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

JOHN D. FINNEY, JR.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background	
Born in Indianapolis, Indiana	July 31, 1939
BA in American History, St. Louis University	1957-1961
MA in American History, St. Louis University	1961-1962
PhD in American History, Georgetown University	1962-1967
U.S. Army Combat Engineer	1962-1962
Entered the Foreign Service	1966
Arequipa, Peru—Vice Consul	1967-1968
Monitoring Communism and the capture of Che Guevara	
Lima, Peru—Political Officer	1968-1970
University and youth radicalization	
The Alliance for Progress and liberation theology	
Peruvian military coup and Standard Oil controversy	
Life in Peru	
Rosslyn, VA—Student	1970-1971
Vietnam training center experience	
Phan Thiet, Vietnam—Province Senior Development Officer	1971-1972
CORDS security situation in Binh Thuan province	
Land reform implementation, irrigation, and banking	
Corruption and elections	
Tuy Hoa, Vietnam—Deputy Province Advisor	1972-1973
CORDS security situation in Phu Yen province	
Close encounters with death	
Personal opinion on Paris Peace Accords and Vietnam War	
Washington, DC—North Vietnam Desk Officer, East Asia Bureau	1973-1975
Upholding Paris Peace Accord and defeat of South Vietnam	

Udorn, Thailand—Consul General 1976-1978
Upholding American relations and monitoring Vietnamese refugees
Visiting Thai countryside and military government
President Carter's influence and CIA intelligence
Yellow Rain and American MIAs

Bangkok, Thailand—Political-Military Officer 1978-1979
U.S.-Thailand Security Relationship and Sino-Vietnam War

Lusaka, Zambia—Political Counselor 1979-1981
President Kaunda and Zambia's situation
Economic and social ordering of Zambia
Regional conflicts in Southern Africa
Declared persona non grata and forced to leave

Washington, DC, National War College—Student 1981-1982

Washington, DC— Pol Mil Bureau 1982-1984
Deputy Director, Regional Security Affairs
Israeli-Lebanon War erupts
Preparation for invasion of Grenada and invasion operations

Washington, DC—Director SEA Affairs, Intl. Security, Office Sec. Defense 1984-1985
Elections in Grenada

Washington, DC—Deputy Director Philippines Desk, East Asia Bureau 1985-1987
1986 Philippine election and exit of Marcos
John Kerry defies the Filipino military

Honolulu—Political Advisor (POLAD), Commander-in-Chief PACOM 1987-1989
Security issues in PACOM zone of operations
Working with CINCPAC leadership

Manilla, Philippines—Political Counselor 1989-1992
Attempted coup against President Aquino of the Philippines
Military basing negotiations with Richard Armitage

Washington, DC—Director, Thailand and Burma Affairs 1992-1994
Thailand's military, economy, and drugs
Aung San Suu Kyi returns and the failed democratization of Burma
Dealing with the Burmese government

Washington, DC—Pol-Mil (PM) Bureau 1994-1995
Director, Defense Relation/Security,

Arms sales around the world

Washington, DC—Pol-Mil (PM) Bureau 1995-1996
Director, Security Relation/Policy Resource

Washington, DC— Pol-Mil (PM) Bureau 1996-1999
Political Advisor to Chief of Naval Operations
Admirals, regions of concern, and role of civilian political advisor
War games on Kosovo
Balkan instability
Threats faced by the U.S. Navy and global relations

Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina—Political Advisor to Division North 1999-2000
Divisions and tensions within Bosnia and Herzegovina
War criminals and political risk of continued presence
Bounty hunting and perceptions of NATO allies
Refugee return and protection
Behavior of the American military
Russian brigade cooperation and NATO threat of use of force
General atmosphere of Bosnia after Kosovo campaign
Foreign brigades and intelligence gathering

Washington, DC—Pol-Mil Bureau 2000-2001
Coordinator for State Dept. Political Advisors

Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina—Political Advisor to Division North 2001-2001

Washington, DC—Political Military Task Force on 9/11, Ops Center 2001-2001
Coordination with military branches and foreign allies after 9/11
Need for more cooperation between DOD and State
Planning for the war in Iraq
Marginalized civilian roles in the lead up to Iraq War
Invasion of Iraq

Kabul, Afghanistan—Political Advisor to Commander in Kabul 2003-2004
Initial outcomes in Afghanistan

Retirement 2004

INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Finney.

Q: Today is December 21, 2004. This is an interview with John D. Finney, Jr. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. John, let's start with a little background. When and where you born?

FINNEY: I was born on July 31, 1939, in Indianapolis, Indiana. My parents are a St. Louis family, but they were living in Indianapolis for a year. I was born there in St. Vincent Hospital, and then I returned a year later with my parents to St. Louis and grew up in St. Louis, in West St. Louis Country in a suburb of Kirkwood about 17 miles outside the city.

Q: Let's first talk about your father's side. Where did the Finneys come from and what you know about them.

FINNEY: On my father's side, the Finneys are direct descendants of Bernard Finney who came from Ireland to St. Louis in 1831, and he married a lady also an Irish immigrant in 1834. Bernard Finney and his young wife had, I think, 11 children. One of them was John D. Finney, my great-grandfather who became a judge in St. Louis in the 1870s. He founded the St. Patrick's Society in St. Louis and was a graduate of St. Louis University, which is a Jesuit university in St. Louis founded in 1818. My great-grandfather had seven or eight children one of whom was my father's father, Paul Finney. Then my father was born in 1907 and grew up in St. Louis, the Kirkwood area—that's West St. Louis County—and he was a child of the depression. He went to a Jesuit high school, St. Louis University High School. He won a four year college scholarship but then had to drop out of college in his junior year because of the depression to support his family: his mother and father and five brothers and sisters. That was my father.

Q: On your father's side again, your grandparents. What were they doing?

FINNEY: My grandparent, Paul Finney, he died in 1944 when I was five years old, so I have no remembrance of him. He was a white collar worker in one of the merchant houses in West St. Louis County as a small businessman. He lost his job, my father told me, during the depression in late 1929, 1930. He never was able to find a full time job thereafter, and that is one of the reasons that his son, my father, had to drop out of college in his third year to help support his family.

My mother's maiden name was Glancy. She was the daughter of a Thomas Glancy who was a fairly prominent owner of the Marquette Hotel in St. Louis in the late teens and through the 20s. He, my mother told me, walked out of Batavia, Ohio, barefoot at 14 years old in the 1880s or so to look for his fortune. He came to St. Louis, and he was a very gregarious and well-spoken individual, somehow got an education, and he became a very successful hotel owner in St. Louis. He was related to the Glancys of Detroit who were involved in the early founding of General Motors. My mother told me that her father—my maternal grandfather—had some substantial amounts of General Motors stock in addition to the Hotel Marquette which was the last hotel that he owned in St. Louis. Sorry to say that when the depression came, like my father's family my mother's

family was also devastated. My grandfather lost all of his hotel properties, lost all of his General Motors stock in the depression, and he died about 1946 or 47. I have some memory of him, but he never had a full time job thereafter, either.

Q: What about your mother?

FINNEY: My mother went to Sacred Heart Convent School in St. Louis. Then she went to a Sacred Heart College in Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. Like my father she had to withdraw from college in her second year, again because the depression wiped out all of her father's funds. I have a twin brother and then I have another brother and two sisters. There was a third brother who died shortly after he was born, so there were six children in all, five survivors, and our parents were forever marked by the depression. They had come from, I would say middle class families, maybe my grandfather on my mother's side upper middle class as a hotel owner, but they were devastated by the depression. So my mom and dad were essentially supporting their own families before they met and married and had us children.

Q: As you grew up was the depression in a way bigger than World War II for a family, would you say?

FINNEY: It was big. The big folk memory was that my grandfather, my father's mother, had been a man of very substantial means. For example, when my mother graduated from eighth grade they went on a two month tour of Europe. So he was a man of very substantial means and country clubs and fine convent schools, Catholic schools, for my mother, so losing that was, of course, a major blow. My grandfather on my father's side was a hard working business man and never had a lot of money, but even that was lost. So the depression had a huge impact on the collective memory of my mother and father. Now World War II, of course, provided the means for my father to work his way through all of this and produced a recovery of the economy in St. Louis, but I heard about the depression all my life. After the war my father worked in an airplane factory in St. Louis Lambert Field which, you know, Lindbergh and a lot of fliers were operating out of in the 1920s and 30s. He built airplanes there during World War II and then decided that he would like to become an electrician. So he became an electrician, joined the Electrical Workers Union in St. Louis. We became the typical, I would say, lower middle class/middle class Irish Catholic family, my father in the union, my mother staying home. We were very much a part of the democratic Roosevelt political process.

Q: How Catholic was your family in your experience?

FINNEY: They were very Catholic. My father went to a Jesuit high school, a Jesuit college, a distinguished university high school in St. Louis University. My mother went to Sacred Heart Academy in St. Louis and Sacred Heart College in suburban Chicago. My brothers and sisters and myself all of us went to parochial schools. My brother and I went to the Jesuit high school. We went to St. Louis High like my father. We went to the Jesuit college, St. Louis University. My sisters went to the Ursuline High School for Girls

in Kirkwood and then also graduated from St. Louis University. So both my father and my mother were devoted to the church, and we were a very strong Catholic family.

Q: What was your impression of the church as represented by its priests and nuns? Were they strict or not so much? St. Louis has these two strains: You come from the Irish strain which tends to be rather puritanical and all, then there is the German strain which is also big in St. Louis which is basically somewhat different and all or really liberal.

FINNEY: I would describe the Irish Catholic church that we belonged to in St. Louis as a combination of strictness but also love of life. There was a lot of drinking in my father's and mother's family. Whenever we had the priest over or we went to functions, there was always enough to go around so people could enjoy things. We had Ursuline nuns in our parochial school. They were wonderful. They were extremely important figures to us in our grade school lives, and they were, I thought, wonderful, nurturing, admirable women. Not all of them were perfect, but overall they were a very positive, nurturing and encouraging force in my brother and my twin brother's lives and for my sisters. So I had a very positive experience with the sisters at the parochial grade school. Then went on to high school with the Jesuits at St. Louis University High. That was a very formative experience. We idolized the Jesuit brothers and priests there. They had a profound influence on us. The Jesuits had their regular priests there, and then they had what they called "scholastics." These were young Jesuit seminarians who might be in their mid to late 20s who were aspiring to become a full-fledged priest in their early 30s. These were very energetic and intelligent. Some of them were very schooled in the classics, of course, and they were very bright. Others were terrific in terms of being our coaches, but they became in effect our older brothers. We idolized them. They had a tremendous impact on us in helping us to appreciate the value of a good education, the value of a good Catholic education, and they were sensible. They weren't dogmatic; they weren't rigid. They taught us a very broad version of Catholic spirituality. And then on to St. Louis University, again all of us, five children, graduated from St. Louis University, again, a Jesuit college, again taught us to try to think outside of the box. So I have a very positive impression of those experiences in the parochial high school and college level.

Q: Let's pursue this religious background until we come back to other things. Did you ever get the feeling that somehow the hand of Rome or almost more likely out of Boston telling you, "Don't read this. Don't see that," and all that?

FINNEY: That didn't loom too large. Our mom and dad were wonderful parents. We had very modest means. We did not have much money at all. My brother and I had to get summer and winter jobs to pay for our way through college. My parents couldn't afford to pay for our college education. We earned our way through, so we're from modest means, but mom and dad were always very positive and upbeat about life. We relied very much on them to guide us. We were not rebellious children. Growing up as teenagers we wanted to learn about the outside world and what was going on, but by and large our mother and father gave us sort of broad guidelines and let us know what they expected of us. While we would go up against the edge against those guidelines, we never crossed them because we wanted to retain their respect and love. It's true, during the 1950s you

remember there was the communist scare. Senator McCarthy was riding high, there was the League of Decency thing about movies. We heard a lot about that in school. Remember the movie, The Moon Is Blue? [Ed: Released in July 1953, two playboys try to seduce a woman who vows to stay a virgin until married. Three Oscar nominations, David Niven won Best Actor at 1954 Golden Globes.]

Q: I was just thinking The Moon Is Blue staring William Holden and Maggie McNamara. everybody. It was as innocuous; but I think the word "virgin" was used in it.

FINNEY: I guess you would say it seems extremely provincial but we, I thought, had a wonderful education. I never had the feeling that we were being oppressed or that we were restricted. We were informed about church views, of course. I remember particularly when I was graduating from high school the importance the cardinal and the bishop in St. Louis had and about encouraging Catholic high school students to go to Catholic colleges. That was the big push. The situation was that I didn't have any options. I couldn't think about going away to school or going to another school because my family couldn't afford it. So my twin brother and I had to pay our own way, and all our friends went to St. Louis University, so we continued in that area. So we didn't have any major crises in our faith. We basically accepted the values that our parents and our nuns and priests set out for us. We felt that we had a very rich and full life. We played sports in all the Catholic sports leagues. We had a terrific time. It was a very happy and positive childhood.

Q: Are you telling me you didn't sneak off and see The Moon Is Blue?

FINNEY: (Laughter) Well, I'm here to tell you I didn't! I was too much interested in the St. Louis Cardinals, Stan Musial, Enos Slaughter, and my brother and I loved the outdoors. We lived out in the country, so when we weren't trying to imitate Stan Musial and Marty Marion and Enos Slaughter on the ball field, we were out in the woods chasing rabbits and shooting quail. We were regular attendees at the movies in Kirkwood and in Webster, and the cowboy movies were big in our lives. It was Johnny Mack Brown and Hopalong Cassidy, and Randolph Scott, and Gary Cooper. These were seen as very admirable people, and I know they didn't see The Moon Is Blue, so why should we?

Q: How about the nuns? One hears stories about the nuns rapping your knuckles. Did you find the nuns were open to things? How did you find that?

FINNEY: What I remember about the nuns is that they were loving. It was a combination of firm love. On the one hand they were very strict in terms of making sure that we got to Mass every day, that we did the requirements, but then on the recess they were out there playing softball with us in their habits and hitching up their skirts and tucking the long flowing edge of their skirts inside their rosaries. They're out there playing basketball and softball with us, so, in that sense they seemed like part of us. We looked up, and we admired them. I don't have a memory of a nun being cruel or being vindictive or being vengeful to us. I just have the impression of being very loving and supporting and positive and encouraging us. That's what I remember.

Q: Let's move back away from the Catholic side. How about in grammar school were you, your brothers, others in the family, were you readers or not?

FINNEY: Oh, yes. That was very important. Again, I came from a union family. My father was an electrician. We had very modest means. We didn't have a television until I don't think the late 1950s because we couldn't afford one, so we entertained ourselves by reading and listening to the radio. On reading my mother was tremendously important in encouraging myself and my brother and my siblings in going to the public library and reading. She hauled us there, and we would go there and come home with a dozen books, and some of us liked to read more than others, but I was a voracious reader. My mother encouraged me at every step of the way. That was a huge part of my education: myself, my mom, and the public library. I went through those things like Sherman through Atlanta.

Q: Do you have any...I think you said at the elementary level...any books that really stick in your mind, or series of something?

FINNEY: Oh, yes. Yes, there was a wonderful author, Joseph Alexander Altsheler who wrote a great series of books on the French and Indian War, the American Revolutionary War, the settling of the west, and then the Civil War. They were fantastic! [Ed: Altsheler (April 29, 1862 – June 5, 1919) was an American newspaper reporter, editor and author of popular juvenile historical fiction. His seven series' comprise a total of thirty-two novels, each containing an independent story.]

Q: I was interviewing Judge Lawrence Silverman, and he remarked about that. I read them, too. They are great books!

FINNEY: They were fantastic books. Then I read Fennimore Cooper and those tales. Coming from Missouri, Daniel Boone loomed large, so I was very interested. I read children's books on the Civil War, and they were marvelous, and I must say radio. Let me say a quick word about radio again. I'm still a radio person 'cause I grew up listening to all the serials like the Lone Ranger, Jack Armstrong the All American Boy, The Shadow, Gangbusters. Jack Benny. Fred Allen. Jack Benny and Fred Allen, and the Sunday evening shows, and the whole family listened to it.

We as a family sat around in the living room and listened to these programs: Fibber Magee and Molly; these evening shows, Charlie McCarthy and those folks, and that was a great source of entertainment and closeness among the family.

Q: Did you get much of a feel...the early grades, before you got to high school...about the outside world? We had the Korean War, the aftermath of World War II.

FINNEY: Yes, I did get some sense of it. Here we were in West St. Louis County about 17 miles out of St. Louis, but a couple of things. Number 1, my father's youngest brother, Paul Finney, served in the Navy for four years in the Pacific during World War II. My

twin brother and I were born in July 1939, so by the end of World War II we were five, six years old, and I remember letters that my mom and dad would read about Uncle Paul and his service in the Pacific. Then I remember the victory parade in St. Louis with Victory in Europe and Victory in the Pacific. My Uncle brought back and my other uncles brought back items from the Pacific in World War II. I look back on it: German helmets, German caps, German knives or whatever, and we played World War II over and over again in our back yard with all these instruments, souvenirs that my uncles brought home.

One of my key memories of the outside world was North Korea's invasion of South Korea on June 25, 1950 because I was at my mother's friend's house. They were much better off than we were. They had a television, and I remember seeing the Fox movie-tone pictures of the North Korean troops pouring into South Korea. So I because intensely interested in that. I started a scrapbook, and I clipped out clippings from Time Magazine and Life Magazine of what was going on in Korea during that war. I remember Colonel Mickelson and the Wolf Hounds for some reason, and I saved those pictures. [Ed: The 27th Infantry Regiment, nicknamed the "Wolfhounds", is a unit of the United States Army established in 1901, that served in the Philippine-American War, in the Siberian Intervention after World War I, and as part of the 25th Infantry Division("Tropic Lightning") during World War II, the Korean War, and later the Vietnam War. The film (1953) and book (1951) by James Jones From Here to Eternity was based on some of the Wolfhound regimental life.]

My first political memory was my father staying up all night in November 1948 during the Truman-Dewey campaign. I was amazed that my father stayed up all night, and he told me the next morning how important it was that the Democrats had defeated Dewey. So that made a big impression, and then during the 1950s, of course, with the end of the war, Eisenhower and Truman... Truman was from Missouri, of course, so we followed him. You will recall, he was not widely acclaimed when he left in 1952. The Korean War was seen as going bad, there were corruption scandals during his administration, so Eisenhower came in. I remember the election of 1952, the election of 1956, but the key thing for me as a young, Irish, Catholic, middle-class, provincial, young fellow from Missouri was John Kennedy. His arrival on the scene had a mesmerizing effect on all of us.

Q: In elementary school did you find subjects you cared for and subjects you didn't care for?

FINNEY: Absolutely. I loved history and I loved English and I feared math. Again, I always received a lot of positive encouragement. It started with my mother for reading. My mother had a profound influence in encouraging me to read. I read and got into the Altsheler books and other adventure books and Jeremiah Johnson and Jim Bridger and Kit Carson and George Custer and the Civil War. So when I went to grade school I just kept reading and reading, and the nuns were very supporting and encouraging. Math was always a challenge for me, but you live with it.

Q: While you were there did you get much of a feeling of the arts? I was thinking of Thomas Hart Benton from Kansas City, although I'm not sure the nuns would approve of Thomas Hart Benton. He's always been one of my favorite painters.

FINNEY: I didn't learn about Thomas Hart Benton until college when I took some art classes, and I was struck by his powerful, powerful paintings. Very impressed by him. I wasn't aware of him.

Well, you know we had my mother's side. My mother's father married a woman who was a widow, Esther Cronk. She had a number of children, one of whom married into the Lucas family. The Lucas family was a very, very old St. Louis French family, and their predecessor J. B. C. Lucas came from Normandy, France. His father was Benjamin Franklin's landlord, one of his landlords in Paris. J. B. C. Lucas came to the United States in 1780s and 90s, became a congressman from Pennsylvania and then was appointed by Jefferson to be one of the three commissioners to administer the Louisiana Territory. So he arrived in St. Louis in 1803. That association through my mother's branch of the family with this early founding of St. Louis was always something of great interest to us. I eventually did a master's degree on Mr. Lucas and his contribution to the development of St. Louis.

Q: When you got to high school, what was high school like?

FINNEY: High school was terrific. Well, first of all let me say grade school was great. I'm positive because I had a very positive experience: great loving family, modest means again, but good Ursuline nuns, sensible. They weren't cruel, they weren't dogmatic, they were positive and reinforcing.

They were a teaching order. They had been in the St. Louis area since the 1880s and 90s. They were well established. They had a girls' school in Kirkland, and they taught at St. Peter's Catholic grade school in Kirkwood which is right next to St. Peter's Catholic church. My brother and I desperately wanted to go to the local Catholic diocesan school in Kirkwood which was next to the local grade school. This was named after Father Coyle. My father, who had graduated from the Jesuit school downtown in the city, insisted that we go to the Jesuit school over our heated objections. We very much enjoyed sports my brother and I: baseball, basketball, football, and we knew if we went to diocesan school that we would have a good sporting career. Instead, my father insisted that we go to the Jesuit school. Going downtown to St. Louis 15 miles away was like the other side of the planet, but we did and it was a great experience for us. As I mentioned, the Jesuits are terrific teachers. They teach a broad view of spirituality—Catholic spirituality. They challenged us, they encouraged us, they inspired us, and yet they rapped us on the head. And, yes, its true, the Ursuline nuns did rap us on the head from time to time. With the Jesuit fathers, just a couple of intimidating talks with them made clear to us what the limits were, and we stayed inside them.

Q: Did you get the Jesuitical approach to argumentation, how to proceed and how to organize and all that?

FINNEY: Yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. They encouraged us to think. They encouraged us to examine all sides of the problem. They recognized that there was a Catholic world view, but one of the things they imbued with us is that as Catholics, we're in a large, large world. And yes, we have argued, but you have to think broadly enough to incorporate the other views, and you can incorporate the other views and analyze them and still stay true to your Catholic heritage. So they encouraged us to read broadly, to argue broadly, to be eclectic in the learning process, and that was very valuable. They very much emphasized the power of reason, the power of deduction, and the importance of thinking in broad terms. At the same time there was a core belief based on, of course, the principles of St. Ignatius that they were very firm on. They were saying, "Look. You can follow the principles of St. Ignatius, and you can follow Catholic philosophy, and you can still understand the rest of the world, and you have to live in the world, and you have to relate what we're teaching you to what's going on, and you should challenge your faith." They encouraged us to read books and to listen to people who had no time for Catholicism or no time for religion. They said, "You can't ignore these people. You have to go out and listen to them, and then you have to make your own conclusions, and you should be strong enough in this process to know the difference between right and wrong and appreciate the value of Catholic principles after you have gone through this examination." They did not want us to hide from the world; they wanted us to embrace it.

Q: How did you approach the issue of high school dating? Did the family suggest you restrict yourself to good Catholic girls

FINNEY: Here was the situation with dating: We grew up in the suburb about 17 miles outside of St. Louis. That suburb where we lived was on the edge of the rural area. In that suburb there happened to be maybe a dozen young boys and girls our age who were growing up. They all came out to be public school kids. They went to Kirkwood High, the public high school, so we grew up with them in sports and in dating. So we had a couple of girls in our neighborhood group who were public high school, Kirkwood High School, and we dated those girls. At the same time at St. Louis University High, the Jesuit high school, it was a boys school, and the way we did dating there is that the all-girl Catholic schools around the area would hold dances. We would go to those dances and meet Catholic girls there, but my parents were not rigid in that regard. I think like any parent they wanted you to date good kids, but they were perfectly happy letting us date the public school kids in our neighborhood or the girls from the Catholic school. My brother and I were very interested in sports and the outdoors and somewhat shy. Dating did not loom large in our consciousness, I don't think, for the last year or two I was in school. I think we tended to grow up a lot later in those times.

Q: What about through your high school? Did you run across many Jewish kids or blacks or other groups? How broad was it?

FINNEY: In terms of the African-Americans or Negroes as we called them then, at my grade school, my parochial grade school, I can only remember a couple. Historically, the St. Louis diocese in 1948, under Cardinal Ritter I think, was one of the first diocese in the

country to open up its parochial schools to African-Americans. So there was a smattering of them in my parochial school. Only a handful. In high school there were a few more. We had about 200 boys in our classes, each of the four years at this Jesuit high school. Out of that 200 there was just a small number of African-Americans, maybe five or ten. In college from 1957 to 1962 where I did graduate and under-graduate work at St. Louis University were there were larger numbers of African-Americans, but they were still pretty much in the minority. Of course, our basketball team at St. Louis University in the Missouri Valley, since the late '1940s we had a lot more African-American basketball players, so they were a lot more visible.

In terms of the Jewish kids, very few. In University City which was a popular place for Jewish families to raise their children, we played against them in sports. I never had a lot of association with the Jewish kids in sports, not until college when we debated them at Washington University, a very fine university in St. Louis, did I come into contact with them. By and large it was a pretty provincial upbringing, Irish Catholic grade school, high school, college, slight association with African-Americans along the way. I think within the Catholic tradition it was a liberal Catholic tradition. It was not an exclusive Catholic tradition. We were aware that Cardinal Ritter had opened up our diocese

We were aware of poverty. We were aware of injustice. When I was at St. Louis at the high school, my brother and I volunteered for this group in our high school that would go down to the inner city of St. Louis every winter and we adopted a school. We would go down there, and this was almost an all black school, grade school, and we adopted it. That was an exposure but the fact of the matter is in our daily lives, we grew up in a largely Irish Catholic white Anglo-Saxon community. That was 90%.

Q: From what I gather your experience with the "Irish Catholic" is quite different than the Irish Catholic growing up in Boston.

FINNEY: It could have been.

Q: For example, you weren't getting the steady infusion of people coming out of Ireland all the time there as they have in Boston.

FINNEY: That is correct. From what I've heard about South Boston, it sounded like a more combative type place. The Irish in St. Louis, my great-great-great grandfather Bernard Lewis came over in 1830, and my great-great grandfather set up the St. Patrick's Society in the late 1870's, so we were reasonably well established. There were Germans and Italians that we were always competing with, but it wasn't violent. Again, I grew up in the suburbs. I didn't grow up downtown in the tenements. I do remember during the Hungarian revolution we had a large influx of Hungarians came into our Catholic churches as a result of that, but I don't recall a steady stream of Irish people coming in. We had great St. Patrick's Day celebrations. We knew all about the depredations of the British. We sang these songs. My father talked about the depredations of the British with us, but we were not... It doesn't sound as bare knuckled, anywhere like the bare knuckled Irish things that I've read about in Boston.

We were very proud of our Irish heritage, but it was a settled community. We were on the police force. We were on the Board of Aldermen. We were making our way, and we had enough to share with the German and the Italian immigrants, and you know the Germans were in South St. Louis; the Italians were in sort of the center of St. Louis, the Irish were in North St. Louis. All of this had been worked out.

Q: What about the Cold War while you were in elementary school and high school?

FINNEY: Yes. Loomed very large in our consciousness. Very large. I remember Herbert Philbrick, I Led Three Lives, a riveting program for us. [Ed: This TV series lasted 117 episodes from October 1953 to January 1956. Philbrick narrated each episode and served as a technical consultant — and all scripts were approved by J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI. Nonetheless, the episodes often had very little to do with the actual events of Philbrick's life]

Riveting number one. because it seemed to us that there may be a Communist under every other bed. Number Two. Senator McCarthy, of course, was beating the drum in what became a terrible, terrible campaign. I remember if I remember correctly, my father was alarmed at what McCarthy was saying, and he followed it closely. I remember toward the end that he became very disenchanted with him and what he thought were the excesses. But, after every Mass in our church throughout my grade school and high school years, we closed the Mass with prayers for the conversion of Russia. Just amazing.

