Club in senior year. We would go into town the World Affairs Council's offices at the Wannamaker's Department Store which was the first department store in the country. Wannamaker's was like the center of the universe in Philadelphia. It was right across from city hall and from the Union League. The high school representatives would work with the education officers to plan large monthly conferences for the student members that were held in the ballrooms of the big hotels in Philadelphia on a Saturday morning, the Ben Franklin, the Bellevue. I was starting to realize there were things like private schools with really smart kids in them, but I was never intimidated. For example, for the one on Northern Ireland, we would have readings to do, guideline questions for discussions for whomever was the table leader and a speaker -- in this case, the well-known Bernadette Devlin. Even as a 16 year old, I was clearly planted in the realist school of international relations. I thought she was a kook.

Q: She was from Northern Ireland.

BOLTON: Yes. A bit of a Marxist. . We had good speakers, then we would break into little groups, and that's how I learned what a rapporteur did. The Council had its Model United Nations (and still does). I remember being Argentina and being assigned to the UN General Assembly's Sixth Committee (Legal) to discuss peaceful uses of outer space at Penn. Philadelphia certainly made nursing an interest in international affairs easy. There was also a great deal of interest in what was happening in ethnic politics. Obviously Israel. Very important. Everything in the Middle East. Ireland, obviously, of course. Europe in general. There still is a lot of Italians obviously, south Philadelphia. World cultures were starting to come in. It wasn't just European history, and I remember having a course in high school in Russian history and in African cultures which actually turned out to be very useful as did the African culture course I took in college. The foreign service exam that I took had three questions on the trans-Indian Ocean copper trade of the 1700's and I knew the answers. I am convinced that few applicants had ever heard of it, let alone knew the answers. If you made the effort, if you wanted to, you had plenty of access to the outside world.

Q: You say when you were 14 you decided to be a diplomat. How come? When did this epiphany happen?

BOLTON: I was sitting around the library wondering "What am I going to be when I grow up?" They had all these career books and we had a set of encyclopedias at home. My mother would get one edition at the super market each week and it included shaded boxes about careers, for example, an entry about medicine and a box about what a doctor does. And they also had one for diplomat. I said, "Oh, that's good. I get to travel! Oh, that sounds like fun."

Of course I didn't realize that was supposed to be hard to get in or that it wasn't normal. The Foreign Service was still pale, male, and Yale at the time. I just thought, " That sounds interesting!" I just started to read books about the foreign service, memoirs, things like that, and thought, "Oh, this is what I want to do." Of course there were no women as role models, but at the time remember that things were changing. The past was not indicative of the future. Young women were all just full of vinegar. Everything was possible at the time. I didn't feel restricted by the fact that there was no great history of women in diplomacy.

My mother was uneven in her support regarding gender. She pushed but knew what the odds were in "a man's world". She wanted me to be a teacher or lawyer, maybe. Yet she would do things like when I had these two teeth out when I was a little kid. She took me a female dentist whom she knew from her grade school or high school. She made sure that I saw the few women who were available out there doing things. But I had to direct myself.

Q: You went where now to school?

BOLTON: St. Joseph's. It's a Jesuit school in Philadelphia. It was all men until my year. We were the first class of women. There were 100 women and 3,000 men. My second

day I met my advisor who was a retired foreign service officer from the old school, and I told him I'm going to join the foreign service. I know that he did not believe me! Then in April of my senior year when I got my acceptance package from the foreign service and he was full of excitement and good wishes, especially since the two men he was grooming failed the exam although they passed the next year. He never discouraged me of course, but he was, "Take the consular section because women make very good consular officers." So I'll sign up for the consular cone because "women make very good consular officers"! Again, for the context of the time he was always very encouraging. So St. Joe's was a good fit. The Jesuits are so very demanding and the classes were very small. I remember the biggest class that I had was intro economics, and that was 30 . Almost all my classes were between 5 and 20, with 30 the largest. My second semester freshman year, I had three department chairmen for teachers. I had classes with seven, eight people in them, poetry class second semester freshman year. And you were expected to discuss, based on preparation. I was shocked when I found out schools had classes with a hundred or more.

Q: Where did the teachers come from? What order?

BOLTON: It was a Jesuit school, but they didn't have that many Jesuits. They were just your normal PhDs and like that, but the Jesuits are teachers. That's what they do, and they're very demanding. You had four philosophy classes, four theology classes. They taught you how to think about things. Again, they were just wonderful teachers, very well educated and demanding. I liked their world.

Q: *You were there from when to when?*

BOLTON: '70 to '74.

Q: Had the various things in the '60s, civil rights, Vietnam, women's lib. Had this impacted on you at all?

BOLTON: Yes, of course. Vietnam certainly because my brother's high school has the highest percentage of young men killed in Vietnam from Catholic high schools. It was one right after another from North Catholic and from Father Judge and West Catholic and Archbishop Dougherty because the tradition had always been for white working class that you finish high school, go into the military where you learn a trade or get money for a school. That was the tradition. It continued during Vietnam. The Philadelphia Bulletin daily it seemed there were graduation pictures with the white dinner jacket and the carnation.

Q: Were there protests?

BOLTON: Not so much. I mean, at school again because these again were mostly first generation working class -- there was studying to be done and jobs to pay the tuition. Occupying the dean's office is a luxury. Keep in mind that in'72 we were leaving

Vietnam. It was still an issue, but not central. There was a lot more campus turmoil when they fired the basketball coach.

Now what was happening in the Jesuit community was much more interesting particularly in the international affairs area because you had the Jesuits were going through a lot. The students were from Philadelphia. They were just trying to get through and get a good job. We produced the governors from New Jersey. We produced tons and tons of doctors and lawyers. We had the country's first major in food marketing. It's a very good school, but it's not a particularly politicized school.
But the Jesuits were. They were having a lot of trouble because they had the older generation, they had the younger ones who were much more into liberation theology. I remember one pries, we used to call Father Fidel. I remember as a senior I told him, "Oh, I just got in the foreign service." He looked at me and said something like, "Well, you're just like one of them," or something like that, and I thought, "Oh, I guess I've been insulted, I'm not sure." He had left the Jesuits soon afterwards.

As the first women students, we had struggles all the way. Most resident students lived in one of the large mansions on campus; the women were in the new "high rise" but we wanted a house. By senior year, we finally got one -- St. Albert's. Although we heard that alumni who had lived in the hall were angry that it was going to women. I thought we did the hall's tradition well. We had the highest academic average of any of the halls and we were the first girl's hall put on social probation. I am still good friends we a few of my hall mates. We had no fraternity system.

Q: Did you ___ thought process at this time? Were you saying, "There's no barrier for me as a woman." In other words, how did you feel about the female thing, about moving up…

BOLTON: There weren't any models out there, that's for sure, but so much was changing that we just thought there wouldn't be a problem. The girls I was in school with, they were going into business, they were going to be lawyers, they were going to be doctors.

Q: You weren't being told, "You better learn to do shorthand,"?

BOLTON: No, they were in pre-med because pre-med was a hard course to get into, and it was a hard course to stay in because they had a very good… I mean, they were supplying all those medical schools in Philadelphia. Of course we didn't know what the rest of the world was like. It was just the university where everything is possible at a university. I did, however, learn typing and shorthand "for the college-bound" in high school. Boy, can I take fast notes in a meeting.

I remember senior year our house resident was a nun. I remember being none too thrilled, but she was just terrific! She was from an order that was founded in the '20s as social workers, so they've always been "worldly" and clever , different from your medieval nuns. She was just wonderful. She was just so encouraging and keep in mind that communities of nuns were changing, too. Since it was a Jesuit school there was an

element of spirituality such as reminding us that "You do have responsibilities to communities and responsibility to yourselves…" Well, without going into natural law and everything else, you do have a responsibility to yourself and your mental abilities and intellectual honesty and integrity and things like that.

Q: Given the nature of Philadelphia with a very large African-American community in a separate place, was there any movement because of the spirit of the times to try to do something to bring that community…

BOLTON: Absolutely. There were African-Americans on campus, in our classes included, not all from Philadelphia, from other places, and teachers. My advisor for my senior honors thesis was an African-American. There were all sorts of community service projects for the west Philadelphia neighborhood.

So yes, we were involved and again, in sports. We were very good in basketball, but we always made sure those athletic scholarship students were qualified students. Of course, there were also international students.

Q: Did you run across a real live foreign service officer?

BOLTON: Yes, I think occasionally one would come to speak. I think I remember one might have come to speak, but as I said, my advisor, Dr. Chase was retired foreign service. I remember once in class he mentioned that while serving in Baghdad, he was traveling on the road from Baghdad to Babylon and I thought that, yes, I want to be on that road sometime. I think occasionally one would come to speak because the school was always having conferences.

Q: You mentioned the Jewish neighborhood. I assume there weren't many Jews in a Catholic school.

BOLTON: Well, there were. It was a good education with good pre-med and sciences. They were on the faculty. You could take Judaism course from a faculty rabbi to satisfy one of the theology requirements. It was a light touch Catholic school. The Jesuits run a fairly sophisticated environment.

QL Was Israel at all a cause or not?

BOLTON: In Philadelphia, the press covered it closely. The Soviet Union was the big international issue, of course. My international relations orientation and the predominant theory in the department was from the realist perspective. There wasn't a whole lot of international liberalism being taught there.. Which is interesting except of course for the element of some of the younger Jesuits that were out to save the world from capitalism.

Q: Was there revolutionary theology or…

BOLTON: No. Courses were for the most part still quite classically based; even the more evolving courses were still intellectually rigorous. The professors didn't care as much about how we "felt" but about what we knew and what we could defend.

Q: You were in what, international relations?
BOLTON: Yes, which at the time was an interdisciplinary course. They were just starting it. I think it was about the second year maybe, and it was history, economics, politics. The coordinator was Doctor Elwyn Chase who's retired foreign service. You had to take one course from column A, one from column B, language, I had French, so they also had a Latin American studies program which is very interesting because I never got my certificate in Latin American studies because I didn't have Spanish. Of course, I fluent after one year in foreign service and served in several Latin American countries, we were aware of what "liberation theology" was and it had some sympathizers but not in the political science, history or economics departments. More likely among the theology, or sociology departments.

Q: You mention your senior thesis. What was that about?

BOLTON: I was interested in Africa. I had taken a course in high school. The first half of the year was African cultures, and the second half was Russian culture. In college I had taken another African studies course; part of the course of study was in development and political stability. The university had hired a British female anthropologist whose husband was teaching at Swarthmore. They were Africanists. As I think I mentioned, the foreign service exam that I took had about three questions on a trans Indian Ocean copper trade

I was an honors student, so I had to do an honors thesis, so I did it on the Nigerian Civil War. I wrote a bit on the role on mercenaries. Maybe I was ahead of my time -- some call them contractors.

Q: You mentioned a woman anthropologist. Were you seeing more women models, or were they pretty scarce?

BOLTON: : They were starting to appear. The school was out beating the bushes. Of course there weren't a whole lot out there. Just like even today it's sometimes hard to get women in national security studies. I don't remember any women in the politics department or the economics department or the history department. They were in the sociology department, in the English department. I don't think I even had a female professor other than the woman who taught me to speak some Bacongo. I don't think I even had a female professor.

Q: You're graduating in 19…

BOLTON: '74. I took the written exam in December of my senior years when I was still 20.
Q: I never knew that.

BOLTON: Yes, you could as long as you completed your junior year.

Q: And you were on your way to being…

BOLTON: Exactly. I took the written exam, went downtown. I also won a Rotary scholarship for graduate study abroad in case this foreign service thing didn't pan out. It's a very competitive scholarship in Philadelphia. I had to go down to the Rotary Club in Philadelphia. We were coached at school because we used to always win the scholarships, so the international relations folks used to make sure we were prepared and prepped.

I won the scholarship, and I was going to go to University of Ibadan in Nigeria. I also passed the foreign service exam, and I thought, "Hmmm, I don't think I'm going to pass the foreign service exam again." So I had decided for the foreign service. I had passed, taken the exam in December, got notified in January, scheduled an oral exam in Washington in April. My mother went down with me.

Q: Do you recall the oral exam?

BOLTON: Do I recall it? Oh, yes, I do, every second of it, every question.

Q: I try to capture those. What were some of the things you were asked?

BOLTON: I remember even the lounge and I knew I wasn't in Philadelphia anymore. About four of us were waiting for separate interviews with a panel of four FSOs. I remember Mary Ann Peters and two males and of course all of them were much more educated than I was. They went to graduate school, they were working in Brookings and I barely knew where Brookings was, and I thought, "Oh well." My mother made my suit. It was an oatmeal color with a little bit of brown threads and a brown top, and I remember asking Dr. Chase, "Should I wear gloves??" and he said, "You haven't been wearing gloves the last four years. This isn't the time to start."

I was feeling very bad going in thinking that I was out of my element., I even remember who my interviewers were. It was Tony Taylor. He just retired. And it was Barbara Schell-- she later died on duty and someone with an Italian name.

Q: She was a…

BOLTON: She was a POLAD shot down in a helicopter observing the "no fly zone" in southern Iraq.

Q: She was shot down in a helicopter over Iraq.

BOLTON: It was a friendly fire case. Again, I had been drilled -- a "murder board". Dr. Chase made sure I was about as prepared as you could possibly be. I made sure I

understood the issues the State Department faced as an institution, current events, culture, and Philadelphia; I made sure I knew what Foreign Service Nationals were. I had read volumes of the Foreign Service Journal and the Department's magazine. So the questions were not a surprise. At the time, for the written exam you indicated your cone choice when registering so I had taken the consular portion. So I made sure I knew what consular work was for the oral exam. “Well, what about you’re a consular officer in Nigeria, and you’ve got this incredible demand for visas.” I didn't know anything about demand in visas -- wasn't quite sure what a visa was. “What would you do to control it?” I said, “Well, the first thing I’d do is charge for them.” They said, “Well, you couldn’t do that.” (Well, we sure do that now -- part of the visa fee is to discourage repeat applications!) “I would make sure that I was using the local FSNs to the best of my ability and giving them as much responsibility as possible.” I had no idea what the visa process was but I had just read an article in the "Foreign Service Journal" in 1973 or 74 about using FSNs more effectively!

I remember they asked me, “Take an ethnic group in the United States and detail its contribution to American life.” I had to leave out the English so I did the Jews. Because I had grown up in a Jewish neighborhood I knew from blintzes. They said I had done well but that they thought I had done an easy group. I said, “Well, would you like to hear about the Italians?”

Then they asked me a funny question. They said, “What would you say at a reception to a French diplomat who that the Americans have no culture? I think I started off by saying that the questioner wasn't probably worth much consideration but I knew I would have to deal with him. Funny, I actually have had to defend the existence or American culture (both high and popular) to European elitists, particularly French ones.

I felt as if I were there forever. Then they said, “Please go outside and wait, and we’ll come for you.” And of course this is going on for these other three people. They brought me back in. They said, “We’ve decided to recommend you for further action.” I didn’t know if that meant I passed or not. They said, “Please go through here to get fingerprinted.” I thought that sounded positive. I was getting fingerprinted with Mary Ann Peters. It was a very fixating moment for both of us. We were both giggling at getting fingerprinted. Mary Ann and I never served together, but we knew each other and laughed when we saw each other. And during my last assignment in Newport, she was hired as a provost. She had been retired from the Foreign Service. Of course the president of the Naval War College asked me, “Do you know her?” I said, “Oh, yes. We were fingerprinted together.” That became the gag up there that we were arrested for at Wal-Mart. I spent the last year of my career with the same person I started the first day with!

Then I went back to the hotel to tell my mother that unless I have some horrible background issue or disease then I'm on a roster.” At 21, what kind of horrible background issue would I have? So I went back to Philadelphia, called them regularly, had my security interview. Which was a lot of fun because it was at the federal building in Philadelphia, and I remember the Diplomatic Security agent that interviewed me. He said, “Do you know FL?” I said, “Yes I do.” He said, “Oh, he’s a great friend of mine!

He's in diplomatic security!" It turns out that FL had life guarded with me for the Philadelphia Department of Recreation and he was quite a character. If Fred had gotten through, I knew I was in. I took my physical down at the naval base in Philadelphia which was very disturbing because the naval hospital in Philadelphia was one of the two or three centers for Vietnam vet amputees. A sobering morning on the hospital compound.

Then I went on the roster, and they called me for the November of '74 class. I'd come earlier down to Washington early and got a job. I moved in with some friends of friends up on Yuma street in D.C. -- the name on the checking account for our house expenses was "the Good Yuma" -- and got a job at a small oil lobbyist doing office work. I got to know D.C. and actually stayed in the general neighborhood.

Q: Was there a number of the class?

BOLTON: We were in like the Fighting 116th or 119th -- I don't remember which.

Q: Just to give you an idea, when we started the number class, I was in class Number One! That was July of '55. That was during McCarthy years then it started again.

Going in, in the first place, this was about the time when there was a revolution of all women. Were you picking up as sort of the new girl on the block what was happening female wise?

BOLTON: About a quarter of the class were female. Remember, I was still only 21. We had at least one woman in the class who had been one of the ones who had to resign because of marriage. She was reinstated. Again, there were no role models around. No ranking female officers, but again, I was a junior officer and the senior ranks just seemed so senior. I mean, you were just trying to find your way around the building, and the focus was dealing with your classmates and the system than the service. But you know, everything was just changing. The "Young Turks" had shaken up the institution. We were changing everything. We were ready to take on the foreign service!
I remember, for instance, when we were talking about my first assignment, they were considering Guayaquil but told me that it was too tough a post for a woman. Now of course they kick you out of the helicopter gunship in your Kevlar vest to go to Post. So they sent me to the capital, Quito.

Q: At one point I did a history of the consular service.

[cross talk]

Q: ...yellow fever.

BOLTON: Oh, yes. Disease was still an issue there. Now it's one of those places like Bogotá and a couple of other places in Latin America where they've had wonderful

mayors although there are still problems with national leadership. But in those days, you still took a lot of guff, but less all the time. Gender certainly was a factor in assignments. [crosstalk]

Q: It was paternalistic guff.

BOLTON: Near East Affairs took a lot of women, though, at the time because nobody wanted to go to NEA. The bureau was so desperate they would even take women!

Q: First, describe the class. You said about a quarter were women?

BOLTON: Yes they were a fun bunch. I liked them.

Q: What about some of the other people in it? Were there any people you have kept touch with?

BOLTON: Maybe there might be one person left in the service. I think I was almost the last one to go. Not anybody I'm in contact with on a regular basis but a few I see around. We did periodically have lunches every ten years or so.

Q: Did you feel still the kid in the class? You were 21.

BOLTON: Yes. There were about two or three who were right out of undergraduate, but for the most part people had advanced degrees, they had work experience. One had already worked in State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research as a civil servant, so we thought he was God. Later, about three weeks into the class, they brought over the USIS class. They all had PhD's, and we thought they were a bunch of snobs. Culturally, very different. And remember that there was a draft so many of the men had been in the military.

Q: Did you have a language?

BOLTON: No. I had Tarzan French. I came in with I think a one, two-plus in French.

Q: Did you have any area or specialty in mind? You came in as a consular officer?

BOLTON: Yes. At the time you were coned before you came in. Everybody took the same basic foreign service exam, then the applicant had to pick the political, economic, administrative, or consular test. We also had to write an essay. I remember my essay question. My essay question was basically "Explain why the railroad system in the United States is such a mess." The Penn Central had just gone broke a couple of years before and was well covered in the Philadelphia press because it had huge local impact and I had done some work in school on this question so I felt confident about it. I had no real preference for an assignment. I didn't have a strong regional focus. I was comfortable with Latin American affairs and we all were familiar with the Soviet Union as the prism for all international relations at the time. Remember, Vietnam was still open. In January

1975 when we got our assignments, they discussed Saigon for me and I know one of our class was assigned to Nha Trang. As the winter progressed to spring, posts were falling as the North advanced. But personnel just changed his assignment every few weeks to Da Lat, then to Bien Hoa, and finally to Saigon and in March they broke his assignment and took him out of language training, putting him in French for Africa. These poor guys were in language training until the bitter end to everyone's confusion.

Q: Had you by any chance picked up as you were in the basic course conventional wisdom about where to serve or what was the right kind of cone in the end?

BOLTON: It doesn't take long for the corporate culture to emerge. For example, why was there no political training? The informal response was "They're already smart. If you're in political cone you already know what you're doing." Yes, it was coming through although not as strongly as apparently it had been in the past. They would introduce the issue and then deny that there was an issue which meant that there was an issue. I certainly didn't detect anything from my classmates -- we had two lawyers in our consular grouping. I did detect quite clearly a sense of disrespect at post. I remember pulling my copy of Foreign Affairs out of my mail box and one of the political officer saying, "Oh, since when does a consular officer read Foreign Affairs?" At the time, of course I was a junior officer and this was a mid-level officer, and I didn't dare say, "Oh, don't worry. I just look at the pictures." But I thought maybe I'm not supposed to be reading professional literature. The rotation in the political section was unpleasant to say the least. The two most annoying officers never made it into the senior ranks by the way.

Q: Please go there a little more. Did you get consular training?

BOLTON: Oh, yes. Consulate General Roslyn was just starting. They didn't call it that yet but the outlines were there to make it more realistic.

Q: How did you find that?

BOLTON: I thought it was good. It was a lot of book work, of course, and we were doing a lot of role playing which I think was a relatively new, revolutionary training technique for State.

Q: Proved to be one of the most successful things.

Q: The old consular training was awful. Read the regulations and being lectured to. The doors were locked.

BOLTON: There were elements that were like law school and quite pedantic but it is law and procedure. I remember language training more, but language training was fun. I liked the teachers, classes, and colleagues.

Q: You went to Quito. You were there from when to when?

BOLTON: From ’75 to ’77.

Q: You arrived in ’75 in Quito. What was Ecuador like, and what was the situation there?

BOLTON: It was a military government. I think most places were in Latin America. "A son of a bitch, but our son of a bitch" -- as long as you were anti-communist. Remember that Philip Agee's Inside the Company has just been published and Quito was a big piece of that, and he named names.

Q: This was described as a rogue former CIA officer…

BOLTON: The role of the Soviet Union in Ecuador was of great importance and colored most of our policies. The country was poor, but making progress. Living wasn't difficult, but of course, it was first post and what did I know. I had find an apartment, and that was all new to me. I didn’t have any furniture. I had a car, a big old clunky Buick. It was a small post, a small country, military dictatorship, a quiet country, not a violent one, heavily indigenous. I never could figure out why the Indians put up with so much? They’re not putting up with so much now, but at the time they certainly were. It was a very stratified society. The geography was varied -- jungle (where Texaco drilled for oil), mountains, and a coastal region . It was beautiful and of course, the Galapagos Islands, rivers, volcanoes and miles of bananas. In fact I was there about two months when a coup started over Labor Day weekend. Fighter jets strafing the palace. I thought, “Wow, my first Latin American coup." It was not a totalitarian or oppressive or theological government. It just simply was an authoritarian, marginally competent military government and the generals would periodically switch out. Civilian governments were unstable, corrupt and regularly replaced by the military who also were corrupt but usually better managers. Not that the military was so strong but the other civilian institutions were so very weak and people like stability and predictability which they got with military rulers. Pure Samuel Huntington, I know. Democracy had a long way to go in Ecuador.

Q: Let’s talk about the embassy. Who was the ambassador?

BOLTON: Bob Brewster who just died last week. Bob Brewster, and Brewster Hemingway was DCM. After a year, Dick Bloomfield and Ed Corr replaced the front office. Cy Richardson was my boss.

Q: Who was your boss?

BOLTON: Cy Richardson. Cecil Richardson. I remember a lot of people from that post! Well, your first post is very intense, and it was a friendly post for the most part. So life in the consular section was fine. The visa work was very difficult, demand was rocketing and at the time, there was little thought given to supporting the consular section and the issue of illegal migration. The protection cases were interesting. I also rotated to the commercial and political sections.

Q: Let's walk through this. You started in the consular section.

BOLTON: Yes.

Q: Consular cases.

BOLTON: Yeah.

Q: Do you have any consular stories?

BOLTON: Thousands and most prove that truth is stranger than fiction. One of my consular cases wound ended up as an hour television show on NBC, and it was also close to home because a young man and a young woman were from right outside of Philadelphia. They were of Mennonite families, so they were out in the world. They themselves were not Mennonites, but their families were. And the father of the boy worked with the brother of a family friend of my mother's. They were on the hippy trail through South America using the South American Handbook as the guide. Many young people where wandering through the region on two dollars a day, admiring the poverty and failing to recognize danger. Well, this couple had gotten off a bus in the south. We traced them to having met a man who had a farm in the area. Reportedly, they went to the farm but were never seen again. We -- through the police -- conducted extensive investigations in the area but didn't find anything conclusive although we all suspected foul play. Of course we were very, very concerned because the travelers seemed to be fairly responsible people who were reporting regularly, and time was passing with no word from them. The paths or the trail stopped there. I remember the police calling me while we were at work one afternoon saying they had bodies that they had tentatively identified as theirs, so I reported that to the State Department tentatively identification. Turns out that it was not the missing young people. That started the conspiracy theories. At one point NBC came down and did a documentary. They didn't find out anything new but emphasized what a shady character the farmer/rancher was and showed on TV my reporting cable on the tentative identification. We never did as far as I know ever find out what happened to these poor kids. I remember when I left post as was on home leave in Philadelphia I did go to see the young woman's father and the mother with a little Mennonite cap on and just talked to them, and I visited a sister of the young man at her dorm at the University of Pennsylvania. But that was a big case from my time there.

Then there was the first time I went to the mental asylum for a young American citizen, a woman, who was off her meds and announced she was going to "eat her roommate's heart". We basically stuffed enough valium down her to get her catatonic and onto the plane with an escort. We did a lot of things in those days that you couldn't do now. I also had to go the asylum for a visiting American who was having an psychotic episode. The guards sent me through the courtyard where the inmates were wandering around and expressing increasing interest in me, but the guards wouldn't open the gate unless I paid. I did.

Q: In the good old days…

BOLTON: You could do a lot of things!

Q: You could get a friendly psychiatrist to go give him a shot and somebody go with him and then walk him in a daze!

[cross talk]

Q: Actually, it worked!

BOLTON: You don't do that so much anymore.

BOLTON: I remember we had the bicentennial, and I was in charge of the fireworks for the events at the Residence, so one of the drivers took me down to the firework neighborhood, and all these men are just sitting there in piles of gun powder. One had lost his hand, and he's got some kind of plunger attached to the stump, and he's stuffing gun powder down bamboo tubes. I thought, "These are the fire works?" I said, "I'll order them, but I'm not picking them up." Later I found out that there had been an explosion there a few years before and several residents died. I didn't even know that firework district was down there and I had an Ecuadorian boyfriend so I knew Quito like the back of my hand. He was a South American tennis champion and a medical resident. He was from the coast, so he didn't have family there. In fact, my favorite quirky site was across the street from the city cemetery. It was a bar called "Aqui Se Pasa Mejor Que En Frente" -- "You have a better time here than across the street." Why I never took a picture of that, I don't know.

Q: I assume there was within Ecuadorian, particularly Quito, society there a was considerable gap between the indigenous and the elites…

BOLTON: I'm sure there still is. Quite a bit and quite obvious. The people were very pleasant but that may be because I was the visa officer. I found that very hard to take, the constant requests for favors no matter where you went. You couldn't sit anywhere, get a service, visit a town or restaurant.

Q: It was one of the ___ problems that I found. I hated to go to cocktail parties.

BOLTON: Oh! Cocktail parties, having people knock on your door, anyplace you went. Hair dressers. No matter what it was, it was constant. And our colleagues were no better. The opportunities for corruption were enormous and I'm glad that the Department has finally focused on it.

Q: "You don't have to pay for this. By the way, my name is Carlos, and I…"

BOLTON: That was the problem the next post. The next post, Buenos Aires, was where we had a big scandal

Q: You were saying the political section was not your favorite place.

BOLTON: No, it wasn't. I mean, you walked in, and they had a full length poster from Hustler magazine in somebody's office. Could you do that today? Should you have done it then? Very much the white boy's tree house.

Q: A poster would be a nudie.

BOLTON: Yes, and Hustler was a little cruder than Playboy. Our admin officer was female and she pushed back at them. Everyone knew the political section was a bunch of good ol' boys. They were not very helpful. I just found it very unpleasant, and I was very happy to leave there. But they did help me become a good leader and manager by ensuring that I handled my staff the opposite of how they treated me and others.

Q: Besides the Hustler thing, somebody could interpret as sexual harassment?

BOLTON: It was probably what they call now an intimidating work environment. For instance, one of the officers said he was "published", and they put that in his performance report (EER). Do you know what he was published in? He was published because he did this little ditty where you put words in Column A, words in Column B, and words in Column C, and if you take one from each column you have some kind of cute little sexual phrase, and he got it published in something like Playboy. And it was in his EER that he was a published author. A couple of months after I left post, someone from the section visiting Buenos Aires told me that the section got awards. I asked why because I didn't see any exceptional performances or crises. He said, "Oh, no. X just decided we all needed promotions." I started to figure out how the system worked, the "art" of the EERs, the purpose of awards, and how certain people took care of each other in that sense. At the end of the day I think the system does work as I did better than all those officers, but it makes it unpleasant.

Q: How about Ecuador and Peru, were they fighting each other?

BOLTON: Just once a year when it was the anniversary of the treaty that ended their war and they would demonstrate against the U.S., one of the guarantors. That was when I had to go down to the brothel and get two Marines. You know that scene out of Gone with the Wind where Prissy is calling for "Mr. Butler, Mr. Butler!" in front of Belle Watling's? Well, that was me.

Q: 1942 or something.

BOLTON: Yes, around WWII when there were other issues circulating. Keep in mind that the students were very active then. They were rioting in the Embassy neighborhood and were heading our way. Security wanted all the marines on deck, but two were missing -- they were doing "marine things" on their afternoon off and I sent down there to get them. A good Catholic girl banging on the door, "Can you the Marines down here?"

Q: Obviously, your nuns had told you, "When you have to go to a whore house to get people out, you do it this way or that way."

BOLTON: One wonders if our parents' vision of diplomatic life matches the reality

Q: My wife and I one time got desperate when we were in Thessalonica on a trip, and we ended up... I think we were the only people who spent the night in this particular hotel! It was ___ rented by the hour!

BOLTON: Since it was first tour, you don't have anything to compare it with. It was fine, except for the political section. They put in my ER that I didn't maintain decorum. Nothing more. I asked what that meant and they said that I take my shoes off in the afternoon. This is a place known for its scatological humor, but they thought I didn't maintain decorum because I took my shoes off in the afternoon. At altitude (9,000 ft) feet swell and can be very uncomfortable in high heels toward the end of the day. But I promised to do better.

Q: EER is an Efficiency Report which everything is based on.

BOLTON: It was not a pleasant place although the head of the political section at the time showed up later in my career - I was a FS-1, he retired as a FS-1. I had heard that he had several discrimination suits filed against him.

Q: This is probably a good place to stop. You left there in 197…

BOLTON: '77.

Q: '77. Where did you go?

BOLTON: Buenos Aires.

Q: All right, so we'll pick this up in 1977 in Buenos Aires. Very good.

Today is the 26th of January 2010 with Debbie Bolton. You're off to Buenos Aires.

BOLTON: I was 24.

Q: When was this?

BOLTON: 1977 to 1979. I was assigned to the consular section in a very bad time. It was still the Dirty War.

Q: Okay. Let's talk about Argentina and the situation there when you got there. What was the political situation there?

BOLTON: The standard Argentine dysfunctional politics. Any year in Argentina is, but it was even more messy than usual. Isabella Peron just had been overthrown.

Q: Which Peron was this?

BOLTON: Isabella was at least wife Number Three. The famous Evita was number two because I think Peron was widowed before Evita. Estela I think was her full name, but she went by Isabella. She had been replaced by a military government about a year before I arrived. She was a disaster as President -- she had been a cabaret singer in Panama when an exiled Peron spotted her. She relied heavily on an advisor who can best be described as Rasputin-like. It was all very operatic, but Argentina usually is grand opera. There were many unresolved internal Argentine issues at play as well as the overplay of urban terrorism and extremism that came together to produce the Dirty War.

Q: Had the Dirty War started? It was the middle.

BOLTON: Oh, yes, it was well under way.

Q: Could you explain what the Dirty War was?

BOLTON: There were several urban terrorist groups operating in Argentina at the time -- some were products of the twisted, violent Argentine political system and were Peronist in root; others were coming out of a pan-revolutionary, anarchist tradition; some were Marxist and heavily influenced by Cuba (remember that Che was an Argentine). They would use terrorist tactics for the most part. Targets varied -- often the police but they were not fussy about where they set off bombs. The government responded to the terrorism in kind. People disappearing. Unmarked, no license-plated Ford Falcons would block the street and pull the suspect into the car, rarely to be seen again. The military or elements of the military had been put in charge of these disappearances. Initially, I think there was support among the Argentines for the most part because the Dirty War brought stability and decreased violence. Then the lack of accountability started to hit so many families -- it was alright to take someone else's son, but not mine and where is the 6 month old grandchild.

Q: When you're talking about disappearances, people would be picked up off the streets

BOLTON: They'd disappear. In Ford Falcons with no license plates. They would close off a street at three o'clock in the afternoon in downtown Buenos Aires. A Ford Falcon would close one end of the street, a Ford Falcon would close the other end of the street, another Ford Falcon would go down the street, pull somebody off the street, and off they go never to be seen again most likely. Night raids at homes and apartments. It was a very dangerous time in Argentina, and of course the Argentines for the most part tolerated it. Eventually, the society decays. The government kidnapped and murdered three French nuns just before I got there which focused increased international attention on them.

Then the Navy turned on the Navy, so you had elements of the Navy setting bombs against other elements of the Navy. I remember being awakened at night by a bomb. I believe it killed the CNO, Chief of Naval Operations, and was placed by another element of the Navy, the whole society was spinning out of control.

The economy was dreadful. They were doing a lot of "import substitution" at the time. It was a very 1950s type of life. Shopping was specialized. No supermarkets. The Church had missed Vatican II. Inflation was just soaring. I was a second tour officer. They didn't pay us much then. They still probably don't pay second tour officers well. The cost of living allowance never kept up with the increases. If you put a 10,000 peso bill in your pocket, if a couple of weeks the darned thing has lost more than half of its value. People would get their paychecks on Friday and run out and spend it no matter on anything they could because on Monday it's not going to be worth anything.

The environment was very difficult. The Argentines hired a snazzy New York advertising agency to promote the government's tough line on television. There was little on TV so I only had a TV for part of the time. I remember one of the ad agency's products. The map of Argentina looks like a steak which happens to be the national dish. They then showed a terrorist/pac-man thing taking bites out of the country. In another they promoted "responsible parenting" by having a father sit down to answer his teenager's questions about the conditions, with the father justifying the harsh measures.

The atmosphere was really dreadful. It was a very sad, stressful place to be.

Q: You arrived who was the ambassador?

BOLTON: When I got there I think we had just gotten Raul Castro, political appointee. Tex Harris was there. Jimmy Carter was president, and we were increasing pressing Argentina on its human rights policy which was a new policy direction for us and of course Argentina was one of the star violators. Everyone knew that the Naval Mechanics School was connected to the disappearances. Rumors flew about instances of bodies washing up at the shore with no finger tips for no finger prints and decapitated. With the Spanish-language press having a boot on its neck, reliable information was hard to come by. The English-language press had more leeway for a few years until the editor of the Buenos Aires Herald became an exile after threats to his life.

Q: The Navy training school…

BOLTON: The Mechanics School.

Q: It was really sort of the torture chamber.

BOLTON: That certainly has come out. There were other sites, too. You had the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo which was a very stirring thing to see, very brave for these women in their white kerchiefs walking in silence. I think it was Thursday at two o'clock they

would just walk around in front of the ministry with pictures of the missing. Those human losses became the subjects of future award-winning films.

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Q: When you got there, what were you told how to behave?

BOLTON: There were security issues of course. Some parts of the country were off limits because the government had limited control. But it was a brand new embassy. We were just opening up. I was in the consular section so I really knew little about the details other than that there was tension between us and the government on human rights reporting. I remember giving wide berth to police stations which looked like bunkers -- I think we had to cross the street rather than walk in front of one.

And you still of course had the Soviet Union and other external issues. I remember asking to read the daily "read file" but the communications unit did not want to let me because I wasn't "authorized" which is silly because any embassy officer should be able to read that file. I had to fight to get permission. But I wanted to understand embassy operations.

Q: The cables went out, and they were kept usually in an embassy in a …

BOLTON: In a reading file. In a folder literally.

Q: You had to really fight to get to see it.

BOLTON: Yes. If you weren't in the political or economic sections. So I had to fight to get permission to read that.

I had friends in the public affairs office, so I did attend cultural events. Buenos Aires had a wonderful theater life. Chorus Line opened up on the stage, and the US writer came for the opening. There were night clubs with shows. One of my favorite was a folk music club -- of course the show began at 10 PM complete with children in the audience. There were all sorts of a very active night life. I also took ballet lessons at the Olga Kirowa studio which was fun and was with young women my age. But I found it socially to be a difficult place. The consular section was under a great deal of strain from nonimmigrant visa demand that hard to manage. I had come from a high fraud post. I was stunned to find that no one seemed to have a problem with taking tickets for Davis Club play from Koreans who channeled cases to the section. I found the cases to be questionable, to say the least.

Q: I served for three years as consular general in Korea, and you had to keep the gifts away.

BOLTON: Oh, absolutely! But again, this was a strange consular section. It was old fashioned in that the consul general presided rather than get involved in gritty, modern management issues. My whole time in Buenos Aires was really dominated by the consular section because we had a massive fraud that made above the fold in the New York Times in the B section. It was a multi-unit fraud. Again, the economy was so

disrupted that an Argentine could go to the United States, buy a water heater, put it on the airplane, and pay for his whole trip. Or, a young Argentine could just stay, and many did. And we had problems with Argentine prostitutes. Because of the economy we had gotten deluged, and I mean *deluged* with applications. I had a year in NIV which was spent trying to cope with the deluge, then I moved to IV's. While I was in NIV, two of us revamped the section with the DCM's encouragement. We went to working shifts. We started the appointment system -- we used the White House visit system and Disneyland as models (and this was in 1978). We were the godparents of the visa appointment system. We knocked down walls, stopped name checks unless we intended to issue, had officers from other sections assigned to help for an afternoon a week. We had gone from issuing about 200 a day to issuing about 1000 a day. One senior officer limited his advice to telling us that we were using too many rubber bands! Control the number of rubber bands, you control the number of applicants? Why didn't I think of that? Of course the junior officers from other sections complained about having to help but as the DCM said, "This will teach them not to believe everything they hear."

Then one day soon after I went over to IV's, I had just come in to work and no one was there in the unit except for one senior FSN. The regional security officer had just carted the IV staff off. I thought something was coming because when I was in the NIV unit, the security officer had asked me questions about processing because I was so concerned with some aspects. To make a long story short, we had three separate fraud rings going that didn't even know about each other. We had one in NIV, we had one in IV, and then we had one that involved a missing blank U.S. passport that the receptionist was going to use for a social security fraud.

Many FSNs were fired and some arrested and prosecuted. There were two in IVs who were running a sex for document fraud ring. I think investigators figured out after my first interview that I had been a Cassandra so I served as more of a consultant. When the Visa Office representatives visited, they asked me "What do you need to make things happen?" They were very interested in the management techniques that two of us tried to impose. They asked, "What do you want for a next assignment? You did good work down here under hard conditions," so I got to pretty much pick my next assignment which was Madrid. There was a real failure of senior leadership, a sense that a consular section should be seen but not heard and visas were like party favors for other sections to dispense to friends and contacts. Of course, in the next years it would become clear that consular officers needed a spectrum of management and policy skills. But we "Young Turks" pretty much pulled it together and got through it, but Argentina was not my happiest assignment.

Q: Let's talk about the fraud a bit. I wouldn't have thought particularly or even non immigrant or immigrant. I guess you could go, but wouldn't they come back?

BOLTON: They were starting to overstay because it was a very unhappy place -- it's spirit had been destroyed by both the terrorism, a poor economy, and the response to both. Remember, several faculties at the universities were closed and several professions such as psychiatry were very suspect. The economy was very unbalanced. They believed

in "import substitution" which limits choice and the inflation rate was out of sight. They hosted and won the 1978 World Cup soccer championship which was a bright spot. No one would believe us, believe the consular section and what we saw. Nobody cared. We had a problem with white slavery, now called trafficking in persons. Argentine prostitutes going to Puerto Rico. We had an activist Immigration and Naturalization Inspector in Puerto Rico who deserved his own TV show. He would go after them. If you refuse a young lady who's good looking with no visible means of support, you're going to hear about it from somebody. Or, the girl would tell us her family would be harmed if she did not go.

Q: Where were the centers in the States?

BOLTON: Puerto Rico, Miami, and New York. But again, we were the only ones that cared about trafficking then. We had adoption fraud from Americans: "Oh, I gave birth in the bathtub and don't have a doctor here." But Argentines are of European stock so the babies were attractive to Americans and presenting the baby for a citizenship document was easier than going through the adoption/immigration process.

Q: The typical thing of this would be somebody would arrive on a 10 day stay, and all of a sudden, whoops!

BOLTON: And they neglected to mention to the boarding agent and the airlines failed to notice that they were nine months pregnant when they came.

Q: I've interviewed Tex Harris who was very much involved in the human rights side of the mothers of the disappeared and the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Did you all get involved at all in this?

BOLTON: We were starting to. We started in-country refugee processing which at the time had never been done anywhere. Now we do it in Cuba and Vietnam but at the time there was really no concept of processing refugees in their home country. We had two tracks going. Political prisoners who were eligible for immigration, for example, having a U.S. citizen brother, were handled by the immigrant visa unit. It was easier and quicker to go as a refugee, but sending eligible immigrants through the IV process saved refugee numbers for those who had no other access. Those political prisoners or recently released ones who had no access to immigration were processed through the refugee unit which was set up in the consular section. There was an American citizen spouse as the administrative employee and a representative from one of the refugee organizations in the U.S. with a consular officer. When I was in the IV unit, I would go the prison to interview them. The prison in Ecuador was an Aegean stables. It was medieval. But they'd open the door, say, "Go right in and find your guy", but a prison in Argentina with political prisoners was serious business, it was very serious business to go to prison and interview someone in jail for political reasons.

Q: How were you treated by the prison authorities?

BOLTON: Oh, very coolly and officially. You didn't move. You followed instructions carefully. The guards were very heavily armed because they were dealing with small armies of guerillas who could mount an attack on a prison. So you just went in, did your business, and left. .

Q: There you were a single young woman. Were you making friends in Argentina?

BOLTON: I was going around with a young man from Bank of London and South America. There were trainees from the Europe and Australia. They had to be single. One had told me that the corporate expectation was that they would marry Argentines or Uruguayans who would be more "traditional" spouses. They were fun. Although when we had parties, we had to remember to feed the bodyguards that they had in the first months of my time there. Again, I had my friends in the press and cultural areas. I'd usually try and make friends with the press and cultural officers. They have a lot more fun than almost anyone else in the embassy I think. I had some Argentine friends and I knew the young women (and a few young men) in my ballet class.

Q: Did you feel within the embassy, was it divided into usually into… ___ the senior officer corps would be…

BOLTON: Yes. I think there was some of that tension between senior officer raised in an anti-Soviet environment and younger officers who were also looking at other issues We were still staffed with many layers of oversight -- deputy unit chiefs, unit chiefs, deputy section chief, section chief, etc.

Q: Did you have much of a problem with congressmen and visas?

BOLTON: Oh, of course. They can apply a great deal of pressure, but for the most part it was routine. That was it.

Q: Did you get at all into American services?

BOLTON: I didn't, no. I'm not even sure what was happening in American Services. I wouldn't see a citizenship/ACS unit until the middle of my third consular tour! Just visas and more visas. There was an officer who had a lock on that ACS/passport unit. I was just so up to my eyebrows in visas. We were working two shifts - another one of my innovations because even with extra staff, we could not all fit into the space at the same time. We had the seven a.m. shift and the three p.m. shift. That's how hard we were working. What was happening as far as passports or missing person, I had no idea. After the fraud, we had to hire and train a lot of people so I also had to focus on training.

Q: This was the fraud.

BOLTON: It was the fraud, yes. My focus was entirely on getting through the day in the consular section.

Q: Were there problems with people? Were there parties you couldn't belong to like the Peronist Party?

BOLTON: There weren't really any parties at that stage. The Peronists were illegal at the time although still quite a force. There was a lot of class issues. It was a very divided society. And you still had the very hard core, right-wing, sub-rosa Catholic group. It's not Opus Dei but something similar for "God, country, and family."

Q: What about the universities? Were students in universities considered suspect or anything?

BOLTON: Yes. Several schools were closed at the time, for example, psychology. Sometimes, the university was closed, sometimes it was open. I think law and philosophy were closed often.

Q: Did you learn to tango?

BOLTON: No, I didn't do the tango and I never saw it outside a tourist show! Well, I was an American, and any dance class I went to overseas, they always expected I was an expert in tap and jazz but all I knew really knew was classical.

Toward the end we were having problems with the Falklands. The Falkland War hadn't broken out yet. I was in Madrid for that. I remember at one point I decided to be a Canadian in taxi cabs. "You an American?" "No, I'm from Toronto!" Or my Spanish was good enough at that stage certainly that people used to think it was Venezuelan, and they couldn't quite place the accent.

It was an interesting place, but I found it a disturbing place. It was a country under a great deal of stress. Economically, politically, socially. I was glad when it was time to leave. I took the ship from Buenos Aires on Grace Prudential Delta Line from Buenos Aires through the Straits of Magellan up to Valparaiso. In Buenos Aires I had done actually the only seamen and shipping work in my career. I was minding my business in the IV unit. Again, bosses were someplace else or not interested. A phone call comes in. "Quick. We have an American seaman who wants an voluntary sign-off from the Prudential ship…" "You go down." "Me! I don't know anything about this! Give me the FAM!" I'm reading volume seven of the Foreign Affairs Manual in the back of the car.

Again, I may sound like I know seamen and shipping but it is only because I studied so intensely in the back of the car.. It was a voluntary sign-off and any sign-off (voluntary or involuntary) required the consular officer's concurrence. Sometimes a U.S. merchant seaman would sign on for six months, become bored and want to return to the U.S. but also wanted to be paid for the six months. After return they would develop a story claiming that working conditions were bad and therefore sue for wages. But sometimes there were dangerous conditions on the ship, for example, that same line had lost a seaman overboard somewhere between Buenos Aires and Valparaiso, Chile. Remember, drug trafficking was really starting to take off and we were deeply unprepared for it.

So the seaman wanted to sign off. The ship's master (captain) was not going give permission, so it fell to me as to whether I would allow this American Merchant Marine, to leave the ship. I didn't want to damage the company and I didn't want to ignore any well-founded fears of the mariner. I spent all afternoon with the ship's master, the sailor, and the union representative. I remember it was like parent effectiveness training which was very big at the time. "And how did you feel when he came to your cabin with a knife?" Of course, the ship's master wanted to put the man in irons and give him bread and water, if not keel haul him. He was not very helpful at all.

The union representative was interesting. Actually, it's the union that eliminated the real need for consular officers in seamen and shipping work. For example, the manual talked about how the consular officer had to ensure that there was a "slop chest" on board with fresh water, foul weather gear, and tobacco for the sailors. Well, now they have a ship's commissary. He decided to remain on the ship. I was exhausted. Positively exhausted. But that was my one seaman in shipping experience.

Q: I remember one time I got a call from Bahrain. I was in Dhahran. You couldn't get there at the time. They said, "We've got a mutiny, you know."