Another person who came to St. Louis was Kurt Von Schuschnigg who was one of the last premiers of Austria before he was imprisoned by Hitler. He came to St. Louis, and he taught at St. Louis University. His daughter was in my grade school. So, yes, the Cold War seemed very vivid to us because of the programs on TV, because of the depredations, because we were aware Catholics were being persecuted, and because of the atomic thing, the atomic threat that the Russians were presenting. Yes, I can remember crawling under our desks in grade school because of the atomic drills. I vividly remember a lot of concern about building a shelter in our back yard to withstand the nuclear attacks. Oh, yes. I remember that very vividly. It loomed large. There were times when it seemed like nuclear war with the Soviet Union could really happen. The Communist threat or what we thought was the Communist threat to our society, the Rosenbergs and the other nuclear spies, that had a lot of impact on our thinking.

Q: You entered St. Louis University from 1957 to 1961.

FINNEY: ...and I stayed an extra year...

We had to work during the summer, and then during the winter as mail carriers to pay our way through. So by paying our way through college we took more ownership of our education. That was Number one. Number two, my brother and I pooled $75 together, and we bought a 1949 Ford, so instead of being driven to school in the morning by our father, we drove ourselves to school in our $75 Ford. Number three, of course, we

encountered a much broader circle of people and friends. There were more African-Americans visible then, and other students came from around the mid-west and this broadened our circle of understanding. The teachers in St. Louis University were, in effect, more sophisticated and broader minded than our beloved Jesuit fathers and scholastics at the high school level. They encouraged us, again, to think broadly, to look at all aspects of learning, to not to be afraid to question our own faith and our own values, and they said, "At the end of this, you'll come back stronger." So, it was a broadening experience for us.

I took philosophy, I took lots of English, lots of history, psychology; I took the requisite math courses, took arts courses, but the core of it was history, English, and philosophy. That was the core.

Q: Did you find in later life that the training you got, particularly from the Jesuits, did this help you in your Foreign Service career, your outlook in dealing with things?

FINNEY: Short answer is yes. The Jesuits in high school and in college taught us to focus on developing the mind, the soul, and the body. All of them were important, so they warned us to be intellectually, spiritually, and physically fit. This happened to suit my twin brother and I because we loved sports and the outdoors. Our mother and father inculcated an interest in learning, and we accepted the Catholic faith that we were brought up to. Then I went in the Army, and that was a tremendous and broadening experience. Then I did graduate work at Georgetown. The result of all this was that it gave you a lot of self confidence about who you were. We were well grounded. I knew who I was. I was a young, provincial fellow from Missouri of very modest means, Catholic upbringing. I didn't have any angst about who I was, so I had a sense of self confidence. That's number one. Number two: I felt I had a good education that taught me to value intellectual life, to question assumptions, and to make a life-long commitment to learning. It also taught me, I think, to be open, to be open to new experiences. Coming from Missouri, I was keen on finding out what the dickens was going on in the rest of the country and the rest of the world. I had loved history. Because I was encouraged at every step of the way from grade school, high school, and college, to pursue history and the history of the United States, I was persuaded that the United States was a tremendous country with a fantastic history and had a lot to offer the rest of the world. I thought that representing that country, how much better could it get, so I felt well prepared.

Q: Did you concentrate on any particular type of history?

FINNEY: I was concentrated mostly on American history, but also Latin American history, classical history. I had four years of Latin in high school, and that's another benefit from the Jesuits I would say: their emphasis on the classics, the Romans and the Greeks. They kept telling us over and over again the value in learning and appreciate the classics and what the Romans and the Greeks can tell us, to study them, to learn from them, and to make it relate to our lives. That was the biggest gap. How could what the Romans and the Greeks did be relevant to what we were doing. They focused on that very importantly. So my history was first and foremost the United States and these

Altsheler novels, and the Civil War stuff that I read really fired me up. We had the standard European history, the classical history, and then I had a wonderful, wonderful priest teacher at St. Louis University, Father John Bannon who was a real authority on Latin America. He got us interested in Latin American and Californian history.

Q: By the way, with a twin brother what was your relationship? It can be tricky.

FINNEY: My twin brother Timothy. I got along great with Tim. We never had a combative relationship. I think we've had a complementary relationship and, you know, in grade school, high school, and college he was always my best friend. He was always my closest friend. I mean, we shared beds, we shared growing up together in St. Louis, and we shared the same interests in terms of the outdoors and in sports. He has gone into advertising, and he lives in Santa Rosa, California. He is a terrific guy, wonderful disposition, and we talk all the time. We get together at least once a year, and you know, he's just a super guy. We shared so many common interests. Yes, there were times when we spat at each other and when we had our run-ins, but it's just been a very positive and great relationship. I always had somebody that I could play catch with. I always had somebody who was interested in going fishing or somebody who would go in and buy the car with me. We helped each other and supported each other when I was in college, in graduate school. He had already gone into the business world, and I needed, I was short on funds. He always came through for me, so it's been very positive, very good.

Q: You were in college during the Nixon-Kennedy presidential campaign. Did you get involved with that at all?

FINNEY: I would say it had a tremendous impact on myself and my twin brother and my parents, my whole family, for us as Irish Catholics who had always voted democratic, who tremendously admired Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman. I heard about that from both parents what great men they were. To see someone like John Kennedy come along was absolutely mesmerizing for us. Not only was he handsome and articulate, charismatic, well spoken, he happened to be rich and, most important to us he was Catholic. He was young and vibrant, and a war hero, it seemed right out of central casting, and the fact that he was Irish, oh.

He was Irish; he was Catholic; he was articulate; he was well-spoken. He just bowled us over. We were totally infatuated with him, and he inspired us. In that election his brother Bobby Kennedy came to St. Louis University and spoke. We helped organize that appearance. We were there for that, and that was the first election that my brother and I voted in. So it was a very formative experience for him, and when he won, we were delirious. We were so proud that someone from our ethnic background and our faith had wound up being President of the United States.

Q: Did public service reach out to you as an aspiration during this education process?

FINNEY: Well, absolutely after Kennedy. Kennedy was the pivot. That was the pivotal experience. I had never thought of working in public service. My major focus was to try

to, you know, become a St. Louis Cardinal. I mean, I was deep into baseball. Deep. So then I graduated from college, I did my army service, and I had to figure out what am I going to do? I was very interested in getting my graduate degree thanks to Father Bannon who encouraged me. So when Kennedy came along, he made public service seem worthwhile: glamorous, worthy, an honorable thing to do. It was his speeches and his election as president that certainly planted the seed that serving our country might be a really worthwhile thing to do, so that was one of the key motivating factors for me if not *the* key factor.

Q: You went in the military. What did you do?

FINNEY: I finished my undergraduate in 1961. Because of my work in history, I had been accepted for a Ford Foundation Fellowship. This enabled me to begin my work on my masters the last semester of my senior year. I did my masters thesis and then another extra year, so by 1962 I had been able to finish my undergraduate degree and a masters, and then I went into the Army in the summer of 1962.

I joined the combat engineers at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. That's an engineering center for the Army. I went in the early summer, and in October the Cuban Missile Crisis came. We had finished our basic training, and then we were headed for a railroad to go to Florida to prepare for the invasion of Cuba. That's what we were told. *Possible* invasion of Cuba. So then that was fortunately resolved. So I was in a program for six and a half months of active duty and then five years of reserves. When I went into the Army in Fort Leonard Wood, most of the other young men who were there with me were farm boys or boys from rural communities from Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, and I found out as we went through training, good Lord, how fortunate I was to have been able to go to college and get an education. Many of these young men, outstanding young men, had not had that opportunity, so it drove home to me the importance of education. This was reinforced by the Army experience when I saw that all these people who were ordering us around—these lieutenants and captains—they all had been to college. They were officers. I was an enlisted guy, and they seemed to have a much better arrangement, so I could see why education made a difference. It came home to me with great force, so you can get pretty crude in the barracks and everything, and I found out that I missed the intellectual challenge of studying. So when my active duty was over, I went right back to graduate school to go for my PhD because at that point I thought I wanted to be a teacher. I came to Washington because my father had gone to work for a St. Louis architectural firm that had gotten the contract to build the new Civil Service building down the street from the State Department. So for the first time since I was born, we left St. Louis and moved to Washington, lived in Kensington, Maryland. This was summer of 1962, and the Kennedys were in the White House, and we were up here. This was exciting, so I enrolled in Georgetown. I had a part time job at IBM which helped pay for my education at Georgetown. After a year I was able to win a university fellowship there. The impact of Kennedy in making work for the government worthwhile had a huge impact on me, so I decided to take the Foreign Service exam while I was doing my PhD work at Georgetown.

Q: You were at Georgetown from when to when?

FINNEY: I was at Georgetown from 1962 until March of 1967 when I went on my first overseas assignment with the State Department as a vice consul in Arequipa, Peru.

Q: At Georgetown were you in the school of Foreign Service or another department?

FINNEY: I was in the graduate school of history. Jules Davids was a leading professor there. He had collaborated with Kennedy in Profiles in Courage. He was a big influence on me and other students there. Cal Quigley was another one. A very erudite and tremendously dynamic teacher.

Q: When you were there was Georgetown still all male or almost all male?

FINNEY: Practically speaking, almost all male. After I finished all my coursework and I was working on my dissertation, I was an assistant, and I taught a number of courses. I remember there were a few females. Yes. A handful.

Q: What was the atmosphere at Georgetown?

FINNEY: It was very exciting for me for a provincial young fellow coming out of Missouri. I had never flown on a plane until I was 21. When I was in the Army we were on buses and trains. I had never flown on a plane. We were a family of modest means. I'd never been on a vacation outside of Missouri. The world, my family, when we went on vacations, we went to the Ozark Mountains and we camped out, and we hunted and fished. I'd never been outside of St. Louis! Everything outside of St. Louis I devoured in Time, Life, Look, and the St. Louis Post Dispatch. So all of a sudden here I was in the nation's capitol. It was quite mesmerizing. I was intensely interested in everything that was going on when I first got here. I went to Capitol Hill, I sat in on debates. When President Kennedy was shot and his body was brought up here, my father and I stayed up all night long from 8:00 until 6:00 the next morning when we walked past the casket in the House of Representatives.

You know, working in Washington and the Presidential motorcade zipping around through town, reading about the Kennedys and their family and their style, and their élan, and their glamour, and their intellectual prowess. This was all intoxicating, so then to go to Georgetown University... Of course, you know, I was a big fan of the Jesuits. I'm a big fan to the commitment to learning and to history and to intellectual rigor, so there were some wonderful Jesuits there. Bobby Durkin was one of my history professors. He just died last year. He was 100 years old. Father Frank Fadner who was a Russian specialist and so forth, so those guys were around but so were people like Jules Davids, and we had Jan Karski, the Polish émigré. Dobriansky—our good friend Dobriansky—was on the faculty. Carol Quigley. I felt that I had come to new levels, and all the speakers that would be coming to Georgetown from all over the east coast or elsewhere, from the media, from politics, from Ivy League universities. I drank all this in. I couldn't get enough, and so for someone who was fascinated by American history, who loved politics,

who was infatuated by the Kennedys, who thought that when Lyndon Johnson and the war on poverty came that that was *the* right thing to do. I marched on that march with Martin Luther King down to the Lincoln Memorial in October 1963. So I did all those things, so I was in heaven. I felt I was learning a lot, and I had some great professors, and I was in the middle of the most exciting place to be in America as far as I was concerned.

Q: What about your dissertation? What was it on?

FINNEY: My dissertation was on the migration of Negro or Black African-American labor from the south to the north in World War I. The reason for that topic was that one of my professors at Georgetown had come from Harvard where he had done his dissertation under Oscar Handlin, and Professor Handlin had written some of the really good books...

Q: He was the great author about immigration.

FINNEY: That's right! So his student who he had taught up there as assistant professor then came to Georgetown. He was very interested in the progressive period, from Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson all the way to the l920s.

So my professor was very interested, and he was my mentor for the dissertation. One of the puzzling things that we were looking at was how was it that the immigrants that streamed into the United States during the first two decades of the 20th Century—the Irish and the Eastern Europeans and the Italians and so forth—how was it that they came to the United States and became integrated into the fabric of our society and were able to rise up. How was it that that happened to them and yet our own African-Americans had not had that same experience. So the first time that the African-Americans left the south in large numbers to come north was in World War I to fill this need for industrial workers. So my professor wanted me to look at that. I did, and basically what I found out was there were two quick factors. One of them was the way the union structure worked, and the other was what the Negro leadership was telling them. Samuel Gompers who was head of the American Federation of Labor, I think believed in integrating the African-Americans in the American labor movement just like the Irish and the Poles and the Italians. He didn't want a pool of scab labor that the employers could use to exploit the unions. So he favored it, but the way the American Confederation of Unions was set up, Gompers was up here but the individual craft unions ran themselves. So the bricklayers and the steam fitters and the longshoremen and the rest of them would listen to Gompers but then made their own decisions of what they wanted to do, and they looked after themselves, and they excluded the Blacks. Then, amongst the Blacks themselves, there were different voices. One, like J. Phillip Randolph who was organizing the Pullman porters, was encouraging them to come up. He saw their integration in the industrial process as part of their salvation, but there were other more powerful voices in the Black community. Booker T. Washington wanted the Blacks to stay rooted in rural communities where they felt life was more just and pure and healthier and safer, and for the Blacks to come up north, they would become polluted by the cities and be led astray. So there were tensions within the Black community about which way to go plus the way the craft unions

excluded them, the Blacks never got integrated. The only place they got a decent union was with Randolph & Pullman Porters. They weren't able to come up like the other immigrants. It wasn't until the end of World War II when this process was repeated, but Roosevelt and Truman were able to weigh in. One thing Wilson did do, as I showed in my dissertation, Woodrow Wilson set up in 1916 a Bureau of Negro Labor in the Commerce Department, one of our big bureaucracies which was a bureau set up to deal with the problems of African-American labor. That was a big first, but after the war was over and the war industries shut down and the demand for Black labor ceased, that division withered and was only revived later during World War II. So that's what I was looking at.

Q: While you were in at Georgetown, what about diplomacy with the Foreign Service. What did that cross your radar?

FINNEY: That crossed my radar with Dr. Jules Davids who was a professor of diplomatic history. I was taking courses in the history of the progressive era in the New Deal which was a phenomenal period in our country's history, a period of change. The same time I was doing that, I was taking courses in American diplomatic history from the beginning all the way through with Dr. Jules Davids. He was a passionate historian, and he had a tremendous command of the material. He had tremendous integrity and humility before the facts of diplomatic history, and he conveyed it with such enthusiasm and interest that I felt that you were in the presence of someone who sort of epitomized scholar and integrity. He brought a lot of vibrancy to diplomatic history and showed us how you handle these differing records and differing approaches and how our national interest was compromised, how it was advanced, how people said one thing and meant another, so he was extremely influential.

Q: Did you run across any real live Foreign Service officers?

FINNEY: A couple of people from my class joined the Foreign Service when we graduated from Georgetown with our PhDs. Instead of going in academia, we went into the Foreign Service. Jules Davids, of course, made diplomatic service quite interesting. There was another very fine professor there: William Langer. Maybe Langer's the wrong last name, but he was an expert on the OAS. He was an expert on the OAS and all that machinery and how that worked in our Latin American history and in hemispheric affairs. He brought a Foreign Service officer or two to speak to us. Speakers came from the State Department for the Georgetown University speaker program, so I heard a lot of ambassadors and then through either Langer or Jules Davids, I think I met an officer or two.

The military reserve army unit that I was with was the 352nd Army Civil Affairs Unit and we met at Georgetown. One of the colonels in the unit was Bob Sayre. I don't know if you remember him, but he was assistant secretary for ARA (Bureau of Inter-American Affairs) [Ed: Mr. Sayre has an interview in the ADST collection]. Bob was in our reserve unit as a colonel, and I saw him every third Saturday when we mustered over at Georgetown and then during the summer. In 1965 we had the intervention in the

Dominican Republic, and Bob played a pivotal role as an action officer. He would come and tell us in our Reserve meetings, "This is what happened when we handled the ongoing situation in the Dominican Republic." Believe it or not, we did not study Vietnam. We studied the mid East and our relationship, as a Civil Affairs Battalion. We studied the mid East, and they brought in ex-Foreign Service officers from the NEA Bureau (Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs). They were quite impressive. They were well dressed, they were articulate, and they were impressive, so that all had an impact on me.

Q: How about two movements. One was going strong while you were there, and the other was picking up steam. The one was civil rights. Did that make much of an impact?

FINNEY: Oh, yes. Civil rights made a huge impact. First of all, my parents were very emphatic in raising us as children, you know, to be inclusive. They were very much against discrimination out of the liberal Catholic tradition. When I came to Washington, this was front and center and so, as I said, I marched in the March on Washington. I was at IBM in my part time job, and when this momentum developed for the March on Washington and Martin Luther King was going to make a huge speech, I remember telling my boss at IBM (International Business Machine)that I wasn't going to be there the next day because I was going to march on Washington. He looked at me as though I had lost my mind, but to me it was a very exciting and pivotal time in American history. So I went there and I did that, and it was a tremendously exciting event, and I followed Lyndon Johnson's civil rights legislation very closely. Some of my Catholic friends from high school in St. Louis who had gone to law school were signing up to go down south to help register voters. The civil rights movement was something that I felt was the right thing to do. Also, you know, again, I was a tremendously dedicated baseball player. I remember seeing Jackie Robinson come to St. Louis and saw what he could do. We were all very struck by him, and I played with African-Americans on the baseball diamond, so I was all for this 100%. I went to Lyndon Johnson's inauguration. We were depressed after Kennedy's tragic assassination, but then we saw what Lyndon Johnson did with the war on poverty and this seemed the right thing to do. The southern senators: the Richard Russells, the Strom Thurmonds, and those people in the senate seemed evil. They seemed to be standing in the way of American progress. They seemed to be against the American ideal. Kennedy and Johnson seemed to us to be carrying the liberal Democratic torch to be doing the right thing. We talked about it a lot, of course, in graduate school, and we were all for it.

Q: What about Vietnam?

FINNEY: Vietnam was a different story. I had been in the military, number one. Well, I was still in the military. I had done my active duty and I was still meeting in the 352nd Civil Affairs group. We were meeting in Georgetown. We had Bob Sayre and others in our unit. Our unit was made up of Foreign Service officers, lawyers from the Justice Department, Treasury Department, and FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), so we talked about Vietnam a lot. Because I was associated with the military, I wanted our military to be successful. We were mesmerized by Robert McNamara whom Kennedy

brought to town, and by what he seemed to be doing in terms of transforming the Pentagon and in trying to fight the war in Vietnam in a smart way. I was very much influenced by the Bundy brothers: McGeorge Bundy who seemed to be an extremely acute intellectual, and Bill Bundy over at State Department and, of course, the other gentleman who succeeded Bundy as National Security Advisor, Walt Rostow. I read what they had to say, I read what the Bundys had to say, I read what Rostow had to say, and I believed it. Dean Rusk, our Secretary of State, was all for this. George Ball was a voice who argued against it. I read everything that George Ball said. I was a faithful subscriber to The New Republic, The Reporter, Foreign Affairs. I read all the arguments back and forth. I did not buy the argument that the U.S. military was evil because I knew them. As a reservist I was part of them. I knew they were trying to do the right thing, and I thought the New Frontiersmen Kennedy brought to town and Lyndon Johnson continued was the right thing. As an Irish Catholic I felt that Communism was a threat. You could not ignore this. You could not be soft on Communism. Remember Thomas Dooley?

Dr. Thomas Dooley was from St. Louis. He worked in Laos. Not only was Dooley from St. Louis, but he went to the same Jesuit high school that I did. He came to speak at our high school when I was a junior, and he talked to us about what he was doing in Laos. Tom Dooley had been a Navy doctor at the evacuation of 8-9,000 Vietnamese from North Vietnam in 1954 as a result of the Geneva Accords. Our military was given the task of evacuating these 8-9,000 people—most of them by sea—from North to South Vietnam, and Tom Dooley was a doctor. As a result of that experience, he left the Navy and set up his own foundation to care for the Laotian hill tribe people. He came to speak at my high school. He was very charismatic, handsome. I remember the first time I heard the word *intrinsic.* It was from Mr. Dooley. So, I heard about Tom Dooley. I remember Madam Nhu came.

Q: The Dragon Lady.

FINNEY: She came to speak at Georgetown, and I went to hear her. She said that they were facing a Communist threat, and she and her husband and President Diem were Catholics, and it was very important at the pre-war rally to support them, and I believed her. I believed Walt Rostow, the Bundys, the whole package, so I had no problem with the war on Vietnam. The terrible thing the war brings: the atrocities, the killing, the waste of human life, all of that, all the grief that war brings, was very sobering, indeed. But I thought that what we were doing was essentially right. Most of the American public if I remember correctly was giving Lyndon Johnson the benefit of the doubt. I began my A-100 course with the Foreign Service in August of 1966, and then my first assignment was to Peru in March of 1967. The bulk of the American body politic as I understood it then was still supportive of the war, supportive of the president. Then when I was in Peru in 1968 there was Tet and the fallout from Tet and a very significant change in the attitude of the American people about the war. When I finished my assignment in the spring of 1970 I volunteered to go to Vietnam. I went voluntarily, I went happily. I served in the CORDS (Civil Operations Revolutionary Development Support) program with Bob Komer, far from perfect, but I was a big admirer of him, and Sir Robert Thompson of Malaya emergency fame. He came to see us.

So I went to Vietnam, volunteered to go in 1970 with the CORDS program. There was very little vestige of anti-war sentiment on the Georgetown campus by the time I left in the spring of 1967. Georgetown was a conservative university by and large, and so there was no big demonstrations that I remember.

Q: You took the Foreign Service exam...

FINNEY: I took the Foreign Service exam... The first time I took the Foreign Service exam, I did not pass. That was in 1964, then I took it again in 1965. The second time I took it I passed, joined the 74th A-100 class in August 1966 as a USIA (U.S. Information Agency) inductee, and transferred into the Foreign Service in November 1966.

Just to wrap up my academic career, I had finished my coursework, submitted my dissertation, and my PhD was awarded in June of 1967.

Q: Do you recall in the oral exam any of the questions that were asked?

FINNEY: On my oral exam, I don't recall any questions about Vietnam, I can tell you that. One of the kinds of questions that I got in the oral exam, I think... They were interested in why I wanted to join the Foreign Service. There were questions about diplomatic history in Europe that I remember. Diplomatic history of the United States. There were questions about what I would do in certain situations, but that's about the most I can remember.

Q: In 1966 you entered the Foreign Service. What was the A-100 course—your Basic Officer course—like? What was the composition of your fellow students?

FINNEY: My A-100 began in August 1966. [Ed: This was the 74th A-100 class). It was a good course, and I enjoyed it very much. The composition as I remember was roughly around 40 or 50 persons.

Q: That sounds high for those days.

FINNEY: Maybe it was about 25-35. Twenty-five to thirty-five, almost entirely white male. I think out of those 25 to 35 we had three or four women, and at that time they were told during the course that if they decided to marry that they would have to resign their commissions. I don't recall whether we had any African-Americans or Hispanic-Americans in our course. I think we might have had about one or two, but that was about it: one or two minority, three or four women. As I recall, the rest were white American Anglo-Saxon primarily, and most of us were in our mid-20s.

Q: Most of you probably had military service, didn't you, at one time or another?

FINNEY: I had done my military service in the early 1960s during the Cuban Missile Crisis. I was still in the active reserves at that time. I was in the program where we did a

year of active service and five years in the active reserves. I was still doing my training duty at Georgetown University once a month with the 352nd Civil Affairs, but I would say not quite half but maybe 40% of our folks had participated in the draft and had served in the military.

Q: How did you feel you fit in the group? Everyone gets in there, and most people don't know what this is all about, so you look around at your fellow new officers.

FINNEY: I felt very comfortable with this group, I guess for a couple of reasons. Number one, I had been living in Washington then for about four years finishing up my graduate work at Georgetown University, so I was familiar with the Washington milieu, and of course I had been following foreign affairs and the State Department very closely. I was in the final stages of completing my dissertation, and I had been in graduate school, Stu, for as I said, almost three and a half, four years, and many of the other entrants into our A-100 course had also did graduate work. For example, Al La Porta, who joined before me, and I had been graduate students together at Georgetown [Ed: La Porta's oral history is on file with ADST]. So I would say out of our course a good percentage, maybe 30% or more, had done graduate work, so that was a point of familiarity. Most of the A-100 course looked like me: white, male, graduate students, and interested in foreign affairs. We were all still, I think, not only myself but others were very much affected by President Kennedy and his call to service. We also had former Peace Corps volunteers in our course, and they also shared the same outlooks and values.

Q: As the course developed, did you decide what you wanted to do and where you wanted to serve or at least where you wanted to get started?

FINNEY: We had two outstanding senior Foreign Service officers directing our course. The man in charge, I'm sorry that I can't remember his name, Alexander was his first name, I believe—was articulate, gracious, courteous, informed, suave. He was a very good director of the course, and then his deputy was a gentleman named Ed Jones, I believe. He was a good and reliable stalwart, so we had two good leaders of the class directing our course. It became clear to me that shortly after the course began that I was interested in becoming a political officer. As someone who was completing my PhD, I'd done a lot of research, I'd done a lot of analysis, I was doing a lot of writing and wrapping up my dissertation, and so that function immediately appealed to me. The more I learned about the State Department and how it operated, I could see the political officers were individuals who had a chance to compete for the best jobs, so that very much appealed to me. I had had a number of courses in Latin American in my graduate school as well as about Asia, but I think Latin America and the Alliance for Progress had at that point a stronger appeal for me, so I was interested in working in Latin America.

Q: Did Vietnam play any role or consideration at that time, or was this...

FINNEY: Vietnam became, of course, a very important Washington issue, 1965, 1966 in particular. President Johnson announced major U.S. military involvement in Vietnam in the summer of 1965. Before that we had been in a purely advisory war. Now it looked

like we were going to be in a major fighting role, so the Vietnam issue began to loom very large. The initial reports from the war were that things were going well, that we were bolstering the South Vietnamese government, so I was following developments there very closely. I was interested in military history as well as general history, and so we discussed the situation in Vietnam in the A-100 course amongst ourselves. It was at the level, if I remember correctly, where it was an interesting and increasingly important issue, but it was not an intense, overwhelming, dominating issue. It was just an important development that was underway. We were following it closely. The initial reports we were getting were that things were going well. I was interested in Latin America primarily because I thought the language requirement, Spanish, would be easier to achieve, and the Asian languages appeared so daunting that I thought I better get an easier language under my belt first.

Q: When the assignments came out, how did it work out?

FINNEY: When the assignments came out, overwhelmingly we went elsewhere than Vietnam. Out of our course graduating in late November of 1966, I think only one or two of those 32 officers were selected for Vietnam, and that was because they had French language background. The rest of us were assigned mostly overseas to the wide dispersion of Foreign Service posts. [Ed: The State Department Biographic Register notes that Mr. Finney entered the 74th A-100 class as a U.S. Information Agency recruit and transferred to the Foreign Service in November 1966.]

Q: And you went... ?

FINNEY: I was initially assigned to Belize, but then I guess that position went away. So before the course was ended, my final assignment was to Arequipa in southern Peru where we had a small consulate. It was set up there in 1964 to track a Communist insurgency that was developing in the Cuzco Valley lead by Hugo Blanco. So I was assigned to Arequipa, Peru, a beautiful town in the foothills of the Andes at about 8,000' in southern Peru at the foot of an 18,000 foot volcano, El Misti. I was very excited and thrilled to be going to this assignment.

I took the Spanish course. I think it was four or five months. I completed the course, I guess, in February 1967 and then I departed for Peru.

Q: You were there how long?

FINNEY: I was in Arequipa from March 1967 through July of 1968. I had the title vice-consul. Arequipa had a wonderful consul, Peter Lord, and his lovely wife Suzanne [Ed: Lord's Oral history is on the ADST website]. They were terrific people to work for, and we had a terrific experience in Cuzco. The Alliance for Progress was still going on. We were promoting economic development in the region and trying to keep track of the Communist insurgencies, so it was a busy time.

In the summer of 1968 we were in a budget cutting exercise called "Balpa." I believe that President Johnson had initiated this to save costs, I guess partly to fund what now had become a huge involvement in Vietnam. So we closed our consulate in Arequipa about 5-600 miles south of Lima in southern in Peru because of the budget cutting exercise. Also, the Communist insurgency in the Cuzco Valley that had been lead by Hugo Blanco had been pretty much blunted when Mr. Blanco was picked up and put in jail, I think in late 1967 or early 1968. Then, Che Guevara who was operating in southern Bolivia at that time, was also picked up with the help of our Special Forces by the Bolivian Army. I happened to be in La Paz on a visit over the weekend when Che Guevara was caught. Our consulate in Arequipa played an important supporting role for the U.S. American Special Forces unit which was assigned under Colonel Pappy Shelton to help the Bolivian army corner and capture Che Guevara. This Special Forces unit was being supplied through southern Peru in the port town for Arequipa called Mollendo. So we had Special Forces operatives who were occasionally working from our consulate who would facilitate and monitor the shipment of equipment and supplies through the southern Peruvian Port of Mollendo, through Arequipa, then around Lake Titi Puno on Lake Titicaca, and then around there to La Paz. So the wrap up of the Communist insurgency in Cuzco Valley, the capture of Che Guevara, and budget cutting exercises resulted in our consulate being closed in the summer of 1968. So in July I moved to the embassy in Lima.

Q: What were you doing to keep an eye on it? What were you doing?

FINNEY: I was doing mostly political reporting, and I was doing some consular work. In the spring of 1967 when I reported for duty in Arequipa, Fernando Belaúnde Terry from Action Popular was a democratically elected president of Peru. He was the first democratically elected president as there in a long, long time. So the U.S. foreign policy interests were to do all that we could to ensure that this democratic renewal that Fernando Belaúnde Terry as president was leading that it be successful as part of our effort to promote democracy and economic development under the Alliance for Progress. Arequipa had a strong regional identity in southern Peru. It had a reputation for independence. It had a reputation for contrariness. So one issue was to report on the local political leaders in Arequipa and how they played in terms of supporting the administration and democratic political goals of President Belaúnde.

Another important issue was the status of the university students in Arequipa and in the consular district that we covered which included Cuzco all the way down to the Chilean border. I covered Mollendo, and Arica, another border town right on the border of Chile, and then up to Puno and Lake Titicaca through the highlands, through Juliaca, and then all the way of the Amazonian jungle at Madre de Dios. So I had a fabulous consular district to cover everything from the southern Peruvian desert down to Chile, up to Lake Titicaca, across the Andes Mountains into the Peruvian Amazonian jungle in Madre de Dios. It was a delight to be able to cover such a rich and varied area, but the university students, their attitudes and activities were of great interest to us because, again, Belaúnde, a president, was leading this democratic renewal. Would this take root in Peruvian political soil which had been dominated by the military and dictator? So the attitudes of the university students were of great interest to Washington and the State

Department. We had several universities in Arequipa, and since they were an independent and rambunctious bunch to begin with in Arequipa, the attitude of the students was very important. Many of them were attracted by Che Guevara and by Hugo Blanco who were Communist revolutionaries but who had an important message for the youth of Peru against the injustices of previous regimes and the tremendous economic and social inequities in Peru as a whole. So tracking the students' movements was very important, not only in Arequipa but also up in the Altiplano or the high mountain plateaus in Puno and then over into Cusco.

Equally important with the students, of course, was tracking what attraction that the Communist revolutionaries in this region might have. Along with Belaúnde coming to power in the mid-'60s, there was a tremendous upheaval among leftists in Peru as well. Belaúnde represented the democratic left and a movement for reform, but there was a radical left which was quite active in southern Peru, in the Cuzco Valley and around Lake Titicaca. So I did a lot of traveling in the high Altiplano around Titicaca, Puno, Juliaca, and then over to Cuzco where these revolutionaries were trying to stir up and enlist the support of the oppressed Indian population, the remnants of the Incas, who were living in the area. So I tracked them very closely.

Q: Were these revolutionaries self-developed, or were they under the control of the world-wide Communist movement, or where do they fit in?

FINNEY: As I recall, I think they were mostly self-developed and self-motivated. Many of them, like Che Guevara himself, as I recall from reading the history of Che, who came from a middle class *bourgeois* family in Argentina. He was a university student. He was a medical student. And then he became radicalized. I think many of the radical leftist revolutionaries in Peru at the same time had a similar experience. The same democratic opening that allowed Fernando Belaúnde to come to power as an elected president, also created political space at the universities and for other intellectuals in Peru to espouse their view. So they were radicalized, of course, by the Castro experience and by inspirational people such as Che Guevara. So during the 1960s my experience in Peru, this was a time of great ferment and excitement. In large measure, the Alliance for Progress was intended to be a democratic response to the reforms that were needed that the radical revolutionaries were talking about. The Alliance for Progress tried to provide a democratic path to deal with the horrendous inequities and the need for reforming the system to steer people away from the recipe for change through violence that Hugo Blanco and Che Guevara and many revolutionaries in Peru, most of whom came through the university system, were pushing.

Q: Later the revolutionary movement was Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path). That was a university creation.

FINNEY: That was right. That was started by Abimael Guzman, a professor who was at a university in central northern Peru up in Ayacucho. He, through Sendero Luminoso, sought to and to some extent succeeded in mobilizing the peasantry, the Indian and Criollo, a blend of the Indian and the Spanish. He succeeded in mobilizing these peasants

and these Criollos in small towns and rural areas of central and northern Peru much more than Che Guevara was able to do. It was still a minority but Sendero Luminoso emerged in the 1980s. We wanted to foil these people, and we worked hard to do so.

Another element, very quickly, was the labor unions. I paid a lot of attention to the labor union movement which was a potential source for change and reform. Obviously we wanted to align ourselves with democratic, mostly Christian socialist labor unions, but the labor unions also produced some very radical folks. The last place we looked at closely was what we called the "pueblos jovenes" or the "shanty towns." They were called "barrados" in Brazil. Young cities pueblos jovenes, in Peru, developed in the 1960s as rural people began immigrating to occupy shanty and cardboard towns on the outskirts of Lima, Arequipa and other large cities. We worked with NGOs, we worked with the Catholic Church, we worked with Protestant evangelists to try to encourage the Peruvian government and these slum towns to address the needs of the people.

Q: This was your first assignment. How did you find the local officials? Were they forthcoming? How did you find getting out and around?

FINNEY: Most of them were. It was one of the great pleasures of the job to be able to represent the United States and the Alliance for Progress in going to these small towns, communities, and villages in southern mountainous Peru, southern desert Peru, and then a couple of trips into Madre de Dios in the jungle. In general they were very pleased to see a representative of the U.S. government. They were very pleased to see that the U.S. government was interested in their situation and was paying attention to some of the challenges that they were confronting. On the student level it was much more difficult. The students were very wary. I'm talking about activist students, not your regular students who were, of course, there to get an education. The activists, highly politicized students, were extremely wary of a U.S. diplomatic representative like myself; but if you courted them, you could at least get them to talk to you and to exchange views, and you were able from time to time to develop some personal relationships. The trigger pullers, the bomb throwers, I was never able to sit down and talk to, but I talked to dozens of political activists, and it was quite fascinating.

Q: These political activists. Given the society at the time, did you have much contact with essentially the Incas, the indigenous population?

FINNEY: It was hard to establish direct contact with the Inca descendants. The two main tribes in southern Peru were the Quechua and the Aymara, and the way I was able to develop some relationships with them was through the Peace Corps. We had a large Peace Corps contingent in Peru, I'd say about 100-150 for the country. In southern Peru we had a southern Peru Peace Corps director, and we had maybe 30 to 35, 40 Peace Corps Volunteers spread around our region. They were young college graduates, a lot of them mid, late 20s like myself, and so I went out of my way to develop effective relationships with them. I spent a lot of time with them. I sought them out because they were living out in the Indian communities, many of them. Some of them were living in the shanty towns, but many of them were living in the Indian communities. Through them

I was able to spend nights in these villages, meet the local Indian leaders, and we would drink *chicha* which was the local fermented brew—moonshine—in these villages and sit around the fire and talk to these village chiefs. It was thanks to the Peace Corps volunteers that I had this *entre*. The other *entre* that I had was through American missionaries. In southern Peru there was a community of American Jesuits who had been down there for several decades. They were also a great source of information and understanding and provided a lot of context for someone like myself who was trying to understand how things connected there and what it all meant. Another important group was the Maryknolls who had set up a seminary in Puno to train indigenous Indian priests. They were very articulate and insightful and hardworking and unbelievably dedicated priests and nuns. So whenever I went into those towns, I always stopped at the Maryknolls, stopped at the Jesuits, stopped at the bishop's place to let them know that I was in town, and sometimes share a meal.

Q: Had liberation theology penetrated at that point?

FINNEY: Oh, yes. Liberation theology was a very big deal. One of the founders of liberation theology in South America was a Peruvian Jesuit priest from Lima, Father Gutierrez. As a political officer, you are trying to understand the various elements in society and how they're responding to the drama of development and inequality in southern Peru. So the radical revolutionaries like Hugo Blanco and Guevara had one answer to the need for reform and change which was through violence. Fernando Belaúnde and his Democrats had a Peruvian democratic response, and they worked with us on the Alliance for Progress, but the church also developed a response. The traditional church, of course, was extremely wary of violence and Communist solutions, but there was a liberal element in the church both among the native Peruvian priests and the U.S. missionaries. Also, there were also German, Belgian, and Italian missionaries there. These foreign missionaries coming to southern Peru and to Peru in general were very much affected by the world in which they were trying to minister to people and deliver the word of God. So out of that experience came liberation theology which tried to reform the church and try to tell the church that there had to be a proactive response to this terrible inequality which the majority of the people of Peru faced. There were lots of magazines in Lima and church magazines filled with articles and discussions of liberation theology. It was a major theme among the Jesuits and the Maryknolls on the American side of how to bring change to Peru. This was all in the context of the 1960s and the democratic space developing in the country. So it was a very important issue, and I followed it very closely.

Q: During your time in southern Peru how did you find the government was responding; its governors, its judges, its sheriffs and equivalent?

FINNEY: It was a very uneven response from my perspective as a young, new Foreign Service officer on the scene. I was totally committed to the goals of the Alliance for Progress. I believed in what we were trying to do to promote change and reform and economic development in a democratic way, so I was totally committed to this. The government had various faces to it. One face was President Fernando Belaúnde Terry

who was articulate and who was committed and who traveled to the rural areas and who tried to push for democratic solutions to Peruvian problems, but he was hindered, first of all, by lack of resources. Peru, even though it was a major exporter of copper and other minerals—gold, silver, lead—was still an impoverished country, so he didn't have a lot of resources of his own to back up his pledges for reform.

Number two, the quality of the governors and mayors and police chiefs and army officers, who were the face of the government to the people in the countryside, was extremely uneven. There were some good ones, but I have to say they were in the minority. Most of the government officials that you met were either absent, were not hard-working, were not particularly well educated, had a very patronizing view of the people they were supposed to be serving. There were shining exceptions. There were courageous majors. There were some outstanding university deans. There were some great young Peruvian priests out there. But they were the exception. Most of the government was struggling with poorly educated, inadequately trained, and insufficiently resourced officials, and the government was absent in many large places in the country. The officials didn't have vehicles. They didn't have radios. Phone service was very intermittent, and so this vacuum of lack of government presence was often filled by the revolutionaries, some of whom were very charismatic personalities. So, it was an uphill struggle, and one of the things we were trying to do in the Alliance for Progress was to train Peruvian educators and Peruvian officials so that they could be more effective representatives of the people.

Q: How was the border between Chile and Peru?

FINNEY: At one level it was sort of a sleepy border in the sense that people went back and forth on a daily basis, the locals, without much impediment. So there were accommodations at the local level to allow for a reasonable exchange in southern Peru and northern Chile, but at the political level and the historical level there was always an underlying tension. This was 1968, and Peru had still not recovered emotionally from the defeat in the war against Chile and the war of the Pacific of 1879 when the Chileans cleaned the Peruvians' clock and sailed up into to Callao and sank elements of the Peruvian Navy. So at the official level, and the emotional and political level, it was tense in the sense that the Peruvians never trusted the Chileans, harbored grievances against the Chileans, and there wasn't a lot, frankly, at the senior official level, there wasn't much cross-border dialogue.

I moved in the summer of 1968 to the American embassy in Lima where I was in the political section. Our ambassador was a very fine ambassador John Jones who had been a deputy assistant secretary in the EUR bureau. He later became the vice president of the National Defense University. Our DCM was Ernie Siracusa [Ed: Ambassador Siracusa's ADST oral history is at ADST.org], enormously able person who later became an ambassador in his own right, I think in Bolivia and Paraguay. Our political consular, my immediate boss, was Frank Ortiz who also became an ambassador of distinguished service in Latin America, including Argentina. Our economic consular was "Bill" William Stedman [Ed: Ambassador Stedman has also been interviewed by ADST]. He

was a very scholarly economic officer. He became an ambassador as well, I think to Bolivia, so we had an excellent team...

Q: At the Embassy what was your portfolio?

FINNEY: I came up to Lima which is, of course, the capitol. Very highly politicized. The provincial political developments that I was covering in Peru became much more intense. I mean the political coverage was much more intense in Lima because this is where all the major political parties were headquartered. So instead of dealing with the provincial representatives in Cuzco, Arequipa, Madre de Dios, etc., Arica, here I was in the capitol. I was actually meeting with Haya de la Torre who was a legendary reformed leader of the Peruvian Reformed Party, APRA, and I was meeting with Fernando Belaúnde's chief of staff. I was meeting with all these leaders and then I was also assigned the task of labor union coverage which I found fascinating. I got to go down to the port of Callao and meet with the head of the longshoremen's union. This was right out of the movie On The Waterfront with Marlon Brando [1954]. These guys were scarred, fun loving, parties, two, three, four o'clock in the morning I'm down with the longshoremen's union, and we were belting back the tequila and the pisco sours, and we're singing to guitars, and we were getting roaringly smashed together. I met with the transport workers. These were people who could make things happen in that city, so we were interested in Communist penetration of these unions. We were interested in providing democratic labor union assistance to them through the AFL-CIO and identifying democratic labor union leaders to send up here to the United States.

Frank Ortiz, our political section chief, selected me to accompany about a dozen young Peruvian political leaders to the United States under State's International Visitors program to observe the election here in the fall of 1968. So I had the great privilege of being the embassy representatives to accompany these 12 Peruvians from all the major political parties—no Communist parties—but all the spectrum, far left, far right, and we came to the United States and traveled around here for a month covering the 1968 election.

Q: What did they come away from? We had the convention in Chicago, the killing of Robert Kennedy. All hell was breaking loose.

FINNEY: All hell was breaking loose in 1968. You were right. There was the Vietnam issue which I had mentioned was rather dormant in our A-100 course in 1966. It was now front and center. It was consuming America. The Peruvian political leaders were fascinated by this. They were fascinated at the opportunities for democratic dissent. They were fascinated by the political personalities that we met in the course of the campaign. They were fascinated by the rough and tumble of American politicians, but they were not repelled. They were fascinated.

One quick vignette: We went out to Berkeley at the University of California, and we asked to meet with student leaders from SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), I guess, and I never will forget. We sat under a tree on the Berkeley campus, with half a

dozen, four or five, of these radical Berkeley student leaders with their beards and their bib overalls. Three or four of them were barefoot. So they had a dialogue with my Peruvian political leader/colleagues about political change and how to do it. There was one, I thought, very telling exchange when the American student leaders in Berkeley were talking about the need for change in the United States. They were talking to Peruvian student leaders and now mid-level political leaders who had been through beatings, who had been imprisoned, who had been through riots. At one point one of the Peruvian leaders turned to the Americans including the barefoot student leaders from Berkeley, and he said, "You know," he looked at their bare feet, and he said, "You know, we're trying to have a revolution in Peru to put shoes on peoples' feel, and I see you're having a revolution and want to take shoes off." That was one comment, but the students came across as well-meaning but naive. These guys that I was with, they already had a Ph.D. in trying to bring about student change. It was a very interesting exchange.

Q: Were we looking at the Army and worrying about the Army in Peru?

FINNEY: We were very worried about the army, but I want to finish the story about the Peruvian political leaders. We met Gene McCarthy. We met the Democratic Party candidate Hubert Humphrey, who was running against Nixon. We saw Democratic and Republican political organizers at the grass-roots level in small towns around America.

We didn't meet Nixon, but we met senior people in the Nixon campaign and, of course, we met George Wallace [Ed: The 1968 election was the third time Wallace ran for President. This time as the American Independent Party candidate, with Curtis LeMay as his candidate for Vice President]. Of all the leaders that they met in the United States, would you like to guess who they found most impressive? The one they found most impressive, who charmed the socks off them, who knocked them out, was George Wallace. We went down to Montgomery, Alabama, and we went into Wallace's headquarters. He sat down for 45 minutes, and he was a compelling, charismatic presence, full of tales about how you make democratic politics work in America and what he stood for. He charmed the socks off these Peruvians. He went through the spectrum from far left to far right, and his moxy, his frankness, his candidness made a huge impression on them. It was not what I had expected.

Q: Did they come away with an understanding of the issues as the American voter saw them? Vietnam?

FINNEY: It was hard for them to relate to Vietnam.

Q: But what about the civil rights side of things? I assume these leaders came from an elite, but some of them were trying to reach down to the...

FINNEY: Oh, yes. The majority of them were middle-class Peruvians who had come out of the university or the labor union system or the community system, and they were trying to be change-makers. They were very interested in civil rights. They thought this was the darkest stain on the American soul, and they wanted to know what we were

doing about it, and they were very sensitive to the issues of racism. They went in preparing to hate George Wallace for what he represented and the racism and the segregation and so forth, and that's what made it so remarkable that when they came out of the meeting that he just dazzled them with his charisma and his political insights and his frankness and the time that he spent with them.

Before I get to the Peruvian army I just want to make one other quick comment and that is the importance of the Kennedys in Latin American in terms of what we were doing with the Alliance for Progress. The image that the Kennedys had in Latin American was extremely positive even to southern rural Arequipa where I was working. The Kennedy image, the Kennedy message loomed large. One of my enduring memories in Arequipa during my tour there, my year and a half there, was when Bobby Kennedy was assassinated. We had a wake for him in one of the largest churches in Arequipa. We actually had a casket there in the church I think with the American flag on it. I stood there along with Peter Lord, my consul general, in this church for more than three hours one night while the people of Arequipa, many from the *barriabas*, from the slums, came through the church for three hours. They came up and paid their respects to this empty casket of Bobby Kennedy and shook our hands, so he loomed extremely large there, so that was that.

Now, the Peruvian army: The Peruvian army was, of course, of great interest to us because it seemed to us potentially to be a big obstacle to establishing deep roots for democracy there. The Peruvian army, like other armies in Latin America, had taken it upon themselves to rule these countries because they thought that only they could prevent these countries from falling apart. So in Arequipa I occasionally came into contact with army commanders when I made my calls in the regional areas. I always paid my respects, and they were always polite, but I didn't have the kind of relationship with them in my Arequipa days as I did with the governors or the police chiefs or the missionaries or the Indian representatives. When I came to Lima, I began to see more of the Peruvian military. Our defense attachés, of course worked that beat closely as did our ambassador and our DCM. As I said, I moved up to Lima in the summer of 1968. And then on 3 October we had a military coup in Peru. That military coup threw out the democratic system that Fernando Belaúnde and we were trying to instill through the Alliance for Progress and other means. But this military coup was led by General Juan Velasco Alvarado.

Q: Were you ready for it? Was it something that had been in the offing?

FINNEY: We had hints of it, but fundamentally we were surprised. A major item was the Standard Oil issue that we had with Peru. We had a U.S. Standard Oil concession in Peru, in the La Brea area. We had signed a deal with the Belaúnde government that the U.S. would continue to exploit this oil reserve. The Peruvian military thought this offended the dignity of Peru, and it was an unfair agreement, and they launched a coup to recover and preserve Peru's patrimony and dignity. We were aware of rumblings in the military, but when it actually happened, we were thrown off base. We were also unprepared for the leftist socialist views of General Velasco. The military had always been the staunch

supporter of the right, so to come into contact with a Latin American Peruvian contingent that was leftist was a surprise, unique in Latin America.

Q: Where were you when it happened?

FINNEY: I was downtown Lima doing consultations, meeting with political leaders. Frank Ortiz, my political consular, was desperately trying to get messages to me to come back to the embassy immediately, and so when I got that message, I did go back. He said, "What were you doing? Where were you been?" I said, "I've been downtown meeting with so-and-so and so-and-so." He said, "Well, we have a military coup underway. We're going to need you here at the embassy."

Q: Was it a bloody coup?

FINNEY: It was not a particularly bloody one. There were some deaths because the tanks rolled in to various locations around the town, but as I remember it was practically bloodless. Well, the thing about General Velasco was that he had a very leftist agenda. The key issue here was a U.S. Standard Oil concession in Peru on the La Brea tar pits maintained that oil concession belonged to Standard Oil and not to Peru. This became the key issue in the U.S.-Peruvian relationship, and the company negotiated an agreement with the Belaúnde government which permitted Standard Oil to continue to draw oil from this concession. The agreement was written in a form that the military found unacceptable and compromised, in their view, Peruvian integrity and sovereignty. That was the main justification they used for the coup, and it was a controversial issue. I remember that Richard Goodwin, who had been one of the architects of the Alliance for Progress for Kennedy, and Frank Mankiewicz, a long-time democratic political strategist, and I think was a press secretary for Bobby Kennedy, came down to Lima in 1968 to do an article for The New Yorker. The basic approach of their article was that the State Department and the U.S. government had been too accommodating to the wishes of Standard Oil in supporting their claim that this was a valid oil concession. From Richard Goodwin's and Frank Mankiewicz's perspective, rather than supporting or accommodating or facilitating the Standard Oil claim, the proper position from the U.S. government should have been to pressure Standard Oil to arrange for a more satisfactory agreement with the Peruvian government that reflected some of their nationalist concerns. So they came down and wrote a very critical appraisal of the closeness and chumminess of the U.S. government and Standard Oil on this issue. This was a very, very big nationalist issue in our relationship with Peru on the other hand there was several pieces of congressional legislation that would be invoked when a U.S. firm was expropriated. That's what happened when the military staged their coup in October of 1968.

Q: Hickenlooper Amendment.

FINNEY: That was it. We spent more time talking about that with the Peruvians than you can imagine because we were providing Peru with substantial amounts of aid, relatively speaking, in those days. Under the Alliance for Progress we were bending over backwards to encourage American business. Braniff Airways was making a huge effort to

come into Peru. We were very supportive of these things, and we warned the Peruvians—the embassy did—numerous times that any move against Standard Oil to expropriate would result in the Hickenlooper Amendment being applied and cut all of this off.

Q: As I recall, the Hickenlooper Amendment said aid would be cut off unless due compensation was paid. You can expropriate. That was fine, but you had to pay.

FINNEY: If there was appropriate compensation then the amendment could be finessed, but that did not happen. We were following the negotiations between Standard Oil and the Belaúnde government very closely. We were reading the defense attaché reporting, the CIA reporting, and obviously we reported from the political section on how these negotiations were going, and what impact it was having. All the leftists were arrayed against the oil company, and in the military there were signs of some discontent, but when the coup took place, fundamentally as I recalled, we were surprised.

Then we scrambled to find out who was General Velasco, what did he stand for? He had a very, very leftist agenda. Not only did he expropriate Standard Oil, did not compensate them properly, but he embarked on a large-scale nationalization of Peru in general and have the state take over a number of enterprises and businesses in Peru. If I remember correctly, his actions and the actions of the military that came after him started Peru on a road of economic ruin, and until President Fujimori came in the 1990s, it only gradually had been able to recover. When I arrived in Peru, the Peruvian currency was the *sol*, the Spanish word for 'sun," and was about 22 to 24 sols per dollar. That was in March 1967. By the time that I left in June 1970 it had risen to almost to 47 or 48 *sols* per dollar, and then it started going and going, and then in the 1980s and 1990s it was 15,000 or 100,000 *sols* per dollar until they changed the currency denominations. General Velasco started Peru on the road towards nationalization, expropriation, and an economic course that was heavily Socialist and leftist. Shortly after he took over, I remember the Peruvians in the late 1960s, 1970s signed a deal with Russia to acquire some Russian military aircraft, so our bilateral relationship went down very significantly.

Q: Junior officers in an embassy often tend to be a little more radical than those higher up. This is true anywhere. How did your colleagues at your level feel about the Standard Oil negotiation?

FINNEY: There were a lot of young officers there, as well as the Peace Corps volunteers. In general we were extremely committed to change and reform in Peru. So we fully embraced the Alliance for Progress concepts; the need for widespread reform, the need to address the problems of these terrible slums that were developing around the cities, integrate the Indians into the economy, the social life, etc., and the Peace Corps volunteers were probably the most vigorous for some of these changes. They felt that the USAID programs were too slow and too cumbersome. Amongst the younger officers there was great support for more democratic labor unions and more active activity in the communities, in the new communities, to bring about better lives for these people. On Standard Oil I have to say as a political officer representing the embassy in this agreement, I had to argue the U.S. government case for Standard Oil and what it was

doing in Peru and its legal claim to this oil concession. I had to make that argument, and I had to study the legal basis for this, had to look at the Peruvian claims, and so forth. I confess that, as I remember, that I was persuaded at the time that legally—legally—Standard Oil and the U.S. government in our position that we were on sound ground, that legally we had a better argument. The issue, however, was that politically we didn't because even though we were legally correct, from the Peruvian nationalist perspective their legal arguments which were superficial and wrong and flimsy were nonetheless sufficient for them to make their nationalist case. So my perspective was that I tried to take a step back was that I felt that the Peruvians were cutting off their nose to spite their face. Yes, they had a legitimate political complaint against Standard Oil, but that they should find a way to resolve these in a sensible manner so that Standard Oil could continue to operate, workers would get paid, Peru would still be able to export their oil and earn profits in a country that needed all the economic activity that it could afford. So as I recall...and also what's important here that the Belaúnde government was unhappy with Standard Oil, was essentially prepared to make some kind of accommodation which they did, but the far left would not accept this. That resulted in the military coup, so I would end up, I guess, on the conservative side of the argument in saying that if the Peruvians expropriated Standard Oil, they would be cutting off their nose to spite their face. It was not in their interest to have the Hickenlooper amendment invoked. I can't speak, obviously, for the majority of my colleague. I think some of the people in the embassy would agree with Richard Goodwin and Frank Mankiewicz in The New Yorker that we were too cozy with Standard Oil. From my standpoint I felt this was the price of doing business. I agreed with the ambassador that we ought to find an accommodation that would meet the needs of Standard Oil, meet the needs of the Belaúnde government, and get this issue behind us, so I was arguing the ambassador's case.

Q: When the military government took over, what happened to our relations and Peru's economy?