[crosstalk]

Q: They can be an extended enlistment. The guys were absolutely right, but I had to learn this on the run practically.

BOLTON: Literally I was in the back of the car reading. The initial report I had was that it was a mutiny so I made sure I read all about mutinies, too, expecting to find pirates not a negotiating session.

Q: For the most part the American Merchant Marine has reached such a level that is sophisticated.

BOLTON: Now they finally have redone it. If there's even a page in the new manual I'll eat it. I had actually come out quite well as far as being known as a "new breed" consular officer, interested in management changes. But it was time to leave. I took the ship, they treated me well because the ship's agent remembered that I had been so helpful on that case.

Q: How did you find other than the one summer, how did you find the foreign service nationals?

BOLTON: Oh, they were nice. They were a lot of fun. They were hard working. Great. I mean, very comfortable. I always got on well with the staff, tried to be attentive to their needs and as I progressed, I found that the staff always did its best for me.

Q: Where'd you go afterwards?

BOLTON: I went to Madrid. Of course, I was back in the visa unit. My third consular assignment and I had never issued a passport. I had a great group of friends, Spanish friends, American friends, a great group, British friends. We had parties all the time, went all over Madrid, all over the countryside. Every Sunday a few of us would just take off for a province.

The Iranian crisis hit so were swamped with Iranians. Of course, there were no policies out. How can we give NIVs to people who have no home anywhere. Libya had also burned us out so had many questionable Libyan visa applicants. I called for a stop to issuing student visas to Libyans for nuclear physics and other now-sensitive areas. The Department balked. Of course now we don't issue without regard for certain areas, I think it's the Javits amendment. We ask all sorts of questions, and no, you don't have the right to study whatever you want in the States.

Q: The senator from New York.

BOLTON: Yes. I did about eight months in IVs, and they I went in to do IVs, and then I, guess what, I went into the ACS unit. After how many years now am I doing a passport in consular work? That was great! I loved the determining citizenship issues. I really liked that. Then, for the third time, I had turned down a request to become Ambassador Todman's staff assistant

Q: A well known ambassador.

BOLTON: He had a unique style. He was from St. Thomas in the US Virgin Islands, and having served two tours in the Caribbean, I now understand him better. I ran into him again when I was in Curacao's chief of mission in 2004 which I'll tell you about when I get to Curacao. He was an ambassador, and it was about his fourth ambassadorial position. He had already been assistant secretary for Latin America. He kept running through staff assistants. Then it became back to the visa unit or take the staff assistant job. I think we had the Falklands War going at the time. We were getting Spain into NATO. Franco had died about a year or two before, so we still had the transition to democracy. I was in my dance class, my ballet class, when we had the attempted coup. The studio belonged to a Spaniard, Jose Fuente, who danced for the Joffrey Ballet, then in New York. I remember the evening when his father, who managed the studio, ran into class telling us, "Girls! Girls! Get dressed! There's been a coup!

[crosstalk]

Q: And the king faced Col Tejero down.

BOLTON: Exactly. I was only a few blocks from the embassy, so I dashed back to work. I put my dress over my leotard and still had my pink tights on. It was seven o'clock at night. I wasn't working for the ambassador yet, and I always wondered where he was that night. We never knew where he was, although I think I know.

Q: Stay on the visa side. I don't think of the Spanish as being particularly a problem. [crosstalk]

Q: …immigrant minded at all.

BOLTON: NIV side was fine. The Spaniards were no trouble whatsoever. It was the third country nationals that were the trouble. It was all the Latin Americans, and all the Korean chicken sexers in the IV unit.

Q: The Korean what?

BOLTON: Chicken sexers. This is a tough thing. You have to be able to tell the sex of a chicken as soon as it is born because they're raised differently. This is apparently some niche skill. Turned out later that this was as fishy as we thought. We had challenged the sixth preference visa petition but INS did not waver. So we had a lot of third country nationals. And of course the Libyans burned us out in Tripoli, so we had questionable Libyans and I was not happy with that. I mean, I didn't think they were good applicants. One told me that I didn't have the right to refuse him because the United States belongs to everybody. Then the Iranians of course started to come because Spain was one of the few countries that wasn't requiring a visa. So they would come from the airport, leave their suitcases in the lobby, and come in and apply for a visa.

Q: What did you do with them?

BOLTON: Refused a lot of them. We needed clear guidance from State which we didn't get for months.

Q: At that time I was consular general in Naples, and we were doing the same thing.

BOLTON: It was a very intense time at that. The immigrant visas it was mostly Gallegos from the northwest of Spain. They were still immigrating.. The Gallegos in Spain are of Celtic background like the Britons and the Welsh and the Irish.

Q: Where did they go?

BOLTON: All over the place. They were going into industrial jobs. We also still had the visa provisions for the Basque sheepherders. ___

Q: Who?

BOLTON: They went mostly Nevada and the Rocky region. They stayed up in the mountains with the sheep for six months or eight months in winter because Americans found that too lonely. Again, it was a concession by Congress to a member's constituents who had sheep in rough areas that needed sheepherders over the winters.

[crosstalk]

BOLTON: And as a result is that the University of Nevada has a Basque studies department. The only place in the U.S.

Q: this is one of the things you and I are witness to.

[crosstalk]

Q: I came across Hmong in New Jersey. Who would think of? This is one of the Asian tribes. We monitor these things, and every once in a while they hit us.

BOLTON: The Gallegos are wonderful. They were always the subject of jokes and barbs, they're very suspicious of strangers. Well, Franco and Castro were Gallegos and both have reputation for being shrewd. So we had the Gallegos, but too often we were doing these Korean chicken sexers.

Q: Why weren't they in Seoul?

BOLTON: That's what I wanted to know! What are they doing here? What are they doing in Madrid? Why can't they do this visa processing in Korea? Because at that time you could go visa shopping very easily. We didn't have a big immigrant visa demand because the Spaniards for the most part were not immigrating anywhere. So we had the capacity, and so someone thought we could do this, and I was always thinking, "How do we know what a chicken sexer is and if these people are really chicken sexers? You have to be able to pick up the chick when it's like a day or two old without killing the chick, figure out whether it's a boy or a girl. In birds it's very hard. It turned out it was mostly a scam.

Q: Prior to that in Korea there were a lot of these scams. Oriental cooks who'd never seen a stove in their life.

BOLTON: Right. And it was very hard to question them. INS seemed to have a "How dare you!" attitude if you challenged their approved petitions.

Bu there were good lessons to be learned. I learned don't make snap judgments. A woman came to the window saying, "I'd like to get a new passport. I just got married." I hadn't opened the passport yet, and I said, "Is your passport expired?" She said, "Oh, no, I still have two years." I said, "Well, I can just amend it to read in your married name." She said, "Oh no, no. I want a new picture." She looked like a Schnauzer. I'm sorry. I thought to myself, "Boy, a new picture is not going to help," but I said, "Okay, fine then, as long as you understand you have to pay for a brand new passport." She agreed.

So I walk around the corner to start with the FSNs on the name checks. I opened the passport. She had been a nun. So the passport picture was of a nun in habit, so no wonder she wanted a new passport when she married! Another American woman had taken her

roommate's passport by mistake and was stunned to notice that on the plane. So she decided to enter Spain as her roommate but then grew worried if she were discovered by a diligent examiner at departure. I used the beauty of the passive voice and the vagueness of Spanish to get her out of this legally and morally. So I said, "Okay, here's your passport. I'm putting in an envelope. I'm stamping it, mailing it right back to your roommate tonight. You now don't have a passport. I'm going to issue a new passport, and you're going to go down to the police with this letter that says that your other passport is not *disponible.* It's not available. As long as they don't ask you anything else, and they just give you your stamp the same as for anyone who doesn't have a passport "available".

You always get movie stars of course in Spain. We had a real lovely collection. In the old days when you had the big index cards for your files. We had the permanent collection like Cary Grant's picture. Big Crosby died on a golf course right outside of Madrid. Bo Derek came in for a passport. All the guys all of a sudden needed to find a way to the consular section. We had a couple of models. You get some writers, you know. So it was kind of fun, but I always loved the little gallery of famous people over the years who had their passport applications.

Q: Did you have problems with the servicemen at the U.S. Air Force Base?

BOLTON: Oh, yes

That was also where we had IVs. The airmen would marry in Asia but not get an IV until they were assigned to the U.S. If they married Europeans, they seemed to get the visas in the spouse's country. As far as arrests and things like that, I think the base pretty much handled that under the terms of the agreement and their own relationships, but as far as reports of births and immigrant visas, we had our hands full. I recall one airman who had been married about four times. We had to line up the previous marriage and divorce decrees for the visa process and right in the middle, like marriage number three or something there was only an interlocutory decree. You can't get married on a interlocutory decree. Well, he did, so you get these problems.

We had a lot of married in Thailand, and they were now going back to the States, so we had large number of Thai and Filipino spouses. We had sad cases of airmen married to Spaniards for a year or so. They went back, leaving behind his Spanish wife and American baby; now the boy is 18, doesn't speak a word of English but is a juvenile delinquent, and he's my problem because Spain at the time had still very traditional citizenship regulations. If a Spanish woman married a foreigner, she lost many nationality privileges, including that of conveying citizenship to her child.

Q: Being an ambassador's aide is always an interesting thing particularly in a big embassy. You were a young officer, and almost as a young officer group, and then there's a middle group and then more senior group. You're definitely almost part of a social caste. How did you find the junior officers felt about being in Spain and our ambassador there?

BOLTON: Well, let me see. One had to be very careful in any of those positions. It's not *me.* It's me either acting on behalf of the ambassador and if you're wise you will pay attention to what I'm telling you. There are a few of those. I remember when the political-military consular sat me down. He had worked with Kissinger. He said, "Look. You got to worry about quality control, timeliness, and no surprises." I always remembered that when I was either staffing or being staffed. It was quality control, timeliness, and no surprises. That was very good advice, and I survived. When he traveled it was like a mini sec state visit, the car going ahead and often an 'advance'. Terrorism was also a concern, and increasingly, crime.

Q: Basques and all. They just arrested somebody. I saw the paper today.

BOLTON: It's still bad. I understood all that

He'd travel a lot, so whatever part of Spain I didn't see, I sure saw other parts of Spain. We would take calls like on artists and things. There was this one man, I wish I remembered his name because he was a famous artist and it was the most wonderful, enchanting afternoon. Really. It was in Majorca, a most magical afternoon. He lived in the village and house where George Sand and Chopin used to live where we joined the artist and his wife for lunch. Also World Cup. Again, I was chasing the World Cup around the world it seemed.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Spanish court?

[crosstalk]

BOLTON: There was a very interesting dynamic. There's a constitutional role of the king, then there's the real role of the king. Franco skipped Juan Carlos' father and had taken Juan Carlos into his household as a young man, He had a very difficult job because again there hadn't really been a king for a while since Alfonso XIII, and there had been a Franco who was quite a divisive personality, let's say that, and you still had the wounds of the civil war, among the older people particularly. There was that division in the embassy when Felipe Gonzalez would visit. He was head of the Socialists, and remember Socialists were barely legal. He could come call on the ambassador. He'd come up on his motorcycle. We younger officers (and FSNs) thought it was really cool!

So the elections were coming, and all the young officers thought Socialists were going to win. Upstairs, they were no, no, no, and I said, "I don't even want to tell you why the Socialists are going to win. You need to tell me why they're not going to steamroll to victory." Well, they had a steamroll victory. We didn't pay enough attention to the new, young Spain. The king's role was very special. He played by instinct and by what the traffic would bear. He used his influence selectively.

He played a huge role during the coup. I don't know where the king was. I think the king was moving, too, that night, because there was a real question as to what a garrison in the south wanted to. The king was not quite the middle-class monarch of northern Europe, it

was still Spain and I think he was trying for some middle ground. I think he was trusted by all sides. I think he was a good king who had an excellent and appropriate relationship with the ambassador. Unfortunately, he squandered that good will in the last decade by being very insensitive to optics and his behavior.

Q: Queen Sofia, wasn't it?

BOLTON: Yes. The Greek, as some young Spaniards called her.

Q: The court around, not necessarily nobility, but with nobility…

[crosstalk]

BOLTON: The Spanish upper class. You still had you still had titled people, and some of them were an absolute hoot. I remember getting a letter from one for the ambassador that closed with the very old fashioned, "Allow me to throw myself at the feet of your wife," in Spanish. You still had Christopher Columbus's descendant, with the title of the "admiral of the open seas", he's still around. There are some real characters, some with title but no money or skills.

Q: My experience is that you got some of these courts which some of the ambassadors get caught up in it.
[crosstalk]

BOLTON: No, I don't think anyone was enthralled by the nobility. Well, you have to obviously see them because sometimes they're ministers or something like that, but then you have a tectonic shift when the Socialists came in when it didn't matter if you were a *Conde de* so-and-so. Franco of course had created titles and those title holders were held in some contempt by the older nobility. The traditional elites were losing their influence with the Socialists coming in. The consular section would still see the royalty and nobility in exile -- sometimes it would be a little flashback into European history when a Hapsburg or Battenburg would come in. We had Vladimir came in who's the heir to the Russian throne. This travel document was something like a certificate with only the name Vladimir on it; we need more than that for the visa processing. We also had King Zog and any number of exiled Balkan nobility.

I did the notarial thing for bringing back the Guernica, the Picasso painting came back from New York.

Q: What else was going on?

BOLTON: Well, the regionalism was starting to become politically significant in Spain. You had the ETA in Basque country running a nasty war. Andalusia, Valencia, Galicia, and Catalunya all wanted more autonomy. if not independence. Franco was very centralized, but the new system included regionalization. but what is too much, and what is too little? And Catalunya wanted to take it to the edge. There was even an

independence movement in Catalunya of which speaking Catalan was the most obvious indicator. It was difficult for us because Spanish is the language in which we communicated but often the local government insisted on Catalan or poor English.

Q: We were taking a stand. Spanish is the language.

BOLTON: The regional government enjoyed treating the consul general in Barcelona as if he were chief of mission.

Valencia was a much softer, kinder, and gentler Catalan. I mean, the Catalans thought Valencia belonged to Catalunya, and the Valencianas did not, so it was even within the region there is a lot of tension.

So Majorica, Minorica, and Ibiza, they also wanted to get more regional authority, but I think joining the EU has taken some of the edge and urgency out of the regional tension.

They had joined NATO first which was a real challenge for the ambassador's tenure.

Politically it was a very interesting time which is Spain going through an awful lot of changes. Crime was increasing. I remember seeing the front page of a right-wing newspaper reporting on two murders that day as "another day of democracy."

We had a horrible drought, and this is very funny, another thing I wish I had my camera for. We always saw right-wing wall writings, longing for Franco such as “We had more security with Franco.” “We had better jobs with Franco.” “We earned more money with Franco.” In a small town I saw this great understated wall: “It used to rain more with Franco!”

Q: Did you get any feel when you were working for the ambassador for how our military was there? Negotiating, but at the same time we were getting ready to close down places.

BOLTON: We did go through negotiations for a new base agreement, and that was a big change. The poor ambassador was also our lead negotiator. Not only did he have a whole bilateral relationship to run, but also had as a lead negotiator on a major base treaty. There were so many issues ranging from use of flags to a status of forces agreement.

Q: Were you seen? Again, you are where you are in your age group. I would think that this would be a time when the young people in Spain would really be feeling their oats.

BOLTON: Oh yes. We were having a great time. I was about 27. There were big generational changes as I said with the Socialists coming in, with a young leader. There was anti-Americanism in the sense of, I heard a lot of moral equivalency. “You’re no better than the Soviets,” you know. So there was a lot of that resurgent leftist stuff.

Q: In a way, in American intellectual circles we were playing with that, too.

BOLTON: Yes.

Q: The CIA is the equivalent of the KGB and the bad guys were off in the government movies and things of this nature.

BOLTON: There's certainly a great deal of that. The Spanish had been so isolated. I remember that Italian food was regarded as something that was positively exotic.

Q: Speaking of food, did you find you had a problem with the social life and the late meals?

BOLTON: Yes. I remember being out all night a few times and even going right to work. I don't know how we would do it, but we would be out all night, and we would stop off at four in the morning for *churros y chocolate* on some corner. I think it might be a little too dangerous for that now.

In fact, I know how Spain had changed because when I was in counter terrorism, I was back in Spain with my boss, and the Spanish wanted a working breakfast. I thought I was going to fall over. That was about 10 years later. A working breakfast in a country that barely acknowledged the meal and not before 10 a.m.

The embassy would start at 9:00 a.m., and I think we'd have an hour and one-half for lunch. Many locals still went home for lunch which equals four rush hours during the oil crises. On Fridays our group would often do tapas downtown. Someone would be the banker and take our $10 contributions. We would go all night on that

Even dinner parties would begin late, sometimes at 10 p.m.

Q: Were you seeing as you traveled around, was the change visible outside of the main city?

BOLTON: Not as much. Even when I went back in '95 when I barely recognized Madrid but out in the countryside was still the countryside. You roll into a village and they'd be having the village fair.

One change was to street names, going from Franco heroes to their former names.. When you got in a taxicab, you had to be so politically acute to know the politics of your cab driver because if you said, "Take me to the Gran Via," well, if you were a Franquista, he's not going to take you anywhere. You got to tell him you want to go to Jose Antonio.

But it was a very good tour. I learned a lot.

Q: You left Spain when?

BOLTON: I left Spain in '82. I left the summer of '82 because I was going to Budapest, and I had to go for language training for a year, and I didn't get to Budapest till '83.

Q: Is this choice or a directed selection?

BOLTON: Oh yes. I didn't want to go back to Washington, I liked being abroad. I wanted to see more of Europe, maybe have my own consular section in an interesting place. Eastern Europe appealed to me because access to the U.S. and movement of people across borders were sensitive political issues. Budapest was on my list.

Q: How did you find Hungarian?

BOLTON: Hard, but I liked it. I still remember quite a bit of it. I liked the language. I liked Hungarians. But it is a dreadful language.

Q: There are not many cognates.

BOLTON: No, there's almost none. There's some Latin ones, some Slavic ones, but for the most part, no. Nouns have 12 cases, there is "vowel agreement", and post-positions. It has a wonderful musicality to it.

Q: You were in Hungary from when to when?

BOLTON: '83 to '86.

Q: Hungary was still behind the Iron Curtain.

BOLTON: It was still Iron Curtain, but with a light hand. There would be reminders every now and then where you were like when it came time to cross the border and sometimes in the countryside when you sighted Soviet military units. The Hungarian history was a bit different from Romania or Czechoslovakia or Poland. Czechs had been re-Sovietized'68. Hungary had its counter-revolution in 1956 which failed but they managed to develop a more flexible society than the other Bloc countries..

So in '56 the deal that was made, the unspoken deal Russians made with the Hungarians in '56 was the party remains in charge under Janos Kadar who was one of the ones who stayed in Hungary during the war, and foreign policy will be consistent with the USSR's. And the Soviet troops remained. The name sounds great in Hungarian: "The temporarily present in Hungary troops."

But for the most part they pretty well had a lot of internal control, and they had liberalized quite a bit by the time I got there as far as economics. I mean, we had plenty to eat. If you wanted a tomato in the middle of winter, you could pay a dollar for the tomato if you really, really wanted a tomato. They could travel if someone else paid, and I think every three years they could pay themselves . They were actually fairly content. They could complain. If you went to the comedy clubs, you heard an awful lot. My Hungarian was not quite good enough for a lot of the stand up comedy acts, but they got away with a lot

If you had to be in a communist country, it was the best one to be in. We ate really well. Lots of bread, lots of food, wine, what else did you need? Coffee.

Q: Cherry soup.

BOLTON: Cherry soup, yes! Good hotels. But you go lots of restaurants in town. I lived above a bakery. That was wonderful! I had dance class. It was a private studio and had a beautiful floor. This guy worked really, really hard. People carved out space for themselves. Again, as long as you weren't taking a shot at party control. They were trying to make the Hungarian forint convertible. The head of the central bank there was very respected in the international financial community. Tourist visas were not a problem -- they wouldn't give an exit permit to anyone unless they thought they were coming back.

I did refuse a visa to a plumber because I couldn't figure out how he could afford the trip. Well, it turned out that he played on the national ice hockey team and the plumbing "job" was a joke to make him look like a "worker".

I was very good friends with Hungarian ice dancers who were world champions and Olympic silver medalists. They were a lot of fun. He had had an antique store nearby. Remember that the transition was starting. I had a front row seat to the fall of the Berlin Wall and Hungary which is where it started.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

BOLTON: He was Hungarian-born, self-made millionaire, Miklos Salgo.

His French wife and I got to be good friends. Initially I thought, "Oh, gosh, a French wife. Spare me." Well, she was very funny and you never knew what she was going to say.

We had a lot of interesting consular cases of course because of being Eastern Europe. We had one woman who was going senile. She must have her own filing cabinet by now in Consular Affairs. She just goes out to the airport, gets on a plane, and just goes wherever it goes. She was at Denmark, and the next plane was going to Budapest. I had a manic-depressive who was in full mania for a couple of weeks like something out of The Great Imposter. She was running around town presenting herself as everything from cellist to a businesswoman to selling her furniture that she doesn't have. I had a man in a hospital, a crazy American who had left the Soviet Union when he was 12, and he was on his way to Afghanistan to fight for freedom. He was staying in a Polish workers' hotel in Budapest and had an LSD flashback, jumped off a roof and broke his two legs. He was part of some organization where the last leader had died when someone dropped a hairdryer in the bathtub. This is like a movie. The Hungarians wanted him out, but he did not want to leave, had no money and was not interested in repatriation. Eventually, the Hungarians deported him to Austria. We were not expected to do much for hospitalized Americans but I did visit him regularly. I also got to explain in country team how language study

comes back to you and how I might have been the first and the last American diplomat to ever see a naked Soviet soldier. The Russian-speaking American was driving the doctors crazy because he was so rude. I was back for a visit. They said "Oh, we moved him in a room with a bunch of Russians." I said, "A bunch of Russians?" He said, "Russian soldiers had stolen some jet fuel and had gotten high on jet fuel. They stole a Hungarian's car and drove it into a wall and broke many bones. So we put him with them because we put all our shit together." They send me down the end of the hall. The door is open about three inches, you know, in a big ward. So I just push the door open, and there was this Soviet soldier standing there naked as a jaybird, so I run down the hallways back to the doctors to tell them "mesztelen, mesztelen, az soviet katona mesztelen." "Doctor, you've got to go tell me when I can go in, okay?" He did that, so I went and visited with him and then left and went back. I told this story in country team. And had to re-tell it that Saturday in front of a ranking visitor at the country team briefing. The visitor had asked about relations between the Soviets and Hungarians and the DCM told me to tell my story.

This was also a big transition time for the foreign service life overseas, and it was start of VCRs. That caused an enormous change because before we used to go out to Spanish movies or you did your entertainment hosting each other or doing sports. Now granted, my first tour I never heard Jimmy Carter's voice in two years. I never knew what the President of the United States sounded like for my first tour.

But there we were in Budapest, and we could go out wherever we wanted, go to clubs and to dinner, and one day I heard Haley's comet is coming! There was an observatory, up on Gellert Hill next to the Monument of the Unknown Soviet Rapist (as the locals called the statue to the Soviet liberating soldiers). I asked the Embassy's S&T officer how we could see it, he found out there would be a public viewing the evening of the comet's best transit. But I could only get one person to leave the comfort of the VCR living room presentations.

Q: You mentioned the Soviet soldiers as they went through Hungary they took their pleasure.

BOLTON: Yes, they did. They're not well thought of there. What a funny empire it was where all the vassal states looked down their noses at the capitol of the empire. I had said at one point I wanted to go to Moscow to visit because I had never gone, and my FSN said, "You can go any place in the world and you want to go to Moscow? Are you crazy? It's backward!"

Q: You were there until when?

BOLTON: '86, but it wasn't a dull or trying tour. Again, it was a very light hand for the most part. Occasionally we would see problems, and I think occasionally they would send test cases to us. I remember one case was so, so sad. A young woman, a young man. She was Bulgarian and he was Russian. You think leaving an Iron Curtain country, even going to the West is tough? You should try to go from one Iron Curtain country to

another Iron Curtain country. It is almost worse. They had met at university in Hungary, They wanted to get married, they couldn't stay, they were making them leave, they wouldn't let them go to each other's country, so they asked if we can help them get to Austria. I said no, not without exit permits and other procedures. They said they were going to go try to get out over the border to Austria. Did we know any way they could do it? Well, no, of course not. But it was very emotional. "Well, we're leaving tonight." I gave them 10 forints in cash and some Hershey bars. And I remember thinking, God, 45 years after World War II and we're still handing out Hershey bars in Europe. Perhaps they were provocateurs -- if so, they were Oscar-level performers.

Some were probably sent to us just to test to see what we were going to say, but it was always very sad.

Q: On the visa question, had things got to the point where it was pretty easy to issue visas to them.

BOLTON: Yes. Once they had gotten past their own exit permit process which was a lot more in depth than anything I could do, we generally gave them visas. And immigrants were mostly IR-1 spouses. That was not any problem. We had a lot of Hungarian-Americans coming back to retire in Hungary.

Q: From '56?

BOLTON: Yes, and earlier. They were all coming back to visit, or live. A U.S. social security check goes very far back in the village. The Hungarian government figured out that they had a golden goose. Assuming the applicant for return was not a roaring counter-revolutionary, the deal was that they returned as Hungarian citizens. Most were dual nationals. When they arrived in Hungary, I would get the U.S. passport from the Hungarian government and keep it in the safe and issue the U.S. citizen a "carnet" type document as proof of citizenship. When the citizen wanted to visit the U.S. they came to the Embassy, turned in the carnet for their U.S. passport, and we placed a pro-forma rubber stamp visa in their Hungarian passport to get they out of Hungary. For the most part, the beneficiaries had no trouble. Banks cashed the dollar checks into forints in a heartbeat. We had some beneficiaries who had "representative payees" for a health or mental reason. The Social Security administration would pay for our travel around the country to visit those beneficiaries annually which was a wonderful way to get into the countryside and in to people's houses or social institutions. When the American Consul comes to a small village or town, it's a big thing.

Q: Were you ever involved in the Jewish exodus from the Soviet Union?

BOLTON: No, it wasn't really an issue in Hungary. The Jews weren't leaving. They were fine. Whether they were going to Israel or not, I don't know, but we had no refugee status or refugee program. No one tried to stay in the embassy until we stated dealing with the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. We had the Pentecostals camped out in Moscow in the embassy. I remember someone, a USG psychiatrist, at some point telling us, "The

first day it's their problem. The minute they stay overnight it's your problem, so you really want to get people out the door." Of course, their safety is always the priority. There were ultra-Orthodox Lubavitchers Hasidim returning with U.S. official passports to examine Jewish graves. Previous ones had gone with the consul, but the latest did not want anything to do with me because of my gender.

We had " tourism" issues with the Libyans. The Libyans were very active in Hungary. and were increasingly asking for tourist visas to my shock since we had just bombed Libya. I personally think they were using Hungary for the European operations, but the Hungarians hated the Libyans. "Oversexed, overpaid, and over here," is what they would say. They were based in the Astoria Hotel, very obvious.

Q: When we bombed them?

BOLTON: Yes, in response to the Berlin La Belle Disco bombing that was done by Libyan agents and killed U.S. servicemen. We bombed Libya and Tripoli. The telephone operator had instructions to put calls to the consul through and not to "screen" them. I had many calls afterward with congratulations from Hungarian citizens. Saying things like "Hit them again! Hit them again! Go back! Go back! You missed most of them!" These were the Hungarians calling who were supposed to be friends of the Libyans.

Oh yes, and a very creepy member of the Libyan People's Bureau (their Embassy) had a crush on me. He had scar from here to here across his cheek, and he would trail me around all these receptions. Everybody knew. I would be teased by the staff with "How much for the woman?" Every time I turned around the guy's standing behind me at some reception. It was a very strange environment,

We still had the Hungarians and Iranians keeping an eye on us, and Cubans, and a whole assortment of nasty countries there, but I traveled around a bit. I went to Poland a couple of times. I went to East Germany for a conference. That's an experience. We had a good embassy, but with some sad experiences. A young Marine committed suicide. That was a horrible night. A horrible three days.

I knew the movie people well. I mean, people who won the Palme d'Or in Cannes and the Oscar for best foreign film. I recall one telling me never to underestimate the stupidity of the censor. And my ice skater friends who won silver at the Olympics although many thought they should have had the gold but for the Soviet judge who ensured votes for the Soviet ice dancers. The movie people were interesting to talk to. There was so far they could go, and they were always pushing the envelope. It was so funny, Istvan Szabo won the Oscar for best foreign film. The Hungarians never expected him to win, so he only had per diem for a day, and of course once you win an Oscar people want to talk to you the next day, but he had to leave. He had no money. I used to tell the movie friends that I did not need their human drama plots because I had my consular work and saw enough of the human parade and the banal cruelty of governments.

Q: I think maybe we should talk a bit about some of the stories.

BOLTON: We can talk about how the Berlin Wall started falling. It was starting to fall on the consular section.

Q: And also some of the stories you might make note of. I'll be right back. Do you want have any questions?

SECOND INTERVIEWER: I was going to ask you. Well, obviously I missed like the first part, but so you went to Argentina twice?

BOLTON: No. It was my second tour. My first assignment was to Quito, Ecuador, then I was assigned to Buenos Aires.

SECOND INTERVIEWER: And it wasn't one of your best tours? Was it mostly due to the political climate?

BOLTON: I think it was a combination of a very difficult situation, a lot of extremism and ideology on all sides in a society, and a high capacity for violence. I mean, when a country starts eating its young, what it does to a family, what it does to security, what it does to trust between people in the government in the society, it just destroys it. And the economy was horrible, just awful. It was a violent place in that sense. All the police stations and institutions looked like armed encampments. Nothing as nice as the bollards we have here.

Q: Today is the 3rd of February 2010, an interview with Debbie Bolton, and we're moving on. Debbie, where are we?

BOLTON: We're pretty much toward the end of Budapest at least toward the events around the fall of the Berlin Wall which really began in Hungary and how it pretty much began with consular issues as these things do. There was the old CSCE process and we had of course the Basket 3 which was the movement of people across borders and family reunification issues. These are consular issues so it was interesting for me to handle a consular issue that was heavily political.

Q: Let's put it in the picture back again. You were in Budapest from when to when?

BOLTON: In Budapest from '83 to '86, and I was chief of the consular section as a FS-2.. It was time of transition. The Hungarians had a very interesting relationship with the Soviet Union of course were members of the Warsaw Pact. As long as the Hungarians complied with the primacy of the Communist Party, there shall be no other parties, and as long as they allow the Soviet Union essentially to strongly influence the conduct of foreign policy, the Hungarians pretty well were free to experiment internally. In fact, one of the results of '56 was a very different shift in attitude when Kadar…

Q: Janos Kadar.

BOLTON: Janos Kadar who came in in ’56 had been one of the communists that stayed in country in World War II, not one of the ones who was in the Metropol Hotel in the Moscow. There was a stark division between party members who suffered and fought in WWII in Hungary and those party members who lived as guests in Moscow. His perspective was essentially, “If you’re not against us, you’re with us.: In other words, “If you don’t confront us, you can have a fairly secure and stable existence.” There’s a lot of public space in other words.

I was pretty involved with the dance community as a hobby. I took dance lessons at a private studio which had a beautiful floor. Once a month every Wednesday the owner-teacher would have a dance night. He would bring in either a speaker or a performer. I let our Cultural Officer know that this guy was doing our work for us because the dance trends discussed and demonstrated often originated in the U.S. (but were sometimes quite dated.) For instance, one night I remember what I called the Beatnik Night. It was very hip. The performing artist essentially stood there with some props. It involved saying “bacon,” and "bread". And ripping his shirt. This was revolutionary for Hungary, of course. A communist country cannot stand free choreography or heavy symbolism. Also my teacher would do things like have us perform contact dancing which is that you don’t know what you’re going to do until you touch the other person, so it’s not a choreographed dance. The Soviet dance was famous because of technique and precision. You did not deviate from your lesson or steps.

Q: It’s so old hat now that it seems like going back to the Middle Ages, but I can recall when we had the ballet Fancy Free…

BOLTON: Yes, that was exciting in the U.S. Cats opened in Budapest; I think it was the first overseas location after London, and this was in ‘83, ‘84. BBC was not jammed. I used to listen to it all the time. Isn’t that quaint. Boy. Voice of America was not jammed. There was a V OA host, the guy that did the jazz show on Saturday night. Willis Conover, was that his name?

Q: I understand when he went to the Soviet Union he was swamped.

BOLTON: Yes. People would not even schedule dinners or anything on Saturday night when his show was on. There was a lot of dance groups. In fact they also hosted the cultural forum for the OSCE, and I remember that. Who did I have to bring around? I had to escort a very quiet American pianist. Eugene Istomin. There was a lot of activity. Tony Curtis came to find his roots. He was from western Hungary and grew up in the Hungarian part of New York City. The Ambassador hosted a dinner for him and I really enjoyed meeting him.

Also, we were very busy as I said in the consular section. We had a lot of American tourists.

Q: Go fast forward about five years, and you have Prague which was overwhelmed by young kids. Was Budapest the designated place where American kids would venture, would maybe go to teach English?

BOLTON: To some degree. We didn't have that much opening yet. You just couldn't wander in with some kind of story, but for the most part if you had the money and a sensible story, Hungarians would let people in.

I never really had issues. I had an annoying, vain American woman who was born in 1933 and decided to change her date of birth on her passport to 1938. Of course the border guards stopped her and confined her to the airport while I went back and forth to the airport and Embassy to re-issue her passport. Of course, this starts at 5 p.m.

Q: Obviously she wanted…a boyfriend.

BOLTON: No. Her husband was with her. I thought he was going to kill her, I really did. He was the one who had to of course tell me this whole story and go back and forth with me. Maybe they're still not talking. I don't know.

But for the most part there weren't really any serious issues, and the consular work went fairly well. I did have an interesting case with a young girl. She was about nine or ten. Her father was Hungarian, and her mother was Coeur d'Alene American Indian from Idaho. Her mother died while they were living in Hungary and the little girl had pan encephalitis. She couldn't move for the most part. It was a very horrible disease. I don't think the father was in the picture but the Hungarian family could not take care of the little girl anymore and wanted her returned to the U.S. , to Idaho. They have no money and the girl cannot move. I remember getting a call from her tribal leader in Idaho who went to the U.S. military, Idaho national guard, and everyone else he could think of. So we got a U.S. military C130 Med-Evac plane to come in from Frankfurt, put her on board with her aunt, fly her back to Frankfurt, then fly her to Dover where the Idaho National Guard picked her up and took her and her aunt to Coeur d'Alene, back to Idaho. That was a very complicated case. I remember the Ambassador that morning running around to pharmacies trying to get enough of the drugs she was on in order to facilitate a transition to U.S. drugs. Of course, local authorities don't know what goes into a military evacuation but when they see it and then hear us decline to pay for the departure of other Americans who aren't eligible or interested in repatriation, well, it was interesting.

We had visits. We had the vice president. Vice President Bush came. We had a lot of fun on that visit.

Q: How did that go?

BOLTON: It went beautifully. . The section chiefs got invited to the dinner at Parliament, although we were all seated below the salt. We had a nine course meal and went hungry because we were the last ones served and the first ones cleared. You could either talk to

the person next to you or eat. You couldn't do both. But it was a great example of how the country and economy was opening.

Our ambassador was political appointee multi-millionaire and wonderful to watch work. He picked up the phone for the Fourth of July and called his friend Ray Kroc to ensure that we had an unforgettable July 4.

Q: Who was the head of McDonald's.

BOLTON: McDonald's. Because McDonald's was talking about coming into Hungary but it wasn't working out well. The Hungarians wanted to do their own thing like Paprika Burgers, and you can't. And they couldn't get the right potato to grow. The Ambassador decided he was going to kick start the negotiations by having McDonalds come from Frankfurt to cater the huge July 4th reception that went in shifts all day.
He calls Ray Kroc, and McDonald's packs up a couple trucks in Frankfurt, but they couldn't bring them into the country. We had to go get them at the border. You know, old embassy trucks going out there to get all those hamburgers, chicken nuggets, and frozen french fries the morning or the day before .

Long story short, we didn't have nearly enough help, so the commercial officer and everyone else had to take turns in the tents on the front lawn in the residence slinging hamburgers and frying fries. Then also the ambassador wanted to invite about 3,000 people. His lawn doesn't hold 3,000 people, so he did it in shifts. People got invited for either 11 a.m., one p.m., four p.m., and I think we had a seven p.m. Of course, in a communist country if you do something different, people will wonder what is up, why some people got invitations for 11 a.m. and other people got invitations for three p.m.

We were there from 10 a.m. actually until after midnight because the last people from the reception went home at nine, and then at ten the ambassador scheduled a dinner and dancing for the embassy staff and the ambassadors and DCMs from the other missions and we also had an Air Force band there. And if I hear the Ghost Busters song one more time, I must have heard it a thousand times that day. I'd never gone to a Fourth of July party that started at 11 a.m. and went on till one a.m. We had a great time.

I remember I had an American citizen contact who was the patriarch of the Bulgarian Orthodox church. Why he was resident in Budapest, I don't know. He obviously couldn't be in Bulgaria, so I guess the closest place was Hungary because Hungary doesn't care much as long as you behave yourself. He looked like Santa Claus, he had a snowy white beard down to about here. Bishop Simeon. He was so sweet. I asked him at the reception if I could get him a Big Mac. He said, "No, the secret sauce with the beard. They won't mix." And Soviet generals. You now how Soviet generals have 300 medals, and "they glitter when the walk" in the words of Richard Corey poem and they also jingle when they walk. You can hear them a mile away. Watching them go out the door with Big Macs in every pocket was quite a sight.

The Ambassador really had a vision. I remember once at a dinner party it was I think the deputy secretary, it was a small closed dinner party, Americans or NATO only. Keep in mind this was ’84, ’85. The Ambassador speculated that eventually we will return to the concept of Mittle Europe with Hungary in NATO. We thought he was being unrealistic, and hoped the Hungarians never heard about it. Our situation was better than in other Bloc countries but it was still the Warsaw Pact.

Q: It was just terrible.

BOLTON: It was just horrible. The comparison was like day and night, especially with Romania or Poland. The same thing in Poland. I had gone up to Poland a couple of times to visit a friend of mine who was Consul General in Krakow. I had to bring sausages. I mean sausages I got in the Hungarian market

Q: Did you go to Hotel Gellert?

BOLTON: All the time. Yes. They had just redone it.

Q: Did you go to the wave pool?

BOLTON: Yes, they had the wave pool. And radioactive baths.

Q: I went there speaking no Hungarian. And I went there wanting to try the wave pool. My wife just had an accident, so she couldn’t do it. I went, and I bought my ticket, but I’m sure there were signs that said “Men” and “Women.” I couldn’t tell which was which. I laughed when I opened the door and it wasn’t the men’s…

BOLTON: Hungarians wouldn’t care.

Q: Were American kids going through their wanderings?

BOLTON: We weren’t really getting many of them. Not too many of them. You needed a reason to be there. Again, they were usually pleasant, they were reasonable to deal with for the most part. The Hungarians, they would go back and forth between working in the foreign ministry and working in the Communist Party headquarters. You knew whether you needed to deal foreign ministry, whether you had a circle behind and also deal with America’s desk at the party’s headquarters, but it was the same people going back and forth. Then five years later or ten years later, in fact, the head of the U.S. section of the foreign ministry when I was there was the ambassador ten years later in the U.S. after the democratic transition. I bumped into him in the seventh floor hallway at the State Department. He said the whole group for my time in Budapest was with him. They had no purges..

I dealt mostly with the consular affairs people who were a little older, and they were really old school. They were almost courtly. When I walked in the first day they said,

“Oh, the United States must think so much of Hungary to send such a beautiful consul.” And, “Oh! Your Hungarian is so magnificent!”

Q: Did they kiss your hand?

BOLTON: Yes, and that is also the spoken greeting to a woman: "I kiss your hand" (Kezet csokolom.) They asked me, “Oh, where did you learn your wonderful Hungarian, from your family?” and of course I was handing the schmaltz right back in Hungarian, “Oh, unfortunately I’m not of Hungarian descent. I had to study it.” You never heard “comrade.” Once in a blue moon. Around the Communist Party holidays, then you’d hear it. You still had the old fashioned forms of address, and so it was a still very traditional society in that way. They ruined much of the language as the Communist Party always does. Paragraphs that said nothing in the paper.

But the CSCE was an important process within Hungary. Basket 3 family reunification only included immediate family, not siblings so the Hungarians did not issue exit permits for what we call our "Fifth Preference" for sibling immigration. I agree that it really is a pointless family reunification category but it was a regular discussion topic with the government.

Q: I agree. It’s a political category.

BOLTON: You can’t get rid of it. There’s too many people in line. But other than fifth preference, for the most part of the immediate relatives, we didn’t really have the problems that they had in other countries. What was more interesting to watch, and this is where you can see the change coming in the Warsaw Pact, so the relationship between the U.S. and Hungary wasn’t as much as interesting as the relationship of Hungary within the Warsaw Pact which was very hard to get visibility on obviously. It’s like looking at the family’s dirty linen. They certainly did not discuss it with us.

I had some insight on that in the consular section. It was very difficult to move between countries in the bloc, going from Hungary to Czechoslovakia was no piece of cake, believe me. We think going from Hungary to Austria was the challenge. It was just as bad trying to get to Czechoslovakia! I never could figure out why because technically speaking, if a Hungarian entered Czechoslovakia, the Czechs could not let them go to Austria. You needed an exit permit from your host country. Home country. It wasn’t as if you got anywhere just because you went to Czechoslovakia. There were agreements in the Warsaw Pact that they had to agree to return you if you overstayed or attempted to head west.

This is where they started to fall apart. I had a Hungarian friend who was a celebrity and his family roots were in Transylvania which of course is Romania and which of course is also ethnic Hungarian. The Hungarians and Romanians don’t like each other and Romania was a very strange place under Ceausescu. But remember, the Romanians had sent an Olympic team to Los Angeles, so we seemed more tolerant than we should have been.

I remember I had gotten an invitation to go to the Romanian embassy I think the day before the event, and the invitation said, "The ambassador of the People's Republic of Romania invites ***you***," filled in by hand - no name. I told my secretary, "Call the Romanian and tell him "Ms. You" will attend. I think it was for Flag Day. It was an afternoon reception and I didn't see anyone I knew other than one or two others who also wondered why they were there. What it really was, was Ceausescu's birthday. I walked and someone was soloing on violin. You had to go in and watch a film of Ceausescu, you know, kissing babies, and opening dams, and Mrs. Ceausescu. It was mind numbing. And I was sitting next to the North Koreans who were also very strange. They've had the kittle Kim Il-sung buttons on.

Q: A picture of the leader?

BOLTON: Something similar happened to me with an Albanian diplomat at the theater at intermission. I walked over to a group of diplomats I knew who introduced me to an Albanian diplomat. When he heard I was an American, he positively turned green, shaking his head he backed away, waving his hands in front of him. I felt like the devil with horns or something. Back to the Romanian reception. There was almost no food. No one spoke Hungarian, English, or Spanish. I mean, it was positively dreadful. I thought, "Get me out of here as fast as I can."

A Hungarian friend's problem led me to believe all was not well in the Warsaw Pact. He had relatives who were from Transylvania. They were, however, in Hungary. This is where it got very interesting. He said, "Is there anything you can do to get them to the U.S.? The situation is that they're ethnic Hungarians, they're here, they have way overstayed their visa," he said, "as have many others. They're in Hungary, but they're in a situation where the Hungarian government will not send them back in clear violation of the Warsaw Pact agreements, but they would not document them. They're in this like netherworld of non-people. They couldn't work, but they were not going to be returned to Romania." I thought, "Well, isn't this interesting. A little chink in the wall where one Warsaw Pact country is disregarding its obligation to another regarding the treatment and control of its nationals.

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He told me that there were a couple hundred of Transylvanians who were in that situation where they were in Hungary and the Hungarian government, as I said, would not return them as they were required to do, but neither would they document them at that time. I said there was nothing I could do, there was no UNHCR office to have them documented as refugees and technically, they were safe. Unless they have a claim to immigration status through a relative where we could make an appeal to the Hungarian government through the CSCE process, there was little we could do. They weren't in any danger or anything like that. In fact, to the Hungarians, these were other Hungarians. As far as the government was concerned, these were Hungarians who had come home.

This was my last six months when all this picked up steam. Then we started of course hearing about what was happening in East Germany and in FRG embassies where East Germans were traveling in places like Prague and seeking asylum They were given

shelter, fed and housed. Of course I wondered if that was happening in Budapest and it was. The FRG had about 50 in its basement. I went over because one claimed that her father was an American soldier named Jim, but that was all she knew.

I had a woman and a boy come in, and they were East Germans and said they were not going to leave. Well, I had already worked out with my FRG colleague a code that I said, "If I call you and tell you I have a case of Heineken beer, please come over right away and get these people out of my waiting room." He came and talked to her and left with her and her son, but they had a full house. That was toward the end of my tour. It was an emotional time for my German colleagues, as if there were entering a mystical period of possible reunification.

Where the wall broke was not in Berlin. It broke in Hungary because the Hungarians let them all leave for Austria.

Q: That was about six months before, wasn't it?

BOLTON: Yes.

Q: I go way back to the mid-'60s, and we had in Belgrade, and we had East Germans and others showing up in Belgrade saying, "Oh, we made it!" because it seemed… And I had to tell them that Belgrade… They wouldn't…

BOLTON: They weren't Warsaw Pact, though.

Q: They weren't Warsaw Pact, but they were not helpful.

BOLTON: They didn't have an exit permit.

Q: If they went the wrong way, they'd be turned back, but sometimes you could get through the border. They weren't patrolling very well.

BOLTON: And you probably didn't have mines.

Q: They weren't mining.

I can't be sure if the Hungarians were, but everyone thought they did which is just as effective.

Q: People said, "We can't do a thing for you, but for God's sakes, don't go across the I think the Greek border which was a difficult one, but go across the ___. If you're really bound and determined, I suggest you try up here." A significant number got through.

BOLTON: That's interesting. The Hungarians were of course a lot closer, and they didn't feel any sense of responsibility to any of the bloc members other than their own.

Hungarians have no love for the Slavs, so the Czechs, the Poles, these folks were all Slavs, so the Hungarians didn't have any ethnic affinity for their neighbors.

Q: Anything like ___.

BOLTON: And they didn't like Romanians of course. They didn't like the Germans, either, but the older generation all spoke German from the Austrian-Hungarian empire days when the saying was that "you went to Vienna to die and Budapest to live". It's still true. When I would go to Vienna and everyone would be in bed at 10:00, and they're all a bunch of proper burgers.

Q: Was there a significant number of fifty-sixers who'd come back.

BOLTON: A lot of people who left in '56 were retiring, and they worked in the car factories, and many getting no $400 a month social security. It can be hard to live well on that in the U.S., but you live like a king in Hungary. In Poland it was a full industry. Poles who'd come back and build ranch style homes. In southern Poland when I was visiting my friend he took me around a couple of houses that had been built by Poles who had come back, and they were like U.S. suburban ranch homes in the middle of the Krakow forest.

They had come back, the Hungarians. The deal was they had to come back as Hungarian citizens, so they had their U.S. passport and Hungarian passport. They were injecting quite a bit of hard currency in the countryside, living well, and happy.

Q: Was Communist ideology still viable or had this been ruled out?

BOLTON: Not really. Socialism was. My secretary was born into a family of true believers, and she was a true believer. She was a lovely woman. She certainly wasn't a believer in tormenting people, but she wanted fairness. But she was challenged in her beliefs. She said, "Why is it that people take better care of their apartments when they own them than when they rent them from or get them from the state?" I think it was at that time a socialist state in the sense that it was socialized medicine, of course, and education was free, and arts were very inexpensive.