FINNEY: They soured tremendously because we had to invoke, there was this big thing about invoking the Hickenlooper amendment. I think it was invoked at least temporarily. I think our assistance on the Alliance for Progress was largely suspended because the Peruvians had deposed an elected, democratic government, the elected President Belaúnde was thrown out on his ear. But the Velasco government move was pretty popular in Peru. It turned out they had a large political constituency. After a year or two when some of the military promises rang hollow and the economy began to fall apart, then you started to see democratic voices being raised against this, and a call to return to democratic government. But I have to say that there was a substantial element of the population—maybe the majority—that might have agreed with the Peruvian military to take this kind of drastic solution. Our relations became very difficult and strained and the Peruvian military was highly nationalistic. We were used to dealing with nationalistic politicians, but you could go out and have pisco sours with the highly nationalistic, fire-breathing civilian politician, and through human relationships you could have a good conversation and even a good business relationship as you agree to disagree to these issues, but the personality overcame the differences. That was not true with the Peruvian military. These were hard core, highly nationalistic, highly suspicious of the U.S. They

felt that Peru's honor and integrity was at stake here and that the Americans simply could not be trusted.

Q: Would you describe this as an anti-American coup or were there other...

FINNEY: I don't want to paint too broad a picture because the Peruvians as far as I could determine still had great friendship and admiration for the United States and for Americans in general. They had tremendous family relationships with Americans up and down the social spectrum, so that still remained, but they were upset. I think the leftist military coup and General Velasco tapped into a virulent anti-U. S. sentiment in sectors of Peruvian public opinion and population which was upset at our U.S. government and at the U.S. business community represented by Standard Oil. The context of the time was that the leftists in Cuba and in Peru claimed that U.S. business was exploitive, that it was not contributing to Latin American economies, as was the charge against United Fruit operating in Central American.

So that they painted Standard Oil, and they painted others with the United Fruit tar brush and other extractive industries, U.S. industries that were involved in extracting things like gold and lead and zinc and silver and copper. They came under tremendous scrutiny because they were seen as taking pieces of Peru and selling it outside the country and not giving the Peruvians a fair break. So all those U.S. firms in extractive business became severely criticized by Peruvians particularly on the left. The military tapped into that and the leftist community on the one hand which traditionally wanted less military rule and more democracy in Peru found themselves in this argument over Standard Oil. They found themselves in agreement with extreme nationalist Peruvian military leaders who heretofore had been oppressing the country through previous military dictatorship, so it was a curious development.

Q: In a way—please correct me if I'm wrong—this was not really a major area for Standard Oil in a way. I've never heard of the Peruvian oil fields as being particularly rich. It sounds like something they could walk away from without too much trouble.

FINNEY: I think you're right on that. Standard Oil even in the 1960s was becoming a global firm, and they had far, far more important stakes in the Middle East. I don't know if they were involved in Venezuela. I don't recall. I take you're point. I think you're right, but it was the principle of the thing. It was the principle that Standard Oil thought they had a valid, legal claim, and if they surrendered this valid, legal claim—we've heard the argument before—this would create a precedent that might encourage other countries and other more valuable locations against Standard Oil to expropriate them.

Q: While you were there, did we take out AID and the Peace Corps?

FINNEY: The October 1968 coup immediately and adversely affected our relations. I left in June of 1970. I think our aid to Peru was substantially reduced, and I'm trying to remember whether the Hickenlooper Amendment was actually finally invoked. There was this diplomatic dance that we went through when we said, "It is coming,

Hickenlooper is coming. It's on the way. It's provisionally invoked." Whether it was finally fully invoked, I don't recall, but there was a definite chill in U.S. investment. Our bilateral assistance dropped, and our Peace Corps presence was reduced modestly. But the Peace Corps had a very popular image in Peru except among the really extreme leftists, an overwhelming positive image, and we tried to keep that separate from the normal hustle and bustle of the bilateral relationship as one of our aces in the hole. I think it continued for some time until Sendero Luminoso arose in the 1980s and our Peace Corp volunteers were at serious risk.

Q: After the coup how were your relations, as you experienced them, with Peruvian society? Your social and business contacts? Was the military particularly oppressive under political movements?

FINNEY: It did not result in the severing of our working relationships with Peruvians in general. The focus here was on Standard Oil and this nationalist issue of ownership of Peruvian patrimony. That didn't spill over into affecting the general Peruvian assessment of the U.S. Once we got past this issue, there was a lot of unhappiness that U.S. investment might decline, that our bilateral assistance had declined. There was unhappiness and testiness about that, but our ability to go out and meet with Peruvian officials and meet with them and engage with them and socialize, I don't recall having been affected adversely in a significant way.

Q: How about the Peruvian-Ecuadorian situation while you were there? The border dispute.

FINNEY: Always the tense area up in the border, but the dialogue with Ecuador was a more regular and balanced dialogue when I was there in the late 1960s, as I recall, than it was with Chile. Chile was cool, distant, frosty. Ecuador there was push and pull, but as I recall they were on reasonably good terms. There was always concern amongst the Peruvian military about Ecuadorian incursions, but there was more focus on watching Chile at that time than watching Ecuador. Peru's border with Ecuador and Peru's border with Chili were always sensitive issues.

Another contentious issue that involved a lot of strain in our relationship and opened the United States up to criticism in Peru was this issue of the 200 mile limit. I think it was under the regime of Belaúnde that the Peruvians were the first along the western coast of South America to extend their sea limit out to 200 miles. A principal reason for doing this was the Gulf Stream current which was incredibly rich in anchovies and sea life that flowed up from the Antarctic past Chile, Peru and Ecuador. This was a source of this beginning, burgeoning fishmeal industry. It became a huge Peruvian export as an important ingredient to chicken feed in Europe. So this incredibly rich Gulf Stream current was very valuable to the Peruvians and they established this 200 mile limit. The United States did not accept this. We had a tuna fishing fleet that came down from San Diego at a certain part of each year. I can't remember which part, but they came down and they fished in this Gulf Stream, and if they didn't get the proper permits or something, the Peruvian Navy would swoop in and grab their vessels and bring them into

Callao. This was another major strain in our relationship. There was a very active and aggressive American tuna boat captain out of San Diego. Augie Donatelli is the name, something like that, who led the fishing fleet down there. These boats got arrested and pulled in, and the Peruvian Navy or Air Force sometimes strafed these ships or shot at them when they wouldn't heave to, and we had some really difficult times with the Peruvians on this issue. That was also a major nationalist issue, and the nationalist military elements exploited that.

Q: What was diplomatic and personal life like there?

FINNEY: Diplomatic life in Peru both in Arequipa and in Lima from my perspective was terrific. I was in my late 1920s, I was single, the Peruvians, as I mentioned, either in Arequipa or Lima or wherever I went were overwhelmingly friendly to Americans as individuals. It was a privilege and an honor to be an American diplomat. I was always treated with great respect, and people were anxious to know you. They all had friends in the U.S., and they were interested in visas, but beyond that it was prestigious to know an American diplomat. The Criollos and the Peruvians were also very warm and open. The Indians tend to be shy and reclusive, but it was a very open, warm, welcoming society, wonderful parties and singing. The Peruvians are very social people and spontaneous, and you dated a lot of Peruvian girls, and you got to know their families. Labor union leaders took me to meet their families, and the politicians took me to meet their families, so it was easy to gain access to the social structure of Peru. The Peruvians are very tactile socially in that the *abrazo* was a big deal, and so you're walking down the street in downtown Peru around the Parliament or of the Congress, and you're seeing a politician every other block, and you're going into these *abrazos.* Then you're drinking the *chicha*, and so it was remarkable because I went from Peru to Vietnam where they are not tactile in social situations. You don't touch people there. In Peru you are constantly embracing or kissing the women, on the cheeks, of course, and you were *abrazo*-ing the men, so it was wonderful, and I loved the outdoors, and I loved the trekking. I went trout fishing, and my twin brother came down from the U.S. twice. We went trekking and trout fishing in the Andes. Peru was a fabulous outdoor place. You had this combination of a 15-mile wide band of mostly deserted beaches from Lima to Chile 800, 900 miles south, then you had these Andes mountains which started 50 miles inland and basically went straight up to 18, 20 thousand feet, and then on the other side of the Andes you had the Amazonian jungle which was an emerald sea stretching from horizon to horizon. For someone who loved the outdoors and the Foreign Service adventure, this was a paradise. The final point, the archeological discoveries in Peru, the Inca heritage. You'd stub your toe and come up with Inca relics. And these river valleys along the Peruvian coast, dry desert where it hadn't rained for 400 years, guess what: There were Indian civilizations, pre-Inca civilizations, dating back to one or two millennia before Christ. In Lima they had the bull fighting and that whole mystique, if you like bull fighting, and all the best Spanish matadors from Spain came over for the summer. When it was winter in Spain, it was summer in Peru, and Peru and Mexico were on the circuit. They came over and to see these bull fights and the color and the drama and the blood. It was great insights into the Spanish culture. I loved it!

Q: How about with dating. Did they have to have a duenia?

FINNEY: A duenia. No, that I didn't have a family assigned, an aunt or someone to came along, but sometimes brothers came. We did a lot in groups. It's all so innocent. We went out in groups. The other thing was I was always taken home to meet the family. These young women in their young 20s, they lived at home, so when I got to know them I got to know the family.

Q: You left Peru in June 1970 and what was your next assignment?

FINNEY: I left in June 1970 because I volunteered to go to Vietnam. Vietnam became a huge issue, and I wanted to get into Vietnam and see for myself what was going on there. So in June I came back from Peru and in July I reported to the Vietnam training center in Roslyn for Vietnamese language training and preparation for the CORDS program.

Q: Let's talk about the Vietnam training center and the CORDS program and your preparation before you went there.

FINNEY: We were getting three things: First, an overall introduction in the history, the culture, and the current state of our U.S. and military organizational presence in Vietnam. Secondly, we were doing full time language training. And thirdly, and very importantly, we were training with the military officers—majors, lieutenant colonels and some colonels—whom we were going to serve with in the CORDS program in Vietnam in either the district or the province advisory teams. So that was a great benefit to be training for this assignment not only in the language full time and the history and the culture but also with the military officers we were going to be serving with in the Civil Operations Revolutionary Development Support program known as CORDS.

Q: How did you find Vietnamese language?

FINNEY: The language I had heard was going to be difficult. It was a challenge, but I found it easier than I had thought because I'd already learned one foreign language, which was Spanish. So having learned one foreign language, strangely enough, Vietnamese came a little bit easier than I thought. Vietnamese, like Chinese, Thai, and Cambodian, has a simple grammar. They don't conjugate their verbs, for example. The challenge for Vietnamese was the tones. There were five tones in Vietnamese, and the meaning of the word changes with the change in the tone. That was the challenge; however, we had Vietnamese language instructors—men and women, native Vietnamese—who were teaching us, and they were terrific.

Q: And when did you arrive in country?

FINNEY: I went out in the summer of 1971; I think it was July. I went out July of '71 after something like 48 or 50 weeks at the Vietnam training center. Let me say a quick word about the Vietnam training center. I thought it was a good center. We had a director, a deputy director. They had a good faculty, both the language faculty and this

history and culture faculty, and they brought people back from Vietnam to speak to us. They had Vietnamese. They brought back John Paul Vann, for example. Not only were we getting the academic instruction, but we were getting at least once a month a senior visitor from the field who was coming back and telling us how it was. I must say because I volunteered to go to Vietnam, I was very interested in learning about the place, so I had a very positive experience in the training center because I wanted to learn as much as I could before I went over there.

Q: By the summer of 1971 what was the view of Vietnam from Washington that you were getting at the Vietnam Training Center?

FINNEY: In the wake of the January 1968 Tet Offensive much of the Viet Cong infrastructure had been severely damaged, and much of it destroyed when the Viet Cong surfaced in the Tet Offensive. So the security situation in the countryside was beginning to turn in the South Vietnamese government and the U.S. favor because the Viet Cong had taken such grievous blows. The PAVN, the People's Army of Vietnam, had been pushed back into their bases, and they were there, they were menacing, but the security situation had been gradually improving. This was certainly the case when I got there in the countryside in the summer of 1971. In the spring of 1972 we had a major spring offensive.

Q: This was the Easter offensive.

FINNEY: This was the Easter offensive, and that's where the North Vietnamese made a major bid to gain the battlefield initiative. The head of our CORDS program, John Paul Vann, as you may know, was deeply involved, with the support of U.S. Air Force B-52s in staving off the North Vietnamese army attacks on Kontum and Pleiku [Ed: see Neil Sheehan's biography A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam, published in 1988]. Together with the U.S. forces up in I CORPS, they were able to turn back this offensive. But in the summer of 1971, when I got out there, the sense was that the momentum in the countryside was beginning to move in the government and the U.S. favor. That said, on the political front, there was a series of elections going on, both local elections and national elections. Some progress was being made, but the general reports we were getting from the field before we deployed in the summer of 1971 was that the political situation was still a bit squishy, was still a bit unsettled. There was a constant challenge for the South Vietnamese government to develop a program with an appeal that galvanized the local people. That ability to galvanize the local people was a real challenge for the South Vietnamese government. Nguyen van Thieu from Central Vietnam, Phan Rang, I think, he was elected in 1969 or 1970 or 1971 just when I got there, and he was considered the best of a mediocre lot of South Vietnamese leaders. Economically, again, with the gradual improvement in the countryside in the wake of the Tet Offensive and the severe damage to the Viet Cong organization headquarters that gradually the situation in the countryside economy was getting better. The miracle rice that had been developed by the Rockefeller Institute in the Philippines and brought to Vietnam began to be planted in major degrees in the South Vietnamese countryside in the late 1960s, early 1970s. That was taking hold, and the land reform program was also

beginning to take hold. A lot of the infrastructure that was destroyed in the Tet Offensive was being replaced by the summer of 1970 and 1971, so there was a sense that tough situation, difficult challenges, but on the security side, on the economic side, less on the political side, there seemed to be positive movement.

Q: It was also a time of deactivization. American troops were pulling out.

FINNEY: Correct. It's not so much a pullout as a phase down and train up. They had benchmarks. When certain conditions were met they would lower our forces—the U. S. forces—at the same time they were building up the capabilities of the South Vietnamese security forces. These included the South Vietnamese Army, their police, their field police, and the local units at the province and district level, so you could see the trend was clear that the U.S. as we were training them up, we were stepping down our forces. The Koreans were also there in significant numbers, and one of the problems where I served, we had two Korean divisions, as a matter of fact, but they were sort of replacing the U.S. forces, too.

Q: When you went out there initially, did you serve in one spot or did you move around?

FINNEY: I served in two provinces in Central Vietnam on the coast. My first province was Binh Thuan and our headquarters was in its capital Phan Thiet city located in central Vietnam on the coast. I served there for about nine months as a province senior development officer working on the province advisory team. Then after nine months there I was promoted to become deputy province advisor in Phu Yen province father up the Central Vietnam coast right below Binh Dinh, and I had 13 months there.

Q: Let's talk about the first place. Describe the province and then what you all were doing.

FINNEY: Binh Thuan was a province on the central coast. It was about a three to four hour drive at that time north of Saigon. We were in Military Region 2 (MR 2 or II Corps). It was a province whose economy was based on both fishing and agriculture. Phan Thiet city was the center of the fish sauce industry in central Vietnam; it was right on the coast. It had about 100 factories which produced fish sauce which is sold throughout central Vietnam and even down to South Vietnam. Very high quality, very lucrative undertaking, and then they had extensive fishing up and down the coast. There were a lot of fishing villages, and then they had rice growing in the interior.

As I say, this was a productive province in terms of the fish sauce and in terms of their fishing. I went out several times with their fishing fleets at several points along the coast there and then spent the night out on the South China Sea with these fishing fleets. So I had some sense of what they were doing, and in the interior of the province, maybe 30, 40 kilometers in from the coast they raised rice. After that you got into heavy forest which immediately took you into the lower part of the central highlands. We had tribal people there. So the interior, the deep interior of the province, was heavily forested and wooded and a contested area.

Q: What were the things that you were trying to do?

FINNEY: We were trying to do a number of things. Under the CORDS program our provincial advisory team consisted of 40 to 50 U.S. military stationed in the province headquarters with myself as a State Department officer, a couple of USAID officers, a USIA (U.S. Information Agency) information officer, a CIA (Central Intelligence agency) contingent of half a dozen officers, so all together maybe ten civilians and maybe 35 or 40 military. We were stationed at the province capital which was Phan Thiet City, and then we had five or six district teams, advisory teams, underneath us. Those district teams were in the five or six districts outside the capitol city of Phan Thiet. Those were headed by a major...about 10 or 12 enlisted men and junior officers, and they were advising at the district level. So we were doing security; we were doing refugees; we were doing economic development; we were doing community development.

To summarize briefly: On the security front, in Binh Thuan as in each of the 44 provinces of South Vietnam, we had a provincial battalion of local boys recruited from the province to fight in that province and perform their military duty in the province. This was an alternative to serving in the South Vietnam National Army or ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam). So this was like joining the National Guard, but it was full time military duty, and those lads fought just in Binh Thuan province. Then at each of the five district levels, we had a district company, and that, again, was recruited from village boys who would only fight and be deployed in their district. Then we had a program to set up village militias. As I said, there were five or six districts in the province, and in each of those five or six districts there were a half a dozen or so villages. In each of the villages there were a half a dozen or so hamlets. So with the province, the battalion, with the district company, we then went down to the village level and set up a village militia drawn from the boys and the older men from the hamlets. It was all about winning back the hamlets and establishing an effective government presence there, and that begins with establishing security. So one of the things I did as the province development officer was to work with a Vietnamese first lieutenant and a U.S. first lieutenant and several enlisted men. We went down to key villages in the province and, working with the district advisory team, we set up a village militia in these units organized under the village chief. This was to deter the Viet Cong from coming down from the foothills into the village and getting food, intelligence, and refuge. John Paul Vann, who was director of the II Corps CORDS program, was headquartered in Nha Trang to the north of us. He dictated that we had to sleep out in the villages with our village militia at least once a week, so that's what we did. In some of the villages, these were re-settled Catholic Vietnamese who came down from the north in 1954, and they were easy to organize. But other ethnic groups were represented. We had some villagers called *chams.* They were descendants of Cambodian empire in the 14th and 15th Century who had settled on the South Vietnamese coast. Then we had some *nungs* who were ethnically from Chinese stock. So those peoples—the Catholics, the chams and the nungs—were very receptive to our efforts to set up village militias.

Deeper into the hinterland of the province were just the South Vietnamese stock. Sometimes they were a hard sell because, first of all, these people were frightened that if they set up a village militia that the Viet Cong would overpower them and kill them or capture their children or whatever. So they had to be assured that if we set up a village militia that it would be linked in an effective way with communications to the district company which was at the district town. That meant doing exercises and training so if we called to the district for help, the district guys could come down and respond in an effective way. In the same way at the district level, we exercised with them so that we could ensure that the battalion at the province level would come down and help. So this involved sleeping out at night with these fellows to show them that we were willing the bear the risk that they did. So that's one contribution we made on the security side setting up these village militias and making sure that they were linked to the district and the district linked to the province security forces.

On the economic reform side, we were pushing the South Vietnamese land reform program, and that applied to Binh Thuan. There was a land reform program, and that meant registering all the farmers. That meant doing cadastral surveys of the rice fields and the grazing pastures in the province and then submitting all that data to a district and then a province land reform office and then handing out the titles. This was a complex procedure. Doing the cadastral surveys was difficult and time consuming, registering people, adjudicating disputes, so it was difficult bureaucratically, but the payoff was huge. When we had these ceremonies and we handed out land deeds, it had a big impact, but it was a program that required a lot of management and support. USAID had a big office in Saigon which was working with the land ministry there to support us at the province level. Second thing we worked hard on was irrigation.

Q: What had been the traditional land ownership policy or situation?

FINNEY: In central Vietnam there were landlords, but they were not as extensive as I had been told in the delta and in Saigon and in those areas where a number of people had amassed a large either rubber plantations or estates, and there was a lot of tenant farming. There were tenant farmers in central Vietnam where I was, but central Vietnam was more thinly populated because the availability of land in from the coast for rice farming was much narrower than the delta was. It was a huge, flat place, so it was more thinly populated, and we had more varied populations. As I said, we had the Catholics from the north, we had the Chams and the Nung. So there was some landlord situation in our province which had to be addressed, but a lot if it, frankly, was poor record keeping and an inadequate judicial system to adjudicate the land disputes. So a lot of the farmers who wanted to farm their land had submitted a petition ten years ago, which was never acted on.

Q: Then you were saying the next thing that you were doing.

FINNEY: It was irrigation, and that was key to the success of the rice growing areas in the province. Many of the irrigation facilities had been damaged in the Viet Minh-French war and had also been damaged in the earlier parts of the war when the U.S. forces

entered in significant numbers, and it was absolutely pivotal. Available water was the lifeblood to the farmers. We were working with USAID and working with some really marvelous water engineers from Saigon and from the province focusing on building and restoring and keeping working these irrigation projects.

On the economic front the banking operation in the province, we worked hard on making credit available to the farmer. We had fertilizer and seed distribution programs. We had land reform, we had irrigation, but at the end of the day you had to put cash in the hand of the farmers so they could get a loan at a decent rate and wouldn't mortgage their future. So we supported micro-farm, micro-credit projects to get money in the hands of the farmer. We worked on community development, building schools and clinics and markets and farm to road markets schools, clinics, markets and these small feeder roads. AID had a lot of the money which they made available to the local ministries in Saigon which gave the money out of the province. We had to oversee the execution and then, most importantly, verify that roads were actually built, that the contractors when they actually laid the school didn't make the concrete floor so thin that it would punch through, so we worked very hard on these basic infrastructure projects. Another area was refugees. I got there the summer of 1971. There were still left-over refugees from the Tet Offensive three years earlier, and we had refugees that were generated by the village clashes and destruction of homes that happened as well, so we did that.

The final point was the local elections. There were several local elections at the municipal and provincial level, and then there was at least one national election. So we were going out, and when I say we, I mean ourselves and our South Vietnamese counterparts. It wasn't myself or other Americans going alone. We were always with our South Vietnamese partners going with their election organization at the province level helping them get their educational materials out to support their efforts to get people registered and to provide over-the-horizon security and that took a lot of time.

John Paul Vann was our director in Military Region 2 which covered central Vietnam, both the highlands and the coast—I was on the coast—and he was an extremely energetic, dynamic, and charismatic leader. He required us to sleep out in the hamlet or the village at least once a week to support these security projects and to develop rapport with the local leaders, and he required us to submit a report once a month. We had to do a provincial report. As a province senior project development officer and as the deputy province senior advisor, I ended up doing a lot of this for my province teams. We did our report in which we covered security, land reform, economic development, elections, if there were refugee situations, and an overall view of what was going on in the province: the good, the bad, the ugly. A key part of that was a survey of the hamlets in the province. So in Binh Thuan Province, Phan Thiet the capital city, five or six districts, five or six hamlets in each village, roughly we're talking about over a hundred hamlets. We evaluated as best we could the situation in each hamlet in terms of security and stability and economic progress, and we submitted these reports to Mr. Vann in Nha Trang, and he sent them down to Saigon.

Q: Particularly in the military where you are required to submit reports, you want to put the best face on it than you can. The usual thing is when you are starting you want to put the worst face on it so you can show improvement. I would think as a Foreign Service officer when you are working under a different dynamic, you would find yourself in a clash sometimes about these evaluations? Did you get into this?

FINNEY: Oh, yes, no question about it. It was one of the basic tensions of the job. Mr. Vann who was our director of Military Region 2 or CORDS director was, as I said, extremely active, energetic, hands-on management. He was in the business of doing everything he could to improve the situation: security, economic, public affairs, political. he wanted to promote improvement quite understandably. This was in keeping with the basic Vietnamization program, as on the military side we were training the Vietnamese military forces so that we would continue to draw down on the U.S. forces and complete a withdrawal. While that was going on the military side, of course they were expecting progress in these other areas on the civilian side. So there was a tremendous emphasis to put your shoulder to the wheel and get the job done. And there's no question that, naturally, since you're being graded by Mr. Vann in Nha Trang and Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and his deputies in Saigon, they were looking for progress. Unquestionably since we're all human, many people wanted to put the best face on things. And many people, as you said, when they started out things looked grim, but by the time they finished their tour, by gosh things looked a lot better. That was part of the dynamic. It depended on the individuals. There were plenty of individuals who were as honest and objective as possible, and the people in the CORDS evaluation center in Saigon kept telling us to tell it like it is, so there's no question that we experienced reverses. Many times despite our best efforts we found ourselves dealing with corrupt South Vietnamese officials, and we just couldn't get the job done. On the other hand, we met a lot of courageous South Vietnamese officials whether they were hamlet or village chiefs or irrigation chiefs or a province governor who put their life on the line and worked hard everyday. You had the utmost respect for them, so you had all kinds there. I myself never felt that I was under any pressure not to tell the truth or not to tell it like it is, and as a Foreign Service officer you're trained to give your best analysis, your best assessment, and that's what we tried to bring to the process. That's what I certainly tried to do.

Q: What about the role of corruption where you were. Was it where you were?

FINNEY: It was always an issue. It was an always an issue because this was a government and society under tremendous stress. It was a government and society that had been at war since the late 1940s. Here we were in the early 1970s, so when you have that kind of stress, that's going to expose a lot of fissures in that society as it would in any other. Number two, you had a society where the idea of nationhood or allegiance to national institutions was still very weak. So the basic allegiance was, first of all, to the family and then to your client, and then to your town and then to your province. Another factor was that many of the old South Vietnamese officials were paid a pittance, and many of them, particularly the military or the police, were not paid or were paid intermittently. So you add up all this combination of things and then you add on to it the

U.S. effort to pump tens of millions of dollars into the countryside to promote progress and get things done, and so you can see there is ample opportunity for unscrupulous people to make a lot of money. And they did because people were scrambling and fighting to take care of themselves, take care of their family, and take care of their own immediate interests, so there was a lot of corruption. Having said that, like any society there were also some just really outstanding, terrific people who were immune to corruption because they believed in what they were doing. They understood the greater cause, and they were trying to do the right thing. So I ran into some spectacular examples of corruption such as from a province chief who was siphoning oil off from an oil line coming in from the coast so that he could sell it on the black market. I also met many other people who were trying to do the right thing.

Q: From Binh Thuan Province's point of view, how was the Saigon government viewed?

FINNEY: It was viewed somewhat distantly, but different people had different perspectives. One factor, President Nguyen Van Thieu—I think he was elected in 1969 or 1970 [Ed: October 1971]—he was from Ninh Thuan province which was the neighboring province north of Binh Thuan. The capital city of Ninh Thuan is Phan Rong-Thap Cham, and Nguyen Van Thieu was from there, so he was known to the central Vietnamese where I was working, and that counted for something. They were mostly influenced, first of all, by local government officials: it was the teacher in the school house; it was the village or district police chief; it was the governor; it was the priest or the Monks or the banker. These are the people who had the most impact on the views of the people and how they looked at the government. The people in Saigon, they obviously came down to visit during elections and for other events, and they were received generally respectfully. But the bulk of the population that I dealt with, I would say... my take on it was that they did not want a Communist system, but they didn't want a heavy-handed Saigon government, either. Basically, they wanted to be left alone to raise their rice crops, to have a decent chance for education and advancement for their children, to have secure access to land, and to lead a secure life in an atmosphere of security. If the Saigon government could deliver that to them, then that's fine, and they would support the Saigon government. But if the Saigon government could not protect them and could not help them, then they found themselves exposed to the Viet Cong, and then some of them had to make compromises. There were some in the province that flatly supported the Viet Cong. I found that to be the minority, no question about it, but there was a large group that was up for grabs, and if the South Vietnamese government was strong and effective, they would go with them. If not, they would have to compromise and deal with the Viet Cong.

Q: How would you deal with the bankers? A banker, particularly in lots of societies including our own, bankers are out to make money and get as much as he can out of the situation. I would think that you guys coming in from someplace way overseas and trying to upset the traditional way of squeezing the farmer for everything they've worked for would not be seen in a friendly manner.

FINNEY: I'm sure that was the attitude of some of them. No question about it, but there were some other factors in play here. At the province level many of the bankers in these small provincial capitols were younger people. The big banks and the high finance fellows were in Saigon. That was where the big money was being made, so at the province level we had mostly young guys in their 30s and 40s, and as it turned out, many of them had been trained by USAID and had been through all these training programs. We had a program. That was the CORDS program with our South Vietnamese counterparts for security, for land reform, for basic infrastructural improvement, for economic progress, for schools. This program was also the same program that the governor was implementing, and he had a little cabinet, and he called together all of his representatives from the irrigation, the school, the police, and the bank. He called all these folks together and said, "We have a reform program here. We represent progress. We represent change. You have to get with the program." That was the basic pitch, and there was a free press. We had a dozen newspapers in the province of one kind or another, and we had relatively free speech. People could complain as they did. So the basic situation was that South Vietnam knew that in order to progress, it had to reform, and in order to reform the people had to buy into the program that the government was trying to institute. The CORDS program was designed to help. So it was not an impossible task because the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank were providing a substantial amount of funds for rural development to these provincials. And then these people came down and sat down with the local bankers and went over their books and looked after them. There was still corruption, there was still malfeasance, but there was also progress.

Q: What was the security situation while you were in that province?

FINNEY: When I was in the province the security situation was improving. Binh Thuon Thiet, the capitol city in Bien Thuan, had been occupied by the Viet Cong during the Tet Offensive. There was a lot of destruction, but the ARVN, the South Vietnamese troops, and the U.S. won back the province city and the rest of the province. So the momentum was shifting in favor of the South Vietnamese government and those of us who were supporting it. The situation was definitely improving because the Viet Cong in Binh Thuan province had been decimated by the aftermath of the Tet Offensive. Then these programs that I've talked about were really starting to take hold. The highway to South Saigon was significantly improved, the bridges that had been blown up in the Tet Offensive had been rebuilt. The irrigation systems, the land reform. We had moved tens of thousands of people out of refugee camps back onto their land, and the security situation was improving as the South Vietnamese forces were gradually improving. So in the nine months that I was in Binh Thuan province, there was progress toward establishing secure villages and secure hamlets. That was the cutting edge of our effort; that first the hamlet and then the village, then the district, and then the province. We were working fundamentally day in and day out at the hamlet and village level, and you could sense the progress. You could sense the gradual improvement. Things were moving our way.

Q: Did you have any situations when you were doing your once a week sleep-in in a hamlet?

FINNEY: Oh, yes. A couple of times. In Binh Thuan province, one night I went with the deputy governor of the province, a young man. I guess I was 31 or 32. He must have been my age. He was the deputy governor. We had an ARVN colonel—a South Vietnamese colonel—as our province governor. He was from the province of Binh Thuan. His deputy governor was a civilian. I spent a lot of time with him when I went out these programs. So one night we were out at a rally to bring together these village militias and to also bring together what we called "revolutionary cadre." When we set up the village militias, we also set up what we called the "revolutionary cadre" which were young boys which in a sense were armed boy scouts. So we had a big rally that night, and then we had to drive from the rally back to the district headquarters. I told my deputy governor friend that I thought that was not a good idea because the road was not particularly safe, that we should spend the night there on the rally site, sleep with the militia. But he wanted to go to the province headquarters. So on the way back to the province headquarters, there were six or seven of us. I'm the only American. I'm riding in his jeep, and we were ambushed on the road, just before we got to a bridge. The windows were shot out of the vehicle, and the vehicle half turned over. We all spilled out and crawled under the bridge. There we were, rifle rounds flying overhead. We called for help from the district headquarters which was about a kilometer and a half away. They sent a relief force out to the bridge where we had sought refuge, and they engaged the enemy. Then they brought in the artillery from the district, and we fired back at those fellows. We drove them off, and then they escorted us to the district headquarters. The unit that stayed behind chased the people who ambushed us. A lieutenant in charge of the unit that stayed behind and secured us was killed. We made it back to the district headquarters and spent the night there. Then I will never forget in the early morning—this all happened about 11:00 at night—everybody gets up at 6:00 the next morning. Next to the district headquarters they had a little morgue in a house there, and the lieutenant from the squad that came out to secure us and then pursue the guerillas and who had been killed, was laying there in the morgue. His wife who lived in the district town came in and threw herself on top of him, was laying on top of him sobbing, so that was one ambush that night. In another province, the second province I went to, I got involved in some much more serious situations, but that was the situation there.

Q: Let's move to Phu Yen province. You were there from when to when?

FINNEY: I was there for about 13 months... I guess I was in Binh Thuan province for about nine or ten months, got there in July. In May or so I went up to Phu Yen province which is farther up the coast, and the capitol was Tuy Hoa. This was a larger province. It was insecure because central Vietnam is right up against the highlands. We had two Korean divisions stationed there: the White Horse and the Tiger Division. We had a large U.S. helicopter detachment in Tuy Hoa Airport which provided helicopter support to the two Korean divisions. So it was much more of a security challenge than Binh Thuan was. The Viet Cong were stronger in Phu Yen province, and the PAVN (People's Army of Vietnam, i.e., north Vietnamese regular army forces) were coming down from Binh Dinh

which was just north of us. So they were active in the hills around us. In Phu Yen province I was a deputy province senior advisor. I was number two on the team with a province advisor team of 40 to 50 people and about 10 civilians and five or six districts, and with five or six villages and hamlets in each of the districts. So there security was a big problem because there was Route 7 which went from Phu Yen province all the way up to Pleiku and Kontum.

Q: This was the infamous Route 7 later during 1975.

FINNEY: 1975 when the retreat from the highlands came down Route 7. I left Binh Thuan province just after John Paul Vann was killed. He was killed in June of 1972 during the Easter offensive, an incredibly dynamic and charismatic individual who had been an Army ranger in Korea. He was the subject of the book The Bright Shining Lie by Neil Sheehan from The New York Times. Mr. Vann taught himself how to fly helicopters, and during the siege of Cam Tunh and Pleiku by the North Vietnamese army, Mr. Vann was moved from NhaTrang, the regional headquarters for Military Region 2 in CORDS. He moved to Pleiku but flew every day to coordinate the B-52 strikes against the North Vietnamese army. So he lived in Pleiku but he flew a helicopter every day up to Kontum to be on the scene there, and then he flew back to Pleiku each evening. So he was going back and forth all the time. On the evening of June 6 he was flying back from Kontum to Pleiku, and he flew into a hill. He was in a two-seater, what we call the Loach helicopter, a Kiowa helicopter, and he was killed instantly. He was a remarkably courageous individual in many times and many places. Especially during the Easter offensive, for example, when the PAVN were making a serious threat to overrun the central highlands, we had U.S. advisors who were out with ARVN units who were trying to cope with the North Vietnamese assaults. Mr. Vann went in there personally on two or three different occasions and picked up U.S. Army advisors himself in his helicopter. Several times the helicopter was shot out from underneath him like a steed. About the time Mr. Vann was killed in early June 1972, I moved up to Phu Yen. Our new province director for Military Region 2 was a State Department officer named Tom Barnes who was a protégé of John Paul Vann's. Barnes was a State Department FSO, but he was cut from the John Paul Vann mold. He was extremely emphatic, dynamic. He wanted us to clear Route 7 from Phu Yen province up to Pleiku, and it was laced with mines. That was a huge security project, and because there were large scale Viet Cong units and North Vietnamese units, we were using the South Korean divisions to go up in these stronghold areas. So there was a fair amount of combat and we were using U.S. air support, both helicopter gun ships and Air Force jets.

In Phu Yen province we had 26 hamlets which were under control of Viet Cong, so when I got there our job was to take these hamlets back. So to take the hamlets back, we had to go out there. When I say we, we went out, of course, always with the South Vietnamese district chief, and with the province irrigation chiefs and land reformers. We went to these villages, and then we boosted up the local hamlet chief. One of the things we had to do was to get the hamlet chief, who was the government representative, to sleep in the hamlet, because if he didn't sleep in the hamlet, then the people weren't going to deny the Viet Cong to come in. Then we had to create a unit there. So we went out at night with

the teams. We took everybody from the province who had a function in terms of community development, economic development, security, and we went out and we met with all the representatives. We took the village chief down to the hamlet and the hamlet chief, and we sat there. We would have these two and three hour sessions. We talked about why it's important to support the government of South Vietnam. Then we had local singers and guitar players and magicians, and we would put on a show for the people. These are peasants, I mean the people we were dealing with, but these were singers and puppeteers and magicians from the local area. So one night we went up to a Viet Cong hamlet and put on our show, and we had a company of local security from the province with us. We had a platoon from the district, and so we had about 150 local security. After we had our sessions with the chiefs and talked about the situation, then we put on a part of a vaudeville show, and the security forces that we had protecting us came in to watch the vaudeville show. I'm sitting there next to the hamlet chief. We're sitting in the steps of the flagpole next to his school. About ten feet from us were my jeep, the jeep of the province, the U.S. district advisor, and the chief of the South Vietnamese and the district chief, about six chiefs in a row. We were sitting there talking with the hamlet chief, and all of a sudden there is a huge explosion, and the lead jeep in our five jeep convoy just blew up. All of a sudden there was a tremendous amount of firing and shooting. I turned to look at the explosion on the jeep maybe 20 yards from me as the first jeep went up in flames, and you could see the fire impacting on the other jeeps. So I dropped to the ground, and the hamlet chief, and everybody started running, as you can imagine, in great panic, and I ran behind the school building. We were moving to put a building against myself and the attackers, and there was a tremendous amount of firing. Now three or four of our jeeps were on fire, and I was behind the building with one of the local boys who was guarding us. He was a young kid about 18 years old, and he and I were there, and I'm wondering, "What's my next move." I looked out maybe ten feet from me and in the road and there's the jeep of my district advisor. A U.S. district advisor is lying underneath the jeep, and I was about ten feet from him behind this building. He reaches up and grabs the phone. He's lying underneath his jeep. He reached up and grabbed the phone to alert province headquarters that we're under attack. Just then a Viet Cong comes up and rolls a grenade under the jeep. Boom! The jeep blows up, and my major, the U.S. district advisor, rolls into the ditch on the side of the road stunned. This guy and I ran, grabbed our district advisor, brought him behind the school, and bullets are flying everywhere. We dropped to the ground, and there was a huge hedge and tall grass right behind the school house. So we dropped to the ground and crawled on our bellies through this grass. This was about 10:00 at night, and we crawled into this thicket and after about 20 minutes the firing dies down. There's myself, the U.S. major district advisor, and this 18 year old kid. The firing dies down, and then a couple of women come out from the other side of the hedge looking for people and anybody who's been hit or hurt, and I'm lying there. Keep in mind this is a Viet Cong controlled village. This lady walks right by me and looks down at me, and I looked up at her. In Vietnamese, I said to her, "I'm a U.S. advisor. Can you help us?" I'm speaking in Vietnamese. She gave us a stony glance, and they all had candles, and she walked by. So then this young guy who was with us—the Vietnamese boy—said, "We better move." So we crawled about another 100 yards to another thicket, and we implanted ourselves in that thicket, and we were about 15 or 20 yards from the road. Remember the six or seven jeeps, they're all destroyed now, and

then the Viet Cong started firing up along the road because behind the thicket in which we were was the edge of the village in which some of the remnants of the local security forces had sought refuge. So we found ourselves in this thicket with the Viet Cong on the road 25 yards in front of us firing over our heads into the village while the defenders in the village are firing over that way to them. We were in the middle. Our district advisor had called to our province headquarters to alert then that we were under attack, so about that time one of our U.S. helicopters which is stationed in the province headquarters appears overhead with a searchlight. They're flying down the road to shine the light. We're to the left of the road in this thicket; they're trying to find us. But, of course, by illuminating us for the Viet Cong who on the other side of the road makes us a perfect target. So, it was very dicey there. Tremendous amounts of firing going back and forth. We just kept getting deeper. I just wanted to burry myself in the thicket. So then, that went over.

The Viet Cong started firing on the helicopter and drove it off real quick. Then they brought in Puff the Magic Dragon which is an AC-130 gunship. They were putting in tremendous amounts of fire in the areas around us, and then that passed. We could hear the Viet Cong screaming and yelling to each other, and this guy said they were going to assault. They were going to try to assault through the hedge where we were and get to the people who were behind us: the remnants of the security force. And so I thought this was the end of my days. I'm lying there with the district advisor. He has his M-16. My M-16 blew up in my jeep, but he gave me his .45, and his young 18 year old South Vietnamese local security boy had an SKS rifle, and the three of us were there, ready. We had not fired any shots yet because we didn't want to identify ourselves. We were so close to them, and they were forming up and screaming, and I thought, "This is it." I thought they would attack the hedge and they would kill us all. Believe it or not, at that time a tremendous thunderstorm developed, and the rain came down in huge amounts, and there was sporadic shooting. Maybe it was the fact of Puff the Magic Dragon, but the Viet Cong did not conduct the assault. For some reason they went back up the road and departed. We stayed in this position. They left about 11:00 pm, 11:30, and we stayed in this position until about 2:00 in the morning when a relief battalion ground force sent from the province headquarters came up toward us. I heard them, and the young boy and I crawled out there on our stomachs and hooked up with this relief force and brought them into where our advisor was. Then we secured the village, and we sat there until about 4:00 in the morning when some helicopters arrived. We had about half a dozen dead and a number wounded from the local security force, and we got on the choppers and flew back. So that was a very eventful evening.

Another time we were north of Nha Trang and going down to Nha Trang, and this path was under control of the Korean White Horse Division, I believe, and the pass had been interdicted. It was a road going through a very steep canyon with big boulders. The pass had been interdicted by snipers, and so the South Koreans had gone through there to clear it. We were on our way from Tuy Hoa, province capitol, down to Nha Trang, and so when we got to the edge of the pass, the South Koreans had halted us until their clearing operation could be completed. Then they said, "OK, it's clear to go." So I'm in my vehicle, and another colleague from the advisory team was in front of me in his vehicle.

We started through the pass. We were the first ones through the pass after the clearing operation. We got to the middle of the pass where the Viet Cong had set off a land mine that had blown up a South Vietnamese truck. Because the road had a huge hole blown in it, you had to go around the edge to try to go around it. While we were going around the edge, my friend came under sniper fire. He was about 40 yards ahead of me, and I got out of my car and started walking toward him quickly to see if I could be of any assistance. Suddenly rounds started exploding all around me. The sniper was up in the hills. Obviously, I couldn't see him, so I dashed back to my car and then had to put it in reverse and go back out. About that time a U.S. helicopter came who started putting in rounds all up on the hillside. Then my friend backed his car out, so both of us came under some significant sniper fire, but we happily escaped unscathed. So those were two examples of some interesting times. The fact of the matter was in order to conduct the program, in order to show solidarity with the hamlet chiefs and the village chiefs and the people you're trying to influence out there, you have to share risks with them. We believed in what we were doing. We believed in trying to provide security for these people, and they were very courageous, and so we did this all the time. We had other close calls mostly on the sleep outs, but we all felt it was worth it. We were all deeply involved in this. We were committed to this, and we all wanted it to succeed. Of those 26 hamlets that were controlled by the Viet Cong, I think we got about half or two-thirds of those back in the government ledger.

We had a situation in that particular province where the rice fields...again, I was on the coast...but the rice fields extended to foothills where Route 7 started to go up in the hills. We were able to secure the villages on the plain, but in the foothills we could not get those villages away from the Viet Cong. They were just too accessible to them, and there was too much family interest involved. We did the same things we did in Binh Thuan with our refugee program and our village Farm to Market program, with irrigation, with land reform, with local elections, with micro-credit loans. We had a bunch of programs and all this was in coordination with our South Vietnamese counterparts. We were there to help them extend their reach and extend their activities. It just became extremely absorbing, and you could not help become committed to this if you want to be successful, you want to succeed. The South Vietnamese people that I worked with by and large were impressive people. They were trying to survive and protect themselves and their family and have a decent place to live, so it was a very intense experience. You're 24/7 here. When you're in the program and in the province, you're working all the time. We would go down to Nha Trang to regional headquarters for meetings.

About the U.S. military in CORDS, these were officers and enlisted people who had already been in Vietnam on a combat tour. Now they were back working as advisors, so they were committed to being successful as well. They varied in quality, but some of them were just truly outstanding, and it was a pleasure to work and be associated with them. [Ed: see Richard Hunt, Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds (1995)]

Q: I'd like to ask about the South Korean divisions, the White Horse and the Tigers, and what they were doing. I heard from other people when I was in Vietnam who said the

South Koreans were on orders from home not to take casualties, and so that they protected themselves but were not as active as they might have been.

FINNEY: There was good news and bad news about the performance and the capabilities of the two Korean divisions which were assigned to Phu Yen province on the north central coast of South Vietnam right below Binh Dinh. Let's talk about the good news first. My experience was 1971 through 1973. The positive thing about the Koreans was that you would use them effectively to go into the strongholds of the VC (Viet Cong) or the People's Army of Vietnam, the PAVN, areas back in the hills of our province because they were well disciplined, well trained troops. We provided them with helicopter support, both transport and attack, and medevac and with close combat air support. We had a U.S. helicopter battalion stationed in Tue Hoa Air Base which is just outside our province, so that helicopter support was very critical particularly to troops engaged up in high jungle. We also assigned liaison officers with them—U. S. Army liaison officers—and forward air observers when we put in air support. Under those circumstances the South Koreans performed quite effectively. When you had to sweep through the strongholds in very remote and difficult areas, if you provided the liaison officers, the forward observers and provided them helo, medevac and close air support, it was a quite effective force.

This was at a time when, 1971 through 1973, particularly after 1972, the Easter offensive, when U.S. forces were continuing to draw down. We didn't have large U.S. formations that were easily available for this, so the South Koreans did a very effective job there. Another thing that impressed me about the South Koreans, and I dealt with them a fair amount, was how prepared they were, and to put it in the military vernacular how "squared away" they were. All their positions were well prepared, well thought out. Their troops maintained fitness. This was at a time unfortunately in the latter years of our involvement during the period that I was there, for example, 1970 to 1973, the U.S. Army and our military forces were undergoing very serious strains, so this didn't apply to the Koreans. I remember going through Cam Ranh on several occasions during the heat of the day and coming across several companies of South Korean infantry soldiers running down the highway just outside of Nha Trang in formation in their Ju-Jitsu uniforms. So they were very fit, able, squared away troops in that regard and did not appear to be subject to the unfortunate problems we had with racism and drugs and dereliction of duty among our draft Army at that time. So that's a credit in their behavior.

The down side of dealing with the Koreans, from my perspective as a deputy province senior advisor in Phu Yen province, was that you couldn't use them in built up areas. Our experience was that if a Korean infantry company was engaging in a sweep and went by a village or a hamlet and attracted sniper fire or small arms fire from the hamlet or village, the Koreans would wheel around and storm through the hamlet or village. They were tough troops, and it was very difficult for them to distinguish between the Viet Cong assailants and the local population. So there was fallout from that we had to deal with from time to time, so you couldn't use them effectively, in our view, in built up areas because the fallout outweighed the benefits. We were in the kind of war at that time where we were trying to win back the villages and the hamlets and the remote districts, so

the support of the local people was very critical. The Koreans were brave. I remember the day of the cease fire when it was announced on January 27, 1973, the Koreans from I think it was the White Horse division, the battalion commander and his staff were ambushed in the Bumroll Pass [Ed: perhaps a reference to Cù Mông Pass.] It was either the day of the cease fire or the day after the cease fire. He was killed along with a half a dozen members of his staff. They did their duty, but there were limitations on what you could do with them.

Q: My time in Vietnam was 1969 to 1970. The word was that the South Vietnamese, especially the civilians, were scared to death of the Koreans. They didn't give them any trouble at all.

FINNEY: They were tough and disciplined troops. I think it's also accurate what you said that they had word from Korea, from Seoul, not to take unnecessary casualties. So they had to be cajoled and focused to undertake these large operations in remote areas, but once you got them properly equipped and supported in this area, helo support was critical. Once you got them organized and focused, they did a real good job.

Q: Did you run across this phenomenon that I notice with Thai and other troops in Vietnam, they would have considerable cargo space dedicated to whatever they wanted to get out of the PX and all that.

FINNEY: Oh, yes, this is absolutely true. That was my experience that the Koreans went through the PX's somewhat like Attila the Hun went through Europe. When they came to participate in the coalition effort in South Vietnam, they regarded access to the PX's as one of the benefits of that tour. But I come back to the point having worked with them side by side and seen them that the pluses of the South Koreans outweighed the minuses.

Q: I think you're absolutely right. Is there anything else we should talk about on this?

FINNEY: Let's return very briefly to the CORDS program—Civil Operations, Revolutionary Development Program—that Robert Komer, White House advisor for Lyndon Johnson established in the 1967 time frame and then assigned Bill Colby, Senior CIA officer, to run. I thought it was a very effective program. In the areas where I was working it was far from a perfect program. There were lots of flaws, and we had to learn as we went along. But I believed after I had completed my tour there that if we had instituted something like the CORDS program and integrated joint civil affairs security program, if we had instituted that in the early 1960s, I think we would have perhaps had a much better outcome. Great credit I think should go to William Colby who was our first director. He was succeeded by John Paul Vann, but I would recommend to you Bill Colby's book called Lost Victory [1989] in which he talks about his experiences managing the CORDS program. Also, there's a book by a U.S. Army War College professor, Stuart Herrington, on the CORDS program which I think is a good, objective effort to assess the plusses and minuses of the program [Ed: possible reference to Silence as a Weapon: The Vietnam War in the Villages (1987).

It was a privilege to serve with people like Colby and John Paul Vann who were very committed and energetic and charismatic figures. I also would commend the State Department for establishing the Vietnam training center and assigning three to four hundred Foreign Service officers to the CORDS program, not only Foreign Service officers, included State and USAID and USIS (U.S. Information Service). I think it was a terrific experience to be involved in this kind of joint effort. I notice in contrast today, as someone who has served as a political advisor to our military since Vietnam and a half a dozen different situations, I notice in contrast today we do not have a training center where State Department officers, USAID officers, Agriculture Department, the Justice people who can go together and train together, study the language and culture and history together and then deploy together to places like the Balkans, to Afghanistan, and to Iraq. I think given the new current international security environment, where we are dealing with this war against terrorists, extremists, we need to have civilian agencies that are more expeditionary, that are more nimble, that are more flexible, and that are more integrated with our military colleagues when we're doing stability and reconstruction efforts.

Q: Absolutely.

FINNEY: I think we should have this training capability, and it grieves me deeply that we don't.

Q: Now you left Vietnam in 1973?

FINNEY: I left in August 1973 about five, six months after the cease fire had been signed.

Q: What was your personal judgment, feeling, and maybe your colleagues' when you were in South Vietnam at that point?

FINNEY: First, I have two quick comments, one about intelligence and the Phung Hoang or the Phoenix Program and then about our overall military strategy there. When we talked about the CORDS program and role of our advisory team at the province and the district level, I talked about security, setting up the village militias, linking up with the local Vietnamese, South Vietnamese forces at the district and provincial level and then the irrigation and the miracle rice and the land reform and the refugees and the school building and the elections and so forth. I didn't want to neglect mentioning intelligence.

Intelligence was a key component of our ability to conduct this small unit war. That's what we were doing in the CORDS program in the provinces in South Vietnam during the period that I was there was going out and trying to support our South Vietnamese colleagues; efforts to reestablish control in the countryside and compete for the allegiance of the people out there, so intelligence was critical. I neglected to mention that we worked as an advisor team very closely with our CIA colleagues, and they were a very important part of the CORDS effort. They were not technically part of the integrated CORDS program in the sense of being publicly identified with us, but we had a CIA-

State team house which was right next to our provincial CORDS headquarters. There were probably in the case of Phu Yen province maybe a dozen or so CIA officers there, and we shared information that we got in terms of our activity, CORDS activities, and they shared information on the debriefings and intelligence information that they had. I want to emphasize how closely we worked with our CIA colleagues to get out in the villages and in the hamlets and take out and eliminate the Viet Cong infrastructure. The Phoenix Program was an important element of that. Phoenix Program in many quarters gets a bad name as an assassination program. It was *not* an assassination program. It was a program to go out and capture, neutralize, help remove, or entice to surrender the Viet Cong infrastructure out in these villages and hamlets. I'm sure there were abuses in the Phoenix Program, and there were some killings that weren't justified, but we were going up against a very relentless foe, and the school teachers, and the hamlet chiefs, and the irrigation chiefs, and the police chiefs that we were working with, they were getting assassinated every week. So I thought the Phung Hoang program, the Phoenix Program in both the provinces I worked in, in Binh Thuan Province and then in the Phu Yen province was a good program. It served us well and helped us with our efforts to regain control of the countryside.

Another useful tool associated with the Phung Hoang program was Province Reconnaissance Units called PRU's, and these PRU's were a function of the Phung Hoang program. They went out and set ambushes in difficult areas when we had to hit the Viet Cong hard when they were conducting their terror campaigns against the South Vietnamese that we were working with. So the provincial reconnaissance units, the Phung Hoang effort, our CIA colleagues were all part of our overall effort, and I attached great value to them, and I enjoyed working with them. They were great guys and gals. The other comment was about our military strategy there, and this goes into your question about how I assessed the situation. I would simply say that I was very impressed with the 1972 bombing that Nixon ordered over Hanoi.

This was the Christmas bombing of 1972 to get the North Vietnamese to come back to the negotiating table and negotiate in an effective way. My judgment is that that kind of aggressive effort in taking the air war to the heart of North Vietnam is something that we should have been doing in the mid to late 60s. I think that as you look back in history, one of the issues we need to examine is, "Did we react to the example of the Chinese in Korea in 1950?" Dean Rusk, who was our Secretary of State, was Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia during the Korean War when it broke out. Our leadership during the Vietnam period was very much aware of what happened in Korea when the Chinese invaded. So we were quite careful not to evoke a similar situation there. But I think, militarily, our strategy would have been much more effective in hindsight if we had adapted what Admiral Sharp, who was our CINCPAC commander in 1967, had recommended: which would have been a major effort to cut across South Vietnam at the DMZ over in the Tchepone in Laos to cut the whole Ho Chi Minh Trail and then bombed Haiphong Harbor and Hanoi like we did in 1972. I think that would have been a much more productive military strategy.

But to get to your basic question what did it look like when I left in late August of 1973. We had to turn in monthly reports, and that continued after the January 1973 peace agreement. We still continued the CORDS program under a different name called SAAFO (Special Assistant to the Ambassador for Field Operations). So we were still sending monthly reports to Nha Trang and then down to Saigon. Our basic judgment was at that point that we had had substantial success in winning back many of the villages and hamlets in the countryside after the devastation that the Viet Cong suffered as a result of the Tet Offensive. There seemed no doubt to us when we were working in our province along the coast of central South Vietnam that tremendous strides had been made. We felt that we had a good solid posture there in our province in terms of extending the extent of government reach all the way out to the foothills, all the major inhabited areas.