Q: State supported arts.

BOLTON: These Hungarians had revolutions based on poetry; 1848 comes to mind. Sandor Petofi recited a stirring nationalist poem on the steps of one of the national buildings and everyone went off and started an anti-Hapsburg rebellion -- put down with help from the Russians which was not recorded in history books used during the communist period. I think you could have up to 10 people employees in a private business, then it was 17 people, so it was like a mixed system in many ways. You get interest in your bank accounts. Every now and then you might hear something or something happened in the countryside, and I never trusted them fully in any case. I think everybody knew where the lines were. A lot of self-censorship going on., U.S. companies

were coming over; lots of movies were being made there and sometimes the Embassy folks provided the U.S. cars (our POVs) and apartments for their "typical" U.S. look in the film.

Q: You could also hire the Hungarian army, too.

BOLTON: For very little, I'm sure. In fact for Halloween we had one of the best Halloween parties I've ever gone to. We all got our costumes from the opera. I've got great photos, by far the best-dressed party I ever attended. The Marines all came like Roman Centurions. Bishops and nuns, and Romeo and Juliet, and you name it. Where else can you rent a Halloween costume for five dollars from the opera? The arts were very available, very accessible. They had comedy clubs that were semi-underground or at the university and they performers were hilarious.

Q: Cabarets.

BOLTON: The younger officers would go to the university ones every now and then. When I left it was '86. It was clearly changing. It was again still obviously a communist country.

Q: Had the crown of St. Stephen been returned?

BOLTON: Yes. We had given that back right before I came. They were very happy to see that. It was very nice to see. Anytime anyone in the diplomatic community went to the dentist to get a crown, they would announce having gotten the crown of St. Stephen.

Q: Did you get any feel for exchange students? Were there many Hungarian young men and women who had the chance to go to the United States to study at this point?

BOLTON: I don't really remember so much. We did a far number of J-1 exchange program visas. Not F-1s. .

Q: Js being exchange. visitors.

BOLTON: The relationship with the Hungarians diaspora was always a little dicey because of the ones who had to flee after World War I, after World War II, and after '56. But it wasn't as bitter as some because they had so much common ground on the culture. They agreed to disagree on the political stuff, and the Hungarians never had gulags and only a brief period of show trials; 1956 really was a change in the conduct of the government from the more Soviet style of the group who had sat out the war in Moscow and those who had paid their dues fighting in the homeland.

The prisons were not bad. I visited them several times that had Americans. I recall only one really offensive U.S. prisoner. A Hungarian-American arrested for child molestation. He was a teacher in Rockville, Maryland. I very much wanted to ensure that Rockville knew what was happening, but I was a bit worried by the Privacy Act because of the

$5,000 personal fine and I wasn't sure that an arrest would constitute "public knowledge" in a restricted place like Hungary. The Ambassador told me to do the necessary and he would indemnify me if necessary. Horrible case.

Q: He was doing it in Hungary.

BOLTON: In Hungary. Yes and they had pictures he had taken. At the time there was not the activism in favor of the child like we have today although I certainly knew what I had to do regardless of the Privacy Act. Although it was not in the newspaper, I decided that his arrest was a matter of public record because of the trial not being held in secret.

Q: After you left, I'm not sure the exact time, but Hungarians finally said, "Screw this border stuff."

BOLTON: They sent them all to Vienna. Sent them to Austria.

[crosstalk]

Q: …cutting the barbed wire and…

BOLTON: Right. I don't know if they let the people go first then had the ceremony, but they clearly just let everybody go. For one, I think it was reaching critical mass in the German embassy, so it wasn't like one night the Berlin Wall. There was a lot that led up to it, a lot of chipping away at the edges.

Q: The Czechs, the East Germans, and the German embassy in Prague.

BOLTON: It was really an exciting time to be there.

Q: It must have really been in a way fun because you never say you… We had this enemy, the Communist world, and we were watching it begin to melt.
BOLTON: But it was a very personal level -- what these governments do to the people and how horrible they make their lives over things that don't even come up in our country. I was always aware that I was living in countries where my bookcase could get me arrested. You're just so happy to get home, and you're so happy for the messiness in the West.

I remember how bizarre West Berlin was with the techno, counter-culture crowd but it was a price we paid for our commitment to personal freedom. After the East Bloc, it was almost enjoyable to see the Euro-nonsense there.

But I left at an upbeat moment and I really would have liked to have seen the change.

They continued many national traditions. For example, swearing in the new class of cadets on St. Stephen's Day in August which was done right next to me at the Parliament building, and then they had the military parade down the Danube with soldiers

parachuting into the Danube right in front of my apartment building. It was the best brunch to give with that kind of entertainment in front of my balcony. They kept their national hymn, God Bless the Hungarians .

There were no major issues that I knew of. The Jewish community is always an interesting issue, but the Jewish community seemed to be managing. They had synagogues, and probably, frankly, had fewer anti-Semitism issues than under democracy. There is a fascist streak in Hungary that did not immigrate. As far as the women, women had two jobs. A lot of women worked outside the house, but they had to go home and do all the housework. I know the women used to complain about that. The men didn't do anything. I'm sure that's changing.

Everybody wanted to learn English. No one wanted to learn Russian. Somebody would come to the window, a Russian speaker, and I'd have people in my office with 10 years of Russian in school who would tell me they couldn't say a word as a matter of pride.

Q: In '86 whither?

BOLTON: Oh, whither. I went to Washington for the first time. I got lots of good advice and help from my colleagues in Budapest on bidding -- unlike at my other posts. Another lesson learned for the future was to really support and help staff in bidding. It was time to go to Washington, but not before a sad episode just before I left. A Marine committed suicide at Post 1 late on a Sunday night. I'll never forget having to go to the Embassy at 1 a.m. and smell the cordite and blood in the air. So sad for all. I remember I had to go over to the mortuary, and he was swaddled and looked like a young boy. Then he was loaded on a Lufthansa plane with a Marine escort, and I was on the tarmac as they were loading him. The captain from the Lufthansa plane came down. They were also loading crates into the plane, and he says, "You know what's on those pallets - handguns, Hungarian guns for sale in the west." You couldn't buy a gun in Hungary, but they would make them and ship them to us. Irony is rampant in the foreign service.

Q: Speaking of Marine Guard, what was your impression of Marine Guard? In many places, the Marine Guard is always nice in time of trouble but in time of non-trouble

[crosstalk]

BOLTON: Of course. But life can be hard for them, especially in Eastern Bloc where they couldn't date. It was only a one year tour. They lived in the embassy which is a little constraining of course. I remember one shot a pigeon with a crossbow. We tried to keep them busy. We had this discussion several times as to whether we wanted young men with not lots to do in their spare time. The British had retired military.

Q: Retired military police.

BOLTON: Yes, with spouses. The Germans had the Border Guard Police, the Spanish had the Guardia Civil. But as I said that was kind of sad note toward the end of my tour, but it was a good tour and I had good friends there, Hungarian friends, a great embassy,

lots to learn and enjoy. But one had to be careful in some of these authoritarian countries that you're not responsible for bringing someone to the attention of their government. You could cause a great deal of harm so you always had to be very careful that you weren't putting someone in a bad position through friendship.

But so we didn't really have that problem because the Hungarians knew well how to treat their athletes. They didn't hold them back. They didn't defect because they were all allowed to keep a big chunk of their income that they earned. Like my ice skater friend, he would go to Europe to ice skate. He was out of international competition at the time but still making a living skating in expositions and ice shows. He said he would go to Monte Carlo and skate, then come back to Hungary. He kept something like 60% of his earnings. He was heavily taxed, but the Hungarians were smart enough to let him keep enough so he could live well, so he had no urge to leave. And his female partner who was just a sweetheart got a job teaching skating in Hawaii. I just enjoyed the whole country, and the work was very interesting.

It was time to go, and the DCM was really great help to me in preparing for Washington.

Q: Who was the DCM?

BOLTON: It was Keith Smith. Keith advised me on the practical aspect of getting Department positions. He gave me good advice and support to get a job as a desk officer in WHA. I was the Uruguay/Paraguay desk in the Office of Southern Cone Affairs. Goodguay, Badguay, Innerguay, Outerguay, Guay of my dreams in southern cone. I became a "conehead" as we called ourselves after the Saturday Night Live skit. It was really a shock because it was so different from working in the field, you know, when you clear something in an Embassy you run down the hallway and you get the DCM to sign off on. What's it take, five minutes? The clearance process in Washington was so complex, even unpleasant at times. And I had a real active embassy in Paraguay. Clyde Taylor was the ambassador. At the time Elliott Abrams was assistant secretary. We were working against far left regimes, and far right which included Paraguay so my job was to ensure balance against outlier governments.

Q: President Stroessner.

BOLTON: Yes, President Stroessner. And we also had of course the Chileans, too I think Pinochet was still kicking. Uruguay had just left dictatorship but was in bad economic straights. Argentina was a mess as usual. Being a desk officer is an essential Department experience. My countries were a nice size, not too big where business is conducted above the desk level or so small that no one cares. I think I pretty much was in charge of all things Paraguayan and Uruguayan for the U.S. government -- who else would do it? And it was an activist time in Paraguay. And Again, Uruguay was just coming out of dictatorship. Paraguay was the most trying of the two.

Q: Lets talk a little about what was the situation first in Paraguay at that time?

BOLTON: In Paraguay it was Stroessner. It was essentially a one party state that was very familiar to me in style, if not ideology, having served in a communist country. I kept making these comparisons, for example, when Stroessner won an election with 94%, and I said at one point that these were Eastern European results which got into the press guidance. The Colorado Party was a tough institution, complete the equivalent of a an agitation and propaganda unit, like a communist party, to do "agit-prop."

Very corrupt. But yet it was different from other Latin American countries. There was a pride of the Indian background. Stroessner spoke Guarani. His father was a German immigrant who opened a beer factory and married a Guarani Indian. The Paraguayans would speak Guarani when they didn't want us to understand. They loved the Peace Corps. Again, it was an inland country, one of the only two without a sea coast in South America, and I think that explains so much. It was insular. It was isolated from so many trends, different from so many Latin American countries in the sense that often Latin American countries have weak governments and regular coups, not so much that th military aspires to the job but because the parties are weak, as are other non-military institutions.

In Paraguay it's a different situation. It was really a party, a very powerful very strong party much like the PRI in Mexico. You've got the two odd men out in Latin America where you actually have an actual party. The PRI of course had the military under control. The same with the Colorado Party. The Soviet and Chinese communist parties also had their militaries well controlled. All Paraguayan military officers had to be members of the party as had all teachers and government workers. The relationship between the party and the military is an interesting one that I don't know how much has been written about it. But it was different from many of the Latin American countries because of this very powerful Colorado party, with really little ethnic issues with the Indians since the Indian population is very much part of the cultural identity. The problem was the absentee landlords, the absentee land ownership where the Duke of Something in the EU owns a huge ranch not necessarily being well used. That problem is certainly coming to the forefront now.

Economically it wasn't in that bad shape considering that at this time in Latin America a lot of Latin America was in very bad shape. Stroessner didn't really borrow much money, and he had the sense to build Itaipu Dam with the Brazilians and the power generated from the biggest damn dam in the world split 50/50 between big Brazil and little Paraguay Then, little Paraguay sells the excess power back to the Brazilians at a certain rate. But they were corrupt. If you just look at statistics, they were the number one importer like Johnny Walker scotch. Where do you think that stuff's going? Right out the door to Brazil and Argentina.

Q: I understand that Paraguay is sort of a smuggler state.

BOLTON: It's Capitalism at work. You can see a lot just from the trade statistics.

Cars. Stolen cars would wind up in Paraguay. In the newspaper there would be a page for cars with papers for sale and cars without papers for sale. And then one or two days a year they would have this open house: "Bring your car in and no questions asked, we'll give you papers." It's just lunacy. It was very transparent what was going on. Remember the movie The French Connection? The French Connection movie showed a smuggling network between Marseilles and New York. Well, in reality the French Connection was Marseilles to Paraguay to New York, but they didn't put that in the movie because they only have two hours, and who wants to hear about Paraguay, but the real French Connection went through Paraguay. Paraguay had always been like a low level smuggling, but they started making a lot of money with the sweetheart deals and kickbacks for building the dam. That was bringing much more money than they had seen with consumer goods. Then when the dam was done, well, what else can really bring in that kind of money? Drugs

Q: Why the French Connection when you've got Bolivia which is producing stuff?

BOLTON: They didn't manufacture, they moved the stuff and that is where the value is added. Bolivia may have been too unstable. One thing that smugglers and tourists like is you need a little bit of stability. You need phones to work, you need some reliable infrastructure to be a bad guy. But we had concerns about drugs, so that was becoming a major bilateral issue along with the lack of democracy. Again, the patterns were so different then. It's all so very different.

We had a lot of human rights issues, pressing Paraguay to give more political space to the opposition which really didn't have much of a chance. It had other parties, but they had such a difficult time working but they were not that effective. I think they spent more time tearing into each other than trying to oppose the regime which we see elsewhere.

No matter what we did or said, they still liked us. Americans were very popular there. The Peace Corps was very popular; volunteers learned Guarani language. The Paraguayans every couple of years would have a reception for the volunteers. It was a very interesting relationship. Ambassador Taylor was under a lot of pressure down there. The Paraguayans would call him a rogue ambassador. There were some in Washington, not in the Administration, who cultivated that impression because Paraguay was deeply anti-communist. The Paraguayans had friends in Washington, and they did not hesitate to call on their friends, and so we had a lot of policy turmoil in Washington particularly with some members on the Hill, and I never knew what kind of messages were going to the Paraguayans through the back door.

Q: Jesse Helms being pretty close to the right wing dictators.

BOLTON: Well, I think he's also very anti Communist, too, which seemed to be his litmus test. Then of course the drug certification issue arose each year from our policy habit of "name and shame". The Paraguayans would get named periodically as uncooperating but get a waiver, and the Paraguayans were right in that, at that time, we

really didn't acknowledge our role as a market country for the drugs. It was a very intense two years with longer hours than I thought possible.

Q: How about Uruguay?

BOLTON: Uruguay probably didn't get the time it deserved. Periodically, I'd have to tell Embassy Asuncion that they've been getting 75% of my time and I'd have to do some things for Uruguay the next week

Uruguay didn't get that much time and attention, but as I say it was not in that bad a shape. Economically it was, but that was mostly Treasury and the Department of Agriculture trying to help out. They had textile issues, the sugar quota…

Q: Were they out of it?

BOLTON: They were recovering from its time of terrorism and repression. It was a democracy. They elected a democratic government for which you get lots of support but not much assistance. They had the highest per capita debt in the world. There were only six million Uruguayans. That's like the State of Virginia. They had a small Embassy so I tried to keep an eye on their needs, too. But Uruguay is fairly well behaved which means in Latin America it got little attention at the time. It was tackling its debt. It was not in default. It had a good plan. Enrique Iglesias had been the foreign minister who was president of the International Development Bank for like the last 25 years. Being a desk officer was a positive experience

Q: What was your impression of the effectiveness of the Paraguayan and then the Uruguayan? I would think the Paraguayan had been around here for a long time.

BOLTON: They were having a hard time adjusting to the change in Washington. So many more players in different arenas outside the State Department. The collapse of the Warsaw Pact, for example. Paraguay and Uruguay, I knew everybody in all the U.S. government who was doing work on these issues, and we were always eager to help each other so I didn't have any problems with anybody. Afterwards, I transferred to the Ambassador-at-Large for Counter-terrorism.

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Q: You went to counter terrorism…

BOLTON: Jerry Bremer was ambassador-at-large.

Q: I've interviewed Jerry. How long did you do that?

BOLTON: I did that for two years. I did the European bilateral which was busy because the bilateral remains stronger than the multilateral.

Q: What was your responsibility?

BOLTON: Well, I interviewed for the job. They didn't know me. I had been overseas, I explained in my interview what I did in Budapest on my own to try to get a handle on suspicious travel to the U.S. As a consular officer I had a vested interest in the safety of American citizens overseas which I think is what the whole counter terrorism process is all about. I explained that in Budapest it seemed to be a Libyan operation center as far as I could figure out, a lot with lots of Libyans running around. After the bombing of Tripoli it was not the time for casual itinerant travel to the United States by Libyans, but yet they were coming in for visas for the U.S. which they were not getting…"

Q: You're talking about the bombing of the Berlin…

BOLTON: After the Berlin disco bombing, this was the retaliatory attack on Tripoli. I told my interviewer that I was very concerned about the number of Libyans coming in for visas; I asked around and my Western colleagues saw this trend, too. I suggested to them that we exchange names of Libyans who applied each month. We sent Notes to each other. The French would not supply them but I had no problem sending them copies. Well, turns out I was very ahead of the issue and the initiative impressed S/CT who was getting nowhere with a similar idea. Remember, this was 1985 when I did this in Hungary. I got the European job which was very busy. Essentially it consisted of implementing our CT policy and tracking the policies towards terrorism of the European governments. Keep in mind a lot of terrorism was in Europe at the time, much of it either Palestinian or anarchist. We tried to be very agile.

Q: There were many events.

BOLTON: The airport attacks. We had the Rome Airport, the Vienna Airport attacks, Paris, the Christmas bombing attacks. There were street bombing attacks in Paris. It was a very busy time, so my job was essentially to know what the terrorists threat or profile was in each country, who was there, what groups were there, how were they acting, what was the attitude of the countries toward those groups and induce governments to adopt effective policies. I had the Communist countries, too, which is a really interesting group as the Warsaw Pact fell apart. Of course Yugoslavia was a nightmare. Nothing happened in Europe without the bad guys transiting Yugoslavia, and Yugoslavia didn't want to hear anything about this.

We had a good policy in place. Behavior rewarded was behavior repeated. The first thing I walked into was the trial in Germany, the Hamadi trial. Hamadi was part of a group of terrorists who had taken over a TWA plane. I don't know if it was out of Beirut, but it was in Athens when they methodically killed several passengers including Robby Stethem who was a Navy SEAL diver and just threw him right out on the tarmac, so we knew we had to capture and prosecute him. A few years after the attack, the Hamadi brothers were arrested at the Frankfurt airport so the Germans got stuck hosting the trial -- I did not detect any enthusiasm in Germany for this. In Germany apparently the victim can hire a lawyer to help the prosecution, so DoJ hired an excellent criminal lawyer to advise the USG; the FBI took care of the witnesses. Once a week we'd have a Hamadi meeting. It was Department of Justice led. I learned so much about German law I swear I

could take the bar examination on criminal procedure. A long story short, we got a conviction, but the maximum was only 20 years and I believe he was released early to our displeasure.

Then right away Pan Am 103 happened. I'll never forget that. It was December 22 afternoon, my birthday. I was at a Christmas party at my old office. S/CT came up and got me and said, "We lost communication with a plane." It's hard to lose communication like that with a plane over Europe. A 747 when it crashes it usually takes a while unless there is a catastrophic failure. It doesn't usually break up in the air. It can take a while for a 747 to go down, so it's not good news if you just lose contact with a plane right away. We just were thinking the worst, getting ready to go to work if it turned out to be what we thought it might be. Again, thinking of any threats we had in the last months. And it could be hard to clear cables through the European bureau when we wanted those countries to take action or supply more information. It was very hard to get this stuff out of the European bureau. They had other issues they wanted to work. They didn't want to be using up the chits on the terrorism issue. As the day went on, it became clearer that something horrible happened to the plane. They set up Task Forces in the Ops Center and we were up there for days I had done some work on Semtex plastic explosives, made in Czechoslovakia and often used by terrorists. We were working toward getting controls and accountability on it. Suddenly that work became very important. We had just had bilateral CT talks with UK and they had concerns about Semtex because of the IRA. We agreed to take on the Czechs about controlling Semtex production, tagging it with markers so it can be traced. Because I had done my interagency research prior to developing a policy approach, for about a week I was the Semtex person in the USG.

It was an extremely intense period obviously. Then we had the double standard issue about an internal FAA notification about an threat to flights from Frankfurt that got posted in the Embassy Moscow cafeteria and seen by a reporter. That led to a process to assess threats and if they are specific and cannot be countered, to advise the public.

We were inter-agency before it was cool. We had agency people, we had FBI, military. Not all our European Allies were easy to deal with on this topic then.

Q: I was in Athens for four years.

BOLTON: Oh, Greeks couldn't find terrorists, they had an awful record with November-17, no matter how many American Embassy members they murdered.

Q: Even though they had a shoot out at the airport, they let them go.

BOLTON: They would not arrest anybody from November 17. There's a lot of complicated reasons for Greek political history, party politics and all that, but yes, their behavior was unacceptable. Between the Greeks and the Balkans, the whole area down there was a problem or a conveyor belt to Europe.

Q: The term that I felt for the Greeks at that point was despicable.

BOLTON: I think that's what we called them, too, when we were in a good mood. We called them a lot worse. But between the Greeks and the Balkans it was just a leaking sieve. By then the Warsaw Pact was falling apart and we were thinking where the policy initiatives. They all were interested in a very narrow interpretation of terrorism before the collapse of the Pact. We were only interested in practical cooperation, not just signing international conventions. We cared more about the bilateral and had a specific list of what we wanted to see countries do. I remember an interesting visit from a Hungarian senior police official from the Interior Ministry as things changed there. A group went to lunch and I had an interesting sidebar chat with him about what was happening in Hungary when I was there, like why did I see so many Libyans at the Astoria hotel when I walked by while doing my Saturday morning shopping.

The big changes were the Soviet Union. That was my big project. My second year was heavily involved in moving forward in a new world.

Q: They were still the Soviets in this time.

BOLTON: Certainly. They were still the Soviets but again, they were changing. I had problems with the European bureau. In my opinion, the Soviet Desk was intently looking for progress in arms control, where there was little. To deflect criticism they seemed willing to cite progress in counter-terrorism where, in my view, there was none. The Soviets loved to sign multilateral agreements which committed them to nothing and contained no practical steps. Yet it looked good and could be listed in a briefing paper as evidence of progress. Except that it was not. This was a constant battle in the clearance process.

Q: You know, this is a reflection of… This is two consular officers talking to each other: The consular side is the protection of the American citizens, but when it gets to policy issues… "We got an American who should be in jail. We really need to press hard." "Well, we've got this treaty going on." It's always something. The bigger thing. And guess who gets thrown, and that is the basic protection of the American citizens.

BOLTON: I can understand. Arms control… I mean, nuclear weapons are major. There's no doubt about it. That's serious stuff, but so is the protection of Americans abroad and as we know now, Americans in the homeland. Arms control is a lot of game theory and long-term discussion with fairly rational actors. That was not the context for counter-terrorism. That's one reason I came late to pol-mil work. When I started, it was heavily tilted toward arms control and mega military assets at the division level at least.

As the USSR evolved and broke from ideology, it's assessment of its situation became more practical. Previously, terrorism was demonstrators at the Kennedy Center when the Bolshoi appeared. I think they did some hard thinking, looked at their history, geography, and demographics and came to a conclusion that they were very vulnerable. They were starting to get concerned about the break-up of the USSR and we got signals that they wanted practical talks. Off we went with very practical action items: for example, a

phone number at the Interior Ministry that the Embassy could call in an emergency -- calling the MFA was not a practical step in an emergency. Walking through an incident that would involve us both -- an hijacking of a PanAm plane in Moscow. Who does what. It was very useful and revealing. They were concerned about Islamic radicalization in the USSR as it dissolved. Remember, no one had a good idea what would emerge from the ashes.
Composing our interagency delegation was a challenge. The FBI balked. They had been doing counter-intelligence work against the Soviets and as one said to me, "now you want us to take them to lunch and voucher it?" They said they weren't going, I said, "Fine. Choo-choo train is leaving the station. You can either get on it now or you can jump on down the road." They said, "Well, we'll go, but we're not going to say anything." Now of course the FBI is trying to run considerable chunks of some of our bilateral relations, but at the time I had to drag them kicking and screaming to Moscow.

The talks were more than we had hoped for. When we returned we offered a practical project. Giving the Soviets something to do is the only way to work with them in my opinion. How would we talk to each other? Would we exchange passenger lists? Could we exchange passenger lists? I don't know. Who would handle the press? At what point does the FBI become engaged in an event? Even for next meeting in D.C., the FBI was uncomfortable and reluctant to attend. Again, I just told them I would do the talking for them which must have scared them! Everybody all of a sudden got very serious and very engaged, and what started off as our bosses and me sitting around literally at 8:00 at night saying, "What kind of a project can we give them? The drafts I sent around for interagency clearance were coming back with head of agency signatures. I thought maybe I should have put more time into the project and drafts!.

Q: Not McNamara.

BOLTON: Busby. It wasn't Ted. It was Morris Busby, yes. I remember the next round to be in Washington. The Russian DCM was over comparing notes. For the tenth time I asked for his delegation list. He said he had in Russian and would read it to me, translating. I'm writing it down. Committee on state security, blah, blah, blah. Committee on state security? Unless I'm mistaken, it's the KGB. He leaves. We all compared what we heard and agreed it was a major step that they had a declared KGB officer on their delegation. He's not the first KGB guy in this building, I'm sure, but it might be the first *announced* one we've ever had who comes in as the KGB. The dialogue has been re-cast several times. I was surprised years later to read about the "first CT talks with Russia" having happened years after these sessions.

We did similar things with all of these Eastern European countries. Often, the new policy toward threat announcements caused concerns. We had an obligation to give our opinion regarding threats and conditions in countries, especially after PanAm 103, but it never went over well. And, we continued to insist on practical cooperation.

Q: Practical people dealing with a practical model.

BOLTON: Yes. So that's why we were always very always, you know, locking horns with EUR and NEA who would say, "Oh, well, you know, the UN has a counter-terrorism initiative and is going to do this and that." The UN has got 12 conventions on terrorism. Big deal. I don't care if they sign every one 12 times.

Q: You left there when? It's probably a good place to stop.

BOLTON: I got promoted there to FS-1 and that was the first office where I felt the leadership was really interested in my success. I was surprised when they called me in one day, asked what jobs I wanted, and developed a plan to ensure that I got what I wanted. Even years later, they made sure I knew they were ready to help me. Good lesson for the way I treated staff. I left there in '90 for Cuba.

Q: Okay. We'll pick it up next time in Cuba.

Today is the 23rd of February 2010 with Debbie Bolton. Debbie, 1990, and we're off to Cuba. How come you're going? We don't have relations with Cuba. What's this all about?

BOLTON: We recognize Cuba, but we do not have relations. We have an Interest Section that is part of the Swiss embassy although we're in our own building. It's the largest—it was the largest—Swiss embassy in the world. All of our letterhead and seals were all prepared in Bern for which we paid too much. We had different style letterhead. The Swiss put a cross in the middle of our seals although they did not pay me in Swiss francs which at the time would have been nice. I think there were three people in the Swiss embassy, and we were about 25 which was I think a limit under the original bilateral agreement, supplemented by the migration agreement which included more tasks. But it was unclear -- at least to the Cubans -- whether and what was the limit.. I think that includes the Marines. I'm not certain. But space was not a problem.

I was anxious to go back overseas and back to consular work as a section chief. The Havana opening looked interesting. I knew that consular work was very interesting in communist countries where the movement of people can be central to our relationship. It was an FS-1 slot, section chief, Spanish speaking. I thought it had my name on it. The bureau was thrilled because I wasn't encumbered by things like children because there was no school there. I was known in the bureau also because I'd been a desk officer just a few years before, two years before, and had two assignments overseas for WHA. And CA always liked me. Perfect fit.

Getting to Cuba is complicated because there are no direct commercial flights. There are charter services and one of my consular officers who had an economic background did a very thorough study of this and established the proof that these charters are entirely—*entirely*—to the benefit of the Cuban government which essentially owns every seat on these planes and takes the ticket fees. But it's quite an operation to get there, quite a process in Miami International Airport because they travel at ungodly hours, so you spent a lot of time at night in Miami Airport.

But the consular work was very interesting there because other than the agreement opening the intersection which I think was 1979, the migration agreement is the only agreement we had with the Cubans at the time. I think we might have one now on narcotics cooperation,. The consular work is quite complex as far as American services go. I mean, the Cuban-Americans are visiting as Cuban citizens so you have no access to them if they're arrested. The other Americans mostly are there visiting illegally and not eager to contact the U.S. representation.

Private American citizens could get a Department of Treasury license to visit within narrow limits. For instance, if you are a scientist or you're a professor of linguistics and you're going to go study Cuban Creole as spoken in the Sierra Madre mountains, you've got to do that in Cuba and you can get a license. It wasn't illegal so much to travel to Cuba. It was illegal to use U.S. currency or use U.S. travel documents. So if someone's going to host you, if the Cuban government is going to host you, that is, pay for everything, then a visit could be legal without a license. American citizens did and do go down indirectly. They travel through Mexico or Jamaica. What's interesting is in our law, it is a criminal offence, not a civil offense, to travel to Cuba in violation of the embargo. But the U.S. attorney is quite disinclined to prosecute since prosecuting a criminal case is a lot nastier and expensive than prosecuting a civil offense or fining somebody, so rarely was anyone prosecuted although I do know of two cases.

One was man in Alabama who was running a "scientific" program to study fish. But he was really running bass fishing trips to Cuban lakes. He was actually prosecuted, but otherwise, despite all the huffing, there was little appetite in the Justice department for prosecuting people who violate the embargo.

There's a certain mythology in the Cuban community that they were "exiles", not migrants or refugees, who would return any day now so there was no point in becoming U.S. citizens. Not a few kept their permanent residence status or refugee travel documents for decades. But that was the first generation.

We were also doing in-country refugee processing. This is rarely done. Also quite ironic for the Cuban Government to participate in a program that states that their country is so dreadful that it produces refugees according to an international definition. Numbers were declining because the government had a lighter hand than in the past and we had worked our way through thousands. Well, not only was there screaming from Miami, the Cuban Government was also angry that we could not find "enough" refugee candidates. The Cuban government was very helpful in providing court documents and police reports to help applicants establish their claims to persecution. Like the Nazis, they keep very, very good records of people they've put in jail and for whatever reason, and it was always enlightening to the junior officers to read court documents that go into great detail of how someone jailed for activities we do daily.

My favorite one was someone who got two years in jail because while watching a nature program on TV he was overheard to have compared Comandante Fidel, to a seal. I don't

think it's worth two years in prison. These were things that were happening in the '70s and '80s. Another who had written "Abajo Fidel" —down with Fidel—on a pillar, and the court records went into great detail as to material he used, it was chalk, the size of the writing, whether it was printed or in cursive writing. I think they'll be sorry one day once people get hold of the archives.

The problem was even in a place like Cuba the number of ex-political prisoners is finite. People in Miami will tell you it's the whole island, but it actually is finite, people who can actually produce a record of having been prosecuted for what we would consider to be to be essentially a non-violent political act. And you always had people trying to get through for criminal acts. We would certainly weed those people out. For example, a man stole beer during a celebration for the returning Cuban troops from Angola and he tried to convince that was his own little way of making a statement against the regime. But we were running out of political prisoners and the economy was tanking. It was impossible to convince anyone in Miami of that. Of course it's always funny to hear the Cuban government complain that we were unable to identify more persecuted Cuban citizens. But when you go to Cuba you have to leave bits of your rational brain behind. The Cubans who left in the 60's and 70's no longer had the first degree relations in Cuba for which they could petition. They had nieces, nephews, distant cousins, and uncles but these relations have no status in immigration so the pressure was on to get them out any way they could. IV , NIV, Refugee, raft, smugglers, claim to citizenship -- it did not matter. Keep in mind that under the Cuban Adjustment Act, a Cuban only had to reach to the U.S. to be eligible for a green card within a year. No other national group has that arrangement. There was quite a sense of entitlement among the community.

The migration agreement included a limit of 20,000 immigrant visas a year. This reflects the limit that is written into the law for preference visas applicable to each country. The migration agreement had to be consistent with U.S. immigration law. The Cuban government, looking for a steam valve to handle discontent with the ever poor economic conditions on the island, decided that the "up to 20,000" meant guaranteed 20,000.

The complained we were not meeting out ceiling. Basically we started a lottery at that point. I was leaving at that stage. I think we're doing it now.

For the most part refugee processing went generally pretty well. We had a couple of refugee volunteer agencies in the U.S. that would work on settlement issues, the usual assortment like HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aide Society, International Rescue Committee, of course, the Catholic Relief Services, the usual ones who work on resettling refugees. So we had that operation going on in the consular section.

That was separate because our consular officers would do the pre-interviews and weed out the clearly unqualified, then we'd have circuit riders from the then legacy INS, Immigration Naturalization Service, and they would interview the refugee applicants to determine if under the standards of the time for Cubans they could qualify. The standards were evolving as the well was running dry. It was always interesting. Some days we had to send in the cleaning ladies to clean the offices two, three times a day because the

applicants would sprinkle some kind of powder that they got from their Santeria practitioners. You'd open up passports for NIVs, the same thing. You'd get magic powder all over the place.

Q: This was not an intelligence operation.

BOLTON: No, no. It's Santeria. It was to cast a spell, to invoke their orishas -- personal saints -- to intervene.

Q: ___ the goddesses of…

BOLTON: For example Santa Barbara has a Santeria equivalent. Refugee processing took a lot of time and technically, it's not a consular function.

We also did immigrant visas. I can't remember if we did fifth preference, but we were busy on immigrants but not as busy as you would think simply because of the demographics that I mentioned before. The Mariel group weren't necessarily citizens yet so we didn't see so many petitions yet. The older Cubans could take a harder line politically because they didn't have the first degree relations that the Mariel group had. The Mariel émigrés had close relatives they did not want to see suffer. Interestingly, you tell from the waiting room the demographics. Those who left in the 60-70's were overwhelmingly white. Those who left in the 80's were more representative of Cuba as an Afro-Caribbean country. Of course, the leadership remained white.

We also did non-immigrant visas. This is where Fidel called our bluff. I almost take it personally because the policy change happened about two months after I arrived. As in many communist countries, exit permits were rarely given and usually only to those the Interior Ministry thought would return. In Cuba, they issued them to old people, probably hoping that they remain in the U.S. and have the U.S. take care of their declining health issues. No exit permits for children or working/draft age. I think we did about 10,000 a year. All expenses had to be paid from the U.S., of course.
For the most part they were grannies, who often wanted to return because they had husbands buried in Cubans and other sons and daughters. As much as they liked the kids in the United States and the grandkids, they weren't necessarily interested in becoming live-in baby sitters. Once a year was fine.

For the most part they came back, so non-immigrant were not that difficult. You had the official visas, too. Many needed security name check cables. At times, Washington would evoke the law's provision that refuses visas because for unstated policy reasons. Because we can. These are always interesting when these happen, but for the most part the visas were not a big problem. They were just labor intensive. We only had the undersea telephone cable that was showing its age, no direct-dialing or anything remotely modern in technology. We barely had Wang word processing. Of course, we never missed an opportunity to complain about the lack of freedom of movement, of travel in Cuba. We had a special problem with doctors not getting exit permits. So, we spent quite a bit of public and private time on these issues.

I was called back to the U.S. in the early fall to sit on a promotion board. When I came back the deputy section chief told me "The minute you put your foot on the top step of the airplane," he said, "the bola was starting rolling." Bola means ball in Spanish, but in Cuba it means rumor and of course in a place where newspapers are absolute nonsense, where the television is just as bad, and the radio is worse, you pay a lot of attention to the bola. So the bola was that Cubans were going to lift the age requirements for exit permits. They lowered it in this first tranche by I think five years from 65 to 60, something like that. Then, they just kept dropping the age to about the teen years. We were overwhelmed. Within a few months we had 125,000 passports on hand, waiting for pre-processing name-checks and interview appointments. It was a deluge. We had to turn an office into a giant storage cabinet with a new lock on the door.

From a policy perspective, I could say that off the top of my head that 95% of these people are 214(b), because I can't think how people were going to establish an intent to return to Cuba which was a dreadful place. When the USSR collapsed, so did the Cuban economy - such as it was - it was more of a distribution system than an economy. There was little food and it was poor quality, few medicines, phones didn't work, public transport was poor, just a dreadful place. Castro got rid of the farmers markets (they actually helped with food distribution) just before I arrived and declared a "Special Period in a Time of Peace" that made it even more austere, if that were possible.

Q: Why would he do that? I would think the farmers' market would be on…

BOLTON: He is an ideologue. The markets were too successful. And we all know what happens. He's not going to wake up like the Soviet Union and find himself out of a job. He was paying a lot of attention to what was happening in the Soviet Union. The perestroika stuff is for the birds, and he wasn't even going to start down that road. THE "special period" was a big announcement, and everybody was buzzing about it among the local hires who, of course, were provided by the Cuban government.

Q: They're still suffering under the control.

BOLTON: They still work hard. Fidel had a talent. He would make dreadful announcements of tough regulations and everyone would inhale. But the regulations were never as complete in practice so everyone was relieved and barely noticed that things had certainly gotten worse. But the "special period in the time of peace" was draconian. For example, three bread rolls a week of very poor quality (you could see the paper in them!), milk only for children under seven, an iron only upon marriage, an egg or two a week, and on it went. Then also, of course, to be revolutionary, he decided that everyone had to get out there in the fields and take their turn doing agricultural labor. I remember when our contacts in the foreign ministry were going to be gone for a few weeks to do tomato picking. They know nothing about it, have to be transported and housed and fed with scarce resources and I heard they ruined almost as many as they picked because they're not familiar with field work. My housekeeper was upset because she had to send her 16

year old daughter to one of these labor camps with young men there to pick tomatoes with almost no supervision. Most mothers were horrified.

There were so many indications of tension. A military defector flew a MiG to Key West and landed before anyone knew what happened. A few years later he landed a small plane on a highway in Cuba to pick up his family, again getting in and out of Cuba and the U.S. before anyone knew anything. So much for everyone's air defenses but 90 miles is short distance. There was never a dull moment.

All sorts of stuff was happening, and finally the Interests Section wrote a cable answering the question, “If things are so bad, how come we’re still here? How come everything is fine? How come it’s not collapsing? We didn't see any evidence of impending collapse but the Miami drumbeat was that any day now it will fall.

So against this background we had this visa nightmare of incredible demand. Miami wanted everyone to be issued immediately. The Florida politicians were in a bind. Despite the rhetoric, they clearly did not want a repeat of Mariel with tens of thousands Cubans arriving over months. I was clear that without written instructions or a change of law, we will apply the law and warned the Front Office and the Department that we should expect an extremely high refusal rate. I was personally prepared to curtail if I received political pressure to issue without regard to the law. I had picked up a strong whiff that we would be expected to issue to mollify Miami, but fortunately, cooler heads prevailed. The Department sent down a small team to look at our operation. They agreed we had a nightmare on our hand and they agreed that we were managing it well. I told my staff that unless and until we get more resources, we will do a respectable volume each day and not get depressed by the hundred thousand passports sitting in our store room. We got some more resources and we did as much refitting as we could , for example adding more interview windows and improving people flow. In a series of cables we made proposals to manage the demand; the instructions came down to issue a moratorium on new applications so we could work our way through the 125,000 on hand. There were few exceptions; medical emergencies got to be a racket but we were getting skilled on seeing through them. As expected, few could qualify. Initially, the applicants never even bothered to lie on the application. The purpose of trip was often listed as "get a job" or "live in the U.S." I did plenty of interviews and remember refusing 175 cases in one morning.

Miami maintained intense interest in the operation of the section. The Miami Herald had a Spanish-language version which translated some items but also did "original" items that were not publishable under normal journalistic standards. For example, an article speculated about the number of doors in my private office, particularly as to whether any led to "secret" rooms. They wrote about your luck if you were called to "window number 5" which was funny because we all worked different windows daily. I like things random for anti-fraud purposes.

We also had the return of the Marielitos who were found to be inadmissible to the U.S. and were being held in prison until they could be returned. We did work out a bilateral agreement and bit by bit, and once a month I’d have to go out to the airport and meet a Department of Justice plane and do some turnover to the Cuban Ministry of the Interior

of anywhere from five to fifty Marielitos coming. These were all felons, some pretty bad guys. Legally, they had never been formally admitted to the U.S. so they could be "excluded" and removed from the U.S. They're getting off the plane in belly chains and ankle chains, each escorted by a U.S. Marshal. This was another program that no other consular section on the planet handled. The plane was often late which meant my chatting with an Interior Ministry colonel for extended periods. Often about baseball. Although three week after the Gulf War broke out, then questioned me at length about Gen Colin Powell who had made quite an impression on them.

The Consular Section also supported the human rights outreach. We supported the in-country refugee processing program by doing the pre-application interviews, so the consular officers were very well educated and informed about recent Cuban political history. Our contacts in the Americas Department were surprised when we asked questions, trying to clarify, for example, where was the radio station in our neighborhood where political leader Eddie Chibás killed himself on the air (he was Castro's mentor before the revolution, when he was still in university.) They were surprised that we had this non-polemical historical interest in what had happened.

Q: Excuse me, but we're talking about the Cuban-American, the congressional people who had their constituents. Was there any possibility of getting ___ to say the truth, or was this all for show?

BOLTON: Let's say I had reason to believe that no one among the governing authorities in the state of Florida expected or wanted a deluge of hundreds of thousands of Cubans with non-immigrant visas in their hands with the intent to claim refugee status because keep in mind the Cuban Adjustment Act. It was the only national group in the world that had this benefit. I don't know why I even had a consular section because under the law a Cuban who gets to the United States by hook or by crook simply announces that he or she wants refugee status or asylum and they get a green card in a year. They were presumed to qualify because they were coming from Cuba. There was a great sense of entitlement with a visa only considered to be a speed bump.

We were pretty good about getting around the country. I did some traveling - several trips to attend trials. Gasoline was a problem, though.

Again, you never knew what was going to come through. I remember this woman coming through, very elegant, tall American looking like she just came out of Saks Fifth Avenue. She had come in to get her passport renewed. She had been living in Cuba for decades. Her husband was a vascular surgeon. They basically established their own little world. A very interesting woman.

I had a neighbor, a young man, Cuban, who had married an older American woman from the pre-revolutionary time. She had died and left him the house. He was an engineer. He tried very hard with his friends to maintain something resembling a middle class lifestyle. I went to a bar-b-cue once there once with a group of 20-somethings. You have no idea how hard it was to do this. They had to smuggle in the food in the countryside which is

illegal. People in Havana used to keep what they called roof pigs. You weren't allowed to have pigs in town but folks would pay vets to cut the vocal cords so no one heard the pigs. It was a lovely evening but bizarre in such a place.

The diplomatic community was an interesting group. I recall a small group of elderly Cuban women who would show up sometimes at receptions, uninvited. In 1960 when the elites left, mother would stay and often the oldest unmarried daughter to hold on to the property, or part of it. There is property ownership in Cuba. Well, these women would get decked out in moth-eaten mink stoles or old-fashioned dresses and slip in to the garden parties. At the Papal Nuncio's, I spoke to one who pointed to a window and said that used to be her bedroom. There are probably a few good short stories there. Of course there is the Hemingway legacy and the gangster legacy. I passed the Riviera Hotel every day. It was Meyer Lansky's and opened just before the revolution.

Q: Gangster of New York.

BOLTON: It was turquoise. I remember that style from Atlantic City or from the Jersey shore in the '50s and '60's. The casino was the Pleasure Dome. I can tell you everything had just seen better days. The old cars are there. I had a Soviet Lada car, and as we used to say "lada car, lada trouble!"

It was just so amazing to see Woolworth's. You'd go into the Woolworth's downtown just like the old fashioned Woolworth's when we were kids when you had the dark brown wood counters with the curved glass fitted over them. It's all there. And the soda fountain, you know the lunch counter, and it has the fluorescent light with pictures of the menu items over the lights, the hamburger, the grilled cheese, and milkshakes, etc. But absolutely none of it was available. The only thing they were serving was some kind of mush out of a giant pot but they still have all those dream menu items there. As if 1959 were yesterday.

For gifts when I was in the States I had a hard time finding the Pepsodent toothpaste and Palmolive soap everyone wanted because those were the brands people remembered.

I would watch television on Saturday sometimes and this cooking show that was an absolute hoot. What you can make with a can of condensed milk, a bottle of beer, and a cocoanut. And darned if she didn't come up with something. My favorite was grapefruit steak because there was no meat on the ration card. Grapefruit steak was taking the peel of a grapefruit and I think they soaked it in like some beef broth and fried it up. It had the consistency of meat, the flavor of meat, but you were eating grapefruit skin!

Soap. There was no soap, and that really annoyed the Cubans who know they live in the tropics. The government started to advertise its new "soap" and it was good for what ails you, including eczema and acne. I put the word out that I would trade a bar of Palmolive soap but I never got a bar which indicates it probably didn't exist.

On a good day I could watch Fort Myers or Naples TV. On Sunday afternoon they would show two current movies because they would steal off the satellite. They didn't care. Movies uncensored, with subtitles.

Cubans returned from the U.S. were funny.. They'd say, "Now I know my heart is strong. I just saw a fully stocked supermarket and I didn't drop dead." They would come back and they would complain, "Well, why don't you do this?" We'd say, "We don't have any money to make that change!" They'd say, "You've got machines in the United States that just give you money!" ATM machines! They didn't understand the banking system or anything. They were convinced that you just go to this machine, you put a little card in and the money comes out. And many thought when they go through refugee program they were going to get a house. We never killed that rumor. And they were very disappointed. A year of subsidized rent in Kansas isn't a house in Hialeah. .

Housing was interesting. We did not have a compound. I lived in a 1950s ranch style house with a pool. I had probably one of the most sensible houses. Architecture was interesting because they didn't renew their housing stocks, so there was a lot of Spanish traditional housing was there, but you would see things like the old gates or stained glass just broken or lying around. The house across the street from me which was again normal middle class house had about seven families living in it and a herd of goats. One family in each of the two garages. Nothing was maintained. Glass breaks, that's it.
People drink out of tin cans. You would never use a glass. We had to pay to have private garbage removal because if we put anything out on the street, it would be 20 people around it in a heartbeat. My housekeeper probably made a fortune off my bottles, jars, cans, and string.

We had a hard currency store that was pretty bad. We used to fret about reciprocity but decided there wasn't a bad enough supermarket in a bad enough part of town to match the hard currency store. You never knew what they would have. The Cuban government did a lot of bartering -- I think it's officially called "counter-trade." You'd go there one day and there'd be a whole aisle of olives. Sometimes there would be no sugar -- no sugar in Cuba even with dollars. I was also turning into a vegetarian. I ate a lot of eggs. I'd go back to the States, and return with my large carry-on just stuffed with cheese and hotdogs. We talked about food all the time because there wasn't any. Everyone laughed at my hot and sour tuna casserole. We had a consumables allowance or a couple thousand pounds or something. And a lot of pasta. We ate a lot of pasta. A lot of canned stuff. A lot of tuna fish.

They had the Pan American games, and the only people that got licenses were the athletes' families along with the athletes, so at the Interest Section had to cover the sports as fans. I'm a swimmer, so I covered the swimming, and I had Fidel two rows behind me one afternoon. The GSOs had been a rower, so she knew some of the rowers, so she did the rowing. The Marines did the boxing and baseball, so we were the three and four man cheering sections for our team.

It was always something interesting going on in town or in Cuba. We were never bored, that's for sure. Always busy. You could go to the beach in you wanted to, poke around town, go to the museums. Oh. Concerts, music, and I love ballet so I was going to the Cuban National Ballet for ten cents. Alicia Alonso was still dancing, but barely.

Q: Was Alicia Alonso still in charge?

BOLTON: She was still Director of the Cuban National Ballet. She was not popular among the dancers and ran a very unpleasant, nasty company although she is much "beloved" in the U.S. She is quite elderly and lives most of the year in Spain -- she's not that devoted to the revolution. She is almost blind and has a vision problems for most of her life. She would still dance when I was there, but as the curtain would open, the stage would be marked like for a hockey game. I've never see stage markings like them. She would just pose. Friday night was gay night at the ballet. That was interesting because I only went once when I could not my usual Saturday ticket. It was like another world.

Cubans were very worried about young people because they're bored to tears. When you think back to '59 and '60, I mean Fidel and his brother and Camilo Cienfuegos were good looking young men with their beards and their sense of romance and they were young with ideas. If you were a young person, you wanted to be with them. Now they're a bunch of fossils. By the 1990's the leadership was very unattractive to the young. Latin American leaders were young, educated, well dressed leaders at these Summits and there would be the Cubans looking like they had been trapped in amber with combat fatigues. They were very, very, worried about young people. They were very concerned about any kind of spontaneous street grouping, concerts. Havana is their major concern. They went out of their way to make sure Havana was fed and amused.

Q: What about U.S. citizen prisoners?

We had about seven or eight U.S. citizen prisoners and others who should have been. In fact, when I first got there a man came in to renew his passport. Strange because so few Americans lived there. I passed on his name to the Desk before we even cabled a name check and we set off bells. Well, his name is James Cherry, and there was a warrant out for his arrest for the murder of a New Jersey State trooper in the '60s.
That started a couple interesting weeks because he wanted to go home. We said, "You know what's going to happen if you go home. You're going to get arrested. There is no statute of limitations on murder." He didn't care. He had escaped U.S. custody when they were moving them and somehow made his way to Cuba. He stayed in the Interest Section for a few days and we arranged his return with the FBI waiting in Miami.

We had hijackers coming in, too. They had had it. They wanted to go home, and so we got very good at processing those cases.,

But we had about seven or eight U.S. prisoners mostly for drugs. They would run drugs from Cubans waters, and if the Cubans were interested they would arrest them. We had one for murder. I think he was a Black Panther type. A group killed seven people at a

country club I think in the U.S. Virgin Islands. He didn't want to see us which was fine with us, but every January we would do the diplomatic note and request a jail visit, and we'd get back from the Cubans he doesn't want to see us.

But I had a young woman who was jailed. Her boyfriend was a Marielito. He had done a drug run. She went along for the fun of it, and they got caught, she got sentenced. I was not normally the person to these jail visits, but since she was a young woman and I was the only female in the section, I thought I better do her. I was beginning to think that they were keeping her in jail so long because they were curious about me. A visit was like a board meeting with one side of the table all the representatives of the prison, ministry of interior psychologist, social worker, foreign ministry, and me and the prisoner on the other side. But I remember one day the Protocol officer told me she was pregnant. I pointed out this was a woman's prison but note that some idiot built it between an agriculture camp and a military camp! I think it was the scissor sharpener technician. And the foreign ministry is asking me what I am going to do about it. Nothing -- it was their problem. Of course, they released her early and we got her out of there. When I went on my Christmas visit it was December 22 which happened to be my birthday. Well, surprise, the Cuban government knew it was by birthday. They know my shoe size. They gave me a dolly, a Cuban prison dolly. They make little dollies there. So I still have my Cuban prison dolly.

We had an unusual perch for watching the USSR disintegrate. I remember going to the unification reception at the FRG Embassy. There was a huge GDR Embassy there that was out of a job. They attended the reception but when the vans drove up , it looked more like a funeral cortege discharging. Their lives had changed and it was unlucky any of them would have a job after reunification. We could see the personal cost and impact of stunning political change.

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Q: Was there any thought at the time that this meant the end of Castro? I mean at the Interest Section. Speculation?

BOLTON: This was a tough time. Fidel would not even start reform and he played a tough hand. People were not happy but they do not want to be "rescued" by Miami and lose the little they have. He's very tough. Any one even vaguely forming as a rival is eliminated. Shortly before I arrived they executed Col Ochoa who was a popular military hero from the Angola adventures. The government accused him of drug trafficking; he was tried and executed I think the same day.

Q: This was part of the weeding out of competitors.

BOLTON: Exactly. So that's a pretty strong message around. Now the military was doing pretty good. They had food. One thing about doing immigrant or non-immigrant visa interviews and refugee pre-qualification interviews is you can ask anybody you want anything, and if they really want to go to the United States, they're going to answer you. After asking the same question or similar questions about 2,000 times, you get a pretty good sense about what life was like.

He was so good at keeping the lid on and redirecting blame. There was the embargo which they called the blockade but of course it wasn't. Embargos are legal and blockades are close to an act of war. We're not doing a blockade. Any country who wants to send money down the Cuban rat hole is welcome to do it. Moving to the U.S. -- the problem was us. We were denying visas, we were stopping their rafts.

The basement of the old embassy was very funny. We have a vault down there that is holding items belonging to Cubans from the early 1960's. After the Embassy evacuated, the Swiss took over the property. People began leaving their treasures and the Swiss accepted them. They should not have. Well, it's all down there, most in bad shape because of dampness and flooding. Every year I took inventory. We won't send it to the U. S. because that would be smuggling. People are welcome to take the stuff but then they have to deal with the Cuban government customs. The items range from boy scout knives and wedding pictures to furs. Some in Miami probably think they all have Ft Knox or the Prado down there. Cash was sent back decades ago.

He keeps the lid on the place with the unintended assistance of Miami. Every time it looks like we're getting close, he tends to do something like shoot down the Brothers to the Rescue plane.

Q: Was that during your time?

BOLTON: I think it was after my time. But Cuba is a beautiful country. It's a shame. I liked this place near the Bay of Pigs that we called the Blue Lagoon -- someday they'll build a Holiday Inn there. But they kept the personal pressure on us.

They would periodically to go through some kind of a tickler file, and then it was your turn to get the full court press from the counter intelligence folks. You come home, and you'd know they'd been there. They left a big cigar in the ashtray or something else.

There was one. The worst time, and this resulted in an exchange of purple prose diplomatic notes. The counter-intelligence boys had stated leaving excrement around us, on car handles, in my pool room, in people's bathrooms. We were angry because our children were being exposed to this nonsense.

So the Interests Section wrote a diplomatic note on this which would be one of the better diplomatic notes. I'm sure there's some real classics and gems in the files, but this was a close encounter of the unpleasant kind diplomatic note. Of course, the Cubans always profess no knowledge of what's going on.

Oh, they got me one night. They had come in, and they had set every alarm clock in that house at about an hour and a half apart. Like the one at my bed, the one in the guest room, the clock radio in the kitchen, the parson's clock in the den, and there was another one that they got. I was up all night turning off alarm clocks. One you can understand.

Oh, the maid must have flipped it when she was dusting or I had not… But when it's all night long and it's every clock in the house?

They didn't bother the consular section much because I was clear and that if they ever cost anybody in my consular section any pain, expense, or interfered in my ability to do my job, I can do damage, too, because I control the door to the U.S.

Plus we had lots of tourism. We knew. We could tell whether this was a minister's son going to the United States. Or a colonel's wife.

Q: What was your impression of the activists?

BOLTON: Mixed bunch. Some of them I think were provocateurs, of course. The infighting was just so bad. I mean Fidel had nothing to worry about. Some of them were very brave and committed, but not very effective. For some it was a career.

One that was very interesting was an Afro-Caribbean. He said he got treated the worst in prison because they used to tell him, "don't you know what Fidel did for your people, for the Afro-Cuban?" He was convinced he got treated worst because they considered him a traitor. They're no threat to Fidel. That Virella project was probably was pretty close because that was a petition that people signed and went out on a limb for.

Q: Who was the head of the interests section when you were there?

BOLTON: Alan Flanigan.

Q: How was he?

BOLTON: He was effective. Even tempered. Not particularly a WHA hand, he was more of an EUR type. He's been DCM I think in Portugal.

Q: Did you get either staff or congressman or woman?

BOLTON: Not at that time. I don't remember anyone coming from congress.

Q: You were blessed.

BOLTON: Yes. Now they go. Of course, they don't need country clearance and don't have to abide by the Executive's regulations. Businessmen were starting to get interested.

Q; Did Guantanamo… Of course this was before it was used as a prison but was Guantanamo…

BOLTON: Guantanamo may as well have been on the other side of the moon. There was no access from the island to Guantanamo except through one gate for the very few Cubans who still worked on the base. I think there was a regular meeting, I don't know,

maybe once or twice a year or something, for operational reasons because I think our water I think at one point at least came from Cuban. The Cubans would sometimes complain about the content of the television broadcasts that the people in Guantanamo town would watch from the base. What are we supposed to do?

The funniest thing, though, was the check because the rent for Guantanamo was set around 1930, whenever it was, for $3,000. So every year we send them a USG treasury check for $3,000, and that includes 1959. So the treasury check would come in December, and you'd send a diplomatic note over with it. I think Fidel cashed a check early on which was a mistake as far as international law because he de facto recognized the situation. But after that he never cashed them, and he makes a big thing out of taking them out of his drawer and showing people.

Our consular section went down to Santiago de Cuba and San Juan Hill, cleaned it up because the Cubans were supposed to, according to the monument, to keep it nice in perpetuity. They hadn't, so some of the consular officers went down and cleaned it up.

There is a great deal of interesting history between the two countries. I mean, Cubans plan revolutions in the U.S. over the centuries.

Tobacco. Cigars weren't very good. There was sort of a blue fungus. They're expensive. Rum. I remember I took a bottle of rum home once when I was on leave. There's nothing to bring home. A bottle called Havana Club Rum. And my mother who's not a drinker went into the liquor cabinet, pulled out a bottle of Havana Club from Antes del Triunfo, from before the revolution. It still had the Pennsylvania liquor control board seal on it. I traded her the new bottle for the old bottle which I still have.

Q: Did you have any hurricanes while you were there?

BOLTON: No, but we did have a storm surge. It was a bright and sunny day, and we just watched the ocean or the straits of Florida get higher and higher and higher and higher at work, and it started to come over the Malecon which is amazing. And sure enough, there was a storm surge, and next day was even worse and boy, I'm lucky I got through the tunnel. We took one look and said, "We got to get people out of here." We evacuated the consular section, moved out cars up the hill and by 11 am the water in the parking lot was up to my hips. With the sun shining. Water about half a block inland.

We went to a baseball game. U.S. national team came down to play. Got beat, of course. It was like our college all stars or something like that. The stadium is a downtown one and very much like going to Fenway or the old Connie Mack in Philadelphia. My picture cheering was in the Miami Herald the next day.

Q: Were you feeling through your contacts the effects of… By this time the Cuban troops were out of Africa.

BOLTON: Oh, yes.

Q: Was this having any impact or not?

BOLTON: No. Some AIDS, but the Cubans didn't mess with AIDS. When you got AIDS, you went into quarantine. That was it. No two ways about it.

I think what's going on, to me it's a rolling transition with Raul taking over. It's very difficult for us to manage or react to a rolling transition. To the degree we did or do any planning, I don't think we really contemplated a rolling transition.
…

Q: We can't politically.

BOLTON: Yeah, I was always asking about planning. But I did have contacts sat the old ACOM, the old Atlantic Command. The military can do this without political interference. If we even sit down and talk about Cuba it winds up in the Miami Herald. Even a little meeting turns out to be a major war council after it leaks to the Miami papers, so we'll pay for that one day. We used to think about it at post. If nobody else is thinking about it, we're on the line there. We have to think about it. But you know, it's just blue skying. You know, "Plans are useless, but the process of planning is invaluable," as Eisenhower said.

Q: Everything is domestic politics.

BOLTON: Yes.

Q: American domestic politics.

BOLTON: And also for Cuba. I don't know what they'd do without us. I think Raul would like to do a lot more, but I think we've obviously seen his limits with Fidel. People are always predicting that Fidel is ready to die but he keeps on ticking.

Q: One time I was INR officer for Ethiopia. We had been figuring our the successor for Haile Selassie since 1913. I was ___ the 1960s at the time. Some of these kinds of people… It will happen.

BOLTON: One day these people will be right. One day when they're going to be right,

Q: You left there in '93?

BOLTON: '92. It was two years. '90, '92.

Q: Just put at the end here.

BOLTON: I was off to my most exotic foreign service assignment, and that was the Air Force War College at Montgomery, Alabama.

Q: Oh, my God! You speak the language?

BOLTON: Ah! I had to do some studying! As I heard on the radio as I was driving into Alabama -- Alabama is so conservative even the Episcopalians handle snakes.

Q: Today is the 9th of March 2010 with Debbie Bolton. You're off to…

BOLTON: I just left Cuba which was intense, interesting, and increasingly irrelevant. I was assigned at that point to the Air Force War College for a year of senior study. We'd had a discussion I remember with my career counselor as to where I wanted to go. I said St. Elizabeth's Mental Hospital because I really needed a break, and they said the War College might be an alternative. We talked about whether to go to Washington or elsewhere. I lived in Washington, didn't want to do that. I didn't want Carlisle Army War College because I'm from Pennsylvania. Newport with the Navy was undergoing some academic changes from what I've heard.

Q: The Navy really takes it very seriously.

BOLTON: Yes. But at that time everyone was taking it very seriously. It had really changed. I wound up going with the Air Force in Alabama because I'd never been to Alabama. I remember treating it like a foreign service assignment, and I went to the library in Philadelphia when I was on home heave, and I found an interesting book written as part of the Works Project Administration in the depression where Roosevelt had gathered up all the ethnographers and sociologists and all those other professionals…

Q: ___.

BOLTON: Yes, who would be otherwise unemployed and put them on these projects. One of them was this extremely deep study of Alabama, of the social fabric and the music, and it was just the most fascinating book.

Q: This was, I believe, the WPA
…
BOLTON: The WPA, exactly.

Q: The WPA State Guides.

BOLTON: Yes and this was like from 1930-something, and when you think back, they were only a few generations from slavery. There were plenty of people walking around who remembered the Civil War quite well even if they hadn't been in it. In fact, they still had vets and reunions. I remember reading the guide all afternoon. Two things I found more interesting were the music section, the call and response used on a chain gang and found in the Caribbean and was very African structure, and also the Coon Dog Cemetery outside of Florence, Alabama. Florence was also the home of Helen Keller.

Quite an interesting chapter on the coon dog, and so I became quite the little expert on the coon dogs and actually went up to the coon dog cemetery in Florence because I figured how many places have a coon dog cemetery? It was really unique. It's still there.

The Air Force War College which was very interesting. It was a lot of work. Ike Skelton who had been chairman of the house either committee or subcommittee on military affairs and made sure all the war colleges became more stringent and academic..
The Navy War College decided in '80-something to issue master's degrees. I heard a story when I was at Newport that they decided to go for the accreditation because they found out their students were getting credit for their war college classes from Salve Regina University and taking a few more courses at that school for a master's.

I was glad I did it. Three trimesters, the first one on military history, the second one on how to buy a B-2 bomber/acquisition and how Washington works. It was a little more information about how to buy a B-2 bomber than I wanted to know about, but the contracting system, it's all very interesting. The third trimester was regional studies, and being the Air Force, they have their own transportation, so there was a visit to the region. Most of the trips were in the spring, but the one to Russia was right after school started, and they asked me if I wanted what trip I wanted to do. I said, I'll do the Russian. I hadn't been there in a couple of years since I went with counter terrorism.

I did Russia with the military which is a different perspective. When we landed one of the B-52 pilots said to me "You know, if I ever came to Russia, I didn't think it was going to be on Delta Airlines." [laughter] Oh, this is going to be a lot more interesting than I thought because it is such a different perspective.

Q: First, let's go back to the War College itself. How did a lady foreign service officer fit in there?

BOLTON: Depends. My first trimester was terrific. The seminar was just as good as it could be. They were wonderful, very supportive. It was a very frank seminar. Each seminar had a female and they tried to have one non-military, in addition to international officers. Then they re-mixed us. For the second and third trimester stayed with the same new mix and that was the seminar from hell. It was somewhat disagreeable and very argumentative, except about including the female in the argument.

It was interesting because I didn't really know the military that well. I assumed that the Air Force would be the most flexible being the newest of the services, and since technology was so important it wouldn't be tied up with all the tradition. Wrong! I've had quite a bit of experience with the military now and I find the Air Force to be the most inflexible and least self-examined.
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The Air Force is often the traditionalist. I used to hear enough stories from when they would go in for their promotion board to be interviewed to be a colonel, with questions like, "Is your wife good enough to be a colonel's wife?" in the late '80s. Two years before

that they'd been a problem because one of the colonels, one of the students' wives had gone to work at Dillard's Department Store which wasn't considered to be appropriate for an officer's wife. So there was still a lot of nonsense.

As I said, the first trimester was a terrific mix. There weren't that many women at the time. The women officers were interesting from the other services. I got to be friends with a good group. But the second and third trimester, the mix they put me in was difficult. Honestly, if they said the sky was blue, that seminar would have jumped up and said it was green. It was a very fractious one.

Egos were enormous in that group. Like one A-10 pilot. He came into the Air Force with a PhD in history, so you he was very normative. Anytime we got on a political topic or foreign policy topic or what causes coups, he would start on chaos theory or something. I who had lived through coups was not seen as having anything to contribute.

Q: Everything affects everything else.

BOLTON: I used to get picked on a lot. Foreign service would get picked on. State Department got picked on. I remember one day coming in. We finally had a State Department speaker during the regional affairs trimester. They had Deputy Director from Soviet Affairs or Russian Affairs, whatever it was at the time. He had a bow tie on. We went back to the seminar after the address in the auditorium, and they were all over me with, "Oh, does everybody wear a bow tie? Where's your bow tie?"

Keep in mind this was also a time where the Air Force's Chief of Staff General McPeak was really annoying many. He changed the uniform. It looked like a concierge's uniform on the Upper East Side, and what uniform the visiting flag officers who were speakers were wearing was an internal Air Force political statement. This was right after the Gulf War where the Air Force had decided it had saved the world through air power and could run policy through something called "Air Occupation." You could occupy a country from the air. Nonsense. But you couldn't convince most of them because they had won the Gulf War which of course was not the position of the Army and Navy students.

I had come back to the class and was getting piled on about the bow tie, and I simply said, "Hey. Coming from the service that's doing to its uniform what you're doing to your uniform, I'd keep my mouth shut before Merrill McPeak puts you all in a bow tie," which got a round of applause from the two Army officers and two Navy officers who were also getting sick and tired of the Air Force chauvinism in the classroom.

I made a lot of friends, and a purpose of these schools is networking. In fact, the French student, he sat next to me during the second and third trimesters, was a colonel. He just retired on December 31st as a French three-star, and he was head of the French military mission in NATO. Before that he was the French military attaché in Washington which came in handy when I was doing Katrina work at Northern Command and we had French navy divers in New Orleans. We could do things on the phone on an issue with no precedent.

There was another State Department student who I think had the same type of experience. Now the two-stars and the one-stars, they were thrilled to have us. The Air Force, first of all sitting there in Alabama far from Washington, had a hard time getting ranking speakers because it took three days to get there, speak, and return. Those with good overseas experience also appreciated me. One who worked at the Pentagon command center told me, "Some people don't know why you're here, but I know why you're here. I was in the NMCC, and we can't do a darn thing unless the State Department is on board." I said, "Yes, I know."

Then my follow on assignment…

Q: I want to stick with this a minute. You have the feeling that the Air Force Academy and all, that the Air Force is almost evangelically Christian.

BOLTON: Yes, it is.

Q: Did you find it so in Montgomery?

BOLTON: Yes, I did. I saw it there in 1993 and certainly in Colorado Springs in 2004. The Air Force is having a hard time with the revolution in military affairs now that the nuclear and heavy bomber missions have receded and its unlikely we'll have aerial dog fights any time soon.

Q: And the drones are taking on tasks.

BOLTON: The drones are taking the pilots out of the fight. You have to deal with the whole pilot mentality. Pilots are automatically considered to be qualified for any billet in the Air Force which is a silly human resources policy, but that's the way it was set up from the first barnstorming days.

Q: I was in the Air Force for four years but as an enlisted man. I was with an intelligence outfit.

BOLTON: Well, at least the Air Force is the only services that sends its officers off to die. [laughter]

Q: I was in something called the Security Service which is all part of the National Security Agency eavesdropping.

BOLTON: The black crows. The black crows.

Q: One of the things that we noted because this is in the Korean War, so World War II is right around the corner, and the Air Force in its wisdom took all these pilots who maybe had finished high school—maybe—but in World War II they were trained ___ who stayed in. Many of them were overly well educated. They were pilots, and they didn't know what

to do with them, so they put them in this intelligence outfit which… Most of us who were language types were graduates of some of the top colleges in the country, and we had these officers who weren't… Anyway, it wasn't a good thing.

BOLTON: Yes. I think the Air Force has always…

Q: Did you find that you acted as a resource as far as the state department and its attitude?

BOLTON: Absolutely. We have a more strategic and prudent view that comes out in military history and regional studies. I had very little to say about whether Napoleon should have gone right or left as far as his tactical direction, but I have plenty to say about whether he was smart enough to stop in Austria or not. What was always funny was that everybody always thinks that the State Department or foreign service people particularly are naïve and gullible and believe anything anybody tells them. Yet they often seemed to be gullible. For example, if the Germans offered a deal in a historical situation, the class would say "Oh, that sounded like a good deal!" I would say, "What! I wouldn't take that deal with a bow on it! Boy, it's a terrible deal for A, B, and D and if you take it, in another 10 years you're going to be in a real mess."

I think our commissions are different from the military commission, and a little Trivial Pursuit question for the foreign service is always prudence, integrity, and ability, and the military commission, there's no word about prudence, it's patriotism, integrity, and ability. The fact that we are looking at a much broader and longer picture is clear.

Q: How did you feel that women were moving in the Air Force?

BOLTON: That was fun to watch because the big fight of course was women in the cockpit. If women can fly, what's left for the male pilots if women can fly? There were no rated women in the class and few in the Air Force then. Now it's changed. They even have a woman pilot in the Thunderbirds, their performance team. One of the Navy class members was a female navigator in P-3's.

Q: Orions.

BOLTON: Orions. Yes.

Q: Planes that went over the ocean…

BOLTON: Recon

Q: …and look for…

BOLTON: Submarines.

Q: …intelligence submarines.

BOLTON: Now they're looking for drugs because there're so few submarines for them to look for anymore.

That was the big question was role of women, women in the cockpit, and women in combat. If you want to get a real fur fight going, just say "women in combat panes." Of course now there are plenty of rated women and women flying. At that time, they could fly C-130s and things like that, but they could not possibly be fighter pilots. We didn't have any Air Force Academy graduates yet at War College because the academy graduated its first class in '79 I think. Also, Clinton had been president, and there was a lot of grumbling in the ranks of the class about Clinton. The stories were coming down from the young staffer who insulted General McCaffrey. The Don't Ask, Don't Tell was another raw nerve, so it was nothing but one raw nerve after another for those guys. First the uniform. You don't see the Marines ever changing the uniform.

Several other changes that were taking place within the Air Force that I didn't have a lot of visibility on, but I did see the larger ones. The idea that the Air Force thought it made war obsolete because of precision guided munitions and the performance in the Gulf War. And you couldn't tell them anything regarding that principle. Air occupation was very questionable. I said, "The best thing you can do is stop people from doing things, but if you're going to conclude a war, you've got to get people to do what you want them to do, and you can't do that from the air." Being in Alabama did not help. It was isolated and not easily open to new or different thinking in DC or NYC.

I had a friend who had an interesting job in pol mil in current operations and peace-keeping, and so I've bid on that job as deputy director, and it turned out to be a wonderful job. The office initially had about six people in it, and by the time I left it must have been 20-something people in it with half military, half foreign service, five or six interns and it was such an interesting job for several reasons. One, that was just when the interface between state and the military had to be current, had to be daily. We were changing the nature of war. We were doing the Balkans. We were doing Somalia. We were doing Haiti. These small wars, the operations other than war, whatever you want to call them, or contingency operations. Or, as one military officer told me in confusion: "Shoot what you don't feed" is not a good rule of engagement.

Many functions of that office, PM/ISO, are now done by new bureaus. They use many terms now, but a lot of what we worked out at the time was just to solve immediate problems that emerged in mid-operations. The operations weren't thoroughly planned because no one knew what we would face. Often, we were dragging the military along in the planning process so they were reluctant to plan. For them, planning means they're ready, and agree with, a deployment. We started using contactors which is a major part of the force today. I remember the days and the weekend afternoons and the nights when we made those types of decisions are certainly the same things we're living with now in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately in a lot of ways, but its symptomatic of the way we approach so many other issues. But it was a very intense time.

The office itself was half military, half foreign service. The office director was an Air Force colonel who I just thought hung the moon. He was a terrific leader. He was a fighter pilot from Shreveport, Louisiana, and I'm still friends with him. And there were two deputy directors, another Air Force colonel, and me, and I did the regional side, and the Air Force colonel did the more operational, functional side. I'll say the functional side because there were several things, for instance, the new issue of de-mining.
We grabbed de-mining because at the time it was handled on the margins of refugees, as something that stopped refugees from returning. We knew the answer was in the military skill set. Hidden Killers which is one of the State Department's most popular publications and is on land mines, we published the first Hidden Killers. We published the second one, too, and now it's a regular publication but I think the name changed. But we took land mines. We had several classified programs. We had humanitarian support in disasters or when help was needed from DoD. Any time for instance the Lions or the Rotary Club in Ohio or Arizona wanted to fly stuff down to the Rotary Club in Chile, they can get help from DoD and we provide the policy approval.. The two Department of Defense programs one provides excess property, the other one will provide transportation. We did all of that. Any kind of request of the Department of Defense went through us. For transportation, for emergency support, so we were almost 24/7.

Q: We get continually called upon in places like Africa to get troops to places.

BOLTON: Oh, constantly. Again, there were not a lot of processes in place. Just a few basic ones between Executive Secretaries. We were dealing with a Pentagon that was in the grips of the Powell Doctrine, they were still in a post-Vietnam mindset which meant no use of the military for anything short of a direct attack on U.S. territory and only with the complete support of the people, use of the Reserves, Guard, and with an exit strategy. Plus the Clinton administration had not put in many senior officers, so for that first year I was going to Secure Video Teleconferences meeting, DoD would be fully staffed. I mean, the Joint Staff screen would be full of officers. SecDef, not so much, they had some holes. Everybody else had just had horrible gaps.

Being that the joint staff came to the game with all their pads, helmets, and the ball, it was a real fight all the time to deal with them. At the time I think General Powell's policy influence at the time was pretty remarkable simply because of a power vacuum. There simply was not enough senior officers in place to push back of the fact that the Joint Staff actually had its own guidance form Powell.

The rest of us were trying to find out what the policy was, and we used to make jokes about, "What does the editorial in the Washington Post today say? That will be the policy by the afternoon." It was a very intense, unclear, poorly run. At the morning meeting on Bosnia, the lead senior officer from the NSC would say, "And what should we talk about today?" I thought, "Geez, Bosnia's going to hell. How about that one?" as opposed to getting an agenda out every morning and following up on decisions from the day before. It was basic Meeting 101.

It was a very intense, difficult time to do this type of work, plus I said we had Somalia. I walked in just as Somalia got very hot. We just lost the 24 Pakistani peace keepers. At the time, UN peace keepers were still sacred. They were still not to be touched, so this was breaking that protective shield that UN peace keepers were supposed to enjoy. Our office had pretty much pushed for the mission but for one that was very limited: Go in, hold the beaches, hold the airport, get the supplies in, get some safe lines out, and that's it. Since that had worked so well, some folks at a policy level decided to go down the nation-building route. That's a different type of mission. Then we had Black Hawk Down, and as I told some folks at EUR that morning on the margins of the Bosnia meeting that what had happened that morning in Somalia - which of course they had no interest in - would guarantee there would be no ground intervention in Bosnia.

Q: Black Hawn Down was in Somalia.

BOLTON: In Somalia. That was a mission that had not gone as well as it should have because there were so many players. I mean you had the UN. You had the multi-national forces. You had UN forces. It was just our U.S. forces. Command and Control was very confusing

I was working on the Balkan issues. The part of the Balkan stuff that worked well was the humanitarian operation which was what we were doing. The air bridge which is run by the U.S. military. It's run by the European Command with our office doing the non-military part of it, That was a big success, and we were trying to keep that out of the way of the political types or policy types.

Q: How long were you there? From when to when?

BOLTON: It was from '93 to '95. The Balkans issue, that was a fairly ugly and nasty issue at State. It was an absolute classic demonstration of the split between Wilsonian international liberalism and realism. You had a lot of people in the European bureau who were classic Wilsonian international liberals. Was there genocide going on. Nobody would say it was genocide. Was it a civil war? Was it an international conflict? There was a lot of support to have it declared an international conflict for legal reasons - when you are declared a belligerent, it becomes legal to aid and arm them. It was a bitter experienced state, and of the Pentagon didn't want anything to do with it.

One of the functions we did in our office was if the military wouldn't plan, then we would start military planning for the military. We were always trying of course to stay in the middle of the bureaucratic conflict.

After Vietnam the one thing that Powell and those who rebuilt the military decided was, "Never again. No more will the civilians ever do this to us again." The way they structured the military, they put so many things in the reserves that were key to running an operation that was going to last more than a week. For instance, the truck drivers were in the reserves. The civil affairs people are in the reserves. Unless the president's going to call up the reserves, there was little that could be done effectively, or for the long term. In

a crisis, we always asked if the President was going to call up the reserves. If not, then it's not serious or destined for success.

If the president doesn't call up the reserves, you're going to have a mess trying to get anything done with the military but again, many at State Department don't know the way the military capacity is distributed and so you've got people saying, "We've got a plan to relieve the Balkans. We're going to get all the truck drivers, all the military trucks in Germany to drive to…" some port in the Balkans. "We're going to dock a ship, then we're going to have all these military trucks come down from Germany." What military trucks? What military drivers? There were no lack of ideas from EUR but almost none reflected an idea of the political requirements.

The interventionists thought the military - or the policy leadership - wouldn't notice that it was being led into a serious military operation. On the other side, the military of course would paint all sorts of horrible stories. There's a lot of Serbian influence on the military at the time, so it was a really unpleasant issue. I did go to Sarajevo during a brief lull and what had happened in that city was pretty awful. Sniper blankets hanging up. Tanks positioned for use. Fresh graves. And of course, like a lot of conflicts, you can't necessarily tell the good guys from the bad guys although I did think the Serbs were the bad guys.

As I said, the humanitarian operation was going pretty well. We kept it below the radar. Then at one point the policy folks decided they had nothing else going, that they were going to then turn their attention to the humanitarian operations and claim it as a success. If you politicize that, you're not going to really have anything left. So many issues and so many problems we're dealing with now of course were also rooted in the Balkans especially regarding the Muslim element of the conflict.

The other issues I worked on was Haiti. I used to call myself the pimp for the Multi-National Force. It was building up, a lot of pressure, get Aristide back, could we get the generals to resign peacefully or not. We very much wanted to get democracy going there. If the generals wouldn't go, we would push. We didn't want to do it alone, of course. UN wasn't sure it wanted anything to do with it, so we got a UN "blessing" to form a multi-national force with like-minded countries, not a UNPKO. We thought we would have to mount an invasion and gave the generals a deadline; a last-minute mission got the generals to leave peacefully but required a massive, fast turn in U.S. military planning because the mission had changed within hours. Gen Zinni, the SOUTHCOM commander, did an incredible job.

My task was to set up the multi national peace force politically. We learned to do this kind of solicitation with the Somalia operation. Probing for interest, assessing skills and filling gaps, keeping a spread sheet. Spreadsheets were new at this time. Remember, this was '93, so all these tools were new, so we would run these spreadsheets as to who was in, and what they needed or wanted. So we got into the routine where every morning and every afternoon on these soliciting cables. We would send a spreadsheet to the White House morning and afternoon which I heard was going to the president's desk which is

sobering, and we would get them around to the Pentagon, and we would have the name of the country, committed, not committed, cable numbers, comments, and action items and that was a very useful document.

Q: Who checked your facts?

BOLTON: We didn't have any time for an elaborate clearance process! I checked the facts. My interns. We got seven interns because remember this was happening mostly in the summer. We were working 18 hours a day just about. I'm not kidding. I would come in around five in the morning and go home eight, nine, ten o'clock at night. You'd feed the interns Chinese food at three in the morning, and they're happy. We checked it, but we were moving pretty fast. I'd get summoned on short notice to sit in a meeting in the Undersecretary's office to pitch a visitor on troops for the Haiti MLF. I'd run down and see P, brief him, or sit in on the meeting and make the pitch myself. Very little paper trail.

We were starting to see the problem of having this high tech equipment like video teleconferencing but still a paper-intensive process. Taskings via video but still needing thirteen paper copies and a red tag. The fact that the world was changing and State needed to change the way it did business was coming home to us very quickly because we were just doing things on the fly, and if it wasn't in my head, then it wasn't anyplace.

We got a special air mission (SAM) **t**o go through Latin America to recruit for the multilateral force because we really wanted Latin Americans be to on board which would have been ground breaking because a lot of Latin Americans were reluctant to act in each other's countries.

I was really stressed putting together an interagency SAM, the policy papers, the admin arrangements with DoD and the White House and yes, approving menus for the plane. We did Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Suriname, the Caribbean, Salvador and Honduras in less than one week. I had us sleeping in a bed every night, not on the plane, and this is a week. We had a compatible group, and I was working a lot with the old Atlantic Command out of Norfolk. That's when I started to understand the difference in military and State resources. That's when I found out they work in shifts and the State Department doesn't because I would be talking to Joe at six in the morning and find out at 8 PM that Joe is home and Jack is "on shift." I was the only shift at State.

Keep in mind we were also still doing Somalia in the office. We were also doing the Great Lakes in Africa with Rwanda, Burundi. Burundi also spun up. We had the African Lakes crashing, so we were also trying to set up some kind.

Q: Gas.

BOLTON: This was the Rwanda-Burundi-Tutsi-Hutu genocide.

Q: I was thinking of the other one where a volcano…

BOLTON: We did those on the side. Volcanoes and the regular Bangladesh flooding. We did all of that on the side. And the coups and evacuations of U.S. citizens.

Q: How did the geographic desk fit into your process?

BOLTON: It's a good question because it depended. I really got the sense that the bureaus certainly do acquire the characteristics of the geographic area that they work with. We would offer ourselves as a plussed-up political-military component to a bureau or office under stress. Some welcomed it, some ignored us, some fought us.

That worked really well for almost all the bureaus except for the European Bureau. I quote what they told me, their regional political military affairs told me that they are "the flagship office of the flagship bureau." And he wasn't being cute.

Q: The Great Lakes you mentioned earlier.....

BOLTON: In Rwanda and Burundi. It was just a human disaster, a human nightmare. The Tutsis were being slaughtered.

Q: Would you talk for a bit about… Let's go to the Great Lakes. The problem with working with the Non Governmental Organizations there.

BOLTON: Again, we had seen in the Balkans and also in Somalia the UN or the protection of UN Red Cross flag used to provide to humanitarian workers meant nothing. Security was the issue, and it was a big problem for NGOs to decide whether or not they wanted to accept security from the military or from the UN peacekeepers. Could they continue to be seen as neutral when getting protection was no longer neutrality. And the U.S. military needed to take into consideration the expertise and concerns of the NGOs.

The military didn't understand NGOs, NGOs didn't understand the military yet again, one of the things we've seen now is a much better relationship between the two. They now train together. Now U.S. military regional command exercises include dealing with NGOs, working with NGOs. The military has to be able to address a group of refugees running through the battle field.

There was so many original problems to be solved. In Haiti, when some members of a country in the multilateral force needed a dentist, but we didn't have any, DynCorp, the contractor, put its hand up to find dentists -- and give us the bill. As problems arose for which we had not mobilized the military resources, or did not have the skills or the authority or the policy interest in doing, we just hired it out. Something we relied on in Iraq and Afghanistan. Contractors have become a complication but essential element of mounting a complex, long-term operation. It was a good tour. I'm happy that I did it, and I was very happy to work with the people that I worked with.
[crosstalk]

BOLTON: It was really right on the edge of the changes in the way U.S. uses its military, start of a change where the military had to basically restructure itself. All of these issues that really weren't resolved until General Petraeus came along and really forced rethinking as to what type of enemy and battle we would be facing in the future, and again, people were free to start thinking about hybrid warfare where your enemy has got everything from cruise missiles to cell phone bombs, but he doesn't quite have a phone number or POC. It was really the start of rethinking the political military relationship. In the old days before the armed conflict broke out, there was a very high diplomatic tempo, but very low military tempo. You'd go into a conflict, the diplomatic tempo drops sharply. The military tempo rises sharply. Then at the end of the conflict the diplomatic tempo increases sharply, and the military one decreases. What we have now of course is in these conflicts you've got military and diplomatic sharply engaging all through the conflict, so it's a very different tempo.

Q: You were in that job from when to when?

BOLTON: From '93 to '95.

Q: And then where?

BOLTON: The bidding process. I thought about going back to consular, but it would have to be very interesting and a challenge. I saw Ho Chi Minh City as Deputy Principal Officer, but I dismissed it initially because I had no experience or interest in Asia at the time. Then the phone calls started. My career counselor pitched Saigon to me. I told him I didn't do Asia, but he pointed out that I did communist countries. I also noted that the job did not really exist yet, given the designation code on the bid list. I promised I would think about it. Everyone told me I was crazy not to take it, especially since I would likely be Acting PO through much of my tour, but no start date on the assignment.

Q: Principal Officer.

BOLTON: Principal Officer. I was concerned because as the process started, I heard that I didn't have EAP's support. I made an appointment with the Office Director who was acting DAS to present myself, explain why I was the best candidate and that they would not regret having me at Post.

I found out that actually the assistant secretary had given his word to another department principal to back this other department principle's special assistant Well, apparently that person thought having EAP's vote was sufficient and didn't lobby. I did, pointing out my extensive management, policy, and communist country experience which is a very special environment, both professionally and personally

To make a long story short, I heard informally that of the 13 votes on the panel, I got 11. After I was paneled I went back to EAP to tell them how pleased I was at joining the Bureau. I was left wondering about the value they placed on selecting good people. The problem was that when I finished language training, we still hadn't opened HCMC!

And of course Vietnam is highly sensitive. It was still very sensitive at the time. The POW/MIA issue. We had a former congressman who had chained himself to the gates of the Joint Task Force -Full Accounting in Hanoi, which was the military element that does the remains retrieval. I mean, it was a loaded issue.

Q: Debbie, I'm just looking at the time.

BOLTON: Yes, I've got to get going.

Q: This is probably a good place to stop. We'll pick this up, what was going on before you went there.

BOLTON: I had to get to language training first, and that was also the Gingrich shutting down the U.S. government. I had to go three or four weeks furlough in the middle of training.

Q: We'll pick all that up. Of course I've got a real interest in this because I used to be consul general in Saigon back in the good old days.

BOLTON: It was an interesting place.

Q: Today is the 19th of March 2010 with Debbie Bolton. Debbie, you're taking Vietnamese. When did you start taking Vietnamese?

BOLTON: I started September 1995.

Q: How long did you take Vietnamese?

BOLTON: I took it until June 1996 except for the interruption caused by the shutdown of the federal government for several weeks which was a horrible break in training because when we left on a Friday, we thought they would do something and we would be back on Monday as they had done before during the Fall. They didn't assign any study projects, we didn't take any extra assignments or readings and we weren't even allowed back in the building during the closure, not even to water the plant that I had brought in for the classroom. The only newspaper I had brought home with me was the interior ministry police paper, Cong An, so I spent about three weeks reading that thing backwards and forwards, and it was actually very good for my consular vocabulary, of course, with all the criminal activity reported.

Q: How did you fit with Vietnamese?

BOLTON: It was interesting the way they set it up. There was enough of us for two classes. They had a speaker from the south who had been teaching for a long time. There was a young man from Hue who'd been a boat person and he was very IT oriented. Keep in mind, we were all just learning computers at this time. And we had an older gentleman

who had only started teaching, who was from the north although he left the north in ’56 for the south. He was a professor of literature and had a northern accent; he was a Catholic but Confucian in ethic and of course, Buddhism controls the cultural calendar.

There was some debate over what accent we should acquire given that the northern accent is now called Vietnamese standard dialect by way of conquest, but I knew I was going to be in the south, so I did not want to speak like a northern occupier. I wanted the accent of the people with whom I'd be living. It's not an easy language, and I’d rather learn right away what I’m going to be hearing. The post still did not exist. It didn’t exist on paper, just in the Department’s mind. There were a couple of us who knew we were headed for the south who agreed with me.

I decided I wanted to learn the southern accent, and I got a hold of the old tapes for the old book, and a copy of the old book. I would go in in the morning around seven a.m., and I would just work from the yellow book as an extra drilling period. The teachers just use their own accent. We had a northern accent from Ong Do. We had a southern accent from Ba Hien, and we had a central Hue accent which is a very difficult accent from Ong Duy. That worked out quite well I think as far as being used to hearing everything, and I was happy with my decision to focus on southern dialect though I could also handle the northern one. Everyone sings in northern dialect.

I think now there’s a decided preference for northern dialect, but there was a lot of discussion in the Vietnamese language program which direction to go, which book to use. There was a new book I think University of Illinois or Indiana or something which was northern.

We also were a bunch of agitators who pressed to do an immersion period in Vietnam on our own nickel for a few weeks in April. I think they still do them, but we were the first ones to make a case for it. The mother of one of our teachers had been hospitalized in HCMC, the teacher was going, and asked if anyone wanted to go. Some of us did, we did our own schedule and travel; we stayed in no-star hostels, and got as far off the beaten path as possible. Buying railroad and boat tickets, getting lost, trying to feed ourselves, dealing with mosquito nets. We had a hard time getting a visa because the Vietnamese government couldn't figure out what we were doing. We went to Da Lat, Vung Tau, Saigon.

I think it was about in April that we did that more or less, then finished up in June. I think I got a three-three-plus. God knows how, but I could always read. I could read a Communist Party newspaper in any language on the planet because they’re all written the same. So I was very good at guessing what the substance of the meaning is. I somehow did get out with a three-three-plus.

Then what to do with me? There’s no post. As much as the department thought it was a nice idea, there were several members of congress who were opposed. You only really need one person to oppose it. The department didn't seem willing to invest the chits needed in getting it open. There’s still the issues of POW/MIA although we had Joint

Task Force-Full Accounting had been out there for a couple of years. We had the Orderly Departure Programs set up I think since ‘79 and running out of Bangkok going to Saigon two weeks every month and out.

We were getting a lot of the practical arrangements done and of course Senator Curry and Senator McCain were very much in favor of this. But it was hard to get the department to roll up its sleeves and take on the few opposed. Opening a post isn't rewarding a country, it's getting our work done. We do it in our own interests.

They put me on the Desk to do odd projects. There was an APEC meeting coming, the pol-mil issues needed some expertise. I read everything on Vietnam in our library on my bus rides home. But I was starting to get a little bit bored since there wasn’t any perspective for opening a post, and it was very hard to plan life this way. I finally had to insist that they at least let me go to Hanoi; keep in mind that my language was fading by the day.

There’s always work to do at post because this was the time in the ‘90s when Clinton was balancing the budget over our broken backs. The department was proud to say they had opened all these posts in the 'stans and hadn’t gotten any extra resources. Well, you know, maybe you should have because Hanoi had been open for a couple of years, and I might say unsatisfactorily as far as resources and staffing. It was difficult. It’s always difficult to have a new post, but I went out to Hanoi with again no particularly clear assignment.

It was very strange. They wanted me to get out before Christmas, but I saw no reason to leave December 18 so I went out the first week of January and of course I get out there and they don’t know what to do with me. I had no idea why they wanted me before Christmas. An indication of the casual, undisciplined thinking I was in for.

I was in the political-econ section which was ok but it could have used more organization, direction, and leadership. It was a very prickly post. You had to be very careful what you said all the time.

Q: Why was it prickly?

BOLTON: I think it was just so stressed and understaffed. Someone from my language class had been there for six months as GSO -- and as every other American Admin slot. And no one had done a voluntary EER for him! I don't care if it has to be done at midnight, you take care of your people when they are working like dogs.

They were sending country clearance responses to cables announcing CODELs. I suggested that they change the wording. Congress is not subject to the Executive, and it should just be "Embassy Hanoi welcomes the visit of ...." I was cross-examined as if I had suggested we invite Gen Giap to redesign the Vietnam Memorial. I could not believe the push-back I had on this silly, but significant, item to help make a polished Embassy.

When we had the announcement of the arrival our first Ambassadorial appointment, I volunteered to staff his arrival.

Q: Pete Peterson.

BOLTON: Pete Peterson. Former POW and also a congressman. I had met him because when we were in language training, I heard of his nomination, and called his office to arrange a lunch for him to meet the language students which we did in an 8th floor dining room.

Also while I was in language training, I arranged a visit to the Veterans Administration to talk about what can we expect from dealing with U.S. veterans who come back to visit or have concerns, why are they back, what are they looking for? They also set up a very nice round table for us, so the class went down, and spent an afternoon with the Veterans Administration. They had a psychologist there and social workers talk with us. You've got physical issue where they're 19 years old carrying 100 lb. pack in 95 degree weather is one thing. Then they go back 40 years later, and they're not 19 years old anymore, and they can't take the heat and fall ill -- that becomes a consular problem.

Then of course there is an emotional issues. Some want to go back and help or they want to make sure that the country's okay. Our VA interlocutors suggested we do something like put a blank book up or something where people could come in and write their thoughts. I knew that this was not going to be your father's Embassy. I did not want to wallow in legacy issues but I did want to respect and acknowledge them. because I also very much wanted decided that this was going to be a fresh approach. This was not going to be Son of Embassy Saigon. I was always thinking about how do I forge a path for a new entity, for a new mission yet keeping in mind the legacy issues.

Some of those in the embassy that had their first tours there and seemed too high ranked for working in Hanoi, but they wanted to go back, and many had Vietnamese wives. As if it wasn't enough to do in Hanoi, there was way too much interest in what was going on in south in my opinion after I opened the ConGen.

Peterson came, and it was a very interesting time. By this time because I had gone out in January and Peterson came around March, after Tet. His goal was to get Ho Chi Minh City open and it certainly was mine. It had been eight months since I had been in language training. The Embassy treated me as if I were a sack of sand. They were doing HCMC planning without even including me; as soon as I found out there were meetings to which I was not invited, I hit the roof and elbowed my way in.

Peterson and I used to talk about how are we going to play out getting Ho Chi Minh City open. Again, Hanoi was fascinating. Lots of visitors. I remember going over to speak to an isolated Robert McNamara at a reception for a group reliving the Cuban Missile Crisis -- they had had a few meetings with Russian counterparts in different capitals to discuss the affair. His memoir had not come out yet. I can assure you he was as feisty as ever about decisions made during the Vietnam war.

We kept getting visitors, visitors, visitors. Then we got a cable announcing that Secretary Albright would visit Hanoi on her way to Hong Kong for the turn-over ceremony, I dashed in to see the Ambassador. I said that this was our opportunity. I drafted a first-person cable from the Ambassador to the Secretary offering her the task of cutting the ribbon for our new consulate general in HCMC if she would get the reprogramming letter out of the Department and over to Congress and the Ambassador would take care of any recalcitrant congressmen. I hadn't been able to get anyone in EAP to push M to get the money reprogrammed and deal with Congress on the question.

He loved the idea. I knew the Secretary would be enchanted with the idea of another "first". Three days later we had our answer. “What a great idea! I’m coming! We’ll get that money!” The ambassador worked the phones, and you’ve got the 12 hour time difference, so he’s doing this in the middle of the night with his friends in congress. S is telling M, “You will do this,” in time for her visit. Of course, I was going back and forth to Saigon to help with some other odds and ends visits like Robert Rueben, secretary of the treasury, so I was the control officer for his visit to Ho Chi Minh City.