The question was number one, could the South Vietnamese sustain this? Number two, the question was, would the United States continue to supply them with the wherewithal to sustain this? It was only natural after twenty years and $200 billion that the South Vietnamese perform this on their own, so that was the big question in our minds. On the one hand we felt good about what we'd been able to achieve in our province in terms of establishing government control, in promoting local development, in promoting local governance, and drastically improving the security situation. This is what we achieved. Could the South Vietnamese sustain it, and would we still be able in a position to help them substantially. So at the level we were working with, with hamlet chiefs, with village chiefs, with district chiefs, with provincial governor, there were some terrific South Vietnamese people and leaders here who were committed to make this work. This made us feel reasonably optimistic for the time. But there was always the question mark in the back of our minds whether the South Vietnamese military could hold it together and whether the South Vietnamese political leadership would take the time and the opportunity that our presence over there had bought them to solidify these tremendous gains that had been made from post-Tet 1968 through 1973. So I departed South Vietnam with that basic feeling that we had made very substantial gains and if the South Vietnamese could step up to the plate, and if we could continue to support them in a decent way, they stood a decent chance. You couldn't help but be impressed by the tenacity and the endurance and perseverance of the North Vietnamese foe that we were facing. Again, the Viet Cong had largely been beaten back and discredited, and we found ourselves dealing more and more with North Vietnamese back up in the hills. Of course, these were very tough and determined folks.

When I came back from Vietnam in late August, I reported in the middle of September to the Vietnam Task Force and State Department where I was assigned as a North Vietnam desk officer. So for the next two years I watched the situation unfold in South Vietnam from the vantage point of the Vietnam working group as we called it in the East Asian Bureau in the Department of State. Philip Habib was our assistant secretary, and Graham Martin was our ambassador in Saigon, and Henry Kissinger was our Secretary of State. In watching it unfold, by 1974 there were some worrisome signs. A couple of very important things happened very quickly. One was in the peace agreement signed in January of 1973. In May and June of 1973, just before I left, there was already significant evidence that the North Vietnamese were beginning to violate the accord in sending

troops and supplies south. I remember very well on several occasions, in response to reports from Saigon, that we got up on our helicopters and went deep into the edges of our province and into the lower highlands of South Vietnam to check the transit routes, and we could see with our helicopters that sure enough, there was the Ho Chi Minh Trail, extensions of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and troops and trucks were coming down there. This resulted in the military proposing to President Nixon in the summer of 1973 that he undertake significant bombing of the North Vietnamese violations of this accord. You may recall that in March of 1973, after the agreement was signed, Nguyen Van Thieu, the President of South Vietnam, went to San Clemente, and he visited Nixon. They issued the San Clemente declaration, and that declaration committed us to support South Vietnam if the North Vietnamese violated the terms of the agreement. So on Nixon's desk in the White House in May or June, July of 1973 was the proposal that we use B-52's to stop these violations. It was at that time that the Watergate scandal began to develop, and President Nixon never acted on this recommendation to go after those violations. This was the summer of 1973 and, of course, in August of 1974 he resigned from the presidency. So during those 12 months, as I was sitting on the Vietnam Task Force in State Department, we saw a couple of things were happening. Intelligence showed that the North Vietnamese were violating the accord and sending people south again.

The sentiment in our Congress against funding the war continued to expand significantly. I know Senator Kennedy from Massachusetts had a strong view on that. There was an important vote I think it was in the fall of 1973 or early 1974 where our Congress cut off significant chunks of our funding. Then there were issues that developed over support for the South Vietnamese military. Their performance was OK, it wasn't great. Then in January and February of 1975 the North Vietnamese made an effort to take over one of the provinces in Three CORPS up near the Parrot's Beak, and the South Vietnamese were unable to stop them. That successful North Vietnamese push then produced the assault on Ban Me Thuot in the central highlands in March two months later. The decisions of the South Vietnamese government at that point were absolutely abominable. They met in Nha Trang in mid-March and mapped out a plan to evacuate the highlands. It was a bad plan to begin with, and it was executed in such tragic fashion. You remember the retreat down Route 7 to Phu Yen which I had left the year before. So the South Vietnamese leadership at that point failed miserably. They made bad strategic decisions. They failed to execute even at the tactical level, so the whole enterprise collapsed. It was a time of great tragedy and sorrow, but I think it was a combination of factors. I don't think that denigrates the fact that from 1968 through 1973 in the CORDS program, the Vietnamization program, we made great progress. Unfortunately, in the two years after the event our inability to address North Vietnamese violations, the rising anti-war sentiment in our Congress resulted in reduction of funds, and the abominable decisions of the South Vietnamese civilians and the poor performance of some of their military resulted in the disaster that followed. But I left South Vietnam, to conclude, feeling very good about what we had done there, what the CORDS program had contributed, and I was reasonably optimistic this could hold if these other events didn't take place.

Q: You returned to Washington with an assignment in the East Asia Bureau's Vietnam Task Force from 1973 to 1975 as the North Vietnamese desk officer. How well did we

know North Vietnam? Would you talk about that including not just what you had in your files, but the Pentagon and the CIA.

FINNEY: We were striving to understand and know them. I think at one level, at the operational level of their forces deployed against us and deployed into South Vietnam, I think we had a pretty good fix on who the key military force commanders and their civilian counterparts were. And basically I think, we had a good appreciation of what they were trying to do by undermining the accords, the Paris Peace Accords. What was difficult for us, always, to the end, was underestimating the absolute fundamental rock bottom commitment on the part of the North Vietnamese to achieve their goals. The fact of the matter is, if there was only one person left in Hanoi, he'd probably be trotting down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. So I don't think our leadership was able to come to a fair appreciation that while we were fighting a limited war against them, they were fighting an old war without limits against us. They had time and they had an inexhaustible reservoir of 18-year-olds for their military as well as the general support across their entire population. So I don't think at the end of the day that we fully appreciated the fact that they were prepared to fight for another fifty years if that's what was required.

On the other hand we had our South Vietnamese colleagues. We had worked with other folks in Asia. We worked with Syngman Rhee in South Korea, Chiang Kai-shek in China and Taiwan. We worked with Magsaysay in the Philippines, and we had reasonable success with Chiang Kai-shek once he retreated to Taiwan. We had reasonable successes in these other areas, but unfortunately we were not able to find the kind of caliber of leadership in South Vietnam that would match the organization, the discipline, the focus, and the commitment in the North. Now, there was a reason for this, I think, in my humble opinion. The North Vietnamese Communists, of course, had systematically and ruthlessly eliminated all non-Communist Nationalists in the north and through much of Vietnam during the Viet Minh days. So you didn't have people of the stature of a Ho Chi Minh and a Vo Nguyen Giap in the South. Not that the south couldn't produce them, but many of them had lost their lives or had been killed by the north, and also I think another failure was in our leadership.

As a desk we were focused on supporting Phil Habib and the EAP front office to try to ensure that the Paris peace accord was respected and that South Vietnam had a chance to develop its future. So we were supporting Mr. Habib, we were supporting Secretary Kissinger, and we were supporting Ambassador Graham Martin out there. But far above us at the Nixon-Kissinger level, these grand decisions and grand assessments, Al Haig was there at the White House, they were being made. We only saw glimpses of that since we were consumed by the day-to-day minutia of supporting Habib as Assistant Secretary and those in the embassy. Divergences developed between Mr. Habib as the assistant secretary and Ambassador Martin out in the field. We don't have to go into them here, but there were very significant divergences which shocked us that these people who we revered and we were supposed to do everything we could to support them had profound disagreements and weren't pulling together, but it happened. But fundamentally it was a failure on our part to understand that the North Vietnamese were waging an absolute all-out no holds bar war to take over the country and that we had adopted a limited posture.

Finally, the American people, who to their credit, had supported a U.S. presence in Indochina since 1954, and spent roughly $200 billion, they no longer had the political will to continue this.

Q: Did you have the feeling when you were back in Washington that Kissinger and Nixon and Ford said, "OK, let's get away from this," and their interests moved elsewhere?

FINNEY: I think a couple of things were happening. First of all, you're absolutely right. When you look back at that period there were other things going on in the world. We had the Yom Kippur War of 1973 (October 6-25) when Kissinger got in to shuttle diplomacy in a big way, and the preoccupation with the Middle East was a huge concern. The relationship with Russia was also a major concern. President Nixon's interest in strategic arms limitations was also a huge matter for them. So at any one time our national command authority could probably work two or three major issues at a time in term of their executive attention and resources. So South Vietnam was important I think, as far as we could tell, because of the prestige of Nixon and Kissinger in forging with the South Vietnamese, the North Vietnamese, the Paris Peace Accords, and our reputation as a reliable partner was often invoked as a key component of our strategy. Kissinger was a midwife to the Accords. We were committed to the San Clemente declaration to uphold the Accords. We were committing to give the South Vietnamese the best chance possible to survive. These were important considerations in terms of our international reputation or our ability to maintain our alliance and security partners elsewhere in the world. But it was also true on the one hand our leadership was diverted by other places, and on the other had they wanted to take the chalice of Vietnam and pass it down. They felt we had done our thing and that we were now in a post-Vietnam period and we had to re-address ourselves. There was a consensus that we had over-invested in Vietnam far out of proportion to the strategic gain that we could get to, so we had to reset ourselves. It was time to re-balance ourselves. At the same time there was a strong emotional attachment, it seems to me. I know I felt it personally. Emotional attachment among people in the military, in DOD civilians, in State Department because of our involvement in Vietnam that we shouldn't just cast them adrift. So that was a competing feeling.

At the same time within the country as a whole and in the Congress, people were simply... I mean, the public attitudes and Congressional attitudes were that Vietnam was too expensive and the outcome that we could expect was so meager compared to what we had invested in the place that they wanted to forget about Vietnam. So it was very difficult during those two years to go up on the hill and present the administration's budget requests for what we regarded as minimum support that we needed in an honorable way to give South Vietnam a chance to make it. And these requests, which in ordinary times I think would have been excessive, were howled upon and were rejected by the Congress which was very tired of the Vietnam burden, so it was a difficult time.

Q: Looking at this, there must have been a point that you realized we made commitments to support the Peace Accords, and you see the massive flaunting of the Peace Accords. It must have been the time to say, "The game's up."

FINNEY: You put your finger right on it. There was a tipping point. That was in January, I would say December-January, no later than February, December of 1974, January of 1975 when it became clear to us at the desk level at the State Department and of course in the East Asia Bureau, and I think with Graham Martin, the redoubtable ambassador in Saigon, that this thing was heading south.

Now there was a split view on this. You know many of the people who were in the field, the leftovers from the CORDS program, which became SAAFO [Ed: with George Jacobson as SAAFO (Special Assistant to the Ambassador for Field Operations). CORDS existence ended in January 1973 when the Paris Accords went into effect]. We still had people in all the provinces. The reporting from them was that things are starting to crumble around here, and the South Vietnamese military performance is starting to slip. Then that province in military region 3 near the Parrot's Beak fell. The failure of the U.S. from the South Vietnamese perspective to respond to that North Vietnamese army attack caused some psychological unraveling. The fact that the Congress could not be persuaded to rush emergency assistance to the South Vietnamese was also another warning sign.

Now someone who took a different view was Ambassador Graham Martin. He felt that it was his role to be realistic on the one hand but to try to buck up the South Vietnamese, to explain to our Congress and the rest of the world that these people deserved a chance. He took the road of always trying to stress the positive and not let the negative get the better of you. That is the way he talked about himself. Publicly the perception was that he would only talk about positive things. I went with Graham Martin as his bag carrier up on the hill several times in late 1974 and early 1975 when he had testimony. He kept telling the Congressmen that there are a lot of things wrong with the South Vietnamese political regime. There are deficiencies in the military, but they are improving. Give them a chance. So he took the road that things are not as bad as it seemed. But underneath him, all the reports that we were getting were showing that this thing was starting to come undone.

Q: Was there a point where somebody was, was it you or somebody above you or below you was saying OK this thing really is falling apart. What are the North Vietnamese intentions if they do take over? In other words were we looking to the takeover, and what do we do which includes getting people out?

FINNEY: I went out to Saigon at the end of March, first week of April 1975 to see for myself the situation. It was eerie because you know the North Vietnamese had taken the central highlands. They were bearing down on Nha Trang. The roads from central Vietnam to the southern part of the country were clogged with refugees. Yet in Saigon it was as if what was happening in central Vietnam was in another country. It was eerie. No one was making preparations in Saigon to deal with the inevitable onslaught. Children were going to school, people were going about their jobs. President Thieu it seems to me, was very late to come on the TV and the radio and try to rally his people. Now within the embassy, well let me say this. I remember vividly that Graham Martin had come back for dental surgery in early March when the North Vietnamese assault in the central highlands took place. After he had his surgery, he came back to the State Department one day, came

up to our office, North Vietnamese Working Group. He stood before a map of South Vietnam and he pointed to Ban Me Thuot in the central highlands. This is late March, about a week or two after they had fallen, and Nha Trang was about to collapse. He pointed to this and stood there with us gathered around him and said I will personally drive back to Ban Me Thuot this summer. The South Vietnamese will recover the central highlands. So he was wrapped up in a lot of bravado. He went back there about the time that I went out in late March or early April. As the North Vietnamese continued to bear down, the question was would they settle for half a loaf or a whole loaf. Graham Martin got involved in negotiations with one of the members of the international control commission which was the Hungarians. They tried to broker a deal which led Martin to believe the North Vietnamese would stop short of Saigon and essentially leave Saigon and the delta as an autonomous zone of some sort. But that all turned out to be false and based on wishful thinking. Ambassador Martin later admitted that he had maybe been too gullible as the Hungarians were trying to broker this deal.

So the short answer is our national command authority frankly seemed to be pretty paralyzed by this event. It was a stunning development. The North Vietnamese attacked Ban Me Thuot in mid March, and Saigon falls April 30. That is six weeks. Kissinger and the rest of them sent out General Fredrick Weyand. He did a very fine job during the Tet Offensive. He was sent out there to assess the situation, was it retrievable? He came back in early April to Washington and said, "Yes it would be retrievable, but you will need roughly $750 million to a billion of immediate infusion of aid." That went up to the hill and went nowhere. So that was it. There was no comprehensive strategy to deal with this. Our national leadership seemed exhausted, dispirited and stunned by the North Vietnamese advance.

Q: Did anybody within your apparatus at the State Department say OK look, this thing is going downhill so rapidly, we have got to figure out what happens afterward. I mean this is what we are supposed to do, think ahead.

FINNEY: Well, part of the problem here is there wasn't the political will to take, in my humble opinion I mean I am just the North Vietnam desk officer, that is all. I am operating at that staff level. But it appeared to me that the political will did not exist to take the kind of emergency effort you know, for the Berlin Airlift, or to make a stand at Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin in the early 1960s. That political will didn't exist. Watergate had thoroughly discredited the Nixon administration and eliminated the San Clemente accords and it was clear the U.S. was not going to employ certainly our ground troops but not even our B-52 strike forces. So what is the alternative to this? The alternative seemed to be wishful thinking, that somehow President Thieu and some of his better military commanders would find a way to staunch his onslaught of North Vietnamese and somehow at the last minute, pull together, gather their population and hold on, maybe at least to Saigon and the delta. And Graham Martin got diverted over to this back channel negotiation with the French and the Hungarians, supposedly with reliable North Vietnamese interlocutors, about some kind of autonomous situation. So it was confused. It wasn't focused. Fred Weyand was our military officer. But the U.S. response was basically send General Weyand out to the field. He came back with the

assessment. This is the money we needed. Congress scornfully rejected it. Nixon wasn't there. Nixon was gone. Jerry Ford was there. Jerry Ford did not have the political will to invoke the B-52s which is the only thing we could have done in immediate military returns to stop the North Vietnamese onslaught.

Q: The question I am asking is did somebody come up to you and say, "John look, this thing is deteriorating rapidly. What would happen if the North Vietnamese took over completely? You have heard about their conduct during Tet in 1968What would happen. How should we respond or what should we do?"

FINNEY: The feeling was I think at the end of the day, the feeling was of pretty much helplessness. The feeling was if the North Vietnamese took over, and there were some Viet Cong now who had come to the fore, but mostly North Vietnamese. When they took over there would be a bloodbath. But we had departed from Vietnam two years earlier. North Vietnam had flagrantly violated the Paris Peace Accords. The focus was on getting our friends out of there. So rather than the far sighted thinking and planning that you are thinking about, Stu, namely could we engage the North Vietnamese in thoughtful planning about the morning after. This was complicated by the fact that first of all we were roundly condemning the North Vietnamese for flagrant violations of the peace accords. Well it is sort of hard to sit down and negotiate with someone whom you were I think justly, condemning for making a mockery out of the Paris Peace Accords.

Then again the North Vietnamese themselves were like foxes on the hunt. I mean this was victory day. Emotions on their side were sky high. This was a phenomenal situation for them. They did not conceive when they made the attack on the central highlands that South Vietnam would crack open like a rotten egg. So all of a sudden they are in full pursuit. They are in the hunt. They are not in the business of sit down on this settee and talk about what the place might look like. They want to nail this victory down. So that was a problem. The next problem was trying to decide how are we getting our people out of there, and then how are we going to help the South Vietnamese to get out of there. Believe it or not in these kinds of crises situations, it is nice to think that cool heads suddenly sit down and take an Olympian view. Maybe they do from time to time, but I was stunned to see these very senior people in our government became totally consumed in trying to rescue their former South Vietnamese counterparts. So the emotions took over, Stu, in my humble opinion, to get our people out safely, to get our South Vietnamese friends out of there, to assure Thailand that we certainly were not going to let the North Vietnamese tank columns go into Thailand. I think Cambodia fell before, so Cambodia had already fallen.

There is no question that if the North Vietnamese had wheeled west from Saigon and gone through Cambodia and into Thailand, absolutely for better or worse I strongly believe we would have rallied to the Thais. We had a security relationship with them and we would have stood by them. We were making strong diplomatic representation to them to stand fast. Unfortunately I was not aware of any far sighted effort that should have been done as you suggested, Stu, to see about what would happen in Saigon the morning

after. We were all stunned. We were focused on getting our own people out and our friends out, and then bolstering up neighbors like Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore.

It was one of the most depressing things that I have ever experienced. I couldn't believe that we would not have responded. I mean as a North Vietnamese desk officer in the summer of 1973 having seen with my own eyes troops and supplies coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail while the U.S. wouldn't live up to the San Clemente Accords and apply the necessary force to get the north to honor the accords. It was a great lesson to me in political will: that we should never get into a situation like President Nixon did in committing to the San Clemente Accord and not having the wherewithal to back it up. Watergate was huge there. I don't think you can underestimate the impact of Watergate sucked dry our political will to properly support South Vietnam in 1974 and 1975. Ultimately of course, in my humble opinion it comes down to the South Vietnamese leadership and their failure. I mean we made plenty of mistakes. There is a lot that we should have done. I think our congress bears a part of the responsibilities. Certainly President Nixon and the Watergate issue, but at the end of the day, the South Vietnamese leadership with whom we worked so hard and including many honorable people did not execute, did not provide the kind of leadership that you need to deal with that crisis.

Now a final point about Phil Habib. Phil Habib became someone for whom I had bottomless admiration. Phil was consumed with trying to work with Graham Martin. We had a situation where Ambassador Martin was sending 40 and 45 page telegrams back channel to the White House and to Kissinger. The guy was a brilliant writer, and he made the best possible case for doing what he thought was the right thing. But Phil Habib sensed like a lot of us did in early 1975 that this was going south. He couldn't do anything about it. One of the things he tried to do is take a delegation out to South Vietnam including congress people, including our good friend Bella Abzug, representative from Brooklyn. He took this delegation from Congress to show them that South Vietnam was in peril. This was in early April. South Vietnam was in peril; all our investment in blood and treasure over the years was at stake. We were going to need you, Congress, to come to the aid and support these people. He took the delegation out and took them in to see Ambassador Martin. I was not there, but I am told that the meeting did not go well at all, and the Congress people came away with the feeling that Ambassador Martin was terribly out of touch, and this was a hopeless situation. Phil Habib, as a result of that, became extremely discouraged. He and Martin had a falling out, and it complicated our operational policy, our tactical policy. Our final point here was that when it was obvious that Saigon was going to fall, there was this huge issue which consumed Habib and Kissinger about how do we get our people out. If we start evacuation of our people from the embassy and from DOD to the airport to get them out in time, how can we do that without causing all of Saigon to collapse. Once the South Vietnamese start seeing us move to the airport, and beginning this exodus, then it was felt they would collapse and make it impossible for us to move. So this went back and forth for two or three weeks, and Martin held on to the bitter end, that he would not permit such action. Not only would he not permit evacuation to begin, he would not permit planning for the evacuation to begin for the wrong signal it would send to the South Vietnamese. Well people did it behind his back, and people arranged to get out

surreptitiously. At the end of the day almost every one of our people and our key South Vietnamese partners got out; although some didn't. It was chaos in the last 48 hours. But that whole process consumed inordinate amounts of time of the principals. You remember that.

Q: Yes. I am interviewing Terry Tull now, and Terry was the acting Consul General in Da Nang.

FINNEY: One of the first places to fall.

Q: And she said fortuitously, Martin was getting his dental surgery in North Carolina. So she said, Wolf Lehmann was the DCM, was very helpful in getting her people out. She was sure that if Martin had been there, they would have been left dangling.

FINNEY: That probably might have been the case.

Q: After the Task Force job in Washington where to next?

FINNEY: I did two interesting things after this. Number one, after I finished my tour of duty as an North Vietnamese desk officer, I wound up going to Northeast Thailand as consul general in Udorn during the years of a major insurgency in northeast Thailand and during the time that Pol Pot and his associates were running amok in Cambodia. Then after that I went to Zambia in East Africa for the last two years of the Rhodesian War. That was 1979 to 1981. Then from there I started doing more political-military things.

Q: John, you were in Udorn, Thailand, from when to when?

FINNEY: I was the Consul General in Udorn, Thailand, from July, 1976 until August, 1978.

Q: What was the situation in Thailand in 1976 when you got there?

FINNEY: When I arrived in July of 1976, Thailand was going through somewhat of a withdrawal from the Vietnam experience. The Thai government and the Thai people and Thai army had been solidly behind us in general during the entire Vietnam conflict. Udorn, in northeast Thailand where our consulate was located, was the site of a major U.S. airbase. We had several other very significant airbases in the northeast where the consulate was responsible for 16 provinces. Ubon, and Nakhon Phanom were two other very significant U.S. airbases. The Thais, after the collapse of Cambodia and Vietnam were going through a re-think of their close relationship with us. They were having second thoughts about how valuable it was to be so closely associated with us. This re-thinking came primarily from the foreign ministry, from some political sectors, and certainly on the university campus. So there was some questioning going on for the first time since WWII when we had forged a very tight relationship, security and political relationship with the Thais, re-enforced by the SEATO accords. The Thais were taking a fresh look at our relationship and continually wanting to distance themselves from us

somewhat. This was going on simultaneously with a loosening up of the political system, as the university campuses became more active and the foreign minister became more assertive.

Q: Well, what did you see as your job?

FINNEY: First and foremost it was to continue to represent the United States in northeast Thailand which abutted directly against northwest Cambodia. It also abutted directly against much of Laos. So in the wake of the collapse of the non-communist regime in Cambodia, in Thailand there was a lot of questioning going on about how large North Vietnam's ambitions were. Would the North Vietnamese having now been successful in Vietnam, and having been successful in supporting a communist regime in Laos, fasten its designs on northeast Thailand? So we were up there in Udorn first of all to demonstrate to the Thais and the people in the area that the United States was still very much interested in Thailand and in this specific area.

Number two, our job was to monitor the very significant refugee situation in northeast Thailand against which the U.S. was supplying a very substantial amount of funds in coordination with the United Nations high commissioner for refugees. So we had a number of very large refugee camps, 20-25 thousand persons apiece, of people who had sought refuge either from Cambodia or Vietnam or Laos in Northeast Thailand. So we had USAID and a number of American NGOs working with UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) in assisting the Thai deal with this refugee inflow. Many of these refugees sought asylum in the United States. So on the one hand we were helping the Thais put up the camps, fund the camps, feed the people, and we were also doing extensive interviews with these people about who would go to the United States and who would not.

The third reason for our presence up there was that there was a very significant communist insurgency in northeast Thailand, and again through our military assistance program and the Central Intelligence Agency, we were providing substantial support for the Thai to help them cope with this insurgent threat which was operating in 15 of the16 provinces. So they were very active. So we were monitoring that. We had a CIA station inside our consulate with a chief and three officers. We were very actively working with the Thai military and Thai intelligence services to keep track of this insurgency. There was a substantial Vietnamese population in northeast Thailand dating from WWII, and there was some concern that the local Thai communists might try and recruit Vietnamese in the wake of Hanoi's success in Vietnam and Laos, to try to establish an important political and intelligence presence in northeast Thailand.

Q: Let's talk on the political side watching what was happening. What sort of government did Thailand have? Who was in charge and how were your contacts?

FINNEY: Even today Thailand has an absolute monarchy. Even if it was a constitutional monarchy, the king was enormously popular when I was there in the mid-1970s, and he continues to be enormously popular today. He is a constitutional monarch, but with

enormous moral influence. He was very popular up in northeast Thailand because he and his wife and his mother would come up to northeast Thailand each summer or early fall and spend time up there and distribute largesse and give the villagers an opportunity to come and dialogue and present their problems. Northeast Thailand was the poorest part of the country at that time. So his yearly visits were pretty important and significant occasions. The government itself was a military dominated government as I recall, when I got there in 1976. And then because of the political changes sweeping through Bangkok in the wake of the Vietnam turn of events in 1975, the civilians came to the fore. The military general in charge stepped down and some civilian prime ministers came to the fore. That is what I remember. [Ed: The Thai student movement hastened the end of military rule in October 1973. The country returned to an elected Parliament and civilian Prime Ministers served from October 1973 to October 1976.] In Northeast Thailand itself, on the one hand there was a regional Thai military commander. He eventually became prime minister of Thailand for about 10 years in the 1980s and 1990s [Ed: March 1980 to August 1988]. But General Prem (Tinnasulanon) was the senior military regional commander for the northeast. He was a very interesting, very astute, very powerful figure. There were then appointed governors. There were 16 provinces each with an appointed governor. Some of them were military; some of them were part of the Thai civil service. There was a long tradition of Thai civil service since the late 1880's of serving in these provincial positions. Then below them you had district chiefs and village chiefs. Because northeast Thailand was impoverished, remote, and unsettled politically, it had always been a source of concern to Bangkok because Bangkok's sway up there had been thin. So there was a lot of unsettled situation up there. Then there were a number of students, who participated in university riots and uprisings in Bangkok, who came to the northeast, went to the jungle and joined the insurgents. These were some of the most talented, articulate and gifted university students of their generation. I mean potential leaders of the country. Because they were so unhappy with various aspects of the Thai government, they went into the jungle and joined the insurgents. So that was a big concern.

Q: How did you sort of evaluate what was going on? I mean did you have good access, newspapers and information.

FINNEY: I did what I think any energetic and committed State Department consul general would do serving overseas in a remote part of a host country. That is I got out and around constantly touring the 16 provinces. I had the good fortune of getting a year of Thai language training before I was assigned there. So that was invaluable to me. I had an excellent and very competent Thai support staff at the consulate including a superb driver and a superb, what I call, political assistant. He was a terrific interpreter. Both the driver and my political assistant were from the area. So one of the most important ways I gathered information was to get in the car with my Thai assistant and Thai driver, and we would visit every one of these 16 provinces. We did it on a regular basis. I had a vice consul, so I gave him the responsibility for keeping things running in the consulate in Udorn while I got out on the road as much as I could. I also provided opportunities for him to get out as well. It was extremely important given the insurgency. I had a chance to go down to the provincial district and village level and get a sense of what the high

officials were facing, get a sense of what the local people felt, get a sense of whether the insurgency was going to have any chance of gaining traction up there. So I did an enormous amount of traveling and meeting of local officials supported by my very competent and able staff.

As I mentioned we also had a very effective CIA station housed within our consulate with a station chief and two officers. As I was liaising with the mayors and the village chiefs and the governors and the district chiefs, my CIA colleagues were liaising with the Thai intelligence service, with the Thai border patrol police and gathering lots of information that way. Of course I was quite active in Udorn. At one point I was actually invited to join the Thai boy scouts and found myself going to a number of jamborees, Thai boy scout jamborees around the northeast. That was a very interesting event. I spent three or four days myself with the Thai scoutmasters and worked with the young kids in all kinds of places, villages and elsewhere. That gave me some insight and gave me a lot of opportunity to meet a lot of people I wouldn't ordinarily meet.