I had been getting to know people in HCMC because the Vietnamese have a whole parallel structure in Saigon. They’ve got a ministry of the foreign relations office, all the ministries have offices down there that work with varying degrees of independence. The foreign ministry office is where the old foreign ministry was down the street from the palace, and the orderly departure program is processed right next door. I had already been around and met the American Chamber of Commerce people. The American Chamber was already up and running, and Hanoi one was still trying to get set up. I was getting very comfortable being in the south, and we had some apartments on a piece of property we owned, a former BOQ. Lovely little property. Because we had done property negotiations and made deals with them; whatever we had the paper for, the deeds, we kept or traded, so we had pieces of property all over town.

I became the control officer for Madeleine Albright’s visit. That turned out to be a challenge because we weren’t up and running there. We had two FSNs. I had a jeep and a driver and one clerk and trying to do a visit for Albright which is silly. So I got a little bit of help from one of the other officers that was going down there. We got a TDY admin officer down. Setting up the program became complex. Hanoi was a series of meetings at government offices. In Saigon, we had the "people to people" events, American Chamber of Commerce, NGO visits. And the meeting with the Party First Secretary. As they had done with the Treasury Secretary, the GoVN wanted to be sure we knew who won and scheduled the most important political meeting to take place in Saigon.

I wanted S to meet briefly with the Peoples' Committee, the local government. S's advance said she doesn't do local government calls. The Committee is more than a mayor and has plenty to say about whether a U.S. company will do well or fail and it was important for the operations of the new Con Gen -- that is not done in Hanoi. Other ranking visitors from other countries included the Peoples' Committee. S agreed to a brief meeting.

We had to arrange the events with most moving parts, the visits to the hospital, the visits with the kids, the ground-breaking, the visit to turn over the wheel chairs, the visit to the market, the visit with the people's committee, the visit with the party people, and every stop is very different. .

The hotel. Thank God for the New World Hotel. That was my motor pool. They had little buses. I think they sit about 12, 16. They have radio control which was the most important thing obviously for security. They had a white Mercedes I could borrow. We had to go make flags across the street from the New World Hotel near Ben Than Market. "We need flags. Go make flags for the car," and they couldn't make them fancy enough. You should have seen the first flag they gave us! It had everything but diamonds on it. And the gold braid ran in the rain.

The first thing I told the foreign office is that the host country is in charge of the weather. It took them about three seconds to get it. They all laughed, so after that we had a very good meeting. I said we'd have one meeting a day formally because you have to do things formally with the Vietnamese but yet they're funny, and you can do all sorts of things on the side, but you've got to maintain an eggshell of formality. After the official meeting, the working groups slide off and get the real work done.

The Vietnamese were very supportive.

Then a big problem emerged a few days before the visit. Well, Cambodia was going to hell at the time. S was also going to go to Cambodia. A coup was brewing and the Department cancelled the Secretary's visit to Cambodia. Almost the entire advance party moved over to HCMC -- without telling me in advance. The hotel general manager stopped me in the lobby and wanted to know who all these people were who were coming in saying they were with the Secretary's visit. And, S decided on an overnight in HCMC! An overnight would be a very different visit. We had no facilities for classified or much of anything else. They might as well stay for a week! There hadn't been a classified document produced or safeguarded in Ho Chi Minh City since 1975.

I of course was getting three hours a night of sleep if that. Of course, hotel is getting no money until the end. They're taking this all on my word that this is happening. Remember, there was no track record in dealing with the U.S. Consulate General and we had no local rolodex. So people kept coming in all day long, and the next two days from Phnom Penh. Then they had to send all the classified Xerox machines, security guards, burn bags, communication equipment, but I knew they would not be taking the copiers home and that we would get some good machines.

We had to set up all those control rooms, all those classified processing rooms in a place that doesn't do classified and hasn't done classified since 1975. All the security. Change the schedule. Give her more things to do. Again, there's a whole embassy in Hanoi with just four events, no overnight, and us with at least eight events, plus an overnight.

The rest is history. She arrived, and everything went fine. She did go back to the market twice. That was unplanned. Nobody got hit by a car although you know they run those motorcade road races. She waded out into the crowds and everybody was cheering which made great press and TV coverage. She arrives at the hotel which has a big atrium and mezzanine. All the hotel and restaurant guests are standing there, the lobby's jammed, everybody's applauding. It got very good press in the U.S. and Asia and Vietnam. Meetings went well. The humanitarian and people events went well, and she liked that. She didn't need the hairdresser because that had been the most difficult thing to line up, thank heavens.

Oh, and laying the first brick at the consulate. Remember we have no consulate, we have no contract, we have nothing. We just have the old Embassy building and the old outer buildings which we were going to take down. We would build where one of the outer buildings were

Q: Was it a two story building?

BOLTON: Yes, two story, long, flat, long building. I think it had been a marine security guard detachment barracks building. To do something different than a boring ribbon cutting and do something more active, we had a brick laying tableau set up. Actually, the new building was not made out of bricks. We even had thought of having her drive a bobcat.

There was an American contractor down there who actually did wind up with the contract and he was great about making the arrangements for S's tableau of brick-laying.

After she left, I didn't get a break. I had to start thinking and planning for opening the post. When would more American staff come -- by then we were up to two. Where would we live and how can we make our temporary working space habitable and compliant with regulations and how would we hire and train the local employees. The Ambassador came down for the 4th of July which the American Chamber of Commerce did at a picnic/amusement site which was great fun.

Then the CODELs started in late July and early August. Three came within one month. Fortunately, three were not too demanding and had been there before. But they still needed their services and transport and schedule and hand-holding. The fourth CODEL was the classic "shop-op" with little substance beyond tourism and what the German Consul General called "revolutionary tourism". Too bad no one could stop this because it made setting up the Post very difficult and left to nights and weekends. The GoVN did not allow pouch between Hanoi and HCMC and we had all sorts of controlled items that had to be transferred to us. One CODEL came down on a C-130. The Embassy threw controlled boxes on the flight when the Vietnamese were looking. I had a truck from the hotel that I rode with to the airport and we unloaded the boxes on it. One officer went to the hotel with another truck and I went to the ConGen to unload, log, and secure the items, sitting there at midnight counting accountable forms and passports. What a way to run a railroad, but I am the cheapest line item in the budget. Finally in late August, I sat

there at a desk with 2 FAM open to the part on opening a post to make sure I had all the items in the check list to include in the diplomatic note for the Foreign Office announcing we were in business. I hand carried it myself to the Office. We were in business. There were no other Americans at post that day to commemorate with.

Q: When you say the consulate, what did it consist of?

BOLTON: At first, it was the building at Nguyen Dinh Chieu. It was the BOQ in the old days where we had a couple of apartments now. There was a back building that we were working out of but we had to turn the two apartments into work space which meant we needed housing. We had an energetic admin officer who managed to line up good housing in what they called "service apartments" built for the non-existent expat Asian businessmen. Keep in mind we had all these security standards to meet, too. Slowly but surely, new officers came in. Political, Economic, Consular, and IT. The temporary building turned out very nice, with a nice waiting room and a lovely garden. We worked there for the first year. For the second year I moved into what was essentially an alcove in a hallway for an office

One of our early CODELs was very demanding. Of course, it is usually the staff that makes the most demands. The staffers of the CODEL wanted to make several exits and entrances at HCMC, leaving the country to see sites in the region. I just didn't have the resources and people to run back and forth to the airport and draft dipnotes all day long. Ambassador Peterson was great. He did not try to run the Post from Hanoi although I can't say the same for the rest of the Embassy staff which apparently didn't have enough to do and either wished they were in Saigon or wanted to relive their youths. He just asked me how things were and what could he do to help.

We had a congressman who was being a little too demanding. Peterson took care of that, too. In a minute. He just picked up the phone, and that was the end of that one. He knew that we just were not set up for business. If you want to work, we can do that; you want to tour, well, wait until we have staff.

On people-to-people, with no AID money, we took on two issues: the street children and AIDS. At least we could give those issues visibility. I remember taking Senator Kerry to a program that World Vision ran in the 7th district. He wasn't enthusiastic on the way over but just loved it because as many times as he had been to Saigon he had not been back in that area which was filled with canals and warehouses that still had U.S. Army quartermaster markings on them. And we took him to a "condom cafe", again, something different and real. He grew to trust our scheduling and became comfortable work with. We kept good records as to who came and what they did.

We had NODELs which are congressional visits not paid for by congress, usually paid for by a NGO. We had one very interesting one who was close to the Zen Buddhists and I was handling political Buddhism in Vietnam which was still an issue as it had been for centuries. Thich Nhat Hanh was the leader who had been out of the country for decades and was interested in returning for a visit. He spoke at a Church in my neighborhood

when I was in language training. He's all peace and light now but I had read a book in State's library by him written many years ago early in the war called "Buddha in a Sea of Fire." That was not a peace and light read.

One of the first things I did in Saigon was go to the site where one of the monks burned himself to death during the Diem rule. I had been about 10 years old and I remember reading Life Magazine that month with the pictures. It really hit me because I just could not understand why anyone would do this and what was a Buddhist monk anyway. It was one of the things that drove me to the Foreign Service, the curiosity that drove me to understand that motivation. There's a monument in Saigon at the site of that self-immolation and at one point I went to the temple in Hue from where those monks departed.

The summer was full of getting ready to open. Where do you get the shingle to hang out? Those Consulate General enamel shields are ordered from Switzerland, I learned. A few months before we opened we were hosting a CODEL. The local Foreign Office kept reminding me that I didn't have any local status until I sent the Note. The Ambassador had promised them that they could raise the flag over the new ConGen. I didn't have a consulate yet, and the Vietnamese were reminding me of that -- particularly as I was inviting people to a flag-raising and a reception! I didn't even have a consulate yet but the Ambassador was working on getting support from congress. What he had done was he promised a group of congressmen that they could raise the flag over the consulate. This key group of congressmen were very excited and included Rep. Randy Cunningham, one of two Navy aces from the war. The local government was being snitty about flying a foreign flag which was forbidden except by a consulate general. I told them that there was a French flag flying over the beer factory on the road to Binh Hoa and that I'd take the flag down as soon as the ceremony was open. Fortunately, there were enough clever folks at the Foreign Office who knew what we went through with Congress to get the office open.

That night we were still staying in the apartments. It was still apartments yet. We hadn't yet refitted. TDY GSO who was a WAE was down helping me, and the security FSN from Hanoi was down. We had been playing around with the flagpole all day long trying to get a flag, trying to get it up there. One o'clock in the morning I hear something, go out there. They're out there practicing! I have pictures of us practicing flag raising at one o'clock in the morning! Someone had put this little screw thing on with a handle, and it kept wrapping the flag up. There's only one way you can put the flag up. We had to get a replacement. I'm out at the airport waiting for the CODEL, and the WAE GSO is trying to get it changed. He did. And our friends at the New World Hotel catered the affair. I was just so tired of going to the Cu Chi tunnels and the Cao Dai temple with all these visits.

Q: That's not out in the middle of the river, is it?

BOLTON: No. It's out by the Cambodian border.

Q: There was a Cao Dai one in the Mekong River.

BOLTON: This was the main temple. It's not too far at all from the Cambodian border, the temple that looks like the Disneyland on drugs.

It was more than a religion, it was also a "third way", with its own militia and opposed by both the Republic and the north. They are still very suspicious of that region. They still have repression and, well, certainly very small space in which the government will allow them to work. Victor Hugo is a saint, Abraham Lincoln is a saint, the temple is incredible.

Q: They were very opposed to the Viet Cong.

BOLTON: Yes. They were very opposed to the Republic, too! They're opposed to everybody.

Q: The Viet Cong stayed away from them.

BOLTON: It was a militia and they were mean. There were other groups that had militias and alternative views. One was the Hoa Hao.

Q: Others?

BOLTON; It was another one. Tal-Tien? Something like that, but they also had a militia group in the war, I mean during the days of the Republic because the Republic really didn't have control over the territory. It wasn't just the Viet Cong. Now, they are on human rights groups lists, but I'm not sure the groups have a good idea of the histories of these groups.

A big problem was hiring. We had to use the state-operated "agency" across the street so our employees were not our employees. This is common in communist countries. But we could select someone and have him or her processed through that agency. Otherwise you wind up with nothing but a bunch of worthless cousins and useless nephews of government officials.

A rumor and scam went around that if you fill out what was our employment application form which was in English, that it was actually an application for war reparations to be paid by the U.S. I could not figure out why I was getting hundreds of applications with pictures of amputees, blind, whatever. We put a story in the paper that there were no reparations and that no one should pay anyone to apply for a job or any other benefit or form. I can't tell you how many boxes of applications we had. And we still had to extract the real applicants, interview, process, and train them.

I actually did find good employees. I'd also talked to the other consulates and western businesses who were thrilled that we were opening. I remember talking to my Australian counterpart, and she asked: "You stopped banging your head against the wall yet?" "No."

I talked of course to the other companies who were operating into the hotels. Personnel and Marketing sections of multinationals are fascinating. We could never do the amount of research they do. The managers told me the initially, the employees trained really well, but resented retraining and process change -- which is constant in the modern world. They're not happy to keep on learning. I was starting to see that problem in my second year as new procedures for consular or budgets would come in.

Women make the best employees there according to the multinationals I talked to. Frankly, the men seem to think they live in a cafe society and they are all "managers." We had to do real attitude checks with the men. The women were the hardest working and easiest to manager. The women were thrilled to work with the Americans because if they worked for the Koreans or Taiwanese, they'd get harassed. I remember one young female applicant telling me, "My mother was a cashier in the Da Nang commissary, and she said, 'You go work for the Americans. You will always get treated fairly."

I had trouble with some people in the embassy for instance who wanted me to hire friends from the old days. One had been a night club singer. I'm sorry. I don't have any openings for a 55 year old night club singers. There was more than a little of that going on, and I was not happy about it.

Q: I have to say that running the consular section, we had women, and this is true pretty much with a few exceptions…

BOLTON: Yes. But I do like to have a little of everything working in the Section.

Q: …a very large consular section in Seoul.

BOLTON: Everywhere.

Q: Women may come in there and they stick to it.

BOLTON: It wasn't just consular. We had to look harder for good men. We had them, but we had to look harder for them.

Q: And the women were treated___. The women were treated much better because we would hire married women.

BOLTON: Yes, even mothers and divorced women.

Q: We would also let them… They didn't work on Saturdays.

BOLTON: That was not a selling point. I thought that would be a selling point when I was hiring my staff because again, Vietnam was a very young country. I thought, "Well, you know, we'll be able to say they don't have to work on Saturdays," because the country was on a six day week. I was having a seven day week, but I had said, "Oh, blah blah. And you don't have to work on Saturday." We found out they liked to work on

Saturday, again, according to my multinational friends! They liked to be in a modern office. It's air conditioned. They have their own phone, their own computer, that was the big thing, and there was not 20 people in the room with them like at home. They could talk to their friends, and they had big face working in a modern office for the Americans. They'd be happy to come in on Saturday!

I also used the hotel industry to help with the F-77 report, the Americans in town, how do I know how many Americans are in town? I went to the hotels, like the Marriott had just started to do some work there and the New World and the other big hotels and the U.S. airlines. They had done the research and had all that information! They paid a lot of money to marketing companies to find out who comes to Vietnam. Are they students? Where do they stay? Are they staying with friends? Are they staying with relatives? I had basic F-77 information.

Q: Did you have any equivalent to deserters in the area?

BOLTON: I never saw any. No doubt they were there or in the region. We knew some of them were around. We had sex trafficking, and I worked very, very hard to bring that to the attention of the U.S. government because again, we were working with the street children and that also included that. We had Americans who were prowling predators.

Q: You get the equivalent in Bangkok where the chartered flights…

BOLTON: No chartered flights yet, but the Vietnamese were working on it, too, and there were NGOs working with the activists in the neighborhoods. Once a month I'd bring the NGOs together for lunch so I could understand what they're doing and seeing because I knew at some point AID would be there.

We did many interesting things while keeping the legacy in mind. Our first Tet was the 30th anniversary of the Tet Offensive. At Tet you're closed for a week. Why don't we go have a picnic on the roof of the building? I mean ConGen American staff. We got some old '60s music on the tape recorder. We got beer and sandwiches. We took a tour of the old building. Some of the newer people hadn't seen it yet. We went up to the roof of the building to the helicopter pad, and we just sat there and given the variety in ages, and we just talked among ourselves about the war and where we were. It was very interesting just talking about what we thought of the war. All the music's going in the background. It was a very nice afternoon.

We're set up a travel plan, and I didn't care unless the visitor's name is Clinton, we're sticking to this travel plan because we have not been in these provinces since '75. We've got some information gaps here, and we're going to do it methodically. We had push back from the Vietnamese government because the Vietnamese insisted that the agreement regarding the Vietnamese consulate in San Francisco and the opening of the consulate general in Ho Chi Minh City is just for the city of Ho Chi Minh City. We're not spending all this money so we can run around a couple of districts in Ho Chi Minh, and the embassy's going to cover the rest of the country. We were smart enough not to draw

the line at the DMZ. I think it was a little below the DMZ because Hue was not my district.

We just said that this is the way we're going to organize ourselves internally. We weren't doing any consular work at the time other than American citizen services which was enough, but not doing visas. I told the staff that we would just stare down the Vietnamese. What are they going to do? But barricades at the exit roads. Arrest us in Ca Mau?

The provinces were fascinating. Some provinces were very forward leaning, pushing the edge as did Saigon. The Saigon government certainly pushed for business and reform. Bien Hoa province was heavily Catholic, and the Bien Hoa air base had been turned into like an EEZ of some type. They couldn't see enough of us. Some of the other provinces very welcoming. The People's Committee, anybody you wanted to see. Other provinces, the People's Committee wouldn't see you. Up by the Cambodian border, no one wanted to see us, but I said if the People's Committee didn't want an appointment, fine, let's go see the university, the business groups, the orphanages, anywhere.

We kept that travel schedule. I was very happy that we did because you know what happens to travel schedules. It's always the first victim of something else. It was a chance to go back to the dusty road diplomacy. Fortunately we had adventurous employees. The other officers were young and adventurous, and they thought it was great to go to Ca Mau and eat bat in seven flavors. They'd go and write wonderful reporting cables.

Finally at six months I did our first self-assessment cable. I think I called it Our First 180 Days. I remember one paragraph called "It's the Admin Work Stupid" because we all learned so much about what it takes to open a post. We were literally sitting there with a crumpled piece of paper and oops, no trash cans. "Anybody know how you get trash cans in the U.S. government? " If you asked the question, it became your job to find out. For instance, the one tandem couple who came with the guinea pig. "You want to come with a guinea pig? You find out what you need to take a guinea pig in." Then share it with the rest of us. "Okay, Ted, when you come back from lunch, can you get a couple of baskets at the market? We need trash cans. You do a petty cash voucher.

We all learned about admin work. We wanted to do everything right the first way, and our supply clerk was great. He was from the old days. He worked for the Army. He was so good that if you went back to him for pencils, you got one pencil. I told him he can dispense more than one pencil at a time. But we kept good records because I knew it would only be a few years before we became a very complex operation.

Training was done either at Post or in Singapore. We were sending some to Bangkok or to Singapore. I remember sending one of my employees, she was a pistol, sending her to Singapore. She was so excited. She came back. "I am so happy to be back in Vietnam. You can't do anything in Singapore. I'm glad to be back here where I can do what I want!" because there are so many regulations in Singapore. There's no regulations in Saigon as long as you don't confront the government, just avoid the government.

I wrote this cable. I did each section. What was the economic life? The political life? The consular life? I remember political. I wrote, "Women might not run the country, but they certainly run the neighborhoods." There was an incredibly active NGOs at the grass roots, really democracy at the neighborhood level. It was really impressive, and it's all run by women. The ambassador called me, and he said, "I've got news for you. They run the country, too."

It was interesting consular work. One of my favorites was I was there one afternoon, and two older Vietnamese ladies came in, going at each other, and I couldn't understand them because there's a Saigon female accent that is unintelligible and I think they were rural. Their tones start at very high levels. They were going at each other about a property, and they're trying to tell me about this property. It took us about 10 minutes to sort out the fact that no one was American, no one had ever been in the United States, the property had nothing to do with the United States. It was in dispute, and they thought they'd get a fair hearing at the American consulate. Now I'm the Mandarin! Former employees would come in with payroll disputes from 40 years ago. We didn't pay their last salary before our untimely departure or some other issue. There is actually an office at State for all that, so we would give them the address so they could attempt to resolve their State or military pay issue.

There were all sorts of strange things. I remember one Friday afternoon when we were actually working quietly. Our security FSN said, "Someone's taking pictures across the street." It was a film crew so I asked our political officer (we didn't have USIA yet) to find out what was going on. We knew the story of a FSO who had been taken prisoner by the Viet Cong and held for seven years, not released with the Hanoi Hilton POWs, but released awhile later. I think his name was Ramsey. I said to invite him in. That was the end of that afternoon's work. It was one of the anniversary years so we had many film crews and news organization around town. He also was with a crew that was making a documentary or short report of some kind. Well, he was just fascinating for us to talk to.

We had people in jail. I was doing the jail business until the consular officer came. For the first couple of months I was everything just about everything except Admin. I got back a little bit to August when I first got there.

So the first year was a very hectic, setting things up, bringing people in, hiring, and we wanted to do things in a modern way, plus reporting. We were starting to go computerized very heavily. We all had cell phones. Nobody in the states had a cell phone in '97, I can tell you that. They still were little bricks. We were again, and the younger staff, they all wanted to do everything on computers, and we were still ourselves learning. We had a wonderful IMO. She was just terrific, great and wonderful trainer. We weren't classified. It was hard to do things sometimes in a not classified environment. Every week I'd send up a memo to the DCM as to what we were up to, what we're going, what we're up to, who we're talking to. The ambassador would come down very regularly, at least monthly. He enjoyed it down there. We tried to run a happy, considerate post. By that time he was engaged to a Australian-Vietnamese.

Q: Correspondent or something.

BOLTON: No. She had been a banker in Australia. The Australians invite the private sector to take tours in some functions. I think the French do the same thing for commercial work. I think she signed a contract, and for a few years. She and the ambassador had met at Israeli ambassador's reception right after the ambassador had got there, and the rest is history because the ambassador's wife had died of breast cancer a couple of years before, so we were really happy for him.

Saigon was still a fun place, still the popular culture capital of the country. It was run with a lighter hand than the North with better weather and better food. It was still a party town with a bit of an edge and demi-monde that I doubt was in Hanoi - yet. There were always parties and receptions. My first month I met Harvey Keitel the actor who was doing an indie film for scale and donated his fee to a foundation that funded school fees for poor children and he wanted me have an informal role in the foundation. I had a few hours notice to show up at the ceremony.

Q: I saw the movie.

BOLTON: Three separate stories. Exactly.

Q: Three Seasons.

BOLTON: Yes. I went down to the signing and I got pictures of Harvey Keitel doing all the signings with the foundation.

I gave a lot of speeches and was out all the time. What I used to do is sometimes I'd give it in English, sometimes in Vietnamese if it wasn't too long,. But nobody there would listen to s speech more than three minutes anyway. They would just start talking. That's all there was to it. So I never spoke longer than 3 minutes.

I would open each speech with a Vietnamese proverb appropriate to the event, after a great deal of research. Everyone started to listen for that. I remember for instance when we had the Nebraska farm group meeting with government and industry. I was invited to make remarks. There is this great little Vietnamese saying that, "Scholars come first. Farmers come second. When the rice bag is empty, farmers come first and scholars come second." That brought the house down. It's Confucian but it reflects the practical streak in the Vietnamese character.

I had to go to the Cargill pig project. USDA had a big program going with Vietnam on pig farming. I'm sure that's not the word for hog husbandry. Cargill had very special pigs at this lab for breeding to increase the level of production using Cargill technology. Cargill had a pig laboratory -- these were fancy, expensive animals, and they were trying to raise the level of pork production. Pork is the big meat in Vietnam. I had to put on my

white booties and my lab coat and my hair net. God forbid I'd make a pig sick in Vietnam.

The proverb I used was: "If you want to have fun raise pigeons. If you want to get rich, raise pigs." Another big laugh with knowing nods all around.

I went to a charity that supplied crutches and wheelchairs and artificial limbs for mine victims. It was a U.S. NGO, but not a major one. I did the remarks. There's a Vietnamese saying that, "Building a pagoda of nine stories is not as valuable as helping one person." I can assure you the house just about exploded. Cheering and stomping, and the political officer was there. I said, "Remember how we've been talking about we wonder what everybody thinks about all the construction that's going on in town, all the high rises?" Christian Dior stores and Chanel stores opening, shopping plazas, high-rises. I said that we had our answer that maybe not everyone feels that economic development is affecting them in a positive way.

It got to be fun finding the right one like when I went to the first anniversary celebration of the Harvey Keitel scholarships, there's a Vietnamese saying that, "When you drink water, remember its source."

I had a couple of themes. I would do Choice and Change. That was a big theme anytime I had to make a remarks because that's pretty much what was facing Vietnam, having a choice, dealing with change, coping with change, and being able to have a choice of whether you eat Kentucky Fried Chicken or whether you go and have chicken pho.

Q: Pho being p-h-o which is the noodle soup.

BOLTON: The national dish. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I did a lot of speaking that first year, but things eased up when the CG arrived and I could assume the position of deputy dog.

Q: Who was that?

BOLTON: Charles Ray. I thought a long time about how to do that transition because after a year because the Vietnamese and I were very used to each other. We had already had all the battles you can imagine and hammered out cooperative ways of getting things done. And I was always honest with them. When I arrived, I remember one of the first things they told me was, "Oh. You're a dragon," and they were very impressed that the U.S. government had sent them someone whose lunar zodiac sign was the dragon because the dragon is the best sign in the zodiac.

Q: As someone who was born on February 14, I agree!

BOLTON: Dragons are great. They were very happy. They honestly thought that personnel spent time on that. They were very excited because the head of the Foreign

Office was also a dragon so they assumed they would be treated to some interesting situations with two dragons going at it.

I knew I had to wean the Vietnamese and ensure Charlie establishes himself with the Vietnamese and the American community without too much trauma for anyone. But I knew it had to be done the hard way. I stayed for a few weeks then went on leave for three weeks. When I returned, Charlie had ownership, and I was glad I did it that way. We divided up the work nicely. He didn't go for a stove pipe style of front office. There was too much work for that. He did the management, trade promotion/economics and the business communities, I did the oversight of the consular and political sections, and public and humanitarian affairs.

The consular work was very interesting. We had a fair number of prisoners and they were held all over the place.

Q: Was Chi Wa jail still there?

BOLTON: Oh yes. They're all there and they haven't change a bit. We had them out in the countryside, we had them in town, and until the consular officer got there, I was doing the jail visits. Again, you would not get much notification. Saturday morning you'd get a call to go to the jail Saturday afternoon? Okay, I'm on my way!

Q: What were they doing?

BOLTON: What were they in jail for?

Q: Yes.

BOLTON: Oh, the usual drugs, fraud. What else? Oh, we had James Bond in jail. That even made the Newsweek. He was a Vietnamese-American who had changed his name to James Bond. That's one of those things when the foreign ministry tells you they have James Bond, you'd say, "Is this April 1? "

The Anglos usually were in jail for drugs, and the Vietnamese-Americans were usually in jail for fraud. Eventually they pretty much all got out. They had pretty long sentences, but they wouldn't necessarily stay that long. They men all wore blue pajamas. If they didn't have anyone to help them, I would just order a few pairs from JC Penney.

Q: Did you have to bring them peanut butter?

BOLTON: Yes, we'd bring them treats. We'd bring them little treats. I don't know if we had to supplement their diets or not. I don't remember.

Then we also had the orderly departure program, and that was another management challenge because the goal, of course, is to bring that into a fully functioning consulate general. So I established oversight of that even though the offices were based in

Bangkok. They all traveled regularly to Vietnam and spent one-month there every month. Some of this was a little tricky obviously.

The new ones coming in were being based in Ho Chi Minh City, so I had to meld a program that I was not necessarily in charge of. That was Dewey Pendergrass who was just terrific. They were in another building, so once a week I would go over there and spend an afternoon talking to the officers, watching the interviews which is more than most DCMs do regarding consular sections that are just downstairs. By this time we were sending grandchildren of American soldiers. There was fraud. . They bleached their hair and things like that to try to establish a claim that they were mixed European blood. Plus you had a lot of Russians, too, and Australians in Vietnam, so sometimes the dates just didn't match up.

Then of course we were just doing immigrant visas there, too. I think they were starting to do immigrant visas there. We weren't doing non-immigrant visas. They were still being done in Hanoi.

I think we were working pretty well because I think the officers wanted to be based in Saigon. Some of them had gone through language with me and wanted to be in Saigon. So it was a very gentle meshing although it certainly was a challenge when it came time to do everybody's efficiency reports because I had to deal with a review panel in Hanoi, me writing them in Ho Chi Minh City, and the officer and rating officer being in Bangkok, and this was before E-mail and sending all these packages around. I had to do all this with discs and DHL, but I got everybody's done and in and up to Hanoi by May 1. Everybody. So I was very proud of myself. The HR officer in Hanoi assured me she could not get that level of cooperation out of officers just down the hallway from her. Again, it's not a surprise each year that the EERs are due May 15 in Washington. I don't know why everyone pretends that's a shock.

Then when Charlie was there it was a lot easier on me because I could focus more on what I was doing and on deepening the relationship and working with the new press officer and cultural officer who had just come in because this was the second year. He had just come Chung Do.

Q: Or Chun King.

BOLTON: He was very interesting. We both got called into the Culture Ministry office in November. You know, in Communist countries the office of the ministry of culture is serious stuff. They're the thought police, the ideological, the agit-prop people, full of northerners. This is not going to be fun. I thought, "What did we do?" We do everything we can get away with, but I didn't remember doing anything particularly bad. Well, this was hilarious. They wanted to talk about Halloween. I explained it was a traditional holiday with old roots, not an official one but really for children to go around their neighborhoods in costumes and adults to have parties. It was similar to the Buddhist Feast of the Wandering Souls in principle. I was proud that I had made that cultural link.

Q: Like the Day of the Dead.

BOLTON: Yes, and spirits wandering around, but it's all just superstitious and fun for the kids, and it's an excuse to go get candy for kids. They were still asking me questions. But I could not figure out what they really wanted to know.

Eventually it comes out what the problem was. Halloween was a blast in HCMS. I went to about three or four parties. I got home around five o'clock in the morning and I was in my pink flannel rabbit costume my mother had made years ago -- used it for Halloween and Easter. The head of Bank of America had a big party at his house. He does every year. The first year it got raided about five years before, but now you can do anything. The hash house harriers got arrested during their first hash. The first chamber of commerce meeting got raided. Everybody's first meeting always gets raided. That was the way it was in the early '90s, then by the time I was there the head of the people's committee is happy to go to the chamber of commerce meetings.

Technically speaking I don't think you can have more than 12 people without a permit. The Bank of America rep had a nice party, someone else had a nice party, then we wound up at Apocalypse Now disco. Again, keep in mind, I'm running around in a big pink flannel rabbit costume with a cap with big ears and it's pink with gloves and a tail. Finally they explained their problem with Halloween. There were house parties and street parties all over the place. The Vietnamese will have a party at the drop of a hat. They don't care what whose holiday, they don't care. They'll have a party.

Well, they were furious because I didn't get a permit. I said, "I didn't get a permit for what?" They thought I had organized Halloween throughout the southern part of the country if not the whole city. They thought that since it was an American holiday or American festival day that somehow that the American consulate general had organized all these street parties and bar parties. You should see St. Patrick's Day in Ho Chi Minh City! What did they do to the Irish Embassy?

I was stunned. I told them I had too much work to do to organize a city full of parties. I had nothing to do with Halloween in this city. I don't' know what the hotels were doing. I don't know what the bars were doing. People had parties. But I had nothing to do with it, but they thought the American consulate general, which is a very transparent operation there, had organized Halloween in Ho Chi Minh City. There were very sophisticated Vietnamese like at the foreign ministry office. Very smooth. In fact, we sent them off to Tufts to get law degrees. Interior and culture, very tough cookies. But the culture ministry folks were not in that group and very worried about "spontaneous" gatherings of young people in HCMC.

Q: You're also dealing on this Halloween thing. I watched this from afar, but as we know it, it's a children's party, and its been picked up by…

BOLTON: Baby boomers.

Q: …the young people who go to bars.

BOLTON: Oh, I went to one of the first Georgetown street parties when I came to Washington when I was 21 to go in the foreign service. That was very spontaneous what was happening at M Street although quite well organized now.

Q: Like many things, when it got to Europe, and all of a sudden the French ministry of culture was horrified because it was a young people's thing, all the kids going around asking for candy. It was young people and their ministry of culture, I was watching on TV, was screaming bloody murder about this American thing. It had been picked up by the European young professional club. It probably came through Europe.

BOLTON: The French connection with Vietnam was very interesting. It was there and it was not there. The older generation like in Hanoi where you still have the older ones like General Giap and all those who can still carry on a beautiful conversation in classic French, they're about the only ones.

I saw a very interesting piece in the Saigon newspapers that I passed on to Hanoi to the embassy that in the middle schools, no child had signed up to study French that year. Everyone was studying English. And the French consulate who shared our old compound block, they're still there. The Consul was very *c'est la vie* about it. They had the Francophone in Vietnam that year. Every couple of years they have a celebration of the French language, and any country that'll pretend to speak French for a while, can do well. The French gave the Vietnamese a nice chunk of money for the event and for a few million, the French will speak Lithuanian for a week. But the cultural impact of 400 years is still there. It's there with the *baguettes* in the morning, in the streets at 6 AM. You don't see that anywhere in Asia. It's a café society. They still that special coffee ice milk - the cafe sua da. They are big coffee drinkers. They have *patisserie*. They have wonderful pastries, good cheeses, and of course there's an impact on everything.

There's some effect on the Vietnamese language of French language on some structures and vocabulary, but some of the attitudes I wonder if they perhaps still maintain some of ways of French thinking. I don't know. I mean, there's no interest as far as the young people are concerned in French. The French give language labs, and they learn English on them.

Q: Did you gather that in a way that you got this rigid structure on top, but it's changing. You mentioned women and running things. Almost you might say, and I don't want to over emphasize, democracy for a really free organization ___ with this hierarchy on top which exists for itself.

BOLTON: The relationship of the party to the people is curious It's a very porous. There's a lot more up and down and communication among the levels. The party leadership is attuned to what's going on. They're very concerned about not so much about what is wrong with Hanoi and Saigon. That's a phony rivalry. The problems in the countryside. That's where revolution comes from in Vietnam. It does in China, too, in the

countryside, so they spend a lot of time watching and paying attention to the countryside. The young people are of concern, too, because of the demographics.

Things have loosened up so much from the time I was there. The U.S.-Vietnamese trade agreement. That was 100 pages. If the Vietnamese government complied with that, if includes the possibility that the government's not always right -- it can lose in court, and that's a very important thing for a communist party to lose a contract dispute, the fact that they're always right disappears.

Religion had opened up. This was another interesting anomaly. There had been no Catholic archbishop. Saigon's about 10% Catholic, and it's a little bit more than that in other provinces like Bien Hoa. They had had no archbishop because they couldn't come to an agreement with the Vatican. Eventually they did, and I said to the political officer to see if he can get us invited to the investiture. I can sit in the back. I just want to slip in to see it so we can tell some senators who were concerned about things like that that yes, we are engaged on religious issues.

This was my 15 seconds of fame on CNN. They sat us front row center. There must have been every priest in Vietnam was there.

Then we went back… I'm going to say backstage because that's what the British consul general called it. He's the only other one there because his wife taught English to Vietnamese priests. Then we were invited to the lunch, and the people's committee came to the lunch. The people's committee wouldn't be caught dead in the church, but they came for the lunch.

Lunch was interesting. We were seated at low tables on those really short white, plastic stools -- and me with a dress on. Priests from all the religious orders were there...the Dominican, the Augustinians, younger middle age priests, they were almost in line telling me what they had gone through in the bad years in the re-education camps and now much time they spent in jail. They were very matter-of-fact about it and as a Catholic, in my experience, I find the Church in distress to be much more interesting and impressive than when it is comfortable. It was just really moving to listen to what they had gone through. It was like the sun had come up with the appointment of the Archbishop and our arrival, and they wanted to just tell me what it had been like. The archbishop was very good, very clever. They're having a lot of issues on property and religious practice. But the Vietnamese, they're happy when they have a hierarchy they can deal with, negotiate with. They understand Rome, they don't understand evangelicals.

That was happening in the highlands which were also very, very difficult for the government and had been for hundreds of years. Many lowland Vietnamese don't even consider the highland Vietnamese to be Vietnamese. They consider them to be something else, something below the ethnic group and untrustworthy and the war legacy did nothing to change that attitude. I knew we had to get up there pronto and look around. In addition to religion, there were labor issues, and logging and environmental issues.

I had taken a trip with the other consuls general organized by the foreign office which actually gave me access I would have had a hard time getting myself. We had gone up to and took a train to Nha Trang then over to Pleiku and then a bus down along the Ho Chi Minh Trail along the Cambodian border. This was over a couple of days and very fascinating. Pleiku is so different as was going into the tribal areas. My Australian colleague was very informative as to the projects they had up there such as adding iodine to their soy sauce to treat goiter problems. Malnutrition was a problem as was Hanson's disease. And you can see the tension between the government and the people, but we also had problems with missionaries because you'd have the East Nowhere Church in Arkansas or rural South Carolina —one church—sponsoring one missionary to go out there and preach the gospel. They would have to lie to get in the country. Vietnamese had a lot of trouble with this. The area was politically very suspect.

Q: I remember again, going back to my time, they would send teachers from Saigon to the other villages, and they…

BOLTON: They didn't like the republic. They don't like Hanoi. They don't like Saigon. They don't like anybody.

Q: …they wouldn't like them.

BOLTON: Oh no. The mountain people. There's a lot of bad blood between the lowland. So there's a lot of tension. They were changing on so many levels but it was different world up there. In the morning, you don't need an alarm clock because the loudspeakers start on the street with the patriotic music and announcements. I almost fell out of bed with the blast from the loud speakers.

For example, the People's Assembly which used to just rubber stamp legislation was engaging more on issues and trying to write their own legislation and provide oversight. Very new concepts. The U.S. and the republicans and democrats of the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, they were there.

I think the republicans were there, and they were working with the National Assembly teaching legislators how to read a budget and how to critique a budget and how to produce legislation, and how to do oversight because the People's Assembly were no longer a rubber stamp. They were starting to write their own legislation. They were starting to critique submissions that the executive had made. We were seeing these kinds of little changes, but there's still problems.

Q: What about your local employees. Did they have to report into the security ___?

BOLTON: I'm sure they did. We were unclassified. We had some secrets of course, but we were aware that they obviously were reporting, some probably more enthusiastically than others. We had pretty much picked a lot of them myself, so I didn't necessarily take what they sent me. They were very hard working, and they were fun and anxious to learn. Not so happy about re-learning. That was absolutely true. They figured once they learned

to do something, they weren't that interesting in re-learning. You know, you no sooner learn a computer program when well, we got a new version! I don't think they necessarily liked that very much. They wanted to get paid more all the time. FSNs, it's like the Civil Service. Your position has a grade and a salary, and that can be your grade and salary until you die except for cost of living allowances, and they could not understand that. You would explain it to them 50 ways, and they'd say, "Yes, yes, yes." Three months later they'd want to know where their raise is. Well, once you get your step increases, that's it. That was always going to be a problem.

Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop, but we should pick up. We don't want to leave Vietnam completely yet. Some questions I'd like to ask you. What did you think about the cadre? Were you seeing a change in the cadre?
BOLTON: I didn't think there were many communists left in Vietnam. Maybe in the north and along the Cambodia border. The north was very different, but in the south it was pretty hard to find a communist.

Q: I'd told people who served in Poland during the 1980s. They said they were convinced there were probably three or maybe even four dedicated communists in the country.

BOLTON: If that many.

Q: We'll talk a little more about that.

BOLTON: It was an authoritarian government which was one thing, but communist, not so much.

Q: How you saw doing a certain amount of straight line projection. Where were things going?

BOLTON: They want to wake up and be like Singapore. Really rich and really stable.

Q: And the work ethic. You've touched on that. But also your impression of foreign businesses in there and maybe there'll be some ___. Make some notes to yourself, would you?

BOLTON: The work ethic was funny. One of our Vietnamese employees said, "You Americans work so hard." I said, "So do you." She said, "We work because we have to. You work because you want to."

Q: Okay, today is the 9th of April, Appomattox Day, 2010 with Debbie Bolton. Debbie, one of the things I'd like to ask you before we leave Vietnam. How were the dynamics between the embassy and the consulate general? Having served as consul general in Naples where in Rome they kind of look down on everything in the south. In a way I would think there would be almost the reverse about the sort of backward northerners. I'm talking about within the American staff and all that.

BOLTON: It was interesting because many of the embassy staff had served in Saigon as their first tours, so there was a certain amount of legacy aspirations or a sense that they knew better, so there was some tension there. Sometimes we would get gratuitous direction as to where we should go and what we should be following and whom we should be hiring based on forty years ago. We were busy of course making our own contacts, following the new Mission Program Plan, we focused on sticking to a travel plan, we also decided to focus on biographical reporting and identifying candidates for international visitors' grants and particularly looking at the younger generation as we're supposed to. Of course, we followed the economic reform and business climate, as well as human rights and regional politics. I didn't need to be told to find out what happen to XYZ rubber company in Vung Tau.

One thing we had done way before the deadlines was have our international visitor grantee nominees in. To the frustration of the committee up there, the only ones who were nominated were ours because nobody at the embassy could quite get to it. It's just really a matter of schedule discipline, management of the sections and sticking to your priorities.

It was interesting as far as the dynamics within Vietnam. There is rivalry of course between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, but that detracts from the more important issue which is the urban and rural rivalry or gaps. But Hanoi was no doubt the government capitol and of course if we ever forgot that, they (both the central government and the Embassy) were quite willing to remind us. As I said, any time we had a ranking visitor, president, secretary of state, they always had, when I was there, the meeting with the party secretary in Ho Chi Minh City even though the visitor and hosts had to travel from the north to do this.

The business capitol, the engine of the country, and the popular culture capitol was Saigon. You might get engaged in Hanoi, but you want to get your wedding dress in Saigon. It was the cutting edge place on fashion, performance, publishing, and much more easy going. I would talk to Hanoi people in the local government and ask them how did they like being in the south, and many times I heard especially from the younger ones of course that it was a bit of a relief to be out of Hanoi both far away from the government and also far away from their families because a Vietnamese family can be very intrusive and intense, but if a young economist and his wife were assigned to Ho Chi Minh City, they got a little bit of time on their own, so they found that pretty nice. I always thought that was very entertaining.

The embassy and the consulate. We had some trouble for instance when the embassy would report on issues that were important in the south and not clear or ask our input. We'd see an outgoing cable which is very difficult when you don't have classified cable facilities, believe me, reporting on a human rights issue in the south that no one checked with us and it wasn't correct. It was annoying when they would report on developments in the south without asking us, whether they're economic or commercial developments because the Vietnamese ran two countries. It wasn't as if we were being possessive of a decision made in Hanoi about the south. Every ministry had an office in Saigon. So

whether it was the culture ministry, the foreign ministry, or commercial ministry so there was also this tension between the Vietnamese ministries, the Saigon ministry office and the Hanoi ministry, so there was all sorts of interesting tensions. Occasionally we would find ourselves allied with the Vietnamese foreign ministry office in Saigon against the foreign ministry and the embassy, so that was always a curious development.

As I said, it was the business center. Everyone thinks a communist country is extraordinarily centralized. No always so. They might be pretty darned good at the interior ministry against anyone saying there should be a multiparty democracy, but interestingly enough for instance the way the ports are run and the tariff schedules can vary on the same item. A tariff would be applied on something in one port and not in another port which of course makes life difficult for the American business community.

There were countries that had consulates in Ho Chi Minh City without having office in Hanoi which was funny, too. I believe they are called *a pie*, a consulate *a pie*, a self-standing consulate like Panama for instance which obviously has shipping interests. They have no interest in Hanoi. They interest obviously in the Port of Saigon, and a few other countries were like that, too.

Consulates would sometimes be bigger than embassies. Several consulates in Saigon were bigger than the embassies in Hanoi, but that depended on the countries' interest of course, but obviously business trade, a lot of human rights issues in the south were not so prominent in the north, religion issues, the role of the Catholic Church, there were more Catholics in the south than there were in the north, so there were some issues we really had a better perch simply because of geography or by the way the country itself was organized. The DATT would not be received at the Seventh Military District, but I saw them frequently. Some of it may have been gender. There was only one woman officer in Hanoi and HCMC had many and was more diverse, too. But I did not always find respect for that unless I complained - which I did.

But we welcomed visitors, and I think people from the embassy liked to come down. We ran a very comfortable post. I found it helpful to be able to manage the relationship dynamics between the posts.

People found I think that visiting the south was to enter an much less oppressive atmosphere. We had good restaurants, and it was just more freer and easy going and better weather. There is no sunshine in the north and it was always overcast. I honestly don't know how they could find it to bomb it.

It was much more prosperous in the sense that the infrastructure was so much better, probably because of the French and the U.S. presence. You know, wide avenues. Driving was better but still crazy. The provinces in the south would experiment. The ones along the Cambodian border, no. They were just very difficult.

Some provinces were very Catholic provinces. They were up for anything as far as visits and any kind of ideas or exchange things, whereas in some provinces we would not find a welcome at party/government headquarters.

There's sometimes we were second guessed regarding management, "Well, this is the way we do it in management. This is the way we do it in Hanoi." "Well, that's fine. We don't need to do this in Ho Chi Minh City such as home-to-office transportation." We didn't need this. Everybody lived either within walking distance or in an apartment building with 20 cabs out front, and you paid a dollar to go to the office. I had to waste time on this issue. The ambassador was very supportive. He said he was very clear that if anybody's getting up our nose and trying to direct our work in a way we thought was inappropriate that he would be most happy to step in because he was under the impression they had plenty of work to do in Hanoi.

Q: Where was the line drawn? Was it the old DMZ?

BOLTON: No, it wasn't, no. It definitely wasn't going to be the old DMZ. I think it was one province below.

Q: Did that include…

BOLTON: It didn't include Hue.

Q: So it didn't include Hue. How about Hue and Da Nang?

BOLTON: We had Da Nang, but I don't think we had above Da Nang. I think we were still working on where we were going to draw the line, but we knew it was not going to be the DMZ under any circumstances.

Q: We put in these very fancy port facilities at Cam Ranh Bay.

BOLTON: Cam Ranh Bay. It's beautiful region.

Q: Was there much going on there?

BOLTON: I was up in that area. The Russians had taken Cam Ranh Bay I believe as a base, and I think they're still there although it wasn't very busy because the Russians didn't have two cents. There was a need to upgrade port facilities. Cam Ranh Bay, I think someone was looking at that area as one of those economic zones, one of those free trade zones or economic development zones, because there were a few of those opening around Saigon where they could bring in material from one part of the world, take it to a factory in the free zone, put it together with something else coming in, and ship it out again without having paid any kind of tax, and they were very popular. I remember seeing Isotoner gloves made and I can't tell you how many Nike factories and Reebok factories I went to. The port facilities still needed work.

They could have stood to be modernized because, they had lots of Vietnamese longshoremen who were carrying sacks of rice bigger than they were. Although what to do with any displaced longshoreman is a political stability problem. There were still problems like shipments not getting through as quickly as it should have, and as I said some standardization issues regarding the application of duty that would drive American business a little crazy.