Another important constituency for me was General Prim and the Thai military. So I made it a point to get to know General Prim as much as I could. I visited him at his headquarters at least once a month. We developed a relationship there, and he took me golfing with him. I went to events where he was. I also did something else which gave me a lot of entrée up in the northeast. There was an organization that had been established by our U.S. military assistance group in Bangkok called "mitrephab," which means "friendship." It was a U.S.-Thai friendship association. The unique thing about it was that our joint military assistance group worked with the Thai equivalent to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Bangkok in helping to organize funding for country village schools. The way we did that is that we would go out to a village school and we would do parachute drops to draw a crowd. So as part of this exercise I found myself at the Thai Special Forces camp in Lopburi, Thailand, going through two weeks of airborne training. I got my Thai airborne wings and U.S. airborne wings as well. So I found myself about every other month in these C-130s or C-47s jumping out of airplanes with the Thai military and just the Embassy military assistance group out of Bangkok. We would jump over a village and land there, and then they would have a ceremony to dedicate a school. We would plant trees. We would have the local village chief and local Thai battalion commander come and make speeches. We would hand out prizes to the children. This was a good civic action, joint U.S. Thai civic action enterprise. It provided me a great opportunity to develop great relationships with the Thai military. But also to visit village schools in incredibly remote locations that I never would have been able to.

Q: I have a British colleague who made reference one time to the bemedaled Thai officers in Bangkok who exaggerated the insurgency in order to garner more military equipment and all. Were we looking at this insurgency with any skepticism?

FINNEY: It was a serious problem for the Thai government and a serious problem in the eyes of the king. Therefore even though our relationship was undergoing re-examination by the Thais, it was an issue for us as well. There were still question marks. The context for this was in the wake of the collapse of South Vietnam and Cambodia and Hanoi's

victory there. There was a big question mark about how large was Hanoi's ambition. In neighboring Cambodia after Pol Pot and his communist organization took over in April, 1975, incredible stories started seeping out of Cambodia. So by the time I got there in July 1976, Pol Pot had been in power for a year. Cambodian refugees were coming into Thailand. They were bringing these incredible stories in with them. Even more worrisome, the Thai insurgents were seeking refuge and getting support and training from the Cambodian insurgents. So there was that dimension. There was a dimension from Laos as well. This, with a strong Vietnamese population in northeast Thailand, also raised concerns. Because of our unhappy experience in trying to support democratic governments in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam and see it all turn to dust, the U.S. side was very cognizant of the threat of an insurgency in Thailand. An insurgency that had attracted some of the best young student leaders in the country. And in the context of a big question mark about what was Hanoi's extent of ambition, yes we were concerned.

But the issue was we have got to help the Thais do this. Let's put the Thais out front as much as we can. So through our international monetary education and training fund, and through equipment we provided for the Thais, and through our discussions with them where we talked about the situation up north and the strategy, we were helping to encourage them and coax them to do this. But the clear message was that this is something that the Thais were best equipped to handle and we supporting every step of the way. In order to do that, of course, we had to have accurate information. It was great that we were up there and I had the opportunity along with my CIA colleagues to provide the best information possible. We were very fortunate to have General Prem up there, because he was an astute and thoughtful Thai general. I don't know if your British colleague ever had the chance to meet him. I had long conversations with General Prem about what he thought was the best strategy to approach the threat posed by the Thai insurgents. He said, "What I want to do is make them irrelevant. I am not so much interested in killing my fellow Thais who are in the jungle trying to overthrow our government. I am most interested in making them irrelevant. I can make them irrelevant by developing effective relationships with our Thai people at the village level and the provincial level and try to find ways to respond to their grievances and to their concerns." One of their major grievances was that the northeast had not participated in the economic development of Thailand. Except in those areas where we had our bases, large parts of the rural northeast were pretty destitute. So Prem embarked on a major road building campaign. He had seen what we had done in northeast Thailand in the 1960s and into the early 1970s when we built roads up there to enable us to establish effective bases at Udorn, Nakhon Phanom, and Ubon. So Prem took this to another level. He wanted to get Thai roads down to the grass roots level and into the jungle areas where the insurgents operated. So his approach was very sensible, practical, and enlightened.

When his troops were confronted, and they were ambushed constantly, they lost a lot of men, he never over reacted. He met force with force, but he always had the broader vision to address the roots of the insurgency and promote economic development and do everything he could as a regional military commander with his influence to help the poor Thai population up there. So he, I thought, kept an excellent balance between meeting the

security requirements that required military force, but more importantly, doing it in the proper context to address the larger issues which fed the insurgency.

Q: You were in Thailand about the same time I was consul general in Seoul. This is the time when Carter won the election. If I can get your impression, both you and your colleagues as Foreign Service officers, and then the Thai impression because President Carter came in and was talking about no more Vietnams. This stance left in question the commitment of the United States to protecting these countries. The South Koreans were looking at it pretty closely.

FINNEY: It was an interesting time to be in Thailand and particularly in northeast Thailand because of the background geopolitical changes that were going on. This period from late 1975 through 1978, Carter was elected in November 1976, there was during that period the Thais were questioning United States resolve. Did we believe that Southeast Asia was important? In the wake of the tremendous setback and tremendous loss of prestige that we suffered with Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, was the U.S. going to stay the course. Now there were a couple of responses from the Carter administration that I thought were effective.

One of them was his assistant secretary for East Asian Pacific affairs, the redoubtable Richard Holbrooke. He came out to visit us several times, and I was with him up to the northeast and to north Thailand. Holbrooke sensed that economics was going to be important.

So also there was the issue of the refugees who had come in in large numbers from Laos, particularly the Hmong and other hill tribe people, and the refugees from Cambodia. The Thais were inundated with these refugees, and Carter's emphasis was that he should respond in a way to help the Thais effectively deal with this problem as a human rights issue, also I think was favorably received by the Thais. Then of course, what really had an impact on the whole situation was the North Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. On 25 December 1978, Vietnam launched a full-scale invasion of Kampuchea and subsequently occupied the country and removed the Khmer Rouge from power

Hanoi's invasion of Cambodia unleashed a torrent of refugees into Thailand from Cambodia. Heretofore it had been rather a trickle, bringing out incredible stories. Most of the refugees had come down from Laos. Now with Hanoi's invasion, I mean hundreds of thousands of Cambodians sought refugee in Thailand. Also do you remember that question mark I mentioned about Hanoi's ambition? Suddenly you had North Vietnamese brigades and battalions on Thailand's border with Cambodia. Now this produced a very significant change in the Thai security outlook. It reversed the trend of drawing away from the United States in the wake of the Hanoi success in Vietnam and Laos. It now forced the Thais to come back to us in a sense. You could say to reaffirm the importance of a security relationship with Thailand. After I came back from Thailand several years later, I wound up as a State Department exchange officer in the office of the Secretary of Defense in DOD. I played a lead role there in putting together a logistics agreement with Thailand in 1983 to store significant supplies of ammunition in Thailand as a way to

combat what was regarded as potential threats from the North Vietnamese. There were several incursions by the North Vietnamese as they were going after the Cambodian insurgents harbored in Thailand. That, of course, sent shock waves through Bangkok.

Back to Jimmy Carter. With his emphasis on human rights, with his emphasis on promoting economics to help Southeast Asia, I think he was well regarded by the Thais. His assistant secretary for human rights, Patricia Derian, came out to visit us in the northeast. I took her out to the refugee camps. When she came back she testified before Congress and got a lot of money to provide more support to the Thais and the UNHCR in dealing with this refugee crisis. It was the time of the boat people coming out of Vietnam. Many of the boat people got washed up on Thai shores from Vietnam, so we had all that dimension going. So the relationship, our security relationship that had become attenuated in the immediate years after the fall of Vietnam, now began reaffirming itself.

Of course, with Hanoi divisions inside Cambodia, and with the Thai insurgency in the northeast supposedly receiving support from some second or third generation Vietnamese in the northeast and the communist government in Laos, it was a pretty interesting situation. There was a lot of concern on Bangkok's side. But the basic approach from our U.S. government point of view, and I think it was the correct one, was that in terms of the insurgency in the northeast, let's let the Thais take the lead in this. We will provide all the information and equipment and support that we can, but it is their responsibility. At the end of the day, General Prem did an outstanding job, and the king was extraordinarily pleased with him, with the balanced way he went after the insurgency. By the late 1980s the insurgency had been decisively defeated, and Prem became prime minister. He made his name in the northeast by handling a political military situation up there very astutely and adroitly. It wasn't perfect. He made some mistakes, as anybody would. But at the end of the day, he was seen as the one that was very successful in dealing with that challenge for the Thais and he became prime minister.

Q: Did we see a Chinese hand up there at all?

FINNEY: A key component of the northeast Thai insurgency was a linkage with Beijing. My CIA colleagues tracked this very closely. At the end of the day, in addition to the very capable General Prem and his constructive approach dealing with the insurgency primarily thorough economic development, the Chinese decision in the early to mid-1980s to cut off their support for the Thai insurgency was also a very important factor in their demise.

Q: You mentioned these bases. We had some huge bases out there during the Vietnam War. What was happening to them while you were there?

FINNEY: Well we were going through a transition. We flew tactical fighter aircraft out of Udorn. We also had a very important Army Security Agency facility at Ramusan south of Udorn, which was a very significant listening device focused on China. We turned that over to the Thai equivalent of our National Security Agency. Our facilities at the Nakohn Phanom and Ubon bases we were turning over to the Thais themselves when I was there

in the late 1970s. Now the Thai Air Force, believe it or not, was still almost entirely fixed wing propeller driven aircraft. They had tiny little squadrons at those bases. We still used those bases when Pol Pot started his incredible annihilation of his opposition in Cambodia. Then when the North Vietnamese invaded Cambodia in Christmas of 1978, we had CIA officers on those bases tracking first Pol Pot and then tracking what was going on with the North Vietnamese inside Cambodia. Would they make a lunge for parts of Thailand. That was the whole issue. Also the issue was the Thai insurgents were getting refuge and training and arms inside Cambodia. They were hiding out in Cambodia, attacking into Thailand and then going back. So we were tracking that too.

Q: Given the large size of the U.S. military presence in the northeast, I would suspect that you would have had a sizable retiree American military community with their wives and girlfriends in your consular district.

FINNEY: Well as a matter of fact we did have. It wasn't very sizable I would say, but there were. I would describe it as scores of former American servicemen, some CIA officers who had Thai wives or girlfriends, who had taken up residence in Thailand. We had an American Legion post outside of Udorn. In my effort to keep my ear to the ground and find out everything that was going on, I went to the Legion Post meetings from time to time just to check with them. They also had, has you can imagine, plenty of consular issues for us to address. There were probably in northeast Thailand several hundred all together, service men, ex-intelligence officers who were staying up there, had taken Thai wives or living with the girlfriends or were raising families. Most of them were doing quite well. They had to be concerned about the insurgency. They had to be a little bit careful if they were living out in the remote areas. One of the most well known was Tony Poe who was a legendary CIA operative during the war in Laos. So he had a long record. But yes these folks were up there. I saw a fair amount of them from time to time.

Q: Turning to the refugees, I assume the NGOs (non-government organizations) dealing with refugees had a single issue focus whereas you had a broader perspective. How did you find dealing with the NGOs and that whole refugee issue?

FINNEY: It was one of our three major issues. Maintaining a presence, looking after refugees, dealing with Thai insurgents. We spent a lot of time on that. We had a lot of visitors: Bob Oakley, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asia affairs, Patricia Derian the Assistant Secretary for the Human Rights Bureau. We had key leaders of the U.S. International Rescue Committee and other key U.S. NGOs who were working the refugee issue. There were a couple of things. We wanted to make sure that the U.S. NGO's had the access to the refugee camps that they needed; that their concerns, if they had concerns, with the local Thai authorities, we wanted to know what they were, and in areas where we could help out we most certainly did. All these provinces where there were important refugee camps, I made a particular effort to maintain a good relationship with the governor there, saw him regularly, consulted with him regularly, shared information with him regularly, so that if one of the NGOs had problems they had access to him. Made sure that the U.S. NGOs and USAID and UNHCR (UM High Commission for Refugees) were able to work in a productive and cooperative way. Most of the time they

did. Sometimes there were serious issues and it didn't work out. Processing the refugees, USAID contracted with a lot of NGOs to process the refugees who were going to be going to the United States. There was going to be an asylum program we set up, first for Vietnam and later for Cambodia, and then for Laos. That was a very intensive and emotion charged situation where we had 10-15 U.S. officials or NGO reps interviewing hundreds of refugees every day and then deciding whether they were going to go or if they were going to stay, rights of appeal and so on.

We were also getting a lot of intelligence out of the refugees. As you can imagine, we were very keen on what was actually going on with Pol Pot and Cambodia before the Vietnamese came in. We wanted to find out how he was doing and how the Vietnamese were doing. Same thing for Laos. The Laotian-Thai relationship was a very cool one. It was warmer than what we had, but it was still pretty cool. So this intelligence we got out of the refugees was extremely helpful, and helped us understand part of the picture that was going on when it had become sort of terra incognita for us. By and large the NGOs did a terrific job. They were incredibly dedicated people who spent weeks, months, years in these refugee camps working with these people, dealing with them, processing, helping with the Thai. We had to be careful because the Thais didn't want the refugees through our NGOs, USAID, UNHCR and others to be treated better than the Thai people. As I mentioned, northeast Thailand was an impoverished area. So we had to be sure we coupled the money provided to support the refugee camps with an equal amount of money to support local Thai villagers, and make sure they got hired to do the jobs. Make sure that they had access to economic opportunities just like the refugees did. So it was a very interesting and challenging and dynamic period.

Q: In these refugee camps, did they develop a political coloring, pro-communist or pro-Pol Pot to the point where you really couldn't enter them, such as our experience with the POW camps in Korea?

FINNEY: It was something we watched very closely. But I never saw anything that approximated what you experienced or read or saw in Korea. It didn't get to that point up in the northeast where I was. Within the camps of course there was a shadow government. Sometimes there was competition among the camps for control of the camps, and different groups controlled different sections of the camps. But for myself I never had problems going to any of the camps or visiting any other part of the camps I wanted to. But you can see and sense and then we got a lot of different intelligence information about the different types of shadow governments and organizations that were going on inside. You know this was a very fluid situation. Thailand's borders with Cambodia and Laos were open, porous and with insurgency and with the North Vietnamese, with the Hmongs fleeing Laos, there were arms hidden in these camps. There were people going back and forth. And eastern Thailand which was below the northeast which is where I was, there is no question that some of the camps set up wound up to be R&R opportunities for Pol Pot forces who had by now had been driven out of Cambodia. So that was there. Up northeast where I was, it was not a significant problem where we lost control of the camps. The key thing was to stay on top of the situation. I thought the Thais and UNHCR and NGOs did a good job. We kept our eyes open, and we

gathered as much information as we could. We never had a situation like you had in Korea where the folks in the camps took it over and rejected any outside entry.

Q: Two issues. One not really in the camps, but in intelligence gathering. In the first place, was yellow rain an issue while you were there, or was that gone?

FINNEY: Oh absolutely. I was there for the beginning of Yellow Rain.

Q: Could you explain what it is, or what it was purported to be.

FINNEY: Yes. What it was purported to be was that the Laotian military, supported, abetted by the Vietnamese military were dropping chemical weapons on the hill tribe people, the Hmongs primarily, who had resisted and were continuing to resist the communist take over in Laos. Because of President Carter's emphasis on human rights, these allegations coming out of Laos by the Hmong people seeking refuge in Thailand, that they had been subject to chemical air attack by the Laotians and Vietnamese was called yellow rain because it was supposed to be a yellow mustard-like gas chemical. It caught the attention of the Carter administration. It became a huge issue. I went into camps to see these Hmong people who showed their scabs and what appeared to be burn marks, and interviewed these people, reported that back to the State Department as did my CIA colleagues through their channels. I concluded after almost two years of observing this that it was inconclusive. It was hard to get good solid information, good solid proof. In late summer of 1978 I completed my tour and went down to Bangkok where I was a political-military officer in the embassy from 1978 to 1979. Discussions of yellow rain continued. It continued to percolate in the early 1980s and became even more prominent. It was clear that some of the refugees had suffered some kind of depredation. But I could never, during the period I was there, say that I had seen concrete evidence that they were attacked by chemicals.

Q: MIA, missing in action, was an issue that almost dominated our post Vietnam period. It still comes up today. When you were there, what was your perspective?

FINNEY: Yes. Missing in action was an obsession, and rightly so because this was an important issue. We do not want to leave our people behind. In the late 1970s and early 1980s in Thailand this was a major issue as the U.S. government tried to determine whether the North Vietnamese had kept some of our prisoners behind and not turned them over in March of 1973 as they were supposed to do under the Paris Peace Talks. So that was a major intelligence focus of our agency up there. It was a major reporting focus for me as a consul general, to report information that suggested that there still might be American prisoners held in Laos and North Vietnam. We were inundated with these reports. All the refugees coming in, whenever I talked to them, and I did on a weekly basis, this was always one of the questions that we asked them. And there was a Niagara of reports about this. You tried to winnow through them to see what would be plausible. We also had well meaning Americans, private Americans who were coming to Thailand and conducting para-military operations on their own, from northeast Thailand into Laos with remnants of the hill tribe resistance to the communist takeover there, and trying to

find these Americans who were allegedly left behind. In my two years in Udorn and my year as the political-military officer in Bangkok, I never was able to come up with any conclusive evidence that Americans were indeed being held against their will in these two countries. Now complicating this fact was that there were defectors in North Vietnam, and there may have been a couple of American defectors. There may have been a couple of American defectors in Laos as well. Occasionally there would be reported sighting of these people. That introduced a huge element of confusion. I thought it was important to be very careful about the intelligence and to distinguish between what was a defector and somebody held against their will. Now on the latter point, again like yellow rain, I never saw any conclusive evidence. There was a lot of suggested information, some circumstantial information, but no smoking gun. [Ed: see Paul D. Mather, M.I.A.: Accounting for the Missing in Southeast Asia, National Defense University Press, 1994]

Q: The MIA issue continues today as you see the MIA flag from time to time. It has been taken up as a political issue particularly in the right wing of the American spectrum of people who feel that Americans still are being held.

FINNEY: It took on a new life when President Reagan was elected in the 1980s. He set up an office in the NSC and attached White House priority to the issue. There was also an office in the Pentagon. Of course the families of our noble soldiers in Southeast Asia, the families whose sons and daughters hadn't come home, made this an issue. You know they had a lot of grievances. They weren't getting the information they needed and so on. When I was an exchange officer in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) in the early 1980s we had a former POW in the office. My office was right next to his, in which he represented OSD policy in addressing this issue. But it was a huge issue. The families, I mean I met with many of them. I went to conventions and so forth, and these people deeply believed it. There were some. There were others who were playing it for political purposes. There were others who were frankly I thought somewhat deranged. So you had a whole gamut of people involved there. It was a tremendous issue. It took a lot of time, but at the end of the day I don't think we have ever been able to determine if anybody left was held against their will.

Q: One last question on this time. Did the drug trade come to your attention?

FINNEY: Drugs were a major issue in Thailand. Because of the market for heroin that developed among our U.S. military and others, not just the military but other U.S. and other foreigners in southeast Asia and Thailand, the heroin market was a huge market. First in Southeast Asia to supply the American presence in Southeast Asian countries, and then after our forces were withdrawn and went back to the United States, a huge market developed back in the United States. So it wasn't in northeast Thailand where I was working during these years that this was an issue as much as it was in Northern Thailand in what was called the golden triangle, with Thailand, Burma, and Laos. In our consul in Chiang Mai, we established a significant Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) presence. Our CIA station in Chiang Mai was tremendously re-enforced. The U.S. government worked very closely with the king and the Thai military and civilian officials to put together comprehensive programs for alternative livelihood and economic

development to try and wean the Thai and Burmese and Laotian hill tribes away from growing heroin in the golden triangle. So this was coming very much to the fore in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was a huge issue; we spent an enormous amount of time on it. I am saying the embassy as a whole. It got even bigger during the 1980s. But by the early to mid-1990s, this 15 years of effort from the late 1970s began to pay off. I understand the golden triangle as a source of heroin in the world has declined precipitously. There is still some coming out of Laos but a major part out of Burma or Myanmar. The Thai role has been cut back, I think, very significantly through these programs that have been pursued very diligently through the past decade and a half from the late 1970s through the early 1990s.

Q: Your next assignment then was in the Bangkok Embassy from 1978 to 1979.

FINNEY: Yes, I did a two year tour up in Udorn, and then I moved down to be the pol-mil officer in our embassy in Bangkok. When I arrived in Udorn in July 1976, Charles Whitehouse was our ambassador in Bangkok. He had been one of our deputy ambassadors in Vietnam. Prior to Bangkok he had been ambassador in Laos. He knew the region very well. Ambassador Whitehouse departed in June 1978 and Mort Abramowitz presented his credentials in August. Mort had served as a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Office of Secretary of Defense on an exchange tour in DOD before he came out to be our ambassador.

Both Ambassador Whitehouse and Ambassador Abramowitz had quite different views and management styles, but they were both extremely talented people, a pleasure to work with both of them. Ambassador Abramowitz took a keen interest in the refugee situation, and you know, played a major role in ensuring the Thais would welcome this torrent of refugees that poured out of Cambodia in the wake of the North Vietnamese invasion. Ambassador Abramowitz worked very astutely to make sure that the U.S. contributed its share, worked effectively with the UNHCR and so forth. But with the North Vietnamese invasion, Ambassador Abramowitz also found himself giving renewed emphasis to our security ties with Thailand to ensure that the Thais were not overwhelmed or victimized by the North Vietnamese, which were question marks. Were the North Vietnamese going to make a lunge, and as I said there were several incursions. I thought Ambassador Abramowitz did a marvelous job of working that issue. The bilateral exercises that we had been having with the Thais had been de-emphasized in the immediate aftermath of the Vietnam War, but suddenly became extremely important because we were looking for ways to show our support for Thailand and to reassure them that we took our security commitment to them very seriously. So I spent a lot of my time working with our military command in Hawaii in supporting these exercises with the Thais and dealing with security threats. Senior military visitors started putting Bangkok back on their visit schedule, and so we had a lot of visits from those folks as well. We breathed new life into our security relationship with Thailand.

Q: Is this reinventing the security relationship?

FINNEY: The big issue was did the U.S. have the stomach for another engagement in Thailand, excuse me another engagement in Southeast Asia in the wake of our huge setback in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. What the Reagan administration especially told or conveyed to the Thais through Ambassador Abramowitz and the embassy was that we will stand by you. We will not let you be bullied by the North Vietnamese. We uphold Thailand integrity, and you can count on us. That is why we are expanding our exercises and so forth.

Q: Were the Thais questioning what jointness meant?

FINNEY: When the North Vietnamese showed up on the Thai eastern border with Cambodia, it caused a tremendous turnaround in their thinking. Zbigniew Brzezinski was Carter's National Security Advisor. I thought he was very realistic and very forceful in having us, on behalf of the President, convey to the Thai leadership that we were not going to abandon them. So the Thais with renewed vigor participated in these exercises. The thrust was preparing the Thais to defend Thailand. What better way to do this than by having robust exercises with them to build up their capabilities, to send them to the United States for training, to make sure they had equipment, and we began thinking about supplying the Thai air force with jet airplanes. It didn't happen until the early or mid-1980s I remember. Improving their Navy and so forth. The Carter Administration line if I recall it correctly was to do everything we can to help the Thais defend Thailand and to underscore to them that we took our obligations to them seriously in terms of their security requirements. But I didn't sense much appetite that we would commit U.S. troops unless it was absolutely necessary. Under Reagan administration in 1983 I worked as an exchange officer in putting together this ammunition pre-positioning agreement. That was another big step.

Q: During your time in Udorn and Bangkok were you evaluating the runways and facilities of the Vietnam era bases to see if they could be used in a hurry. Looking at the runways and seeing if there is too much grass growing, seeing if it has been kept up.

FINNEY: The two bases that we looked at were Ubon and Utapao. Utapao was the air base of choice [Ed: It had the longest runways and was the B-52 base during the Vietnam War]. I think it was after I left in the early 1980s that we established very quietly a significant refueling point at Utapao. We laid the groundwork as I recall in 1979 having a small contingent of U.S. military, I am talking a dozen, permanently stationed at Utapao to refurbish it after the North Vietnamese invasion. To refurbish their refueling capacity, and to make sure they had sufficient ramp space. Then we got a handshake agreement with General Prem, who was prime minister in the 1980s. We got a handshake agreement with him that we could bring U.S. maritime patrol planes from Japan down to Thailand four or five times a year for a couple of weeks at a time to help track the progress of the Soviet fleet. We were particularly interested in knowing whether the Soviet fleet, which had begun to show up in the Indian Ocean for the first time, whether they were going to occupy the facilities we had developed in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. We refurbished Utapao and set up a series of annual visits with our maritime patrol planes to make sure our presence was effective.

Q: Was there any concern about India and the Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean when you were talking about tracking the Soviet Navy, from the Bangkok perspective?

FINNEY: From the Bangkok perspective, the Indian Navy and Indian ambitions did not register. We were focused on North Vietnam, the Russians and the Chinese. The North Vietnam invasion of Cambodia brought a sea change in Thai attitudes about the value of our security relationship. We didn't know how far Hanoi's ambitions extended. We didn't know how deeply the Chinese wanted to continue to support the Thai insurgency in the northeast. We were keenly interested in the Soviet Union expansion into southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean in the wake of our debacle in Vietnam, etc. Those were our focuses. India didn't emerge until the mid- to late 1980s. I had the privilege of being the political advisor at CINCPAC (Commander in Chief, Pacific), later, and from there we watched India very closely in terms of its relationship with the Russians. At that time we undertook a major effort to engage more with the Indians on the Pol-Mil (political-military) front to try to dilute their military relationship with Russia.

Q: While you were in Bangkok when the Sino-Vietnamese war broken out?

FINNEY: The Sino-Vietnamese War did break out in 1979. The North Vietnamese invaded Cambodia in December of 1978. In 1979 the border conflict with Vietnam and China erupted [Ed: February 17, 1979 – March 16, 1979]. We watched that with great interest. What would that serve? Would China serve as a restraining influence on Vietnamese ambitions in Cambodia? The question was could the North Vietnamese maintain an effective military presence in Cambodia and still engage in border conflict with China. So the Thais sought to exploit this. The Thais started paying visits to Beijing in 1979 and the early 1980s to see if the Chinese would continue to maintain pressure on the Vietnamese south of China, and also to see if they could persuade the Chinese in backing off from supporting the Thai insurgents. So this was swirling around in the air. Of course we were all trying to make sense of this.

Q: Even today it is kind of hard to put it together.

FINNEY: The Vietnamese, God bless them, can be very ornery people. As far as our intelligence would show us, the North Vietnamese felt perfectly capable of pursuing their interest in Cambodia, and giving the Chinese a bloody nose up on the border. I think that if I remember my military history correctly, the North Vietnamese acquitted themselves reasonably well.

Q: The Chinese thought they were going to give the Vietnamese a bloody nose, and they came out having realized they didn't have a very effective military force.