Mekong was developing. People were looking for facilities everywhere. Manufacturers. Not just U.S. manufacturers. Enormous Australian presence and Korean and Taiwanese. The relationship was very interesting with the Vietnamese and Taiwanese. We were barely allowed to talk to them, and the Vietnamese had a perfectly warm relationship with them, and there was a Taiwanese office represented along with PRC Consul General and everyone got along fine.

Every now and then there would be like one of those consular trips and they'd take us all some place. There's be some mumbling and moaning from the PRC, but the Vietnamese just seemed to shrug. Ten-Ten, the October 10 National Day, was interesting because the Taiwanese would have enormous reception and one of the most gorgeous invitations I ever got in my life and of course we're not allowed to go. It was also the same night I remember the German ConGen did Oktoberfest and westerners went to that. The crowd from the foreign office came in late. I asked where they had all been. To 10-10. They said they go as "observers."

Q: I was just wondering, going back to my good old days, they had the racing. Was that still going?

BOLTON: The horse racing park and elite sports like that? No.

Q: This was a swimming pool and tennis..

BOLTON: They were starting that. In fact, the child of one of our officer couple was a swimmer. and they found a team for her in Saigon. I went to a few of her meets and it honestly took me back to my swim meets when I was a kid. If you didn't know where you were, you'd swear you were in suburban Virginia in July in high summer swim meet season with all the parents there with their stop watches. It just looked like suburban Virginia except a little down at the heels. The kids had the little goggles on and swam their little hearts out. She was the fastest swimmer in the south in one of her events, but she wasn't allowed to compete in nationals being a foreigner. I think the pool was left over from the "O" club system.

What was getting big was golf. It was breaking out all over the place. In Hanoi the foreign ministry Wednesday afternoons was pretty much unavailable because they were all learning how to play golf because they figured out that ASEAN was one big country club. They figured out that unless they learned golf they were going to miss that time on the course and the business discussed.

Q: One entree we had in Burma was golf.

BOLTON: It is incredible, and golf courses were opening up all over the place. I remember getting an invitation to an opening. Lee Trevino was coming. Remember Lee Trevino, prominent U.S. golfer? He was coming to inaugurate one. We just kind of followed him around the course and he gave some little tips, but some of the consuls general were also starting to form a little golf group.

It raises an issue of course of water and land use. Land acquisition is a big issue in Vietnam, and water use, and pollution, but they had golf courses opening regularly. Now whether that could be sustained, I don't know.

I never heard there was horse racing. They did have water buffalo races in the countryside, though. They didn't go back to that type of life, but they substituted different activities for that same type of café society. People were actually going back to the cafes although the cafes were more often in the hotels. Some of were starting to open along Dong Khoi, the main street, and some older hotels were reopening. The Continental reopened, and there were new hotels of course, and some of the old ones were getting a badly needed facelift.

Occupancy wasn't anywhere near what they wanted because this was during the Thai property bust and that sucked the air out of a lot of the economic growth that had been going on in Vietnam. Vietnam dodged that one because they were too poor to be listed on stock markets, so they were saved because they hadn't quite broken into being engaged in the international or regional economic system yet. Projects stalled.

Q: When I was there, there was quite a large private girls school there, sort of a high school level. Were there either the equivalent of private schools or girls schools?

BOLTON: Let me see. There was an international school that had just started a couple of years before. Keep in mind the Australians were there, too. There was an international school. I think they still had to teach some Vietnamese curriculum regarding politics I think, but for the most part it was a private school.

I think there was some type of parallel private -type school, but very small. For the most part it was the Vietnamese system, and of course some schools are better than other schools in the system and seem to function in a selective manner.

Q: How about with the exchange students and all? This was pretty much, they were sending people for technical studies?

BOLTON: Of course study abroad was popular but expensive. There was a group out of Harvard. Sen. John Kerry was involved in it and a couple of other folks. Harvard ran a diploma or certificate-issuing post-graduate economic school for a year. It was a year long business/economics. They could not grant a Harvard MBA because apparently to be

a degree-granting institution in Vietnam, you have to teach Marxism which was just too outlandish for U.S. institutions.

Q: With this Marxism did you… It would have to be ignored.

BOLTON: Taught but ignored in Vietnamese institutions.

Q: No ___. It's just something…

BOLTON: I think I knew more about Marx than more graduates because it would all go in one ear and out the other. Harvard took about 50 students a year in the year program. It was in Saigon. It was taught in English and Vietnamese. That was a very good program. There was also of course the international visitors program, but this group out of Harvard, out of Boston, would send a very promising student to get a Masters degree at Tufts or get a law degree at Duke. I knew some of the recipients and they were outstanding individuals.

Q: They would know the English law system, but it was still the… Was it code Napoleon?

BOLTON: It was a combination. I did a paper on the legal system in communist Hungary and I had the sense it was similar. A combination, but essentially code. No juries, but a professional judge and two lay judges. Heavy French influence, of course, after 400 years.

The IV program is great. We always selected the labor program. We liked museum management, and grass roots organizing. I used to have fun with that one because there was a lot of grass roots neighborhood organizational activities going on such as getting the garbage picked up or and of course the treatment of women and girls was an issue, the role of religion in U.S. society, trying to send someone along for that. Of course they always wanted the business ones. Obviously they always liked the way the U.S. economy works. That was always a popular visit.

We had some interference starting from congress. There was one congressman, I forget who it was, who insisted that we give this 78 year old Vietnamese musician an individual international visitors grant to do some kind of music thing in the U.S. As some kind of reward which is not the intention of the program.

I really started pushing back. Remember, this was the late 90's with the "balanced budgets" which meant there was no money. I pointed out that grants are not rewards for people's friends. And they're not for people who are 78 years old and may not even survive the trip. They're for younger people who haven't been exposed to the U.S. and whom we expect will be influential in the future. The man had been to the U.S. in the old days. I had an very hard time because they were really pushing and I was convinced it was an abuse, bordering on something needing an Inspector General's attention. I think the man got sick before we had to come down to a knock down out on this. That's how interfering things could get. We certainly were trying to hold the line on not using these

grants as little rewards for people's friends from the old days. Night club singers are not welcome to go on international visitors grants I don't care how good they were at the O Club.

The government was still very suspicious if you came back with a U.S. degree. It was always walking a tight line. Education's very important to them, young people. It's a very young society. Most Vietnamese have no memory of the war. It was our longest war and their shortest war, and their issues are with China, and their place in Southeast Asia.

In Vietnamese history they never joined anything. They didn't have alliances. They were always on their own, then suddenly they were signing up for every international association or group that would have them. This is a very different approach to their foreign relations but again, very interested in mostly in business of course and cultural issues, also.

Q: Were films?

BOLTON: They made some wonderful ones, for example, *The Scent of Green Tomatoes*. But there's a lot of intellectual piracy. They had Titanic about two days after Titanic opened in the U.S. and there were pirated CDs around Saigon with somebody's head running in front of the screen. We were having a lot of international property right issues in Saigon. U.S. movies and music was extraordinarily popular but not legally obtained.

This was part of our international trade agreement that was pending at the time. It was a hundred page document. They were not a member of the WTO. We pointed out that if they get the action items completed in the trade agreement, they won't have a problem adjusting to WTO. If they signed it, it would really cause changes in attitude and changes in behavior, not like these new three-page trade agreements. This was a very detailed one. IPR was of course a big part of it. I used to try to convince them that in a few years, they will have the material needing protection or they won't find themselves innovating. Sure enough, we're seeing this in China and Vietnam that they're cracking down more because they're planning on turning their own creative industries. But you could get anything on the street. All the Rolexes, the Pradas, all the movies, everything.

Q: Were the Americans a major influence there or were the Chinese or Japanese or Thai, somebody else?

BOLTON: It's hard to say. It was tough in the business community. Taiwanese, Korean in manufacturing and infrastructure. They're willing to put the money in, set up the factories. I don't think people want to work for the Taiwanese or for the Koreans. Thais were also there for the long term. China also there. I think we were regarded more favorably for many ways. One, we're farther away.

Believe it or not, we're not regarded as having ambitions in terms of territory whereas China has been nibbling away at Vietnamese outlying territory for years now. I think we are respected for our know-how and are regarded as kind and generous, and we still have

the business model and prosperity that they admire. But the question is if we were going to stick it out when the going gets tough? We have to be willing to lose money for a while before you start to make money in Vietnam which is a hard sell to stock holders. How do you get to me a millionaire in Vietnam? Easy, come with two million.

We are dealing and our investors are dealing with boards who increasingly want to know where the profit is for the quarter. It's hard to say, "You're not going to see profits for this quarter or many quarters down the road yet," and that's very, very hard for some U.S. businesses to absorb the Asian countries have no problem accepting losses in the short term or even medium term looking for a longer term investment. Of course we have trouble with our Corrupt Practices Act.

U.S. companies have very strict requirements regarding paying of bribes and of course that's still the way business is done. Corruption is an issue in Vietnam. In fact in Vietnam it's gotten to be a domestic political issue because the Vietnamese know themselves if you're going to get a riot going in Vietnam, just get caught with your hand too deep in the cookie jar. People know we generally don't bribe, and they like to do business with us in that sense because they're going to get just what they paid for.

But it's tough competition. Then the Vietnamese themselves know that some other country is gaining on them. Right now they can do the Isotoner gloves and the shoes and all that, but they also know that there's some place's going to do it cheaper tomorrow. They know that if what you're doing is sewing shoes together, big deal. You turn around and someone's going to be sewing them together cheaper tomorrow, so they're always looking for something more complex, so they're having a lot of challenges in that way because they're population is growing.

It's a very young population. They're aware that while there're no direct challenges to their authority -- for now. As long as the party's producing prosperity and stability then things are fine, but once one or the other goes, I think the party knows its position can be very precarious. Not that democracy's going to break out in Vietnam anytime soon. I think the Vietnamese want to wake up and be like Singapore tomorrow. I think the authoritarian capitalism idea is very attractive to them. I think there's more democracy going on, especially at the local level. But the Vietnamese themselves are probably not all that comfortable with the apparent instability of democracy, the debating and the undermining and the questioning of the family and change in general - I don't think is very attractive to them at all levels, but the party certainly does listen to people. The party is always doing polls, always doing assessments and is always aware that it does need to answer expectations and has limits as to how far it can go. And the relationship with the Vietnamese-Americans is of course another factor.

Q: Did you feel you had to watch your line that you weren't pushing democracy too much?

BOLTON: Yes. We weren't pushing democracy in the sense of change of government. The themes that I used in almost all my speeches was choice and change because they are

modern elements. There's a cultural clash here that would make people a little bit uncomfortable. My goal was always no, Kentucky Fried Chicken is not eliminating Vietnamese traditional food. It's giving people a choice, so no matter what the speaking event was, I would try to write remarks that centered around choice. That's one thing we always live with and choice.

I followed the Buddhists, so we did get around and visit with some of the activists and in a low key way, we'd always keep our ear to the ground. For the most part at the time activists were watched. They were limited, but they weren't necessarily in jail though there's been periodically crackdowns over the last ten years. But we would talk to all sides. I stayed in touch with the university and as I say, I stayed in touch with the Buddhists because there were the official Buddhists and the unofficial Buddhists.

The Catholic Church always had its ear to the ground to a lesser extent. It's a little bit harder to do with the protestants because there's no one institution or address, and there's no one person to talk to, and most of them were fairly well spread out because they had to be very careful about proselytizing. Most missionaries who were active there were basically doing the good works and for the most part, and the local authorities were usually pretty happy to have them, so we weren't having the issues that have come up periodically with more direct activists and some issues in the highlands which go back hundreds of years.

Q: You left there when?

BOLTON: I left there in the summer of '99. One of the last things I did was a Pennsylvania trade mission and the Philadelphia Orchestra visit. The Philadelphia Orchestra played in Hanoi and Saigon.

Q: Were you there for the visit?

BOLTON: Yes.

Q: How'd they go?

BOLTON: Oh, it was wonderful. So popular. Music is very popular in Saigon. They always have concerts. The conservatory is very active, and they were good friends. I remember I went to a couple of workshops where some of the musicians from the Philadelphia Orchestra, which again is my home town, would either work with children or work interestingly with some Vietnamese traditional instruments which were similar to some Western instruments. There's one, I forget what it's called in Vietnamese. I always called it playing the stones, very much like a xylophone. It was fun to have the xylophone player of the Philadelphia Orchestra take a spin of the stones as I called them. The concerts were wonderful and very popular. Sold out. I think they had two of them. And the trade mission I think went pretty well.

Tom Ridge, Governor Tom Ridge at the time was the governor. He of course last time he was in Vietnam he had com ashore in Da Nang in a Marine uniform, so he was anxious to get to Da Nang to see the old grounds. The trade mission was very interesting. I sat with a group at lunch. I had no idea that most of the anchors in the world apparently are made in York, Pennsylvania because I sat next to the anchor people from York. Susquehanna River. That's something about the foreign service. You learn something new every day, even about your home province. I would have thought that the anchor came with the ship.

But as I left, it was very hard to leave in a way. In a way it was time to leave because it was getting bigger, and we were ready to open a new building. It was almost done and it was going to be very nice, and everybody was very anxious to get into it because we were getting really squashed. We had already opened up a little training center in one of the out buildings. I think it's easy for the "plank holders" who were there from the start to become really annoying and an impediment to the normalization of post operations. It was time to leave and let the post become what it will be.

The CG, God love him, gave me a very nice party at the New World Hotel which had been our de-facto admin section when we first arrived. It was a Swiss general manager and an Austrian manager. They decorated the ballroom in a street of old Saigon. We had gas lamps and the murals on the wall of old Saigon, and it was really a good farewell party. I had an ao dai made, a handmade ao dai. Four fittings. I didn't know there were so many parts to be fitted.

Q: Ao dai is a beautiful…sort of like a blouse and pants.

BOLTON: Basically it's a long shirt and pants of silk. It's beautifully tailored. The French had a great deal of influence on it. You don't see very much of them in the north, but in the south they were still common, for example, high school girls wear white ones.

Q: And long hair…

BOLTON: It is a pretty sight when school lets out and they're on their motorcycles, and bikes and how they keep these white silk ao dais clean on bikes, I don't know.

Q: I do not understand it.

BOLTON: I do not understand it, either. I had my ao dai made. I went to the Cho Lon market and bought my silk and had this made, fitted as I say in more ways than you could possibly imagine, but it does have to fit perfectly. I wore that, and all the Vietnamese were so excited because I had my ao dai on. It was just a lot of fun. We all had a great time. The foreign office took me out for dinner the night before.

Again, this is a very much more relaxed relationship with the foreign office than then have in the north, but then again, I didn't have to go over and press regularly on unwelcome issues.

We had all gone through so much. Staff had gone through so much. I got almost everybody promoted. It was so easy to write their EERs that they just did very well. It was a wonderful way to leave, and I was ready to leave. I was exhausted

It was a good time to leave and to pass on to the next generation because also you run the "You should have been here when it was…" problem. Especially when they whined! Oh, my heavens! Those of us who were there those first couple of months, for someone who came the second year and would start complaining about, "Why isn't there this?" I had to be very careful as a manager that you don't get this division between the "plankholders" and the newer arrivals. I remember us literally digging holes in the back yard to take a core sample to send it to FBO. It was crazy what we had to do.

Any time you open a post there are unlimited bizarre tasks. It's other duties as assigned. I can't put it in their efficiency reports because it doesn't get you promoted. The fact that you were out at 9:00 at night digging a hole in a yard to do a core sample for FBO, doesn't require a commissioned FSO. You're not going to get promoted on it but yet it's sucking up time. So you have to be very, very careful.

Q: How did you find the role of women? When I ran the consular section I think there may have been one or two men. All the rest were women.

BOLTON: A lot of women in all sections, but I think the new officers were mostly women. It's funny. They were very hard workers

We had men. We had women. There was no problem to hire lawyers to do those middle management things, so we always had good choice, very anxious to learn.

They were fun, but I really picked well one consular clerk. I was very proud the way I picked in consular. Her father had been a diplomat in the old days, and she was born in Singapore. She turned out to be just great. Terrific personality, lots of energy of course which is what you need in citizen services. For my secretary who also did protocol. I picked someone who had graduated from the music conservatory, and she used to play piano in the hotel lobbies. I thought even if she doesn't know diplomatic practice and procedure, she's probably open to learning it, and I'm not going to get pushed back. Very anxious to learn. We had some really good staff. As they say: hire for attitude and train for skills.

We had to let one or two go who weren't working out, but we were happy to do that. We knew we had to make the decision and if someone in the Embassy complained about our making a mistake in hiring the person in the first place, think of all those staff members officers complain about from year to year. But I didn't want someone later wondering "Who's the idiot that hired this person?"

Q: 1999. Whither?

BOLTON: Whither. I went to Malta, I didn't have a lot of time to look for a job, and since we weren't hooked up on cables, things were difficult. It was very hard to job hunt from Saigon. You've got to call people. Twelve hour time difference. You're sitting there at nine, ten o'clock at night. This is the only time you can do this stuff.

A job was open in Malta for deputy chief of mission. I was a FS-1 at the time. It had been open for a year. The previous DCM had curtailed, and the job had been open for a year. A job opening for a year is not good. If you can go for year without somebody for a year, why have the position?

Malta's very small. It was an interesting place in so many ways but no where near as hectic or intense as HCMC. It was an unusual time to be there. It was getting ready to go through the EU accession which was very divisive on the island. It's like most islands: It's 49% on one side, 51% on the other side, and that's on alternate Tuesdays. You were a conservative rightist or a labor leftist. The language itself is Semitic yet the island is more Catholic than the pope. But an old fashioned type of Catholicism. It's been very isolated in many ways. That's how they survived. The Knights of Malta of the 1300's were not Maltese. They were of course from all over Europe, and the Maltese simply retreated into the interior of the island. I think being insular was how they survived, so they very rarely had any independence. They had Knights of Malta until the 1800s, then they had Napoleon. They had the British in 1815, and it became a southern NATO naval headquarters. Then around the early 1960s they got independence from Britain.

The British just left them with a cigarette factory, a beer factory, and basically a naval base support system. Not much to grow with. The political fighting was very much Britain in the '60s and '70s. You had the labor unions which…

Q: Mintoff was a…

BOLTON: Dom Mintoff, yes.

Q: He so pissed the British off that they just left.

BOLTON: The Maltese liked annoying the Brits, and they wrote neutrality in their constitution which became quite an issue when I was there. They thought they could convert neutrality into an industry like the Finns or the Swiss, but it didn't work that way. Of course, but it was still geographically a significant place, smack right in the middle of the Mediterranean. In World War II the island fortress of Malta was the only country—the only group—to earn the George Cross because of what they would suffer in World War II. I think the memory may have contributed to its desire to avoid war via neutrality and profit from both sides.

They emerged a very ideologically divided island. I think it was trying to make an industry about being neutral. That wasn't working. They also had a banking system that perhaps didn't ask enough questions, and it was a very interesting commercial system. It's very difficult when you have a very small commercial class to have those divisions

that modern business practices require. If you're running an embassy or a consulate, the person that receives can't be the person who signs for it, can't be the person who pays for it, can't be the person who orders it. When you're a small mission and you're trying to divide those four function, it's pretty hard when you don't have four people to do it.

That's almost the way it is in a small island when you have you have conflicts of interest all over the place because the commercial class is so small.

Q: They'd get together, hold hands, and sing ___.

BOLTON: It was. It was very strange almost in a way except that it was very non-productive. They would make these old fashioned collectivist cases, and I would sit there and remind them that I just came from Vietnam and they run commercial circles around Malta. I mean, the Maltese leftists were the only people who talk like that. I guarantee they don't talk like that in a communist country, and while they are sitting there fighting the battle of the 50s and 60s, the Vietnamese are going to clean Malta's clock.

The conservatives weren't much better. Some were very snobbish and class conscious. So it was a very divided political class. Again, there is some hope with the younger people who actually marry someone from the other party, so there was hope they could overcome the dichotomy.

Elections were incredible. They would send ambulances to hospitals to take people to the polls. Everybody knows everybody's voters. Every vote counted. They would even fly them in from Britain to vote. The voter gets a free ticket to come home to vote. Sure enough it would still be razor thin decisions, so nothing was ever settled in parliament.

But the big issue was the EU. The labor party had a very young leader who had a graduate degree from Harvard, Albert Sant. I guess he was about 42, and he made a fatal mistake. He was in power. Had he decided to support EU membership, he would still be prime minister, but because if one side says white, the other says black. That's all there is to it. The conservative party was going to support EU membership, so the labor party had no choice but to oppose it and lost an election and probably a generation in power.

Generally in the EU process, smaller countries do very well and the labor sector does well because they usually acquire even more guarantees, plus access to the EU as an appeals process. Even the very leftist UK labor leaders visited to try to convince the labor party that they could thrive in an EU world.

Malta had serious issues to discuss in the EU accession talks which means for them absorbing the 10 volumes of the EU laws, the Acquis Communautaire. They were concerned about fisheries as an island and also about property. It's a sunny island in the Med and the Europeans would be down in half an hour to buy out every inch of beachfront property, so they had to work in some kind of freeze on real estate for non-Maltese because the young Maltese would be forced to live 45 to a room in the interior

because they can't compete against the Germans who are known for coming down and buying Mediterranean islands.

Q: They did it in Spain, too.

BOLTON: They did it in Spain in the Balearics, especially Ibiza. Not just the Germans. There's a couple other exemptions that they needed for historic or cultural reasons. One favoring us which would be hard wheat, their traditional bread which is wonderful uses it. Most European breads are made of soft wheat, but Portugal and the Maltese bread is made with hard wheat that they needed some kind of exemption to continue with their traditional bread. That was important.

EU accession process was interesting to watch. They also had a diplomatic academy there that trained a lot of diplomats from the former Bloc and USSR countries.

Q: I'm on their E-mail list. I see they run courses.

BOLTON: Yes and they were very busy with the still-new countries out of central Asia and the former Yugoslavia. Also the International Maritime Organization has got the International Law of the Sea Institute where they train maritime lawyers and things like that there from other countries.

Q: Are they in the EU now?

BOLTON: Yes, they are! They came in with Cyprus. I also told them that I was sorry they were paired with Cyprus because it's like getting attached to an anvil given all their international complications but the EU likes to pair applicants

Q: Plus they're in their end.

BOLTON: Anytime Cyprus got in trouble with their membership process, Malta's would stall even though Malta was on the path, but every time Cyprus got tied up with another Greek/Turkish issue, you know, accession would stall.

We also were working on expanding their interpretation of neutrality. We were increasing the number of ship visits which was controversial as the governing conservative party says yes, the labor party says no. Everyone liked the ship visits. After all, Malta has been a navy town since the Phoenicians. And of course the port likes the ship business. We did this assessment of how much the average sailor spends compared to a cruise ships. Cruise ships don't want you to spend money on the shore. They want you spending money on the ship.

We got a lot of ship business. They had a NATO Standing Naval Forces, STAVAV Europe or the Med paid a visit, and it was the first time a Turkish admiral had been in that harbor since about the year 1500. The place was dripping European history.

We also managed to get a contract for the flagship of the Sixth Fleet needed a lot of work in dry-dock. Again, the labor party whose dock workers were heavily subsidized because there wasn't any work in the dockyards said no, and the conservative party said, "We either take this contract or we're going to withdraw the subsidies, and your members can go out on the street." The shipyards got the contract and they did a beautiful job with touches like hand-finished welds which aren't seen much anymore.

We also concluded the Pan Am 103 process which was interesting because I was at the beginning of that when I was in counter terrorism on December 22. I thought it was ironic and satisfying that years later I was there when the trial was held in Scotland.

The bomb was loaded in Malta by Libyan People's Bureau's agents, and one of the key witnesses had been a Maltese shopkeeper down the street from the Libyan People's Bureau where the agents had bought clothing made in Malta. The label said Made in Malta. He may also have bought the Samsonite gold colored suitcase there, but he definitely bought clothing there. When the forensic experts did the study of the explosive debris around Lockerbie, they could center in where the explosion was, in what suitcase, and they found the clothes made in Malta, and they traced it back to the store. The store keeper was willing to testify. He was very, very brave. Remember how close Malta was to Libya and how vulnerable Malta was. And so it was an important issue with the Maltese to keep them committed to this over the years and keep that very brave store keeper committed to testifying so these operatives were convicted.

Then the embassy was small. I served more like a staff assistant; there are several models of how to DCM and this appeared to be the model the Ambassador selected.,

Q: Who was the ambassador?

BOLTON: It was a political appointee, so it was really more a staff assistant slot, but whatever model works best for the ambassador.

Q: Why was she appointed, and how did she operate?

BOLTON: She was a dental hygienist, and after her divorce she got involved in the just-deregulated telecommunications industry by opening a small company that provided long distance service. She was also active in the then-new telecommunications bill and in bundling contributions to the Clinton campaign. She had been there about a 18 months when I arrived but had been without a DCM for about a year after curtailing the incumbent DCM.

DCMs, you work in a system where the ambassador wants. Especially after Vietnam it was a much quieter assignment, much more traditional. We had Y2K of course. I was there for about two years. But I did get promoted to OC and SFS after my Vietnam service.

Q: What was the Libyan influence there?

BOLTON: The Libyans had a trade office in our building. I think they were right above us. There was also the LIFA - Libyan Iranian Trade Sanctions bill. U.S. citizens can't do business with Libyan entities. That includes Libyan hotels of which there were two in Malta. The Corinthian Palace or something like that. They Libyans likely had more investments than anyone knew about in Malta.

Every now and then we had to alert official American participants in conferences that they had to bunk elsewhere. It's more pernicious in the sense that you can almost smell them rather than see them.

We were also getting a lot of Russians. And there were jokes about the Russian influence and the Russian young ladies. Malta had a very active nightlife for the tourists but the Catholic Church was very old-fashion, really almost pre-Vatican II, so it wasn't a good mix with the nouveau riche Russians with active lifestyles and lots of money from the sale of the economy to the private sector. Russians were buying apartments. That's just when Russian money was—gangster money, too—was starting to flow, and in the same way that the Russians have always looked for a warm water port, they're also looking for beach front property. They're all over the place buying up everything with an ocean view. They're sometimes up to no good.

The tourism industry is enormous there. There's barely a tree on the island. It is a dry, hot island in the summer and a wet, cold, rainy one in the winter and hard at home because they don't have central heating. I had a great apartment overlooking the Mediterranean. But I can tell you, when that wind would come down from the Alps in the winter, and there wasn't anything between that wind but my apartment. I haven't been so cold in my life.

It's British right hand drive which of course is always a challenge to learn, and I had a right hand drive car.

I'm sure it's changed enormously. Enormously. But I stayed there two years which I think was enough.

Q: Was the ambassador with you the whole time?

BOLTON: She left about six months before I did, and I was chargé for the last six months.

Q: Either way were the Maltese interested in us or did we have interest in the Maltese particularly?

BOLTON: The Maltese were interested in us. There was a lot of Maltese immigration to Detroit after the war. After the war there was nothing in Malta. The British had little cash after the war and never invested in the place anyway. There was a lot of migration from Malta to Australia to the U.S. There are many Maltese in Detroit and Ohio and the

industrial heartland. They would retire back to Malta, particularly on the island of Gozo with the social security checks. Gozo was charming, but very small.

It was fun to drive through Gozo; they would all name their houses. It was awful trying to find a house a house in Malta. No one lived at 13 Mockingbird Lane. Everybody lived in Sunflower Villa or in Rose House or Buena Vista House. It was horrible trying to find your way around. My favorite one, I should have taken a picture of this. My favorite house name was Beautiful Detroit. They would name them after places in Australia or places in the U.S. where they had lived.

We had very few American tourists. It was just low level. Some business interests. Again, not huge. But there was a lot of good feeling because the U.S. had been good to the Maltese who had emigrated. They did very well. The man who cast the Liberty Bell was Maltese, so for those of us who do the Fourth of July, that's the first thing out of your mouth at the reception when you give your remarks. "John Pace cast the liberty bell." Another little factoid that you wouldn't know unless you had served in Malta.

And of course the geographic location is important, and also financial markets. Banking practices. Along with Cyprus. You've got to do services if you're a small island and you've got good English, but you have to careful about what types of services one does and for whom. This is a very difficult issue because these smaller countries don't have much they can do other than services, and they're competing with let's say Cyprus which even asks fewer questions than they ask in Malta. There's a lot of small countries chasing around what is really a finite amount of money.

The same thing with the port facilities. They were trying to do free ports. Free ports are fine, too, but you can't have a "no questions asked free port." Any time you ask a question about the last stop or the cargo and ask for inspection you can disrupt the ship's schedule which costs money. But transshipment of nuclear material or items for Iran is serious business, too.

We were very concerned about international banking, money laundering, things like that, to ensure that regulations were up to snuff . The other issue of course is flags of convenience. What the Maltese call Open Registry. The Maltese fleet is enormous compared to the size of the country.

They want a large open registry and they have taken steps to tighten regulations both for the seamen and safety regulations, single hulled, double hulled. That was another issue of course. They were big boys in the international maritime organization. Little Malta, big fleet. In things like the IMO they actually had plenty of say and a voice and of course a vote in the United Nations. It normally isn't a difficult post. In fact, the challenge was to make sure that expectations did not spin out of control. Also of course Libyan visa applicants were a big issue. They'd show up with all sorts of silly stories.

I stayed there about two years and then continued island hopping. The chief of mission slot opened up in Curacao, the Netherlands Antilles in the Caribbean. That would be my fourth bureau in four tours.

It was a COM slot because of the peculiar political structure of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Caribbean portion was two-thirds of the Kingdom. The Antilles and Aruba have authority devolved that we need but cannot access in The Hague. This is particularly true in law enforcement and finance/banking. Jerusalem, Hong Kong, Pristina at the time, and Havana are the posts where we have chiefs of mission who report directly to Washington, but are not heard by the Senate but had full COM authority. Washington made a decision that the post would be most efficiently run with the consul general having chief of mission authority and most the other consuls general in Curacao run as consulates *a pie*, self-standing, independent consulates. We also had in Curacao a U.S. Air Force Forward Operating Location. There was also one on Aruba. There were six islands in total, Curacao, Aruba, and Bonaire in the south and Sint Maarten, Saba, and Statia in the north, near Puerto Rico. Quite a bit of geography, a lot of tourists. There are one million American tourists a year. Two U.S. Air Force forward operating locations. We had a U.S. customs and immigration pre-clearance station in Aruba, a lot of DEA issues obviously, so a big DEA office, and business issues, business interests, so it was… For being such a small place it was very busy. It was one of the situations where you wind up with all these other agencies and a very small state department presence, so you spend most of your time feeling like you're a big concierge for the other agencies while trying to deal with span of control management issues.

I went on home leave, went down to SOUTHCOM which was holding a chief of mission conference for the Caribbean. Also I wanted to spend a day in Key West because Joint Inter Agency Task Force South (JIATF-S) is headquartered there, and they coordinate counter drug cooperation and operations in the region in an international format, so that's what I did in the middle of home leave.

I went back to Philadelphia and was supposed to go to post on September 12, 2001, so on September 11, 2001 I was in the post office sending a birthday present to a friend in Rome and everyone in the post office was talking about what happened at the World Trade Center. I hadn't put the radio or TV on that morning. It was about 9:30 in the morning. I had been running around getting everything ready to get on the plane the next day, and one of my last tasks was to get that package off and buy stamps for post. Obviously everything changed that morning.

It was very complex. I had spoken to the post once or twice I believe before I had gone down because there was no chief of mission there. My predecessor had left. The post called me that afternoon in some distress because they said they could not get in contact with the Department where there had been report of a car bomb outside State. I told them that unless they were in immediate stress or danger, Washington was in no shape to provide guidance and I was ready to see we worked our way through this together. So, from my living room, I set a list of priorities, advised them on dealing with the host government, securing the facility and staff, and of course, advising and comforting our

American citizens who were out priority. It's very difficult to guide a post that that one has never been to.

Aruba of course is the big tourist destination, and they have many visitors from New York so that was a special problem because so many either worked in the affected area or had friends and relatives who did. Of course, there was no way for them to depart the island and that caused great distress. And sometimes New Yorkers are not the easiest people to deal with. We also had 14 U.S. Customs and Immigration officers there at a preclearance station so there was some official USG presence which I think was comforting to our citizens.

Aruba to its credit did a wonderful job of cutting the room fees to the bare bones. People weren't being gouged unlike some other places like France which comes to mind. And the same thing with the airlines. The airlines just put everybody back on airplanes. They didn't apply charges for rebooking or for one-way flights like they were doing in Europe. The hotels would set up buffets so the stranded guests could be fed cheaper which was a load off our minds. I think most people were very appreciative of how caring the Arubans were.

But it was very difficult for the post. There was nothing coming out of Washington although that was actually rather refreshing. I really don't think we need the extensive guidance that Washington insisted on at every turn. I think COMs knew what needed to be done and said without cleared talking points. If you didn't know what needed to be done, you had no business having your leadership position.

I had been routed to Curacao from Philadelphia through Miami on American Airlines. Obviously I wasn't going anywhere until the ground stop was lifted. That was to be starting on Saturday. I decided that going the original routing would be unwise because if I got stuck in Miami, I would really be stuck. I knew there was a direct flight on USAir from Philadelphia to Aruba. Once I got to Aruba, the post assured me I could get a flight from Aruba to Curacao because those flights continued normally. If there were a problem with flights out of Philadelphia, I could just come home rather than be camped out on the airport floor in Miami. That was hardly the way I intended to arrive at post. USAir was wonderful as it took a few days to make these arrangements and all I had was my USG travel orders in my lap. State suspended most travel regulations such as city pair fares for the emergency. I was on one of the first flights out of Philadelphia that Saturday morning. The new age we entered was obvious from the increased security and the plastic forks - no knives - on the plane.

I think I got to Curacao about 7 PM that night with much of the staff waiting for me. That next day, Sunday, I had a full schedule. I had memorial service with the Governor General presiding. Remember, I hadn't met anyone in the government yet, we hadn't sent a dip note announcing my arrival or anything. Then after that outdoor service, I went to the TV station to appear on a current events show to talk about the tragedy and what it meant for us. Of course, no press guidance for any of this but I had been taking notes

while home and listening to the White House and State Department speeches and statements.

This was such a shock for the post, the American community, and our tourists, and the Antilleans who were very pro-American. Kingdom citizens had also died. Those first few months were a blur. And, we had an inspection starting in October that we needed to prepare for! The Department was sending instruction and action requests without stop. Frankly, there was no sensible gate keeper to decide if the request made sense. For example, they gave us three days to obtain the translated portion of the local legal code regarding money laundering. Nonsense. Regulations changed by the minute and not always for the better. People were very jumpy; we'd get instructions that a U.S. citizen tourist at a local hotel had reported to the FBI that she or he had recognized a known terrorist from his newspaper picture and he was staying at the hotel. So, off DEA would go to take a look, spending most of the day on it. But the requests for information about the legal system and law enforcement were non-stop.

Q: It can't be done.

BOLTON: There was no filter up in Washington whatsoever. It was a very, very intense time, and just keeping the American community soothed was a full time job, and trying to handle the Washington traffic was a challenge.

I made my rounds and obviously this dominated a lot of the initial calls on the islands. Aruba they were just so terrified because they're so dependent on tourism. I told them I really thought that tourism in the Caribbean would recover faster than it would in Europe because it is closer, much more familiar, and safe.

The Inspection was a lot of work because nothing had been done during the summer between my predecessor's departure and my arrival and there were questionnaires and writing that had to be done. The report mirrored much of my original writing and there a was great deal of sympathy for small post that had a menu of activities that rivaled much larger ones. It started a period of growth - another State position and a great deal of refitting and construction work at the site. The Residence was on the compound, too, and I lived in a hard hat zone for the tour.

Very historical place and the Dutch had interesting issues there. The Dutch treated it as an internal part of the kingdom. It was run out of Kingdom and Constitutional Affairs in The Hague. There was a 400-year relationship, but it was not a colony or a possession or a territory It is part of the kingdom and a unique structure in the Caribbean which is full of unique governmental structures. Clearly Holland had enormous influence, both culturally and politically. Antilleans would get trained professionally in the Netherlands at university or professional schools. I could hold an event, and I'd be the one that would be dressed like I was in the Caribbean. I'd have on light colors and light weight materials or short-sleeved suits and the Antilleans would all look as if someone had just died, dressed like the Dutch would be in November in Rotterdam. But that reflected their professional formation.

The relationship between the Antilleans and the Hollanders was interesting. To other people in the Caribbean, the Antilleans seemed quite Dutch, but to the Hollanders I think the Antilleans seemed very Caribbean. For instance, the Hollanders are very direct. I don't know how they can do diplomacy. But people in the Caribbean are much more indirect and subtle. Sometimes it was like oil and water. I liked both groups a great deal but I could not even comment on their dealings.

After World War II, the Dutch gave their overseas holdings a chance for independence. Suriname took it as did Indonesia. But the Antilles declined, particularly after getting a look at how poorly Suriname has done. They restructured themselves over the next few years regarding their relationship with Holland and, theoretically there are three equal components of the Kingdom. They carry Dutch passports and benefit from the visa waiver program. I dealt with two components of the Kingdom, Aruba and the five islands of the Antilles. Each has an office and representative at the Dutch Embassy; they have their own diplomats and participate in Kingdom UN delegations, for example. But like Puerto Rico, there are strict limits as to what they can do on their own in the international arena.

Over the decades, the Antilles continued to change their structure. They have way too much government per square inch. The Netherlands Antilles started to break up early on with Aruba spinning off first to have a separate relationship with the Kingdom, and now this year St. Maarten, Saba, St. Eustatius, and Bonaire have spun off. The Netherlands Antilles is now no longer. I don't know exactly what kind of relationship every little island is going to have with the Kingdom, but it will be complex.

Q: What was the big employer?

BOLTON: Refining and transportation are big employers. The large refinery in Aruba started in 1929 by Esso, and the Arubans were glad to have it because it meant they didn't have to go cut sugar cane in Cuba. They finally could stay in Aruba and have jobs. Then tourism took off in the 70s and 80s in Aruba.

These ABC are not lush tropical islands. These are very dry islands, and they're out of the hurricane belt. Curacao had a big Shell refinery. In World War II these were the largest refineries still in Allied hands. I understand that the POL for Normandy came out of the islands. Both were protected in the War by the U.S. and Aruba had German submarine attacks against the small "lake tankers" docked there that carried oil from Venezuela to Aruba. We certainly had a deep relationship in World War II, and the gratitude of the people of the Kingdom. The Kingdom gave us the land and house for the Consulate General. The Residence was called Roosevelt House and was modeled like a classic island "Landhuis" or plantation house.

Counterdrug and law enforcement were big issues for us. After 9/11, financial operations became very important. Among many other countries, the money for 9/11 went through Aruba, to the Arubans shock. Another innovation during WWII was the creation of the

offshore financial sector. The Dutch moved all their money and Kingdom financial authority to the Antilles when they were occupied. That was the start of offshore financial operations.

The two Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) were a major presence. The FOLs did counterdrug operations. Bad guys were no longer flying drugs to the U.S. but had been pushed out of the sky and onto the water. Hence the FOL would fly patrols and work with participating navies and coast guards to interdict questionable ships. Many countries in the region participated but the Dutch had the real capability there. They had 1100 sailors and marines at a big base in Curacao and 400 marines on Aruba. But the Dutch were insisted that any information that we gathered be on counterdrug and not counter-intelligence or counter-insurgency because our flights would also fly, with a Colombian officer onboard, over Colombia.

Normally, there were E-2 and P-4's there. We even had F-15s for awhile but that is not the most effective counterdrug platform! The missions were staffed mostly by national guard or reserve units so we never really knew who or what would be coming. Early on, there had been trouble with the state guard units bringing down relatives and friends on the flights but that stopped. We also early on had FOL commanders for three-month tours while they waited for other assignments, which was another bad idea. Fortunately, when I got there the military was assigning them for one-year tours which was great.

The FOL agreement included an operational role for the Consul General/COM. I had to approve each flight to ensure that it was consistent with the terms in the agreement. Just because it was a counterdrug mission, for example, going to train counterparts in Argentina, did not make it FOL mission that I could approve. Those flights would have to be cleared by the Dutch in the Hague. Needless to say, some elements in the U.S. military either did not know or care about the restrictions and we and FOL could have our hands full. I delegated the authority to the FOL commander once I had confidence in him but I still watched the incoming requests and would intervene if I needed. For example, one flight request from an Air Force Base that did special operations. I knew it was most unlikely they were doing our business so I flagged it. The FOL commander said - with a smile - that they trouble was that I knew too much. Maybe they were sorry they had me at AF War College.

There were other FOLs in Ecuador and Salvador but one had political problems and the other had weather issues. The Antilleans would have welcomed a FOL every ten miles around the island. We did a lot of work at the airport, for example, straighten out the taxiway. Actually, we had built the airport in World War II. It was a good program. But it was very quiet during much of my tour because so many planes had been sucked in to monitoring U.S. airspace after 9/11. Fortunately, the wonderful Dutch picked up much of the slack in the Caribbean with extra assets.

It was a very, very trying post at times sometimes because we just didn’t have enough people. A lot of growth potential. A lot of agencies wanted to add people particularly as a counter drug mission group and law enforcement.

Q: Did you feel it was justified?

BOLTON: I would not approve an expanded DEA presence until I had guarantees and funding in place regarding space and support. And I got it. The drug issue had just exploded along with money and financial issues and guns trafficking.

The British had a station ship down there about four months of the year that makes the rounds. The French have got two ships but are focused on French issues. The Dutch have the muscle and were great partners.

In addition, the 9/11 investigation showed that some money had gone through Aruba for the 9/11 hijackers. Money went through about 30 countries, but it also went through Aruba, and the Arubans just about fell off their chair when they found out at an FBI training conference for the local finance industry. The interest in the islands from the U.S. law enforcement community was expanding and I knew I was going to be facing span of control management challenges.

Q: Who was it?

BOLTON: In Aruba there were 14 under COM authority with Customs and Immigration pre-clearance, so I'd go to Aruba at least once a month. That was a little bit difficult sometimes because they were not normally overseas. This is not like a foreign agricultural service or anything like that. Some of them had been border patrol and I think the agency would use this as some kind of reward and mislead them as to what life was like on a small, tropical island. No, they were not going to live on a palatial estate and the supermarkets are what they are which means droopy lettuce. And it was expensive so don't think you'll save for your children's college.

Some of the time my hands full with, "Oh, we don't have the support like my cousin had when he was in the foreign service in Africa." So there were issues with their not being fully prepared, and they had never gone through any training at FSI, had no idea what an embassy did and thought they could behave as if they were living in the U.S. I had to really count on getting very good agents-in-charge and I did.

Then after 9/11 INS was going away and customs was going away, and they were going to be integrated. That was a challenge. They didn't like each other and each legacy agency was proud of its history. It was a problem all over. Nobody wants to say good-bye to their service and join create service particularly when they have different regulations, cultures, and benefits like for carrying a gun and things like this.

Q: We almost lost the visa function back in the Carter time...

[crosstalk]

Q: …because customs and immigration couldn't get together.

BOLTON: We almost lost it after 9/11, too. We didn't issue visas. They had Dutch passports, so we had visa waiver programs, so unless you were going for a student visa, none was needed for normal tourism or business. If they needed a student or other category visa, they had to apply through Bridgetown or Caracas.

I got up to St. Maarten whenever I could. We had prisoners in Aruba, Curacao, and St. Maarten that we had to visit. There were also medical schools full of American citizens on Sint Maarten and Saba. We had thousands of students. One island had only 3,000 people and 1,000 of them were at the medical school. There's a lot of these issues that are very specific to the Caribbean.

Q: I'm looking at the time. This is probably a good place to stop. We'll pick this up. One of my questions has to be, did Chavez in Venezuela have any particular effect on you all?

BOLTON: Oh, yes. There was a very good case with Unitas is an annual naval exercise we do with Latin America. Curacao was selected to be the headquarters of the Caribbean potion. We had three or four U.S. ships and Venezuelan ships, and for the first time a Mexican ship and several other nationalities. I was hosting a reception on a Friday evening for the officers and participants, on behalf of SOUTHCOM , and Chavez announced that Tuesday that he would come for a visit during Unitas. I think the local government was very surprised and I understood that his government did not convey his plans until the last minute. He arrived in one plane Saturday morning and 50 press arrived in another. He was due at his Venezuelan ship at noon but decided to drive around the island and arrived late. Meanwhile, the Consular Corps had been standing in the sun at the gangplank of his ship. When he arrived he greeted us one by one. He asked me if I was married; I said, no, and he asked why not; I told him I was just lucky. Just as he stepped onto the Venezuelan ship, three Venezuelan fighter jets went screaming by, F15s or 16s.. No one expected it as the clearance had just been granted in The Hague and surprised the resident Dutch military -- and the U.S. naval ships who had not been told fighter jets were on the way. He spoke to his sailors and I slipped in the back of the room to listen. Very interesting. He was drawing his exclusive economic zone around a rock-like islet that he calls an island and he thinks gives Venezuela an EEZ almost out to Jamaica. He had said earlier in the week he wanted to visit a USN ship and we could hardly say no, but the Navy said no press. He was very charming to the crew on the U.S. ship and we spent a few hours with him. He cornered a U.S. admiral to give him a lecture on Chavez' view of the world which is an intense experience. At the end of the day, I called the Op Center and said "You know? I could write a 20 page cable about the day, but I'll just leave it in one sentence: Nothing bad happened." It was a strange experience. I would sometimes watch the Spanish-language broadcasts from Venezuela and watch his "Hola Sr. Presidente" TV show. He is a first-class populist, skilled.

Q: Okay. We'll pick this up the next time. You're still in Curacao, and developments there.

BOLTON: We never knew what was going to happen. We had an oil tanker arrive that had illegally loaded Iraqi crude at Basra and became the center of a three-month dispute as it circled the island like the literary "Flying Dutchman." It was clearly a sanctions-busting attempt and really exposed the unpleasant, nasty underbelly of the oil transport business.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up then.

Today is the 23rd of April 2010 with Debbie Bolton. Debbie, where did we leave off?

BOLTON: Curacao's geo-politics. Geography was a very interesting part of the post, and we were very close to Venezuela, about fifty miles and I could see the coast on a clear day, which still was under the influence of Chavez and the Bolivarian revolution. Chavez also had aspirations toward the ABC islands to the consternation of the Dutch and the Antilleans. Venezuelans were sending their children to the International School on the island and moving their money there.

Q: You were there from when to when?

BOLTON: '01 to '04, so I was there for the Venezuelan coup that didn't quite succeed, for the strike that didn't quite succeed. Aruba is only 40 miles from Venezuela, and lots of Venezuelans have lots of money in Curacao. They keep there kids in the Aruba International School, a lot of tourism from Venezuela, and oil relations because of the two refineries although I don't think Aruba/Coastal were buying crude from Venezuela at the time. In fact the Venezuelan oil company leases the old Shell refinery on Curacao, and there are extensive family ties.

Again, the Caribbean is very complex for nationalities and cultures and relations with Europe. There were some accusations of Venezuelan dabbling in Curacao politics. The Venezuelan consul general's residence was right across the road from us. I remember the new consul general. I guess he arrived about a year after I did and he was a Chavista whose previous assignment had been as basically head of Agitprop, Agitation and Propaganda-equivalent. Whatever they called it, it's the same thing of as agit-prop in Cuba, and he was a piece of work. We would get tangentially involved in Venezuelan affairs. He would periodically criticize the FOLs and claim they were there to plan attacks on Venezuela and detail all sorts of military equipment that wasn't there. Anyone could stand there and watch the FOL -- it was right there at the airport. Every now and then I'd get a strange question from the government, clearly reflecting nonsense being raised by the Venezuelans

Q: Fancy military…

BOLTON: Yes, claims of numerous fighter jets. I would tell the government to look at the FOL it and tell me if there is more than one broken down E-2 there. FOL traffic had declined markedly after 9/11.

Q: We're looking at the map now.

BOLTON: Yes. There were times of course when the Venezuelans said they actually own Aruba, Curacao, Venezuela, and Bonaire -- according to their version of historical events.

Q: You mentioned the consul general, the Venezuela consul general was sort of ___. How did he operate?

BOLTON: You know how he operated? He participated in a demonstration in front of the consulate, and we had it on the tape! He wasn't a graceful or gracious actor, so he got into trouble with the host government. He had given a briefing to visiting Venezuelan military officers and I think some businessmen. Venezuela's national day is July 5, and of course we're July 4. That first week of July was a busy one on the local social schedule. The Fourth of July reception and the next day the Venezuelan reception. At the briefing for those visitors, he apparently said that half of the Curacaoans live off the refinery and the other half live off the drug trafficking because he was quoted in the Venezuelan press as having said that. You can imagine what the Antilleans thought when they saw that. They had the Dutch Kingdom Embassy, which has an Antillean diplomat there, file a protest. This all broke the last week of June.

So for July 4th we had the usual great turnout, and we used to have fun in our July Fourths. We always tried to do something different. That was the year I had the traditional Curacaoan island organ which is more like a calliope. Folks hadn't seen one since they were children.

The next day for July 5th for Venezuelan National Day there was nobody from the local government. Just one designated representative. It really wasn't more than the Venezuelan community and the international community and the head of the foreign office came whom I teased about being the lucky one. Her teeth were clenched the whole time.

Then he left post and I think he told me he was going as consul general to Boston. He doesn't speak a word of English. Then he was replaced by a professional diplomat whose gift to me was a copy of the new Venezuelan constitution. Just what I want to sit up nights reading. He apparently had some role in drafting it. He was a lot better, but still a problem. I told the staff not to engage in a battle with them, that they were perfectly capable of stepping in it all by themselves and we would take the high ground. If the Venezuelans violated the "third country rule" in diplomacy of bad-mouthing us, we'll let the host government discipline them.

Of course drug trafficking was really exploding out of Venezuela, and what's the first landmass out of Venezuela? Of course Aruba and Bonaire and Curacao.

There were reports of Cubans coming in to Venezuela, not for official positions of course, but as skilled workers. And I think the local governments hired a few doctors. The neighborhood was starting to change. Again, there was a lot more interest from the

U.S. Then when the strike happened, that almost brought down Chavez's government. Given its oil refinery on Curacao, there was quite a bit of interest in our reporting as to what was going on with it.

Q: The strike was when-?

BOLTON: When? I'm trying to remember.

Q: I mean what was it about?

BOLTON: What Chavez was doing was extending the tentacles of the state into what had been ostensibly private or semi private institutions such as the state oil company, PDVSA. He started to use it as a piggy bank and dumping ground for cadres needing job but having no background in the industry.

Q: It was extremely well run.

BOLTON: Yes, it was, and the same thing with the central bank. He was using the central bank reserves to finance these social programs, and their reserves were dipping below law. At the time he was not as powerful as he is now. He had started to use the state oil company essentially as employment for loyalists. He was also scaring international partners, not only the U.S. but other companies were starting to panic because he was simply changing contracts. As is often the case in these toxic political cultures, Venezuela does not have a very effective opposition. They had a lot of opposition, but it is so stratified and so beset by internal arguing that Chavez doesn't really have to worry about anything because they're capable of destroying each other without his help.

So they called a strike which actually was probably closer to success than Chavez wanted people to know, but eventually after about six weeks I think it fell apart. Essentially Chavez just fired everybody who participated in the strike. I think some leaders escaped to Aruba. In the meantime the refinery in Curacao was running. I paid a couple of visits to the refinery. We had a U.S. company that was doing a build-own-operate project there.

There was a lot of interest in Washington on what was going on in the refinery and whether the tankers out of Venezuela were actually seaworthy. The tankers weren't being maintained, and the international community worried about the state of the tankers because they were still trying to float them. So it was one thing after another, so we had to do a decent amount of reporting on the oil industry. The Curacao refinery was different in structure and products from the U.S. refinery on Aruba.

The Aruba refinery wasn't using Venezuela crude and didn't make white fuel, that is, gasoline. The price of gasoline on the island had enormous effect on the region not to mention up the central part of the United States because Citgo is the Venezuelan oil company in the United States. They handle, they supply a lot of the Venezuelan oil from the Curacao refinery right into New Orleans into the whole Houston-New Orleans

pipeline structure and right up the middle of the country. There was some squealing coming out of Kansas, Missouri, and all around the Mississippi. We did a decent amount of reporting on what we were hearing, but there wasn't a great deal of reliable information coming out of Venezuela and the refinery was trying to cope on insufficient information itself.

Q: I'm a little confused about the wiring, how the situation… You've got both the independent country and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

BOLTON: It's the structure of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Kingdom of the Netherlands consists of three equal parts. It consists of the five islands of the Netherlands Antilles . The second component is the island of Aruba, and the third is Holland, in Europe. So these are not territories. These are not colonies. These are not possessions. They are two thirds of the Kingdom of the Netherlands officially. Each part of the Kingdom is free essentially to conduct their internal affairs consistent with the constitution of the Kingdom. There are issues that are handled as the Kingdom. For example, defense and foreign affairs, and a responsibility for the general order which can extend to law enforcement issues if there is a failure. Both Aruba and the Antilles have a foreign office which walks a fine line with the Kingdom and I had to be careful not to discuss the Antilles with the Dutch representative. There is a Governor General who is from the islands and represents the Queen.

I used to deal with my foreign policy stuff essentially with the Antilleans. I had a chief of mission authority, so I didn't have to go back to the Hague for anything, but I would of course keep them informed. It takes a while to understand it.

Then you have of course Aruba which had difficult relations with Curacao and Curacao had difficult relations with the three islands in the north, St Maarten, Saba, and Statia. Justice Affairs all have to be consistent, but not all laws. For example, Holland is more tolerant of individual drug use, but there is zero tolerance in the Antilles. Gay marriage is another issue that is different. Neither EU or NATO apply in the Dutch Caribbean. And you have the Dutch military down there. There's about 1400, in total about a thousand Dutch sailors.

Q: Why would they have so many?

BOLTON: It's a big part of the Kingdom. They have the big naval base at Pereira. They have frigate year round. Right after 9/11 my first year they had two frigates and a submarine. They've got about 800 sailors in Curacao and some marines. They've got 400 marines on Aruba. Then they also have Dutch para-military police. The have the coast guard which is local, but they align with Kingdom law. It's an interesting relationship because the Antilleans are clearly different from other Caribbeans.

But yet they're still Caribbeans, and it's like watching a family fight. They don't get along very well all the time. They don't want to get lectures from the Dutch that they get all the time.

The Hollanders don't really understand the Caribbean dimensions of the Antilleans and the Arubans. But yet if you put Antilleans and Arubans next to Dominicans, they're clearly different. They're clearly Dutch in so many ways

It gets complicated. After you're there for a while, you get to understand both the formal and the official and the informal. And then you've got the relationship among the islands which is another problem.

They're relatively prosperous compared to the Caribbean, but not compared to Holland. The disparity causes tensions. My housekeeper got paid a lot of money. They have Dutch social service equivalent, and an illegal alien problem. The colonial buildings are charming and Dutch in style.

Q: The same ___.

BOLTON: Yes. They certainly do have a Dutch identity and they speak Dutch although that is declining. In the northern islands, English prevails. My driver spoke five language. He spoke Papamiento, Dutch, Spanish, some Portuguese, and English.

Q: Papamiento. What is that?

BOLTON: It's a Creole. It's a combination of African languages, Portuguese, some Spanish, and some Dutch and now, even some English. The Portuguese because there's a large Jewish influence or a Jewish old community on the island when the Spanish Jews left after the inquisition

[crosstalk]

BOLTON: ___ went to Turkey.

Q: So they're not ___.

BOLTON: No, no. They're Sephardic. After the Inquisition, many Spanish Jews went to Amsterdam and then many went to Brazil and other places where the tolerant Dutch had influence. Eventually, many ended up in Curacao which has the oldest synagogue in the hemisphere and the second oldest organ. It's a lovely synagogue with sand on the floor

Q: Any of the Indian from India…

BOLTON: A lot were in Surinam, and many left Surinam in 1953-54, whenever independence was declared. In fact, the head of the foreign office, her parents came from India via Surinam. There's a large presence in the northern islands, too, but they do not have the political role that they do on other islands or Guyana. Many were traders or shop owners and recent arrivals, but who are the great shop owners on the planet? The Dutch. There was not a lot of commercial or cultural space for the Indians to come because

you're dealing with the Number One trading nation on the planet that was already a polyglot. They did have an increasing presence in Sint Maarten and there were many labor abuse complaints against them either by the Antillean employees or by Trafficking in Persons groups.

Q: They're in the middle…

BOLTON: Although the Dutch would love to see a more prosperous island.

Q: …of the drug trade and the corruption…

[crosstalk]

Q: What was drug money doing there when you were there?

BOLTON: The drug money. The more successful we were in Colombia, the more the drug business used other methods and other places. The U.S. managed to stop the drug flights and the traffickers just took it down to the sea and were using motor boats. During my time in Curacao, I could see the expanding role of the guns on the island. The traffickers pay for services in drugs and guns. Transshipment never leaves no impression on a country. Weaponry was just going through the roof, and it was very upsetting to the Antilleans themselves. What had been a knife fight was now a gun fight or an automatic weapon fight. And there were a lot of Columbians on the island, Venezuelans on the island, and the Antilleans shared the Dutch tolerance for migrants. Dutch of course changed their mind with Theo Van Gogh when he was assassinated.

Q: He was a…

BOLTON: A Dutch politician, rightest, related to the painter.

Q: An immigrant.

BOLTON: He had made a documentary that was considered by some Muslims not to be favorable. He got assassinated in the Netherlands on a Friday because I was in the central bank waiting to meet the crown prince and princess of the Netherlands who were an hour late, and they turned around and went right back to the Netherlands. It was having an enormous effect. They were very tolerant of migrants, but they were growing intolerant, not for the same reasons as Holland but because of the drugs and the violence which they weren't used to on that island, but they were starting to see violence and murders. It was very sad.

Q: Was there the tolerance of marijuana and…

BOLTON: No. Socially they're more conservative. They're having a fight now on gay marriages between the Kingdom and the Antilles. Same things on drugs. They don't have coffee houses where you sit there and smoke marijuana.

An issue is should the United States be sending money at the Antilles to help them improve capacity when they are part of one of the richest countries on the planet? That's a hard sell to congress. But the problem is that the Antilles don't like to be told the time of day by Holland. You've got these white Dutchmen who've got a very direct manner. I find I would be taken aback by the Dutch sometimes. I think we could get more done than the Dutch. We understand the neighborhood better than the Dutch.

Q: Were boats coming from Columbia and Venezuela, too?

BOLTON: Yes, that was the source. They were called "go-fast" boats because they did. They ride very low to the water with several outboards attached. They would leave in the evening from Venezuela or Colombia and either head to or around the Antilles. They head for bigger ships, or they would off loading drugs in Curacao where it would be warehoused and re-shipped. Of course, the islands were developing their own drug use problem because the traffickers would pay for services with drugs -- or guns.

Q: Colombians are gun people, aren't they?

BOLTON: A lovely people but it has a very violent history.

We also had the off shore money situation. Aruba only had two off shore banks, and they both were CitiBank although they had casinos and I believe some offshore companies. They were also low-tax jurisdictions which was problem.

Curacao's a different story. Curacao had a large and impenetrable offshore company sector. I never really figured out who was in charge and how to get to them. I think the best I could do was indirect contact through my normal official contacts. Very hard to even find the regulators or major players. There was an Irish entity very active in the offshore sector with ex-pats on the island but no one ever saw them or ran into them; they isolated themselves in every way possible.

Then was also the problem with free trade zones or the value trade based money laundering. We had these free trade zones by an airport in Curacao and Aruba where a company could unload items and reship them someplace else free of customs and inspection. That could be a box of gold, stolen art, cash. Colombia was using this black market peso exchange which I'd rather not get into, but Columbians are so awash in dollars there is a problem unloading the dollars. They have so much cash that they buy a appliances or something in the U.S. and bring them in and sell them for pesos because they've got so many dollars that they don't know what to do with them all. Almost like those excess currency posts we used to have in Warsaw and New Delhi. I was trying very hard to get some attention to trade based money laundering.

The problem was the Antilleans were nowhere near as bad as, for example, the Caymans run by our good friends the Brits, or the Bahamas. Another problem was casinos. That's another no questions asked, how to clean your money opportunity. Sint Maarten with

30,000 people had something like 15 casinos. Turks own some, Russians and Italians own others. So there were quite a few vulnerable areas. They had way too many casinos for the tourist trade and certainly for the island population. Even with the cruise ships, there did not seem enough business to support so many casinos.

Q: The cruise ships are huge!

BOLTON: Sint Maarten had a population of about 30,000. On days when five or six ships called, that would be 15,000 Americans for a day or two.

Q: What do they do?

BOLTON: They walk around. They go shopping for straw hats and Rolexes. Some take excursions to dive. Many seem quite elderly.

Q: I had a friend whose dead, a consular officer Bill Morgan, and he used to go to Bonaire.

BOLTON: Bonaire was very different. Very heavily a diving island. Very quiet, feral donkeys being taken care of by an eccentric Dutch woman who had a rescue facility, broadcasting towers for missionaries and Netherlands international radio. Very restful.

Q: He used to go there and bask in the sun. He said that cruise ships would come by sometimes, and they would have topless beaches. The tourists would all come by and look at them!

BOLTON: That would be the Holland folks out there. You wouldn't find the Antilleans out there. The Antilleans warned European visitors against topless bathing.

I remember we had an American come in one day. When the ships come in, they have to shut down their casinos on board because that's the deal locally. They squeeze a lot of money out of these ports and out of the government, for example, they insist on a fireworks show then they leave. A nurse in Puerto Rico missed the boat. She was in the casino in Curacao right down the street from the boat. The ship toots its horn - I can hear it from my house, but in the casinos they hear nothing.

We had issues with the financial reforms, and we were doing a lot with them. We were doing a lot of training with them. In fact, the Antilleans would train the Surinamese. There were these financial intelligence units that most countries now have and they talk to each other. Blank bearer bonds, nameplate companies, and all sorts of devices.

Curacao's dry as a bone. It's not even a lush tropical island. It benefits from being below the hurricane zone, and it makes Curacao blue liqueur. They really have to do services but again, they need to be a bit careful because the temptations are enormous as are the earnings.

Q: What about the Cubans? Were they hanging around?

BOLTON: They did not have a mission. We had some refugee issues. Aruba had a some Cuban doctors and I think there were a few on Curacao but no one was impressed with their skills. They did not consider them to be well trained, but the price was right. There were some workers in the dry docks who I think went on strike.

Q: I'm looking at the time. Any other events?

BOLTON: I left right before the missing person case of Natalee Holloway. We had missing persons cases, usually involving water activity and inability to recover the body in the very deep water and currents around the island. I left a couple of months before the Natalee Holloway issue arose in Aruba with that poor high school student that went missing, and that totally seized the post for months and months. It's still going on. It was very tragic. Aruba has one murder a year, and it's usually Colombians related to a drug deal gone wrong.

Q: We'll talk about that.

BOLTON: That was about six months after I left. We had our share of consular issues, and it's not at all unusual for people to disappear either because they want to or on the sea.

Q: Did you have minor piracy of boats?

BOLTON: We heard of come cases robberies on yachts, but not in our area because we had a good law enforcement. .

We had scam artists with missing persons. They prey on the families like they did with Holloway. Any time someone goes missing there are scammers who will bilk the family for money to "find" the person. If a female, they'll claim white slavers took her and for $300,000 their team of "ex-special forces" will find her. There was a case of a young woman who fell off her cruise ship near Curacao and scammers who scammers claimed she was held by white slavers etc. There was a network news 20/20 TV show about it because the FBI investigated and caught the scammers. The family was on a cruise ship and was half a day out from Curacao. They were having Mardi Gras night. She had been drinking, went into her room with a balcony. Wasn't see the next day. Everybody thought she went over the side, and if the body contacts the propellers, forget it. They never found a body. These scam artists had gone to the family and said white slavers were holding her in a house in Curacao. The family paid the money and even had a picture of a girl on a beach with a big hat taken from behind. It could have been me sitting there. The FBI busted the scammers but it was sad for the family. I was stunned that in the Holloway case, the "Dr Phil Show" fell for the "white slavery" nonsense.

We have had a case that has gone on for years where a husband and wife were on a honey moon. This bride's family never liked the groom. They were drinking heavily at the hotel

according to the security videos. They were on a high floor. She went over the balcony and died, and the family to this day is convinced he pushed her. They've investigated many times. This has been going on for six, seven years now.

It's very sad when they can't find a body or you have these accidents. As you know, sometimes people on vacation neglect the safe practices they use at home. It's really a shame. But for the most part people come and have a great time. It's a very safe area.

Q: We'll pick this up the next time. Where'd you go?

BOLTON: As POLAD to U.S. Northern Command-NORAD in Colorado Springs.

Q: All right. We'll do that then.

Today is the 11th of May 2010 with Debbie Bolton. Debbie, you're leaving Curacao and are going where?

BOLTON: I'm going to Colorado Springs. The last couple of months in Curacao were exciting because I'd gotten sick. I'd been diagnosed with ovarian cancer after never having been sick - I don't even get colds or the flu. Of course I didn't have any time from about October 03 or so to go get this taken care of because I was busy. At a small post we have to do things larger posts have to do but with almost no resources. Then around of March '04, I found time to go to the doctor's at post on a Wednesday, and by Sunday I was in Miami already scheduled for surgery that Friday although we didn't know for what. So I spent that rather exciting week in Hollywood, Florida with the great support of the Florida Regional Center and the foreign service medical doctor there and the nurse practitioner doing all the arrangements but I running around like a crazy person for a week from one doctor to another with Constantine my Romanian cab driver who had come over a couple of years earlier. His wife had come with him, and she was teaching math in Miami, and he was driving a cab. He became just about my personal cab driver for Aventura and Hollywood, Florida.

I wound up having cancer but fortunately I was only 1A which is the very early stage and so I had major abdominal surgery, hung around for three weeks in a hotel room in the Hampton Inn off I-95, Sterling Road exit. You know it? Fortunately, the regional medical officer had just been to Curacao and had just gone to all the facilities there. He was happy with me going back and doing the chemo which I didn't really need to do, but the doctors recommended it. I could have gone to Washington, Philadelphia, or back to Curacao. I thought going where I had a car and driver, housekeeper, and my residence about 20 meters from my workplace was the best solution.

Q: What year was this?

BOLTON: This was in '04. this was in '04, so I had already applied of course for my next job since I was in summer cycle. By that time I had already been out for three assignments overseas in three different bureaus. No one can accuse me of being a

careerist, that's for sure. I got promoted to MC while in Curacao which was a major shock. I thought I should go back to DC but nothing attracted me. But the Pol-Mil Bureau was interested in me as a POLAD -- Political Advisor to a military commander.

The NORAD and U.S. Northern Command position was open -- it's a dual command with NORTHCOM being new after 9/11 for homeland defense. Before, the U.S. hadn't technically speaking been defended except at a strategic level with nuclear capabilities and each of the services was free to defend the U.S. as it saw fit. We used to have those coastal forts like Fort Sumter and Fort Adams up in Newport and I believe some gun batteries, but we really weren't defended as a country as we found out 9/11. Even NORAD only looked outward, especially toward the former USSR and its heavy bombers. One of the initiatives after 9/11 was the establishment of U.S. Northern Command. There's a saying in bureaucracy, "If you want it bad, you get it bad." So there were many decisions made very quickly after 9/11 that perhaps weren't as fully developed as they probably should have been.

There was the directive that we needed to do more to defend North America, so they decided they would do a geographic command for the U.S.: Northern Command. They invited the Canadians to come in, but they declined. Canada was fine with NORAD -- it was their major military activity . The U.S. planners saw Colorado Springs met the location need. NORAD was related in task which was our only bi-national command with the Canadians, and that's for the air defense of North America. It has no offensive capability, but it does in essence combine the air space of Canada and the United States for air defense. The Canadians bring a lot of real estate to the partnership and of course it was established in 1958 with the whole system of radar up at the snow line, up in Canada, and around the U.S. looking outward with planes on quick alert. Again, it's looking out toward the Soviets looking up north. Nobody's looking for Boeing passenger jets gone wild.

U.S. Northern Command was set up as any of the other geographic commands, the area of operation was Canada, the U.S., and Mexico, and also bits and pieces of the Caribbean. Of course the Canadians were suspicious. The Mexicans were very suspicious about the concept of the "area of operations" and objected to being assigned to a U.S. Command rather than just deal directly with the Pentagon on everything. We hear this from the Brazilians and from the Russians with European Command. My response is, "We'll organize our workload as we require." Since we administer military assistance through the regional commands, most countries manage to get over it and a relationship with a regional command does not mean that there is no relationship with the Pentagon service secretaries and chiefs. Of course there is.

The Mexicans declined to work with Southern Command or in the old Atlantic Command. They always had a direct relationship with the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, so they were under the impression that if they worked with U.S. Northern Command, they would lose this access. Initially it got off to a very rocky start with the Mexicans particularly since the U.S. attitude was very intense in those early days after 9/11. If the mission included working with the Mexicans, well,

that's what the command was going to do and on the U.S.' schedule. We weren't always pleasant to be around in '01 and '02.

Q: After 9/11?

BOLTON: Yes. Anybody overseas will tell you that. We were very difficult. If the Secretary of Defense or the President orders the combatant commander to make friends with the Mexicans, well, the Mexicans are going to be made friends.

Northern Command was assigned basically the defense of the United States and support to civil authority at the direction of the President or the Secretary of Defense. I thought this sounded interesting because I had worked in counter terrorism. I was a consular officer. I always considered the safety of my fellow citizens to be the essence of our responsibility consular work even if it's being done in counter terrorism or you're working in U.S. Northern Command. It's just another aspect of protection and welfare work in my book. I had experience doing pol mil work, and doing counter terrorism, plus experience with Latin America and the War College. I spoke Spanish.

Getting the job was hard word. The combatant commander at the time was an Air Force four star, and he wanted to interview me. Fortunately as chief of mission I do go up a couple of times a year. He traveled regularly to Washington and I just needed to coordinate one of my trips back with one of his. The one time when it seemed to work when I had some drug work to do meant I would have to come directly from Aruba from having been in the 50th anniversary carnival parade. I was in the carnival parade, not watching it. The U.S. oil company that had the refinery in Aruba asked me if I wanted to march in their group. Of course I had to pay for my costume which was more than I ever paid for anything that wasn't a fur coat, but it was a terrific experience.

I had to go up to Washington right away with my outfit but no way would I get on a plane carrying this thing. It looked like a Las Vegas show girl get-up with more fabric and plenty of ostrich feathers. The vice consul had gone over to be in the parade, too, and do the jail visits. I did my office calls and there was a USCG cutter in port so we paid a ship visit and had dinner with the crew the night before the parade so we were busy. She agreed to haul both outfits back to Curacao. Being the Caribbean, the local airline gave her a seat for both head dresses and bags. So I went to DC with exhausted feet from an eight hour march with dancing and forgetting to take off my gold nail polish, and it's February and cold and rainy in Washington.

I had an interesting interview with the general because I'd done U.S. Air Force War College, so I had my Air Force credentials. I'd done current operations. I'd done political military work. I had done counter terrorism stuff. I'd done chief of mission. There's about seven other bidders on the job. I was surprised that many. But I got the job. Then I got sick and was worried that I wouldn't get the job. The Air Force is a small community and both SOUTHCOM and the Third Air Force sent me flowers while I was in Miami. Fortunately I did bounce back. It was slow going because this chemo stuff turns you into

a toxic waste dump. Be nice to your staff - you may need them to go the extra mile. I had a great staff. They were very protective and very good.

I got through my last couple of months and recovered. I finished my last chemo in August, and three days later I got in the plane for Washington. I had my physical exam at State and medical unit was doing cheetah flips because my blood chemistry was a mess.

I went to home leave in Philadelphia for a few weeks and I needed the rest, bought a car and drove to Colorado Springs which is a very different experience. It's quite an experience to go into an operation that is well-staffed and well-resourced.

The POLAD job is what you make it but you must have an excellent relationship with the commander, understand him and his vision for his command and what is important to him. You're not the State Department's representative. You're not the liaison officer. The State Department in my opinion essentially cuts you loose to give your best political and foreign policy advice to a four-star commander with significant responsibilities. I look at it like a lawyer's advice. I told the boss this. I said, "I'm like your lawyer. You don't have to like my advice. You don't have to take it, but you have to get for it."

I was very lucky with him although he stayed on until just the first couple of months.

Q: I would think that that particular command would be tricky because most commands are heavily foreign.

BOLTON: Initially I wondered how busy just two countries could be. I think what really sealed it for me as far as getting the job was mentioning that when I was in Air Force War College in 1990, '92, my senior thesis was bringing Mexico into NORAD, and everyone laughed at me at the Air Force War College. If you would have told me 20 years ago that we were going to bring Hungary into NATO, they would have laughed at you, too. The General just looked at me and said, "I'm not laughing at you."

People think Canada, especially when you're doing NORAD , is just one happy country with us. Yes, the two Air Forces are very close. Of course that's far from it in just about any other area. It is a very foreign country and the relationship was not going well between the President and the Prime Minister, and Mexico is a headache just to begin with. What I also noticed is that something that a visiting Chief of Operations and Plans of a major Middle Eastern ally told us that Central Command gives them money and the country tries to help but what they really want is help with planning homeland defense. I really focused on that and told the commander that that is the one mission that every military has and it could be a niche for our Command. One of the suggestions I eventually had was that we set up a center of excellence for homeland defense in the military assistance and training arena.

I had settled in with the Commander, but I knew he would be moving on within a few months and the next revolution was an admiral coming to command NORAD and Northern Command. That was a revolution in the military because Colorado Springs is

Air Force Mecca. The Academy is there, Cheyenne Mountain is there. Schriever Air Force Base, Peterson Air Force Base. That was very much a Rumsfeld move. He wanted to send an Air Force person out to Pacific Command, but I think Sen McCain threatened all sorts of retribution.

Admiral Keating had come from being the Navy component commander for Central Command and the first Gulf War, and he had just come from being director of the joint staff. A really wonderful man. I think we clicked and had a good relationship. I thoroughly enjoyed working with him. He was so clear on what he knew and what he didn't know, and he had no problem asking questions. He had been in the Pacific. He had been I think the Navy person in Japan, so he's done a lot of military diplomacy work, but he was not a Western Hemisphere type but a quick study.

The NORAD agreement was up for periodic review and reworking, if need. The relationship was not going well over Iraq and other issues. They didn't want to join the coalition in Iraq, but they kept hammering on it in public. It was grating. The place in our bilateral military relationship rankings had been filled by the Australians. I would go to meetings in Washington with our closest allies. There would be no Canadians. Australians would have pride of place with the UK and even France would be sitting there. The Canadians I think started to notice and even hired a commercial agency to mount a public relation campaign in the security area..

Q: Were you as part of your job courting the Canadians, Canadian counterpart or Canadian representatives?

BOLTON: They knew. The Canadians assigned their first POLAD to the Command to NORAD and he worked a great deal with the deputy commander of NORAD who as a Canadian three-star. Both commands were integrating staffs in the J-codes which could be uncomfortable. Basically, this was Canada's biggest air force base. There was 130, 140 Canadians assigned to Colorado Springs and a major intel post.

Q: I think you better explain at this point what this plan was designed to do, and what was the threat.

BOLTON: Which, the NORAD or the Northern Command?

Q: Let's do the Northern. NORAD we know. That's against missiles and Soviet incursions.

[crosstalk]

BOLTON: It's supposed to detect strategic air attacks on the United States, and that was the NORAD bi-national command with Canada. Admiral Keating was the commander of NORAD. The deputy commander of NORAD was a Canadian three star. The two commands did share many of the J-codes, J-1,2,4,6, and 7. But not J-3 certainly not for J3

operations because there were real legal issues when it came time to mount offensive operations.

Northern Command's mission was essentially to protect the United States against military attack. Now this is a little bit difficult because there is the National Guard, there are the services, the individual services. The Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines all think that's their job. The National Guard thinks it's their job to act within the United States. Then of course you have the entire civilian arm of the United States government: Homeland Security, Transportation, security administration, any number of inter-agency organizations, the FBI. The bad guys don't organize themselves consistent with our charts. If a cruise missile is hidden on a merchant ship 180 miles from our shore, do we use the FBI swat team, the Coast Guard, or the Navy SEALs?

It was quite a complicated command, and it was often the legal authorities as we found out in Katrina. You tend to find out the hard way that you don't have legal authority to do something. You find this out in exercises, too. The cruise missile is a good example. A cruise missile, I mean just between NORAD and Northern Command -- can we use NORAD in an offensive operation because NORAD doesn't do offense which is a big reason why the Canadians like it. For a good price they get a first class air defense and a seat at the table with the Russians on strategic matters -- all without having to worry about the nastiness of offensive operations.

NORTHCOM was complex. It was complex legally, it was complex militarily, it was complex on its relationships. For instance, with the National Guards. I told the commander that it was like a peace keeping operation. You have 50 state governors and governors are very powerful in homeland security. No one can tell a governor what to do. Not the president. People don't really understand until you try to get something done in the United States.

It's like a peace keeping operation. Some National Guards and governors are very good, very well equipped, very well trained because the federal government pays to train and equip the National Guards, but it doesn't have command authority over them except when the Guard is federalized for a specific operation. So you've got governors who may not be skilled in these areas. They may or may not be informed. National Guard elements that may or may not be trained and perhaps did not purchase the right equipment. So it's like a peace keeping operation. If Northern Command has to act within the United States upon direction of t he President, it's really like a peace keeping operation. There is a National Guard Bureau in Virginia directed by, now, a four-star but he most certainly does not command or direct the Guard. He is more a coordinator.

Q: Your basic concern was ___ after 9/11. A civilian plane would be commandeered by terrorists and head toward this. Who was defending the skies?

BOLTON: That was Operation Noble Eagle. That was the NORTHCOM operation. Operation Noble Eagle flies random combat air patrols over designated cities in the United States daily. Some cities pretty much get on the list all the time, some are random.

It’s also a network of defensive measures through the U.S. Remember, our radars before 9/11 were the NORAD radars looking out, looking outward. Operation Noble Eagle was done mostly with the Air National Guards of the several states and some Air Force; the Navy did not participate.

NORTHCOM also did disaster response coordination. Again, states are responsible for disaster response but there is no oversight and limited coordination. Does everyone have the most appropriate equipment -- they all love the decked out SUVs but few have the right communication equipment with common frequencies. Remember, no one can force the states to do anything. At least with federal grants the USG can influence some selections and training. The states have cooperative agreements that they can assist each other in an emergency, but keep in mind that a disaster can affect many states, particularly the contingent ones so partners may not be available when needed if they themselves are coping with the same disaster. And there are federal inter-agency disputes. These are all questions that are duked out in Washington, but they’re not normal questions for a military commander to deal with so you need a politically astute commander. Much depends on how U.S. history shaped the way we are organized and the way we respond -- or don't -- to disasters. It is very fascinating.

The Admiral was on the road a great deal. He visited all 50 governors and all adjutant generals of the national guards. We did exercises. Often very complex with several disasters happening at the same time that required military support or lead. Remember the bird flu scare -- questions like how to dispose of 100,000 corpses which no state can do by itself. Increasingly we included Canada and then Mexico. Canada already helped often and usually in the civilian area. For example, when there is a massive loss of electricity in the northern tier, crews will come from Canadian companies. During 9/11 the Canadian coast guard came down pretty far along the New England coast to backstop our assets

It was a very difficult at times for the Command in that there was so much ambiguity which drives the military crazy. The State Department has a very high tolerance for ambiguity. It’s very happy in the grey area, but the military is not comfortable when there aren't plans and clean lines of authority for every situation.

As far as foreign policy aspects of it, initially I was just watching a lot of these domestic exercises. In a real life hurricane in Miami, the nurses could not get there but the babies were being born anyway so the military sent obstetrical teams in to help. We were doing that kind of plugging in trying to get a dialogue going with the states.

As far as foreign policy goes, I was very taken up the first year with the Canada and the difficult relationship of which the Canadians were aware. On the military level again, the Canadians were not particularly helpful in so many things we needed their help on until Afghanistan started to take off. Canadians went to Afghanistan and were doing a good job although as one senior leader said in my hearing, “We have to learn combat lessons that our grandfathers knew in World War II,” because the Canadians had not been in combat in decades, and they were really getting knocked around there.

But the new NORAD agreement. There was some interest in some Colorado Springs quarters in much more integration than either political body would tolerate. For example, there was a proposal knocking around to fully integrate the militaries. It's one thing to have an integrated defense over North America—over Canada —and even that isn't totally integrated because we can't cross the border without asking the Canadians. It's not as though we can go zipping into Canada anytime we want. It was difficult to coordinate the air defense over Detroit for the Super Bowl.

I pulled out of getting too involved in what was happening in NORAD planning, among the NORAD planners, because they were just in a dream world. I thought it better to wait until Washington focused on it.

Then the negotiations started, and the actually made some good changes I think in the agreement, but it was heavy negotiation at times. I suggested docking language allowing other countries to join thinking perhaps Mexico at some point might in the future would want to think about it but eventually that fell off because it might attract the attention of other countries wanting to join in whom we have no interest.

Things started changing with Canada because Prime Minister Harper came in who was more conservative and much more interested in repairing the relationship. The PR campaign was even advertising in the DC metro system. It was called "Canada Ally."

Harper is from the west and is a very different kind of prime minister. He did not have a majority government and those usually don't last long in Canada. He's still around. Gratuitous insults about the president stopped. Our relationship with Canada started to improve which was very good. It made things more pleasant and more fun to work with my counterpart from the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade who was very effective and an excellent colleague.

We were focusing a lot on Mexico, which is a difficult relationship, has been for several hundred years and particularly in the security area where the Mexican military considers itself to be the guardian and the custodian of Mexican nationalism. In the embassy in Mexico, if you're working with Hacienda which is finance department equivalent, you're talking to people who went to Harvard and Wharton. If you're working with the Foreign or Defense Secretariats, both of those departments consider themselves to be ideological and intellectual guardians of nationalism and culture. Of course, there are solid historic reasons for this.

Q: In that relationship it seems that… I've talked to people going back to the '20s. The Foreign Ministry has almost always been the playground of the left.

BOLTON: They put their intellectuals and literary stars in foreign affairs. It's changing certainly, but at the time it was very sensitive on a institutional level. As far as defense, there isn't even a ministry of defense. There's no civilian Secretary of Defense. You have the navy, and you have the army, and you have the head of the army who of course thinks he's the senior, but the head of the army and the head of the navy are supposed to be

equal and each holds two functions: equivalents of the civilian and the service chief function. You've got a very complicated relationship right there. It's a relationship that the president of Mexico treats carefully because again, there's no really clear civilian control of the military although of course the PRI through history, the Provisional Revolutionary Party, had firm control of the military.

The army was not interested in dealing with the Command. The navy which is always considered to be the most liberal and the most progressive was designated to make friends and see what is in it for them. On an institutional level there are 200 years of bad relations and bad history. The personal level was pleasant. They're a delight to deal with, and it was very revealing to a lot of our U.S. officers at the command. The people in J5 who were in military plans working on the relationship came out of the Embassy in Mexico City, the defense attaché's office or office of defense cooperation which is really of course what runs the relationship with the command, and they were great. I found the Mexican military to be gracious, at least the Navy.

I remember telling some of our senior officers as we were back on the plane leaving Mexico that one of the generals they had met the night before has a son who flies C-17s for the USAF and married to an USAF nurse. He was from a border town and had married a U.S. citizen and divorced. An example of how complicated the relationship is. Most of the Mexicans had a good grasp on the problems facing them and the need to do some deep and serious strategic rethinking, and there were generational differences.

Q: What would be some of the problems that you couldn't talk about?

BOLTON: Oh, Mexican vulnerabilities are their business and they know what they are. One, of course, is the petroleum infrastructure. We tried to reassure them that they had no fear of an attack from the north. They generally didn't think regionally or internationally so they had to change their strategic approach. That includes working not only with us, but with their neighbors. As their economic structures changed, that is, to include more external relationships, so does their exposure and the sources of threats.

Cooperating with the United States is a good idea, but it's a slow process. You would talk to young Mexicans who spoke great English, who had studied overseas, who had traveled. It sounds funny but Mexicans can be insular. They were very frustrated within their own ministries because there were some in the older generation that would not change. I would talk to young Mexican military officers, and they would be frustrated because they don't consider the United States to be the Number One threat to Mexican independence and prosperity. So there was a lot of tension between the generations.

Mexico will change over the next 10-15 years in ways that will surprise us. I was pleased with when the Mexicans agreed to send an exchange, basically a liaison officer to Northern Command.

The Mexicans had liaison officers in Joint Forces Command and in Virginia, in Norfolk. They sent an officer to NORTHCOM because we had to understand how the Mexicans

were organized for disaster assistance. We had to understand each other's structure to be able to help. There were many civilian agencies represented at the command but we needed to know how each military would work with the other and to anticipate the practical problems. The Mexican disaster assistance organization is pretty much like ours in many ways. Is state focused, requiring specific political decisions before the military can act.

There were practical issues with Canada, practical problems, like what if the U.S. military sends trucks to Canada. What about customs or agriculture inspections. They finally we needed an agreement with the Canadians so if the civilians approve military to military assistance in a disaster the trucks can cross the border without having to get export permits or something. We were starting to talk to the Mexicans about these types of problems because we had practical examples with the flooding all the time in El Paso or in Juarez or along the Rio Grande. Of course the bird flu issues. Birds don't care. They just fly across the border. And chickens are very vulnerable to bird flu.

Q: Mexico was hit particularly hard about that time with bird flu.

BOLTON: Yes. Then of course we had the NAFTA agreement which certainly integrates the aspects of the export economies of the three countries. Once you integrate elements, you integrate risk and vulnerability. The Mexicans were starting to realize their vulnerability was their oil industry. They have oil platforms sitting out there in the Gulf of Mexico. They realize they needed to understand how a navy would protect an oil platform.

We had a big interagency group, a joint interagency coordinating group (JIACG) where we had representatives from many civilian agencies and some NGOs such as the Red Cross. This was a Rumsfeld initiative in the regional commands. The security ones, CIA, FBI, I don't think we had Tobacco and Firearms yet. Transportation Security Agency, obviously FAA. NGA was there. Army Corps of Engineers was there. We also had a State Department liaison/action officer but not until about a month after Katrina much to my great regret because I had to put my action officer hat on as well as my advisory one.

We had all sorts of lines reaching into Mexico. One issue is always civilian-military relations. If you think ours are difficult, you should see anyone else's. We were making a lot of very good progress. We still had trouble with the army. They didn't want to talk to us, and they could be almost rude at times.

Q: Which army?

BOLTON: The Mexican army. The head of the Mexican army was reluctant to deal with a regional command. They've come around, but it was difficult.

Essentially the Command set up processes and habits. No one wants to exchange business cards at the scene of a disaster. We also had many visitors from other countries, first of all to go to Cheyenne Mountain or to go to NORTHCOM for homeland defense

briefings. Also of interest to several countries was ballistic missile defense system. ADM Keating had delegated authority. This was NORTHCOM, not NORAD because the Canadians were not interested in offensive or defensive operations beyond the horizon. NORAD doesn't do offense. While NORAD and the Canadians might defend the continent, only the U.S. would take the next step. .

In Cheyenne Mountain they monitor sensors from satellites and radars from stations and ships -- both have to register a launch for action to take place. The civilian leadership decides quickly what action they will take in the face of indications of an attack launch. Everybody was very interested in missile defense. The Indians are very interested, The Russians. We were also working with the Russians with the strategic rocket forces, and again, trying to figure out what was happening in Russia is always difficult, and trying to find out what's happening in the Russian military is really difficult.

Q: Was it difficult because they're being secretive or it was so complicated that…

BOLTON: It was everything. There was a lot of churning going on in the Russian military and government at the time. They had all these issues with staffing, hazing, and corruption and no money for modernization. The strategic rocket forces were struggling and that's one of their elite elements that keeps Russia at the table even as it declines to regional power status. I mean otherwise it's just a country with a third rate military, but with their strategic rocket forces they know it's a country with nuclear missiles.

We did host a visit from the rocket forces. One of our goals is to get more visibility on each other's bomber movements. A type of confidence-building exercise. Hard to say if we've made much progress. I was surprised at how much they saw at Cheyenne Mountain, but I'm sure they have long had the coordinates in any case.

Remember that on 9/11, NORAD was monitoring what it assumed was a Russian exercise. The next thing NORAD knew, we were under attack. Were the Russians doing more than an exercise? There was a report of a truck bomb heading up the road towards Cheyenne Mountain and the big door was closed for the first time in anger.

It was a Canadian three star who was in charge that morning at NORAD because of the this Russian exercise. The thinking was why don't the Russians tell us when they have these exercises. I assume these were outside the OSCE process. I mean fortunately the Russians figured out something was happening on 9/11 so they ceased the exercise before someone got the wrong idea. It was in the 9/11 commission report.

We were trying to get some confidence mechanisms going with their rocket forces folks, and to his credit Admiral Keating was very conservative in making sure he didn't see progress where there was no progress. Often, the audience for Russians actions is its domestic population.

Admiral Keating was very cagey and very shrewd and also again, so balanced in understanding that personal efforts don't necessarily require breakthroughs.

Dealing with the Mexicans we had a great deal of progress, and the Canadian relationship was improving under PM Harper. The Canadians had a new military commander who was impressive. He was effective and very much loved by his forces. The number two in the command in NORAD went off to command the Canadian Afghanistan forces in Afghanistan.

Then we had Katrina. That really changed so much. That was '05. We had hurricanes, and I would sit them out. It had nothing to do with me as long as it didn't hit another country in the AOR. We got the word on Katrina. Of course all this is Thursday afternoon before a three-day weekend. That's always an indication that trouble is brewing. The Command had been tracking the storms and had been in touch with local authorities, weather service, etc. I went to the meetings. Keep in mind State Department has a passport office in New Orleans which became important that next week.

When I left Friday night, we knew the hurricane was coming. The Command had already learned that it should pre-write military orders. We already learned what people need generally in hurricanes. So the Command had all these prepared requests and pre-approved orders ready so that if the President or the secretary of defense gave the word, nobody had to sit there and start typing up the order for the joint staff. We knew they generally needed helicopters. They generally needed transportation They needed tents and plastic sheeting. They generally needed communication support. We were all ready to go. We were just monitoring it over the weekend, watching as it crossed Florida at I think a category three but concerned as it strengthened crossing the Gulf.

I think it was maybe Sunday night, we knew they got hit with a strong storm. We waited and we waited for the call. The governor of Louisiana took her time going to the President for assistance, but she had no visibility on what was actually happening and the level of destruction. The Federal government can access satellite. The governor of the of Louisiana started pleading for help on television and *finally* made the call to the President.

Q: What was the problem?

BOLTON: It was the same problem all of these governors have. Some governors think it's politically weak to ask for help from the federal government, the same way local sheriffs don't want to ask the state police and the state police don't want to ask for FBI help. We had to be careful with vocabulary.

Finally she said, "Yes, I need help." What kind of help? You need to do an assessment. You need to know what the needs are, and that was very difficult to do in that situation. What's there, what's not there. The U.S. military doesn't have law enforcement responsibilities, so when it comes time to controlling the Super Dome or when it comes time for knocking on houses to see who's there, the U.S. military has to go in with the National Guard who can have a law enforcement function. NORTHCOM set up a task

force commanded by LTG Honoré who was commanding the Third Army which handles army training east of the Mississippi.

The Coast Guard does have law enforcement responsibilities within a certain narrow band of the coast. But they had no authority in downtown New Orleans. Of course, the Louisiana National Guard had been federalized to allow it get the proper assistance and work with the U.S. military for unity of effort and unity of command.

We had a lot of difficult problems initially. Communication were totally broken down. Other states' national guards were coming to Louisiana's assistance, but some had no satellite communication capability, others had incompatible frequencies, and so many basic problems. Forget the cell phones. Verizon and all the companies wanted to go in and put the cell phone towers up, and the state was just basically grabbing their trucks. As far as getting these initial cooperative efforts up and going, it was very difficult, and it raised so many issues like can military chaplains administer to private citizens? Not under law, so if you have military chaplains there and there's a group of civilians needing some serious ministering, can he do it? The federal government can't provide priests and ministers to private citizens, but what about the need. Operating in the homeland was different.

Q: Wasn't there any point where. I would have thought that the President would say, "Look. We've got a horrible disaster here and we're putting the Vice-President in charge. Please coordinate your stuff, and let's coordinate it, and let's get it done."

BOLTON: There are any number of constitutional and legal issues involved. We talked about the Insurrection Act -- could the President step in and have the federal government take charge. Not really. Not unless they were in rebellion, insurrection. I had to go to meetings with a copy of the Constitution because I would have to check just what "Article II" was about.

My problems started Tuesday morning when the Ops Center called and said, "What do we do with all this stuff?" I said, "What stuff?" They said, "All the donations we're getting from other countries for Katrina. For Louisiana." I said, "I'll get back to you." That was the last sensible thing I think I said or did. That started the whole foreign policy aspect of a domestic disaster for which we had no precedent.

I discouraged the Secretary from going, not even the President would be touching down because there was so little dry land. She went to Alabama. Then I had the military come to me saying that State called the task force and put a request in for access and support into downtown New Orleans and the J5 planning group asked me why. They asked if we had some kind of black operation there! I said, no, but we do have a Passport office and if we don't want the FARC issuing its own passports, we need to get there and get the issued passports, money, original documents, and any seals and stamps there. The passport staff had gone home Friday with no idea how bad Canal Street was going to be.

Again, it wasn't so much the hurricane. It was the levees, and it was the flooding, that was the situation in Louisiana. In Mississippi it was wind damage. It was like a different place entirely. All of a sudden we got all of these countries insisting on sending items.

It was also the UN General Assembly. It was September. We have all these presidents and prime ministers coming for the UN General Assembly, and they're going to have their own airplanes. They wanted to put all the assistance on their airplane and of course they want to be photographed turning over all this assistance. Louisiana is all under water. There's no place to do this, plus we didn't know much yet about the needs.. We needed de-watering and un-watering equipment, MREs, dredging and port clearing equipment. We didn't need clothing and most other items. Once there was a White House decision to accept appropriate items, we decided to divide offers between items intended for military use (but this was not what is normally considered to be "military assistance" because these were not arms) and civilian items intended to handled by the civilian NGOs. I worked on the first category and helped to channel items either as intended for the military or intended for civilian groups and therefore not be processed by the military.

What we wound up doing was basically having USAID operate within the U.S. because the only organization we have in the country that's experienced in operating in an austere environment. Because what do you do when you have no electricity for lengthy periods -- days and weeks or more? We don't know what to do in the United States. We proposed using wind up radios like we deliver overseas. All these devices that we would use overseas we suddenly had to turn around and use in the U.S. We also had to set up a clearing house which we did at an US airbase in Arkansas that AID ran. First initially we had Air Force do it. The loadmasters set up at this Air Force base in Arkansas that would be the gateway to receiving all this foreign assistance. Now, not everything was needed, but all countries wanted their items to be accepted. While the TV coverage showed a dreadful situation, there were not shortages across the board. The last thing we needed was 50,000 tee shirts from country X -- particularly if were expected to go and pick them up. Fortunately we managed to make sure that the command had the authority to accept or decline assistance intended for the military's tasks. If the Department called me about a donation intended for a task the military was conducting, I had the command inquire downstream; if needed, fine and if not, we declined the offer kindly. I remember going into the office of the Deputy Commander who was wonderful officer to tell him that I had no authority or responsibility in the Command, but he needs to know that I'm next door making all sorts of decisions for the Command. He just shrugged and said not to worry, that they would back me all the way.

Q: The Canadians took over part of our coast protection…

BOLTON: It was the Canadian Coast Guard that watched area around northern New England because we had to move everything down. They also started a frigate underway before "asking."

There wasn't much we needed as a country -- we really do have food and clothing in this country -- but we did need some specialized military engineering services. We needed

Navy divers. The Gulf was a mess underwater where there is a superhighway of pipelines and navigational aids. It was possible that navigational aids had been moved. All the buoys. If you look at a map of the pipelines in the Gulf, it make your pause. They had to check every navigational aid and every pipeline for damage. The channels had changed. You need very experienced divers to do that. We had Navy divers from other countries do that. We had the French Navy divers, we had some Canadian Navy divers. We needed some MREs quickly because of loss of refrigeration.

Q: Meals Read to Eat

BOLTON: But we sent so many cases of MREs that one of the senior officers from the south said, "There isn't going to be a duck blind in Louisiana that doesn't have a case of MREs in it next fall." He was absolutely right. It took about a week for cases to show up on eBay. Another problem was that apparently, MREs from Europe can be eaten by U.S. troops on NATO duty but cannot be imported into the U.S. because of concerns about mad cow disease, per USDA. We were surprised. We also wanted to know what happened to the Tabasco factory. In one of the briefings someone asked about Tabasco which is like water for the military for the MREs, and is made near New Orleans. The next day there was a power point slide with the status. They had gotten in touch with the factory which is on an island while the headquarters was on the mainland. They had taken everybody to the mainland, but the factory was still producing.

The European commander NATO wanted to test its military quick reaction emergency disaster response capability. We already have the Poles lined up and other NATO contributors, but we had to scrub all our arrangements to allow NATO to test itself which caused delays.

A surprise that gave us the most satisfaction was the Mexicans offered assistance with Mexican military, both the army and navy. When we heard , I certainly strongly recommended that the Command accept it.

The Mexican Navy sent a frigate with some helicopters. They were going to Mississippi to help with the immediate recovery efforts. Ships are wonderfully self-contained and need no support so they're ideal. The Canadians were also sending a ship. I was hoping for a "three amigos flotilla" but I don't think they overlapped for more than a day, given the distance the Canadians had to steam. One questions that came up often from military participants was their own "force protection" needs. After the wild reports of anarchy, some countries wanted to come armed, but we refused that option.

The Mexicans were nearby. We had a Navy ship there serving as a command center so they could coordinate with the Mexican and Canadian ships as far as what needed doing and what they were prepared to help with. Lou Dobbs show of Fox kept calling asking about the command structure. I found it curious that they wanted to know but surprised they had nothing better to do.

Q: Lou Dobbs being…

BOLTON: From Fox who was the anti-immigration, anti-Mexican, anti-foreign, anti-everything. He was particularly anti-Mexican on his show.

The Mexican Navy had divers. They had a Lynx helicopter on it. They worked in Mississippi which had wind damage. The Mexican Army sent 50 trucks, 215 military personnel to set up a field kitchen in San Antonio where so many internally displaced persons had been relocated. We trying to smooth the way for both of these operations and had a great team with State, the Command's J5, the U.S. and Mexican Embassies and other key cabinet departments such as Homeland Security who identified an unused border crossing point that the U.S. could quickly stand up for the exclusive use of the Mexican Army's convoy. Again, any problems came from USDA.

We had 50 German military come. We had the Dutch deliver several huge pumps for de-watering. They weren't military pumps, but being handled in military channels because of the size -- they were too big for U.S. military C5's! They came on chartered Russian military transports.

But the Mexicans… The U.S. Embassy did a fantastic job from the Office of Defense Cooperation which is the office that works for the Command. They sent a major up with them the whole way riding shotgun. We got Immigration and Naturalization opened a border crossing point that they don't use normally, so they had their own border crossing point. We got basically everything cleared.

The only people that didn't cooperation were the U.S. Department of Agriculture! Because the Mexicans were coming up to cook in San Antonio at a military base where thousands of people displaced from Louisiana had been relocated, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's had loads of questions and requirements -- and the military cooks had to wear hairnets. They really seemed to not understand there was an emergency underway. They got the kitchen set up and it was a big hit.

Then Texas was upset. They wanted to know who authorized the Mexicans to come to Texas. I had two constitutional issues in two days which I thought pretty unusual. We probably dropped the ball by not coordinating with Texas because these internally displaced persons were at Camp Kelly, I think was the name. It's a U.S. military camp, and we were putting the Mexicans there at this U.S. military camp. Well, we hadn't cleared that with the governor who wanted to know why we were letting Mexicans into his state. Well, border control is a federal issue. They set up this very good kitchen. It was the only fresh food in the whole area of operation which was like three or four states. They served hundreds of thousands of meals and said nothing about the annoying requirements from USDA.

There were so many issues that were new. I had the problem with the a certain state national guard which had a partner relationship with a certain country in Latin America. The Guard didn't want to be left out of anything but didn't think it had to coordinate with the designated COCOM, NORTHCOM, to enter an AOR. NORTHCOM was the

"Supported Commander" which is a special status in military orders and reflects a decision made by the President. I pushed back hard on that. This area of operation wasn't a movie theater. Who said you can introduce foreign military into a combined joint task force area or joint task force area? Nobody's had time or resources to hold the hands of this small country in Latin America military. There's a military command situation. You folks in the Guard and the Embassy are still U.S. military.

Then the governor of Mississippi wanted all the foreigners to go home.

A very interesting issue was "When do international military elements go home?" That got dropped on my lap. No one wanted to be seen leaving while the TV pictures were still bad. But then again, even if there was nothing else for them to accomplish, we were reluctant to be seen "expelling" a unit. We didn't want to drag things out. We had no liability arrangements and unless you were NATO, we didn't have a SOFA agreement, so every day we're living on borrowed time as far as liability issues. That became an interesting diplomatic challenge of how do you leave gracefully?

I did work out something with the Mexicans. I think we did something like a "no objection" statement to their withdrawing. It was such a help to mil-mil relationship. That the Mexicans were able to enter the U.S. with flags flying to help us when needed.

In case you don't think networks matter, we had French Navy divers there . The French DATT in D.C. was a good friend of mine from Air Force War College. He was a French colonel at the time, Mirage pilot who sat next to me for six months. We stayed in touch, and he eventually wound up as the DATT. He called me one afternoon and said he didn't know whom to talk to but he knew I was there: he wanted his divers back at some point but didn't if we thought they had completed their tasks and could he have some kind of release in the event there are complaints that it looked bad to leave. I asked downstream and found out they were only needed for one more day and after that they are welcome to leave with our gratitude. Having networks, you can't beat it.

The Dutch were great. In fact I told the command the minute I heard they were offering hydrology assistance to grab it because remember, I was coming from a Dutch post and they know water disaster management. They were sending New Orleans these enormous pumps that we didn't have. I learned so much about hydrology -- unwatering and dewatering are different.

Q: Of course their country's under water.

BOLTON: Yes. Stunningly so.

Then we were done with the pumps as federal government. But the mayor of New Orleans wanted to keep them. The joint staff representative in the ops center, an air force colonel with whom I had worked extensively, called that he had just received a faxed letter from the mayor addressed to him by name asking for the pumps. He couldn't figure

out how the mayor got his name! We pursued it knowing that the Dutch would agree because no one really wanted to haul those things back

But you know a lot of the assistance was of course being done through civilian channels and being handled by the Red Cross and distributed by the Red Cross and coordinated with the military, but we weren't involved in that other than making sure that none of this interfered with the military missions there. General Honoré was of course was working for Admiral Keating and was the perfect one for running the military side of the house.

The long, complicated experience was valuable for what it revealed. The president came out because we had another hurricane coming of course, Rita, and we had Wilma. It was boom, boom, boom right on top of each other in the same area. The president was ready to go down to Rita but waited in Colorado Springs until NORTHCOM had a feel for how bad it would be. We had about two days notice for his visit but as I say, two months, two days, you're going to get the visit prepared for.

He came on Friday afternoon, and stayed until Saturday afternoon. We did two briefings. We did the briefing for the CNN cameras, and then we did the real briefing because we were doing two briefings a day, one at 4:30 in the morning, in order to get the briefing to Rumsfeld so that he could get it for the president.

We had a good meeting with the president, and he walked around the Command, came to our office, told me about his morning conversation with Secretary Rice and we chatted about the way ahead with Mexico.

From the beginning there was a sense of the historic, that this hadn't been done before and that yes, some will be testifying and the rest of us will be dealing with GAO. The Command has a historian and a process for capturing "lessons learned" as the Command works. From the second it started there was a team that did nothing but gather lessons learned. They shadowed you the whole way. They came in to see you every couple of days or every day or two. "What are you learning? What's not working? What are the problems? What is the great discovery that we were making?" Something beyond State.

Apparently the military did have the communications backbone for the United States before 9/11. Someone thought it was a good idea to take that away and give it to the industry. I bet they regretted that because it was extremely difficult to rebuild the communications backbone. I mean, there was a month easily with no cell phone service. That was a mistake. Taking away that control of the communication backbone from the military made things very hard.

The list of lessons learned was just as long as our arms and legs. Communications always seems to be the weakest and most essential element. Radios were not compatible. You can't guarantee that a state will come in and help another state. They had the opportunity. They have compacts to help each other, but no guarantee. No state's required to help another state. In fact with Mississippi's in trouble, Louisiana's was in no condition to help.

There’s new legislation that tries to compensate for some of these problems. Many of the problems are rooted in the fact that we have federal system and that governors have enormous power and responsibility. Short of invoking the Insurrection Act - which you can't do if the state isn't in rebellion - should the president be able to intervene when a governor fails to act in a timely way?

Q: Was there the response of the federal government to the hurricane? It was highly criticized.

BOLTON: Unfairly, I think. The responsibility for disaster preparation and response is the state. It wasn't FEMA's job to evacuate or feed people. The states got off very, very lightly.

Q: I was wondering, you all during this process feel about that?

BOLTON: Well, the action should have gone to the federal government and military much faster. The scope of that disaster was beyond the knowledge and capability of one governor.

FEMA coordinates, it does not provide assistance and it does not evacuate. That’s the state unless the state requests federal assistance. Disaster assistance is organized by, and the responsibility of the states. Federal government is very limited in disaster assistance. The U.S. military cannot search your house to see if you're trapped. That's a law enforcement, police function which the national guard can do. That's why they had to put teams together so that there was at least one national guard member with every military element making the rounds.

Planning is hard. An old folks home is required to have an emergency plan. Yes, we’ve got a contract with XYZ bus company to evacuate our older folks if something happens. Well so does everybody else have a contract with XYZ bus company. Everybody’s got a contract with XYZ bus company that only had 10 buses so those 10 buses are claimed ten times over in an emergency - assuming the drivers don't head for their families and then the hills.

This have to be organized to the level of “Okay, where are the keys?” The next disaster Rita two weeks later the unsung story was Transportation Command moving thousands of patients over a weekend. Then states said, “Okay, bring them back.” “No, it’s one way. You want them back, you come get them.” It’s a decision that the people in the United States are going to have to make as to the pain of a federal system. I mean, how much authority do they want the federal government to have, and is someone going to have the authority to go in and basically tell a state what to do.

So you want posse comitatus as law, then fine. This is the price of posse comitatus. Interestingly enough, there was no enormous ground swell. In fact it was very difficult to get that amended law into that new law that allows the president to have more leeway

when the situation in the state is so bad the state doesn't even know how much trouble it's in to just go in without the express invitation of the governor.

It was the largest movement of America military in the U.S. since the Civil War, like 80,000 troops on the move between the regular military and all the National Guard who are two separate organizations although the guard can be federalized and most were in Katrina. It really was like a peace keeping organization. I remember all those guards coming with some very capable elements, some not well prepared. .

So Katrina really highlighted new areas in the International Affairs area. We made a lot of changes, set up a procedure for in the event we are in a situation again where all these countries want to assist. I mean as far as Mexico was concerned, our relationship with Mexico was a real breakthrough because the Mexicans were justly proud that they would help.

The Canadians at the Command were fun when we said the Mexicans were coming up to San Antonio. They offered to take a hundred Canadians from the Command, rent a bus, and watch the Alamo for us while the Mexicans were in town

Working with the Mexicans really did make a change in the way we dealt with each other after that. It really did level the playing field in a lot of ways and open up the possibilities for dialogue in disaster assistance and in cooperating across the border in areas that you involve mutual assistance. The Mexicans certainly have had their experiences in their own country and they are organized in a federal way similar to ours which raises similar challenges.\

We went to Mexico for Independence Day "El Grito" in September a few weeks after Katrina hit. The Command's graphics people worked up two wonderful posters -- suitable for framing -- of soft views of the Mexican Army and Mexican Navy on duty in the U.S. and the Admiral presented them and I asked for a set for the Embassy.

But Katrina definitely shaped the next year. I was there three years, but it definitely marked the next year and a half, mostly the lessons learned and GAO reviews.

Q: Debbie, I'm thinking obviously there must be more to talk about. This is very important. If you make note of this, and the next time anything else… One of the things I'd like to ask, a two parter: With your bosom buddy Hugo Chavez. What was Venezuela doing during the time, and also how did we view Venezuela from the Northern Command? Let's talk about that, and let's talk about Cuba on that.

BOLTON: We had the Cuba issue come up already.

Q: I'm talking about beyond the fact…

BOLTON: Oh, as a regional threat.

Today is the 18th of May 2010 with Debbie Bolton. Debbie, where did we leave off?

BOLTON: I'm still in the Northern Command in Colorado Springs. The three years were dominated by policy planning for homeland defense events like Katrina. Then I think we also discussed the incredible progress we made with Mexico. I was very fond of telling the commander we've done more in these five years with Mexico than we had done in 50 years.

Q: We really haven't talked much about Mexico.

BOLTON: We talked about Canada and NORAD, but the Mexico piece was different. A comparison with a very close relationship with the Canadians and a cool one with Mexico's military. It was difficult to handle initially, and we worked essentially and closely with the Navy.

Q: Did you get any feeling for our people, our professional people, in Northern Command looking at Mexican military forces and they come away with any judgment because one just has a feeling that there really isn't… I don't know. It just doesn't seem to resonate.

BOLTON: That's because Mexico is insular and it had strong historical reasons for regarding the U.S. as a strategic threat. Mexico has never really looked beyond borders which it's doing now. They do not contribute to UN Peacekeeping operations. It didn't have an integrated national security strategy. The military did support civil authorities in disaster assistance and some law enforcement support and in fact it's the most well thought of institution in Mexico because it does tend to be effectively responsive to the civilian state.

Q: Like National Guard.

BOLTON: The mission are similar to our National Guard's. The Mexican thinking seem to be to defend the country against an invasion from the United States, so you can imagine how dated and probably ineffective their planning is. They are starting to realize they have oil wells to protect and a way of life. Younger officers are anxious to participate in "the revolution in military affairs", the new way of thinking going on in modern militaries around the world.

Mexico actually did participate in World War II. This is why I hammer on my military classes about who are your real friend? The Mexicans actually flew with us in the Philippines. In World War II there was an Aztec Squadron. Mexicans don't care to recall that now. I liked to throw that out to my military students who were uncomfortable with Mexican flags at immigration demonstrations but had no problem with Newport RI being full of Irish flags. Who did more to help us in World War II? History has lots of moving parts and the relationship with Mexico is very complex.

A lot of it was trying to work out modalities of working together and maybe leave the hard stuff on the side. problem. We're going to have to work on practical issues and practical problems." I was out on one of their frigates for a demonstration of taking down a drug smuggling "go fast" boat. The frigate launches a helo, a rigid Zodiac type boat, even divers. I'd seen other countries do it and the Mexicans did it as well as anyone.

They're also building fast patrol boats that are really very appropriate for that coastal issue because again, it's not only drugs they have to worry about, but that's a big threat to the state. We shut down the Columbians being able to go across the Caribbean then they just ran the drugs through Central America and Mexico. That's how Mexico developed the problem. They're starting to realize that maybe their mission is not an invasion by the United States. Maybe it's an attack on their oil wells about which requires knowledge of infrastructure protection. The

Q: They've got a horrible problem.

BOLTON: Yes, they have a horrible problem. The border is so complex. And also what was so revealing is how we're not so well organized for a lot of this, either. I mean, for instance when a tunnel is detected under the border it starts a storm of interagency meetings because it's not clear in the U.S. government who's in charge of counter-tunnel management -- who detects it, who cleans it out, who prosecutes, who seals it. DEA is interested in the drug finds, but they don't care about anything else in the tunnel, snakes or smuggling. The U.S. Geological Survey is involved. The state, for example, Arizona, is involved, so every time we make these great steps forward or every time we have these great operational successes in detecting, the execution and clean up can be messy.

Q: In a way I can see you were the oil in the hinges there. All of a sudden we had agencies on both sides including internally in the United States and Mexico. ___ we never thought about working together.

BOLTON: It was never an issue of ill will, often a problem of charters, authorities, and lines.

Q: Certainly the foreign background. What are you going to do about it?

BOLTON: By that time we had a foreign service officer on the joint interagency (JIACG) group that the Secretary of Defense directed be established at each geographic command to resolve these practical interagency problems. There was a big one at NORTHCOM. A POLAD is not a liaison or a representative at a Command; a POLAD advises the Commander. I could not work on a problem between a J5 planner and a desk officer -- the Command is huge and I would never have the time. Our foreign service office on the JIACG was just terrific, but she was just banging her head against the wall regularly.

Q: And the civilians.

BOLTON: There's a lot of people who have a piece of the border, and of course there's also Southern Command which shares the joint interagency task force (JIATF) with the counter drug. It's really complicated and new to so many people. All of a sudden people from other agencies who were GS-13s and 14s, these were relatively senior people who suddenly find themselves in this new homeland security construct and traveling overseas officially for the first time to meet with Mexican counterparts, but without international experience.

It was very difficult at times because they didn't have the cultural background. They didn't know Mexicans are formal. Mexico on vacation is not Mexico at work. Working visitors they are not on vacation, so please don't wear a polo shirt to the official meetings. It could be very frustrating for the foreign service officer who was involved in making a lot of these meetings happen and trying to get a lot of agencies to be pulling together on projects. She did a wonderful job. After that she went off to be in the political section in Islamabad. That was her reward for her hard work -- more hard work. Then I think she was in the political section in Afghanistan.

She had her hands full with the Mexicans of course who deal with similar organizational issues and dealing with constitutional, federal issues similar to ours.

We looked like a model of coordination compared to almost any other country, trying to get the Mexicans or almost any country to sit in the same room with their other agencies and our other agencies and talk in front of each other. They'll sit one-on-one with us, but they don't necessarily want to sit with all their other agencies and with us. That was always a problem. They were observing our exercises. They were starting to participate in our big exercises, our big national exercises that the Canadians and the Brits and sometimes the Australians participated in. I was very happy with the progress in Mexico.

Q: When you say that Mexico was for the first time in a way getting involved in the Caribbean, what did you mean?

BOLTON: They're getting involved in the Caribbean. Certainly they were aware they had a problem with Guatemala, pretty much the same problem we have on the Mexican border with them they have with Guatemala on migration and drugs.

We worked to include the civilian elements, too. We invited Mexican congressmen from their congress' relevant committees. And we invited civilians from the foreign ministry who dealt with U.S. issues. We also were starting to develop a council of elders. I mean we reached out to who had knowledge of the Mexican military and civilian-military relations who could advise us.

Q: This is post the election of Fox. There was really a beginning to a breakup of the old dinosaurs. Many of them are. Were things beginning to change.

BOLTON: Without a doubt. Clearly changing. Everybody understood the foreign ministry and defense would be the last given their heavily nationalist bent. Even the young PRI congressmen we worked with or visited us were different.

I spent a lot of time trying to get rid of any unnecessary irritants like the way we do the presentation of the command's areas of operations. One of the first slides they put up in the standard briefing was the official areas of defense operations for the combatant commands. North America, well, Canada, U.S., Mexico, was all green. Latin America is all pink, and each geographic command has its colors. The borders are barely visible. I said, "Okay, I'm a Mexican. This is the first thing I'm seeing and what I want to know is what happened to Mexico? Why is Mexico the same color at the United States and Canada? What did we join when I wasn't looking?" Trying to get Command to understand that as St. Augustine said, "Go out and preach the gospel, and if you must, use words." "You're out there preaching the gospel of mutual respect for nation states and independence, and you haven't said a word yet but the first thing I would want to know as a Mexican briefing visitor is what happened to my country." I said we had to somehow make sure we showed clearly that the area of operations was composed of separate countries, but what a struggle as if I was trying to overturn military doctrine. Later I found out that a visiting group of young Canadian officers had also taken offense at seeing Canada had almost disappeared on that same briefing slide. Such an easy fix.

I got them to change the name of one of their exercises when I got there. It was one of the first things I said. They were briefing on an exercise at the southern border not involving the Mexicans. It was supporting the border patrol generally with equipment, radars and things like that and sound detectors to work on migration detection. I listened to them brief the exercise and its name. The name was taken from a geographic feature but it sounded vicious. Again, I'm the only female, and it was a table full of two stars and three stars and one four star—and I thought, "Okay, I can't let this go any more." I warned that it would sound awful if it came out in the newspaper attached to the mission's purpose. They said, "Oh, well it's just a geographic feature, and this isn't a public exercise, and no one's going to find out." The minute anyone tells you no one's going to find out, you know someone's going to find out. I said, "No. It sounds disrespectful. It sounds like you're going to do something horrible to Maria, Jose, and the two kids as they try to cross, and that's not what you intend."

Then it became "The operation formerly known as…" . Then they gave it a number. Then sure enough, they lost one of the surveillance aerostatic balloons. Where do you think it went? Mexico! I said, "Okay, there's your exercise nobody will find out about."

And I also advised them to change the name of the series of national homeland defense exercises that included references to American Indians. The Deputy Commander saw my point and got them changed... well ahead of the outburst of sensitivity over issues like the Washington Redskins.

Q: Winston Churchill said that when they were planning on the Normandy invasion, he said, "We've got to make sure we have something that has resonance. We don't want to have something that comes up Operation Mickey Mouse for the invasion.

BOLTON: Yes. That sounds a lot better than the computer generated names that many exercises acquire.

Q: The computer generated is something. You're not quite sure. Most people don't have the sensitivities. We picked this up from our mothers' milk practically…

BOLTON: I always found that to be terrifying that they actually listened to me which after coming out of the State Department, you know, where it is struggle to be heard.

Working with Mexicans was really a big accomplishment, and the unit of the command that worked with Mexico was very good. I wasn't always impressed with the civilians for whom this was new -- or they thought similar to dealing with Hispanics in Colorado, but the military staff with Mexico experience was excellent. .

Q: Let's talk about the colossus to the north, Canada.

BOLTON: Canada was interesting. Do we work exclusively bilaterally with Canada and then with Mexico or do we try to work trilaterally. Now the fact that we've got the NAFTA doesn't necessarily translate into everybody having the complementary relationships. Plus the Canadians never wanted to have Mexico in the same room because the Canadians in my opinion just wanted to deal with the U.S. one-on-one and want nothing to distract us in this hemisphere.

We had the "Three Amigos Summit" as we informally called it with the U.S. president, the Canadian prime minister, and the Mexican president, but I never thought the Canadians were thrilled with that structure.

As much as I like the idea of some kind of a trilateral relationship on security, I also know we competed with the Canadians sometimes. We're selling equipment and services to the Mexicans, and the day we go there with the Canadians and we lose a sale because the Canadians have gotten information based on our sources is the day you're going to be testifying for the next six years. I had to remind folks that while we have a close Air Force relation, we are separate countries, and sometimes compete. There are things we do together, no doubt about it, but defense cooperation is also defense military sales. It's a commercial relationship as much as anything else, and don't forget that."

Q: Was there any attempt as we get stuck sometimes with Egypt and Israel to balance with Canada and Mexico or could we sell certain equipment to Canada which would be used for peace keeping like…

BOLTON: No, it wasn't a matter of anything we sell to Mexico is going to somehow impact Canada. No. Canada would like to sell things to Mexico. We want to sell things to

Mexico. We don't want to lose sales to Mexico to Canada, so my point with the command was to be very careful that when we're pushing let's say special military trucks, make sure they buy trucks made in the United States. We don't want them to buy trucks made in Canada, not that you can tell anymore. But that type of thing. And Mexico has certain human rights issues to overcome that Canada does not, and Canada is NATO.

We had bilaterals. We had trilaterals. Very few of those, U.S., Canada, and Mexico in the same room at the same time. Then we had dual bilaterals.

Q: What was a dual bilateral?

BOLTON: Bilaterals in parallel. The U.S. meets first with one, then with the other, to accomplish a common goal. It avoids two Anglo countries appearing to gang up on Mexico. When it was Canada's time to sit with the U.S., they don't want the Mexicans in the same zip code. They seem just want to deal with the U.S. It was a little cumbersome, but hey, we're diplomats. We do cumbersome. Again, that kind of apparently inefficient structure drives the military nuts.

Q: Did Northern Command have any particular issue with the Canadians?

BOLTON: We had issue with the Canadians. We have territorial issues still around Alaska - who owns what. We had of course the big missile defense issue that the Canadians didn't want to be involved in . In order to sit with us in NORAD, a Canadian officer had to be prepared to detect a launch that could require the use of the ballistic missile defense. We could hardly have an American officer sit behind the Canadian just in case something happened that the Canadian government found objectionable. Remember, NORAD for Canada is defense -- retaliation is a U.S. national function.

The then-Liberal government did not get along well with the Bush administration so there were more tensions than necessary. Intelligence sharing could be a problem. The Canadian military has large presence in the J2. But we never seemed to receive much from them. And Canada is very stove-piped. We know we passed information, but it didn't always get the distribution we intended. The RCMP might know but not the Coast Guard.

Q: Provincial?

BOLTON: Provincial police in the east but national in the western part of Canada.

Q: How about the Alaskan border? Did that cause any problems?

BOLTON: It's all NORAD. The air defense piece is fine. But finding a seamless structure for homeland defense functions wasn't so smooth. Trying to provide the air coverage for Detroit for the Super Bowl was a nightmare. If you're in an F-16, you're going to be across the border in Canada many times to orbit and maneuver. What if, God forbid, there's some kind of an attack? Then the Canadians have their F-18s, their CFA,

their Canadian 18s, and there has to be coordinating mechanism. These planes fly fast. making sure they don't bounce into each other, making sure there's a handoff. Windsor is south of Detroit, and these are high powered jets. They don't jam on the brakes at the border. When they orbit, I imagine you have to orbit them pretty much in Canada, too, so it was surprisingly complicated considering this is supposed to be an integrated North American air defense.

There is a philosophical issue. Having Canadians do the combat air patrol (CAP) planning for the inauguration. Is there something wrong with planning and staffing that. I don't know. This is a discussion that has come up. Should this be a Canadian function when this is one of the most sovereign things a country does is to provide protection for its capitol and its president. We don't do that for Canada. The Canadians had a lot more freedom of action, I'll call it, than we did in Canada or with the Canadian government. These were issues that were being sorted out. Where is the line for information exchanges? I don't know. These are just issues I think are going to always be discussed.

Q: Both Mexico and Canada have in their foreign policy a warm place in their heart for your old favorite Cuba. They sort of tweak our noses or whatever. Did that come up at all?

BOLTON: They did resolve a problem with the southern sector of NORAD -- what if planes came out of Cuban airspace to attack the U.S. Would Canada be prepared to engage or to have a role in planning defense or heaven forbid, a retaliation. Probably not. The Canadians are not really active in the southern sector of NORAD.

Q: On the Homeland Security side, was there more concern about the bad guys slipping over the Canadian border than the Mexican or vise versa?

BOLTON: The Canadians denied that strongly. They were neuralgic on it. Personally, I think the Canadian border is more vulnerable than the Mexican one.

Q: It does seem like more terrorists you hear about are slipping across or are calling it the Canadian border.

BOLTON: If you have a safe house for Uzbeks in Mexico, someone is going to know. I mean, Uzbeks are going to stand out like a sore thumb. Uzbeks don't stand out in Toronto. Nobody stands out in Toronto. The Canadians have a very flexible, very liberal resettlement refugee policy. It is still an active, immigrant-soliciting country.

Q: Would you call it Canadian stew as opposed to melting pot or something?

BOLTON: They're very much into multi culturalism, and they have all sorts of debates such as whether Sikhs can carry their knives on airplanes. I don't care if they're ceremonial or not. The Canadians have a very different approach to this, and since they're also French speaking they're also very attractive to the former French colonies, to Morocco, to Algeria, to Tunis. But the Canadians were very sensitive to any discussion of

this topic. You close that border down for a day, Canada is in a world of pain. Mexicans also, but the Canadians really, really would be damaged. Yet we have to have as fluid a border structure as possible. There are parts of the United States you can't get to unless you go through Canada.

Q; One is Vancouver, Seattle, up there.

BOLTON: Yes. There's a couple there and the whole San Juan de Fuka, just crossing the lake you go through Canada, the United States about 20 times. The U.S. is trying to get better cooperation with the Canadian Coast Guard which is only armed with harsh words, not guns. As a result they're not that scary to smugglers or anybody else up there. If they expect law enforcement action, they take a RCMP armed officer with them. Trying to get those two very different coast guard cultures to work together is a challenge, and there is a lot of talking going back and forth which is good. Same thing in the East Coast. We've got all these places where they've got that one town, I guess it's in Maine or Vermont where the border runs through the library.

Q: Yeah! I went to a play there. My wife comes from that part of Maine. It's a library. We saw <u>The Fantasticks</u> there.

[crosstalk]

BOLTON: Yes and some border crossings are on the honor system -- there's just this little phone box. "Hello! We'd like to come in!" An you show your passports like the little camera, and you just drive through. It's being toughened up, and of course the Canadians are very worried about trade. Any kind of limit on trade. That Ambassadors Bridge in Detroit is privately owned. Isn't that incredible? The major bridge to Canada between Detroit and Windsor is privately owned. It has to be rebuilt. You find out these crazy things all the time when you're doing homeland defense, and that was what a lot of the process was, what's finding out these anomalies.

Q: What was your impression overall when they were putting this homeland defense thing together? You were pretty much___, weren't you?

BOLTON: I wasn't a plank holder -- someone there when the command was set up. I was there about three years in so what was being set up still hadn't really be tested other than in exercises. Some agencies were playing nicely together, some were not. There was a great deal of money being thrown at the problem.

A big issue is the relationship with the states. A governor has incredible power. Not even the president can tell a governor what to do. And the role of National Guard. That relationship between Big Army and the state national guards is fascinating. Same thing with the reserves.

Even deciding if an event is homeland security or homeland defense isn't always clear. When do you call the FBI hostage rescue team and when do you call the Navy SEALS?

Is it 50 miles off shore or 500? A smuggled cruise missile on a cargo ship in Long Beach -- do you want the L.A. police or the Coast Guard or the Navy?
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Q: Sometimes everybody wants a piece of the action. Other times nobody wants to touch it.

BOLTON: Yes. I've learned a lot as far what drives domestic agencies.

We hosted so many different countries. Not every country does major regional war, but everybody does homeland defense. Visits from Russia, China, India, and everyone else.

Q: Did, for examples, the Canadians and the Mexicans look to you to defend their country?

BOLTON: No. In Canada we had the NATO structure. Canada's a NATO ally, and we have defense agreements with Canada whereas we have nothing with Mexico. We were very clear with the Mexicans, you're on your own. But modern problems and threats do not respect borders, especially when speed and lethality are concerned.

This raises issues. What if we find a cruise missile in the Gulf of Mexico 205 miles from Mexico. Well, that's 200 miles of international waters for our purposes. This actually raises that whole issue of the North Korean launches that we went through a few years ago. If the DPRK launches toward Seattle (whenever they get a delivery system that can reach that far), are we going to let it land on Vancouver because the North Koreans miscalculated? Are we going to tell the Canadians that they will have to live with the decision to avoid missile defense? We have the capacity to knock that missile off, but we're not going to do it because you demurred."

These were the strange discussions you can have. But thinking about our homeland and hemisphere does raise an issue for State. Normally the State Department has never really been involved in anything domestically like homeland defense, yet it was clear to me that what was emerging was something some called the "intermestic". The international intermestic where there is no bright line between what is a domestic issue, what is an international issue and that space is a black hole at State

This new third border in the Caribbean, the NAFTA issue, the Arctic, the Latin American summit process, the whole vulnerability of the United States to terrorism and the need to think about strategic depth. What is the State Department's role in the United States broadly defined. I think WHA was thinking about that because they did have Canada and Mexico, and it was very different from Paraguay/Uruguay. I think they were trying ways of thinking about it and now Greenland coming more as a WHA issue now. It was an interesting time.

Q: Did you get much support or interest from the Department of State?

BOLTON: Yes and no. I had a very close relationship with the desks and a good dialogue with the POLAD office. But one is pretty much on one's own, which is ok.

Q: The desk being…

BOLTON: The Canada desk, certainly, because they had a pol-mil officer who graduated from the naval academy. As foreign service being graduated from the naval academy, he and I can talk all the shorthand, and the NORAD agreement had been up for renegotiation. I was on phone not that regularly, but we were in touch if we needed anything.

I reached out to the Mexican desk because the Mexican desk didn't really have a pol-mil officer. They didn't have many pol-mil issues although they should have, but that is evidence of what an unusual relationship we had with Mexico. We did now, so the Mexican desk was thinking more about security issues apart from the border. Calderon is coming tomorrow if I'm not mistaken, visiting Washington, a state visit.

I knew the country director. I knew everybody I needed to know personally from other assignments, so things were fine. Mexico. It's just a matter of keeping everybody informed like during Katrina and during the Mexican navy and the Mexican army operations in support of Katrina. I was in touch constantly with the desk. Some were from the White House, some from the desk, me, and two or three others, someone in Health and Human Services. There was just about a core group of about 10 of us who were doing the 24/7 stuff, and people would come in and out as needed.

Mexico is a unique issue and can be a difficult issue for State. There's so many players, but I think I was very happy with the way things were coming together as NORTHCOM found its role. One thing we thought about, if we had 9/11 to do all over again, would we have put NORTHCOM with NORAD? Wouldn't we have moved them maybe closer to Washington but not too close. You want to be one short airplane ride away. There was an issue as to whether there needs to be a NORTHCOM and a SOUTHCOM, maybe an America's Command, but I think they decided that the span of control would have been too much and the nature of issues in the entire western hemisphere is too varied. And I had great contacts are the POLAD office in the Pol-Mil Bureau. But State didn't have a formal, effective support system for POLADs at the time.

We were busy on missile defense with North Korea also requiring focus. SecDef has launch authority for missile defense instructs the NORTHCOM commander who has the button upon instruction of the secretary of state or the president.

NORTHCOM watched North Korea very closely because missile defense. The physics and science involved launches and in this type of foreign policy decision or issue is fascinating. The direction and speed of the earth's rotation. The distortion of the atmosphere. Debris direction calculation.

And NORAD has the global thermal nuclear war piece to worry about. We exercised several times to build up to a nuclear exchange, and that just makes your hair hurt. I really have a very hard time with playing those nuclear games. I think we're rethinking how to do the exercises without it just being too stupid. There was almost no foreign policy piece even though both my Canadian POLAD counterpart and I could not imagine that diplomacy would be sitting around waiting for war to come and do nothing during its conduct. We would huddle and comment on what would be happening in the diplomatic world which is not without tools and weapons. We really have to assume the failure of diplomacy. Our Commander really wanted a diplomacy piece so I would sometimes be a "trusted agent" which means I am briefed on the exercise and suggest where we can play a diplomacy piece.

Q: I can speak about living within 35 miles of the North Korean border. It makes you think about this. One time all of a sudden, all the anti-aircrafts in Seoul started opening up at six in the evening, and we were firing live ammunition. I kept saying, "It can't be an attack. You don't attack the town when everyone is awake...

BOLTON: You do it at two o'clock in the morning.

Q: You can't do at two o'clock in the morning. It can't be. Listen, we've got to get under the stair because the stuff was coming through on the roofs and all of this. I kept telling, "It can't be. It's can't." What I think happened was we never got an adequate response from the South Koreans, but I think some guy probably accidentally pulled the trigger on his anti-aircraft gun, so the guys in the next to him says, "Oh, my God. They're going to ask why I didn't fire at that." You know the way things go.

BOLTON: I found Seoul Airport to be a tense place. You see everything, all the bunkers and all the anti-aircraft. They're all just sitting there where there should be flowers or trees. Everybody is really serious at that airport, too.

Q: You left Northern Command when?

BOLTON: Admiral Keating had asked me to extend which I did so I had an extra year. He was reassigned in March to be COCOM at Pacific Command -- which is every sailor's dream. I was due out that summer. I overlapped with General Eugene Renuart, Air Force. I had him a couple months overlap with him and he was wonderful.

Q: And then what?

BOLTON: There was some discussion as to whether I wanted to go to Baghdad as pol-mil counselor to a job that had been empty for a year. Isn't there a war going on? I found it very, very strange that there hadn't been a political- military chief in a country at war. They assured me that the problem was being fixed with the new ambassador arriving who very much wanted the position filled. I said that I really did not do that type of pol-mil work, I don't analyze military budgets, I really like operational issues." I said if they can't find anyone, then let me know. They did find someone with the perfect experience.

They then said, “Well, would you like to go to Newport, to the Naval War College international affairs advisor slot?” I had to make a decision, given that I had about three or four years in my time-in-class duration to dive in to an issue or think about retiring. I decided to lean toward retirement.

Q: You were there from when to when?

BOLTON: ’07 to ’09. A two year assignment. One year assignment, but they extend you if there are no objections.

Q: What was the atmosphere when you went there?

BOLTON: The way the Navy does it different from the Air Force or the Army. Navy had their command and staff and their senior school at the same place. They did the same curriculum but had been criticized for that. Congress did not want command and staff and the senior school to be essentially the same. The ranks and responsibilities are different and the preparation has to reflect that.

BOLTON: The Navy was behind the other services in getting the right percentage of officers through the senior educational facilities. The problem is these folks are on ships for six, seven, eight months, and that wreaks havoc on trying to do masters work and of course the constant aviation and engineering training.

They grant masters degrees in international security studies. And Naval War College was the first of the senior schools to go with the masters program, about 15 years ago. Now the numbers at the schools have exploded as the Navy tries to catch up to the Army and the Air Force. I taught in both the command/staff and the senior schools in different semesters. The difference in my department was at command/staff level, students would "major" in one of four regional areas while the senior level took a more strategic, global approach. I taught Latin America in the command/staff level. I also asked to design and teach a unit on NORTHCOM and the Arctic for the senior level. Teaching was very hard. Great variety of students. Navy of course, but also all services plus State and other agencies and international students in each class.

The students of course were very different. Many were just back from deployments. Fighting in Fallujah one day, picking up their books the next. These are demanding courses.

Q: Newport had the reputation. People in the state Department avoided it as the place to go because it was a lot of work.

BOLTON: It was hard! I went to the Air Force War College! Exactly!

Q: But going to the Army or the Air Force, it was good. You made good contacts.

BOLTON: They were going to be reading more than they're read in years and writing more than they had written in years and thinking. Particularly the intermediates, the majors and command and staff had real adjustment challenges. One day they are doing what they are really good at like landing an aircraft on a heaving deck but the next day they have to figure out what central Asia will look like in twenty years.

It's also very difficult for them to enter a new area of expertise. If they graduated from Annapolis, they are almost all engineers. If someone told me I had to get a degree in electrical engineering, I'd be in a world of pain.

You're taking them out and environment they have mastered, such as landing on a running the nuclear plant on a sub—and putting them into a very difficult one and into a very gray world, a very non-engineering world. There is no gray area in nuclear engineering, but our world of diplomacy is very ambiguous and hard to fix.

Q: You can't put some duct tape on it.

BOLTON: Exactly. From its tradition of being out at sea, away from communication and instruction, the Navy has an independent streak. Unless told otherwise, do it.
Sailing brave and alone.

Q: You know the old thing: There's a right way, the wrong way, the Navy way.

BOLTON: The old sailing ships they didn't have radios. The captain of the ship is the captain. Once he gets his orders, he leaves. It's not like the Air Force which seems to be second guessed constantly via radio. But since the Navy seemed to be pushing for graduation numbers to catch up to the other services, not everyone in the school should have been in a senior service school or master's program. A seminar is an intense style.

Q: Did you get good responses? In seminars sometimes you run across the usual thing of some guys, gals, hog space or raise their voices.

BOLTON: Yes. We're trained to look for that. My first one was quiet. The seminar had three teachers assigned to it for different aspects of the department's topics. But other seminars were much more engaged.

Many students developed a recent interest in policy, interested in how we wound up in Iraq and Afghanistan. Being military they pretty much follow instructions. If you tell them to read two chapters, they're going to read two chapters.

Teaching adults is different because they have all this real world experience, so they are difficult to "snow." There's a lot of questions, a lot of challenging on things. Of course I would obviously throw questions out to make them think, make them very uncomfortable, put them in a world of gray which they hated, or just be contrarian.

They had to do a paper for me which was hard work, particularly working with them to select a topic for the essay. For example, for the Latin America regional students, I would suggest the expansion of the Panama Canal -- what will be the threats, opportunities, and policies.

The international students of course were in class. Some understand a lot of English, others not so much, but I had good students. I had a Mexican and a Jamaican woman who was in Jamaican Coast Guard who had also been at Sandhurst, and a Mexican who was very engaged. Again, a Mexican who understands exactly what needs to be done to identify and work on our mutual security challenges. In the senior group I had a Bangladeshi and Bulgarian, a Lebanese.

I remember talking with the class, and I asked the Bulgarian, "Were you in the communist party?" He said, "Oh, yes." The other students were, surprised, never having met a communist, I suppose. And he explained what it was like to go from the Warsaw Pact to NATO in one career. My point for the American students was that they are not the only ones coping with change! The hard part was grading papers.

Q: They don't take correction well, do they?

BOLTON: If you back it up, I would give about three pages of tight response on everything. Every darn page. Every mark I made. Every point I had. Every contradiction that they didn't resolve. Nobody ever complained about a grade that I gave.

The other department members were mostly civilians. There were a couple of military officers assigned. For the most part they were civilian or they were retired military who had gone back and gotten doctorates at SAIS or something. The department chairman was an expert in space. She was very good. A lot of politics in the school. I guess any academic department. The other departments, joint military operations, was painful for our state department people, but useful for the type of assignments in war spaces, in PRTs, that we can be expected to take.

Q: Provincial Reconstruction Team.

BOLTON: Reconstruction Team, yes, now it's not a matter of moving your frigates around and your aircraft carriers. Nobody thinks an aircraft carrier's going to have to go into battle as a full battle group anytime soon, especially when so many countries can afford anti-ship artillery.

Q: Did you see the Navy there? Were they wresting with the problem of what do you do in the new world? What's the role for the Navy or the submarine fleet? I have the feeling that sailing off the Kola Peninsula saying, "Can Ivan come out and play?" because that's what they're designed to do.

BOLTON: There is a real problem figuring out the next 25 years, and there's a real split both in the discipline and in the military between sea power v. navy aviation and Russian

and Chinese threats. Nasty little wars that need littoral ships and ships that can handle brown water or aircraft carriers for major wars. Russians could destroy you. Colombians could annoy you. Most Middle Easterners, they annoy you. They ones who can destroy you are the ones you pay attention to. And you can't do both, can't do it all.

SecDef and the CNO know that we have to deal with what is out there. The hybrid warfare, Hamas running around with a cruise missile. A cruise missile is a First World weapon, a major state weapon,. Yet you got something like Hamas which can get its hands and did in the last Israeli War. The Lebanese Hamas, non-state actors, were running around with a bunch of state equipment.

Where will the military put its money for new equipment. You have limited resources, and if you want to build an aircraft carrier you need 20 years lead time and you're stuck with it for 50 years. Tell me what threat is more possible or is going to do more damage? What's the risk? Do you need a blue water, brown water, or green water Navy -- they are different and they all cost money, as does naval aviation. Then we go through the geographic areas.

Q: These are going in the territorial ___, the water on the coast.

BOLTON: Right now it's a heavily blue water Navy. It's a seven sea Navy based on the aircraft carriers which are looking increasingly vulnerable, which the Navy doesn't like to hear. The Navy itself, is it going to stay blue water, big ticket items, destroyers, or are spend more money and less money on carriers and more money on a green water Navy or littoral, close in, river capacity? Is that going to be where your battles are going to be?

The China issue is big. Of course the Navy spends a lot of time thinking about China, although when I teach China I always spend a chunk as China as a land power going into out across the top of India and into central Asia. The Pacific is central to the Navy, but they need also to think about the Indian Ocean. One Marine Corps general, General Mattis, I think said it best: You don't have to get it right, just don't get it too wrong.

Q: Was the debate going on about drones?

BOLTON: A little. That's more of an Air Force and Army thing. They spend a great deal of time thinking about ethics. I had to teach one class on it, but had no trouble having gone to a Jesuit school I had four theology and four philosophy courses. I wish we would do that more at state. The State Department, our ethics consists of, "Don't cheat on your travel voucher," whereas they're way beyond that. We both take an oath to uphold the constitution -- we should understand clearly how we derive our positional authority and responsibility. These officers have had these moral dilemmas on the battlefield all the time, and they spend a lot of time thinking about it. "

I'd like state to spend some time on the source of ethics for a foreign service officer because I was finding these problems with newer officers where they'd be uncomfortable making some of these visa decisions or decisions on protection of welfare cases or

demarche content because of moral or ethical perceptions. I'd have to have these long discussions with them.

Q; Debbie, I know you've got to go. Did you retire after leaving the War College or what did you do?

BOLTON: No, I retired. I left I guess it was August then came back here last year and headed a promotion board and then went into the retirement training.

Q: Just very quickly, what was your impression of the promotion boards?

BOLTON: I'd done them before. I was assigned OMSs, Office Management Specialists. I think it's a fair process. It's a painful process for all. It's the same criticisms that we have every year. They're not as detailed as they need to be, they're poorly written, sloppily written, sometimes internally inconsistent, and it's very aggravating when you think you've got a good employee, and you think they've done a good job, but the writer isn't really giving you much help. Just generally it's people not taking enough time and attention in a process that should be year round. It's not that hard. It's no surprise that every April you've got to do an efficiency report on everyone. There's no reason that they can't basically be done in February, and then you spend the rest of the time refining them. A lot also depends on the dynamic the develops within the individual board. Our board definitely read too much and too many times. I warned them, but everyone was determined that everyone would get as many eyes on as far back as possible. It was very diligent, and it's just frustrating at times because you know you're dealing with a better person but it's not there.

Q: Well Debbie, again quickly, what are you up to now?

BOLTON: I still feel like I'm on vacation because my time is filled with activities. I don't know how I had time to work. I'm volunteering with the Museum of Natural History, the Smithsonian, for the new exhibit on human origins. I have always enjoyed science and this is an opportunity to learn more and work with the public on the wonder of ourselves and how we got to be the way we are. Evolution can be a sensitive topic, but one that needs to be discussed. Most people are curious and open. Most are somewhere on a spectrum and usually just need a few pieces of information to click with the science.

I swim almost daily at a new pool in D.C. near me. It's a lovely 50 meter competition pool, free for D.C. residents. I was a competitive swimmer in my youth. I am active at DACOR and planning to be on the Board of Governors next year. I will pursue a WAE position in the Pol-Mil Bureau and I know they want me, but I want to wait a bit on that. Work on my new condo kitchen starts in a month or two. And I enjoy going to the theater, and resumed my ballet subscription.

Q: Okay…

End of interview