FINNEY: That is right. Their command and control was weak. And so I think the second or third round the Chinese improved their position. And of course, ultimately it did prove true, that by the late 1980s the Vietnamese felt it was too much of a burden to be extended as deeply as they were in Cambodia, fresh up against the Thais and making the

Thais nervous. And also with China looking down their throat. We were trying to discern what all this meant and where the trends were going. I thought the U.S. came out all right on the one side, with Carter and human rights and Dick Holbrooke assiduously working the ASEAN contacts and promoting economic development. I think that was in keeping with a lot of the thinking in southeast Asia. When Hanoi lunged into Cambodia, we reaffirmed our security ties with Thailand, bolstered that up, kept the emphasis on ASEAN and economics and gradually we would up playing a very effective role in making sure the Vietnamese went no further, and participating in the economic renewal of southeast Asia. At the same time providing background but useful advice to the Thais so they could deal with their local insurgency. I think Ambassador Whitehouse and Ambassador Abramowitz were first rate. We had some competent people, Brzezinski and others from the Carter Administration, and Ronald Reagan brought in his group. I was pleased to see our renewal of our military ties, security ties on a more constructive and mature basis with the Thais, through these series of exercises which eventually grew. The exercises we launched in 1978-1979, and 1980 eventually grew into Cobra Gold which by the early 1990s had become the largest military exercise in southeast Asia and became a showcase for the Thais to host other southeast Asian partners. So the little seeds we planted in the late 1970s and early 1980s resulted in the fact.

It also gave me an opportunity to continue jumping out of airplanes with the Thai military. When we did our exercises with the Thais, we always had an airborne element, and through my experience in working through the U.S.-Thai friendship organization, and jumping out of airplanes in northeast Thailand to support village development and work, I found myself jumping out of airplanes supporting our renewed security relationship with the Thailand military. It was enormous fun.

Q: What was your impression of the senior Thai military officers? When you are out in the provinces you have people like Prem who are implementing practical solutions. But when you get to the capital, do you find superfluity of generals with political ambitions, corruption, questionable competence?

FINNEY: The Thai generals that I dealt with up in the Northeast, either General Prem or his deputies, many of them were combat veterans from Vietnam or Laos. They were out there, very patriotic, deeply concerned about the security of Thailand and the new environment there. I thought they were going about counterinsurgency not in a perfect way but basically a sensible way. At the end of the day their approach paid off. These gentlemen were in their fatigues, their army fatigue uniforms every day, and they were busy, hard working people. Down in Bangkok, it was a completely different environment. There, the political face of the Thai military was much more important. The most important political institution in Thailand, leaving aside the constitutional monarchy, I think somewhat like, perhaps in Korea during the times you were there, was the Army. But the Thai army in Bangkok was swollen with a superfluity of generals, many of whom were deeply engaged in business enterprises. I mean the Thai military ran rice mills and trucking companies and railroad operations and airlines, not to speak of vast amounts of hotels and other things that were not very appropriate to say the least, shopping centers. So all of a sudden going from dealing with a Thai regional combat commander down into

the big city, it was somewhat of a shock. I mean when you have the Thai annual military day, you have a huge parade. The Thai senior officers would show up in these resplendent uniforms of different colors. It looked like something out of My Fair Lady race day [Ed: A reference to the couture and hats on parade at the Ascot racecourse in England, as exemplified in the 1964 movie My Fair Lady.]

Because there were Thai generals with plumes on their hats dressed in purple, red, green, yellow, white. It looked like a movie set. The fact of the matter is it was a movie set. It was pretty much of an act. Now within the capital, within the Thai military again there are some real patriots involved there, and there are some fine officers. But they appear to spend most of the time competing with each other for getting to the top positions which carried with them enormous opportunities to make huge amounts of money as well as to become the prime minister or leading governors or ambassadors. So that is what you ran into, and that is one of the reasons that the Thai political structure is still a very immature, highly corrupt, underdeveloped structure dominated by the military. So it stunted Thailand's political growth. It is only today in the 1990s and the first part of the 20th century that the civilian leadership in Thailand has come to the fore. It is long overdue.

Q: John, your next assignment was Zambia from September 1979 to June, 1981. How did this assignment come up?

FINNEY: In the summer of 1979, my first job bid was to go to serve on the Sinai Field force which had been set up to monitor the peace accords between Israel and Egypt that Jimmy Carter brokered. Then I guess there were some problems with the Congress, and my particular job turned out not to be funded, so I wound up, much to my good fortune, going as the political counselor to Zambia in East Africa. There I had the enormous good fortune to work for Ambassador Frank Wisner, who is I think, one of our most talented Foreign Service officers I have ever met. He had a great DCM, Wes Egan who later became our ambassador to Jordan. I got there in the late summer of 1979 when the Lancaster House negotiations under Margaret Thatcher were focused on trying to bring an end to the Rhodesian war. So it was a marvelous opportunity to work on a completely different military problem, namely our support to the British to bring an end to the Rhodesian war, and to serve in a part of the world I had never been before. I had been working in Southeast Asia since 1970. It was now 1979. I remember Kissinger saying that we should broaden ourselves. So I went to Africa with that thought in mind, that I would try to learn something about a new continent and a new set of U.S. foreign policy challenges. I certainly encountered them in Zambia.

Q: Please describe the situation in Zambia when you arrived in 1979.

FINNEY: Zambia was in at that point involved in the final stages of the Rhodesian war. Zambia had been Northern Rhodesia. It gained its independence in the October 1964. Its independence leader, President Kenneth Kaunda, who became the first president of Zambia in 1964, was still the president when I arrived there in September of 1979. They were involved in a struggle with southern Rhodesia as it was called then, headed by President Ian Smith. The rebel forces of southern Rhodesia who were fighting for their

independence in southern Rhodesia were based in Zambia. That included a number of characters. Robert Mugabe from his group, and Thabo Mbeki from the African National Congress, the ANC who was supporting the struggle of the independence movement in Southern Rhodesia. And Robert, I can't remember the other gentleman's name. He was from the Ndebele Tribe in southern Rhodesia and Nkomo, Joshua Nkomo, if I have got it right. He was there in Zambia too, in Lusaka, the capital. So President Kaunda of Zambia, very sympathetic as you might imagine, to the independence struggle in southern Rhodesia, was providing refuge to two of the key rebel leaders, Nkomo, and Robert Mugabe, and also to Thabo Mbeki, who headed up the political wing of the ANC. All three of them were in Lusaka, and outside of Lusaka in the Zambian countryside, President Kaunda was providing support to the forces that were striking into southern Rhodesia from Zambia.

Q: Where was Kaunda getting his financing to support this?

FINNEY: Kaunda was getting his financing primarily from Zambia's very lucrative copper mines in the northwest of Zambia right below what was then called Zaire. Lubumbashi I think was the capital of that province in Zaire bordering Zambia. But Ikelenge in northwest Zambia and another town I can't remember, the Zambians had very lucrative copper mines which had been developed by the British during the colonial period and then had been turned over to the Zambians in the 1960s and 1970s. There were still a lot of British staff there. But those two or three huge copper mines provided for about 95% of Kaunda's foreign exchange. These rebel groups, Robert Mugabe and Nkomo received funds from sympathetic nations around the world as well as Thabo Mbeki and the ANC. They got outside funding as well.

Q: Who was our ambassador while you were there?

FINNEY: Frank Wisner. He went on to become ambassador in Egypt, the Philippines, undersecretary of defense and a career ambassador. [Ed: Ambassador Wisner has an oral history on file at ADST.org.] I was political counselor.

Q: As Political Counselor. What was your role? Sounds as though an external focus was more important than a focus on domestic Zambian issues?

FINNEY: Well you are partially right. Basically I did about four or five things for Ambassador Wisher and DCM Wes Egan [Ed: Egan was DCM from 1979 to 1982 and his oral history is on file at ADST.org] as political counselor. Number one, of course, was reporting on the situation between Zambia and southern Rhodesia as it pertained to the ebb and flow of the independence struggle. The British under Margaret Thatcher in the Lancaster House negotiations had the lead on behalf of the commonwealth in trying to broker a solution to the southern Rhodesia conflict that had been going on for a number of years. The State Department was very much supporting what the British and Margaret Thatcher were doing. We worked with Ambassador Wisner and the top staff worked very closely with our British colleagues there to support their efforts to broker a solution. As part of that effort of course we needed to keep Washington fully informed of the progress

of the struggle, the strengths and weaknesses of the rebel movement under Mugabe and Nkomo and what Mbeki and the ANC were doing, and at the same time reporting about how strong the southern Rhodesians were. The southern Rhodesians were launching strikes from southern Rhodesia into Zambia. During the period I was there, they came into the capital and blew up Joshua Nkomo's house about six blocks from Ambassador Wisner's residence. So there was reporting on the struggle and how it was going, and in the course of this, I accompanied Ambassador Wisner. We met Mbeki and Nkomo and Mugabe and we reported on what they had to say how they saw the situation.

The second thing I was following internal political developments in Zambia. President Kaunda had been president of the country since 1964. It is now 1979, 15 years later. Some questions had begun to arise about the competence and capability of Kaunda and some internal restiveness. Some critics had emerged because Kaunda imposed sort of a British flavored Fabian socialism on his approach to governance in Zambia where the state dominated the economy and set the price for agricultural products, provided free medical care and so forth. So the Zambian economy was fine when the price of copper was fine. That was 95percent of their national income. When the price went down, the country suffered grievously. So Kaunda's party was sometimes not popular because of the way he treated other tribes. I remember there were about six or seven principal tribes in Zambia, and Kaunda was always having to balance the various tribal interests as he pursued his support of the southern Rhodesia struggle, pursued his support for freedom in South Africa and so forth. I did a lot of reporting on the internal party developments in President Kaunda's party and how he was being perceived by the people.

The third thing I reported on extensively was labor developments in Zambia. I was the political counselor; I was also the labor officer. The key thing here was the labor unions in the mines in the northwest in Kitwe and elsewhere. The head of the copper mine union was a very articulate and outspoken labor leader named Fredrick Chiluba. He was an ambitious young man. When I was there in 1979 he must have been in his mid- to late 30s, or early 40s. He not only was head of the copper workers union but he had political ambitions. And because the mines were absolutely vital to Zambia's economy, if there was a strike or the copper workers had some major grievances, Freddy Chiluba, as head of that union, articulated those grievances or planned these strikes and this had enormous economic and political repercussions for Kaunda. So I spent a lot of time working this portfolio of the labor union and how they were doing up there, and what Freddy Chiluba's ambitions were. I had a number of interviews with Freddy Chiluba himself. President Kaunda was very uneasy about Mr. Chiluba. In the 1980s, Freddy Chiluba replaced Kaunda as president of the country.

The fourth thing I was doing, because Ambassador Wisner was interested in this, was checking out the tribal politics of the country. I mean national politics was in Lusaka, but when you got out to the countryside, tribal politics prevailed. It was always interesting to see how deep Kaunda's local support was, his popular support was, and tribal politics played an important part in that. So I tried to keep my thumb on tribal politics. That involved a lot of traveling to the provinces and many trips with the ambassador. Ambassador Wisner was extremely energetic, extremely interested in what was going on,

not only in Lusaka but throughout Zambia. I made a number of trips with him where we would call on tribal chiefs and spend the night, attend various ceremonies, make presentations to these chiefs, and demonstrate that the United States was very interested in what was happening in this southern part of Africa during this struggle.

Q: Well let's talk about the mines. One of the sad stories of Africa has been the malign influence of the Fabian Socialism, a passable movement in England, but when carried to the newly independent colonies essentially destroyed the wealth of countries. I think of Tanzania, Ghana. We are talking about where the British were. What was happening in Zambia?

FINNEY: They were going through some very trying times just as you said. Let me hasten to add I was not an expert on Africa. This was the first time I had served on the continent, so I was very much a novice and obviously had tremendous amounts to learn. Nonetheless, after two years there, I came away with the conclusion which is this: That Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia and a lot of the other independence leaders in East Africa learned about politics in British labor conferences and meetings in Blackpool in England during the late 1940s and 1950s.

Q: Also the London School of Economics had its…

FINNEY: You are absolutely right. So that is where they learned and grew up on politics, and Fabian Socialism, based on what I have read, in the 1940s and 1950s was very strong in the British labor Party. But when it came time to independence, it seemed to me that the independence leaders like Kaunda in East Africa, threw the baby out with the bath water. I sensed that when they got independence, of course they had to set up their own national structures. But they, in my view, were too hasty in not only getting rid of colonialism which was certainly necessary and just, but they also, unfortunately, got rid of good basic business practices that unfortunately were associated with the previous colonial rule. So maybe it is understandable. But the bottom line is by the late 1970s, Zambia was starting to hurt badly. The mines: it was a very delicate balancing of the nationalist aspirations of the Zambians to take over the mines while at the same time retaining the British and expatriate expertise, engineering and finance and so forth, to make sure that the mines remained productive. That the product was sold efficiently on the market, and that the funds of the company were properly managed and were reinvested and maintained and so forth. That was the struggle that Kaunda's government was going through. As more and more expatriates had left or were leaving, the management, engineering, the safety and the investment and maintenance of the mines was on a gradual down slope. This was a source of great concern. Obviously when I went up there to observe the labor unions, we toured the mines. We also reported on the health of mining industry up there. But it was a serious problem that was beginning to be felt. This was one of the reasons that Freddy Chiluba, the labor leader up there, was eventually able to take advantage with popular disenchantment with Kaunda and overthrow him. One of his primary complaints was that Kaunda had driven the copper industry into the ground and used it to put cronies up there, corruption had prevailed and he had mismanaged.

Q: You mentioned this going out to the tribes. I understand this is known as a lot of fun, but looking at it from an objective eye, what is the United States interest in letting the tribes know that the United States cared about them?

FINNEY: I was a strong believer in this. I was brand new to Africa. I had to understand this society. To be an effective political counselor and be able to report effectively back to Washington you have to understand how the society is organized and views itself. You just can't report from the capital. Particularly in a political system that was fundamentally still tribally based. It was part of my own education of what made Zambia, what made East Africa tick. It helped me to better understand the political dynamics of the country. It was a great opportunity for the Ambassador, myself and whatever other senior members of the mission went out, to engage and talk with the people in the countryside. In Lusaka, this was a one party government. The political party that dominated Lusaka tended to keep the Americans a little bit at arms length because we weren't seen as strong enough supporters for change in South Africa and of course support for Mugabe and Nkomo and Mbeki. So they looked at us a bit coolly. You didn't have the kind of access that you would have in the capital that we could have when we went out to the countryside and met local leaders who were very interested in the attention and very interested in foreign visitors, and they were interested in Americans. They had heard about Jimmy Carter who was our President then. They had heard about U.S. interest in human rights, and human rights resonated in Zambia during the struggle for independence in southern Rhodesia.

Ambassador Wisner was a marvelously gifted individual engaging local figures on his trips in terms of the speeches he made about the U.S. commitment to justice in South Africa, on the commitment to human rights in general. He had a real impact, I thought, in explaining U.S. policy in Africa, not only specifically about the Rhodesian conflict and the unjust apartheid problems in South Africa, but in general to say the U.S. took Africa seriously. Did we change a lot of minds? I am not sure. I can tell you we were always wonderfully received by desperately poor, disadvantaged people who were struggling to survive from week to week. I found it very rewarding in terms of my education, better understanding of society, getting an appreciation for what it was like to live in African society. I had come from ten years in Southeast Asia. The poorest village in Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia where I had been operating, you know, they have a cup of tea, they would invite you in for some rice. The poorest village. But in Africa you go in, there was nothing there. There was nothing in the stores. You would go in a little tiny merchandise store. There might be some toothpaste; there might be one or two tins of food, but that was it. So the poverty and rural deprivation there was shocking to me. We had contacts with the NGOs and charitable organizations, mostly religious orders that were working in the countryside. There were parts of Zambia where the government had in effect turned over social services to the Adventists or the Franciscan Friars or to Save the Children. They effectively put together social services because it was so desperate in the countryside. Going out and seeing these people, they were from the United States, they were from Europe, there were some African NGOs. Going out and seeing these people and what they were doing in the countryside when we did these tribal visits, was also

enormously rewarding. We did have modest, and I underscore modest, USAID funds Ambassador Wisner could call on. In some of these places where the poverty was so extreme, if you could get a USAID grant for $5,000 or $10,000 it had an impact. Also, Ambassador Wisner and all of us were very interested in the USIA international visitor program. So going out to the countryside, you would meet impressive school teachers, you would meet impressive local ministers. You might meet outstanding agriculture farm extension agents. Through that we were able to include them in our USIA international visitor program along with the better educated people in Lusaka, of course, and expose them to the U.S. So that was good.

Q: Well, now that we are talking about contrasts, what was your impression of the Lusaka the political class. Were they living fairly high off the hog?

FINNEY: Well in my humble opinion it seemed that they were. I mean this is relative. Everything is very relative and we keep in mind our own political system for example, where our political leaders are living much beyond their means. This was one of the prices you pay for one party government. So Kaunda is the father of the country. He was unassailable politically since he brought independence. He had been there for 17 years. There was one political party. So that meant that all the jobs in the country were going through Mr. Kaunda. And he in many respects was a very decent, dignified, hard working, courageous political leader. That said, he also had to live in the real world, deal with the six or seven tribes, balance appointments. So you have a situation, unfortunately, where a lot of people were in senior jobs in the government or in the corporations that Kaunda had taken over in his socialist approach and made state corporations, who were serving on the board of directors, were managing director, president, vice president. You know how it goes. That is how Kaunda ran his political patronage. And he salted all these organizations, and key firms almost totally dominated by the state, with his friends and cronies. Some of them were decent people, but unfortunately a good number of them were mostly interested in looking after themselves and families and enriching their pockets.

Q: What about the resident rebel groups, the ANC, Mugabe, and all. Were they, the ones that were there, not the fighters, but exiled leadership? How were they living?

FINNEY: They appeared to be living relatively modestly. I had a chance to meet Mbeki on a couple of occasions. He is, as you know, now the president of South Africa. His father was in prison with Nelson Mandela on that island off of South Africa. You were impressed with the dignity and the purpose of this individual. But they lived in modest houses, relatively modest. Of course they did much better, comparably better than average rural Africans. But they would be living in what we would view as a middle class or lower middle class houses. It was not ostentatious.

Q: Not a lot of Mercedes and things of this nature.

FINNEY: No, they were low key. Of course in one sense they had to be, because the South Rhodesian guerillas under Ian Smith, their light infantry, which I have to say from

a purely military point was an incredible light infantry, were coming in and blowing up the insurgent's houses as I mentioned. They were trying to assassinate them. So they weren't living in any flagrant or extravagant style. Now their forces in the countryside: one of the problems Kaunda had to deal with was that these three groups, Mugabe's group, Joshua Nkomo's group, and Mbeki's group, they were in three different areas. They tended to take over an area. If you had a farm or happened to be in a village near the area, you had to be real careful because not all of these militia groups were well disciplined. So that was one of the issues that Kaunda had to deal with, that he was host to these rebel groups, and sometimes they were not good guests.

Q: What were the tribal leaders' attitudes toward funding these rebellions in another country from the mines that represented the lifeblood of the country? How did that set with the tribal leaders?

FINNEY: This was done very confidentially. My impression was that it was not talked about. The government of Zambia and President Kaunda always urged moral support and popular support as part of their obligation to bring about justice and freedom in southern Africa. But they did not talk about financial transfers and financial support for these groups. That was done but it was extremely confidential.

Q: When you were there in this time were there any involvements in the like the Shaba business up in Zaire and all that. Shaba one and Shaba two [Ed: According to Wikipedia, Shaba I was a conflict in Zaire's Shaba (Katanga) Province lasting from March 8, 1977 to May 26, 1977. The conflict began when the Front for the National Liberation of the Congo (FNLC), a group of about 2,000 Katangan Congolese soldiers (veterans of the Congo Crisis, the Angolan War of Independence, and the Angolan Civil War) crossed the border into Shaba from Angola.]

FINNEY: We watched that closely from our vantage point. In terms of conflicts we watched three things. We watched the southern Rhodesia conflict in which we were intimately involved. Then we watched Shaba, the situation up there in southeast Zaire I guess. Then we watched Angola.

There were a number of conflicts going on. We had Southern Rhodesia. We had the situation in Mozambique. You had Sam Nujoma in Namibia, and then you had Jonas Savimbi in Angola and the uprising in Shaba, Lubumbashi. At one time in order to enhance our understanding and our reporting on what was going on in Shaba, Ambassador Wisner and we went up to meet with Ambassador Bob Oakley who was ambassador in Kinshasa. He came down to Lubumbashi and we came up, we traveled through Shaba, we came up through the mining areas of Zambia. We did an overland trip, and we met there. We had a couple of days in Lubumbashi. Our two ambassadors and our political counselors were there. We analyzed this situation as best we could. So we watched that. You are absolutely right. And sometimes Sam Nujoma's people would come through because they were fighting the South Africans in Namibia. I don't think we had any contact with the Mozambique leaders, even though Mozambique borders on southern Zambia. It was a very difficult and dangerous guerrilla area. I don't remember

them pounding any money for Mozambique. Lusaka was sort of a crossroads for these southern independence struggle leaders. Kaunda was always very supportive and friendly to all of them. But we watched Shaba closely.

Q: What about, this is the Carter administration, and what about human rights?

FINNEY: Human rights loomed very large. I have to say I came to Zambia and South Africa from Southeast Asia. One of the reasons I took this tour is because Henry Kissinger while Secretary of State said, "You know, people should not just be specialists in one area. They should open themselves up." So taking Kissinger's advice, after 10 years in Southeast Asia, where I was beginning to understand some of the things in the culture, society, and politics, I found myself going to Africa because Kissinger said to develop some new horizons. So within Africa I learned about human rights. It was a very relevant issue as you can imagine in East Africa and southern Africa. President Carter was enormously respected in spite of the fact that many of the people in southern Africa felt that the United States had never done enough to help bring about an end to Apartheid and injustice in South Africa. In spite of that, Carter was regarded, as far as I could tell, with great respect and great admiration. As far as I could tell based on my first tour in Africa, he had done more through his approach to human rights to improve the U.S. government prestige and appreciation in Africa than anyone else. So human rights were big, and Carter's position on this won us a lot of respect that we hadn't received in the past.

Q: Was there a human rights problem with Kaunda's party leaning on the opposition?

FINNEY: There was some. There were definite limits on what you could do politically in Lusaka under Kaunda's one party rule. He looked upon himself as a beneficent grandfather, beneficent father of Lusaka. But he would tolerate very little criticism. He thought he knew what was best for his people. But he was also a democrat. Let's give him due. You could make various suggestions and observations, but you had to watch yourself. Some of the people in his party who were overzealous in carrying out his programs and so forth did some things that were questionable. But I would have to say that compared to the other governments throughout Africa, President Kaunda did a pretty good job. Human rights issues were not a major problem in Zambia at that time. Later on when Freddy Chiluba and the miners started pressing him, he did some things that were not appropriate. But the period I was there, he was reasonably tolerant. But you had to be careful.

Q: What about relations with Tanzania and Nyerere?

FINNEY: Nyerere was sort of gradually, I guess you would say, falling out of favor. He had this policy of Ujamaa [Ed: Ujamaa comes from the Swahili word for extended family or familyhood] that I think was his personal view of African socialism.

He had a number of advisors. Nyerere was a very well respected independence leader, revolutionary leader, dedicated individual. Obviously extremely intelligent. But his

concept of Ujamaa and his socialist development approach to Tanzania was not working. They were slipping deeper and deeper into poverty. By the time I got to Lusaka later in 1979 people were beginning to be a bit restive. The colonial era was beginning to dim. The new generation coming up was asking themselves what works around here? It seemed to them that Nyerere in Tanzania wasn't working. But if I could take that point I'd like to shift to a related point, that is, the role of the Chinese. One of the things I spent a lot of time reporting with Ambassador Wisner was the Chinese role in eastern and southern Africa. Their presence in Tanzania and Zambia was the primary expression of their identification with the independence movement in South Africa. During the 1970s the main Chinese presence in this area, East Africa and parts of southern Africa, was this big railroad that they built from the Indian Ocean through Tanzania into Zambia. They had big railroad camps.

This was the Tanzam railroad, the freedom railway I think they called it. They had three or four camps, of three to four hundred Chinese workers living in a couple of camps in Zambia and a couple of camps in Tanzania to maintain the railroad because unfortunately the Zambians and Tanzanians had not developed the capacity to do so. So the Chinese Embassy in Lusaka, I think, might have been the largest Chinese embassy in Africa. It had more then two hundred people. The Chinese ambassador there was a very engaging person. Ambassador Wisner was an extraordinarily communicative and engaging person himself.

I went with Ambassador Wisner to call on the Chinese ambassador. We had an unbelievable conversation between the two ambassadors, one on one, with myself as a note taker and a Chinese note taker. The record was six hours and fifteen minutes of one on one between our two ambassadors as they discussed the situation of independence movements in Southern Africa. That led to a discussion of Chinese approach to the outside world in general. Remember this is the late 1970s and China was still somewhat of a mystery to us even after President Nixon's visit there in 1972. So three, four, five, I said the record was six hours and ten minutes. Then as a result of that you can imagine the cables we sent back to Washington reporting on the insight we were gaining from the Chinese embassy about Africa and about the Chinese in general. The deputy assistant secretary in East Asian affairs for China, later our ambassador to Saudi Arabia, a very outspoken individual, Chas Freeman. He sent Ambassador Wisner a couple of cables. He told Ambassador Wisner that his reporting on the Chinese out of Zambia was the best reporting on China outside of what our embassy in Beijing was doing. Now whether he said this to flatter him or not, I don't know.

Q: Well Chas Freeman was a Chinese expert. He was one of our top Chinese linguists.

FINNEY: Absolutely. He was superb. So Ambassador Wisner got a lot of kudos from the East Asia bureau for that. Then we had dinners. We exchanged dinners with the Chinese. We had ping pong night at their place, and we invited them to play basketball. This was part of our outreach to East Asia, even though we were in Zambia.

Q: Were the Soviets there?

FINNEY: Yes. The Soviets were there, and the East Europeans were there. The Yugoslavs were there, and we watched them and checked them, and of course from our intelligence services we were trying to recruit them.

Q: Were the Soviets making much impression?

FINNEY: My memory is that they were not making a lot, that the Chinese were the biggest revolutionary presence.

Q: Did you come away with a reading about Mbeki and Mugabe and all?

FINNEY: During my tour from 1979 to 1981 the Lancaster House Negotiations were concluded in December 1979. Then there was an election in Southern Rhodesia in February 1980 and then shortly after, it became Zimbabwe. It all hinged on whether Nkomo was going to be in charge or whether Mugabe was going to be in charge. The Lancaster house negotiations under Margaret Thatcher's leadership with the U.S. and other supporters I think deserve a lot of credit for ending the conflict and providing for a pathway for elections in southern Rhodesia and its independence as Zimbabwe. I never had much confidence in Robert Mugabe. I knew that the price of independence was going to be that Mugabe was going to win this election. I mean you had to have an election. It was clear that Mugabe was the most ruthless, had the best organization. But it raises the hairs on the back of my neck because I didn't see him as a really democratic oriented person, nothing like Kaunda. And Joshua Nkomo, I thought, was a much broader minded and inclusive fellow. But my impression, leaving in the summer of 1981, I wished for nothing but good will for the government for the newly independent Zimbabwe, but had grave reservations about Mugabe, who I thought was rather sinister. Mbeki, I had a lot of respect for him. He seemed like a calm, thoughtful, measured, dedicated South African patriot. I had the highest estimate of him. Of those three he seemed to me intellectually the most endowed. Who is to say, but Mugabe without question had the best political organization.

Q: What about the other African embassies there?

FINNEY: I don't recall spending much time with the other African embassies. The Zairians were there. Angola, South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique were convulsed with war. The Tanzanians, we met from time to time. And Nyerere was restricted. There weren't a lot of African visitors. The first year and a half was all about Lancaster House and making that work. Then the follow-on election. Now one thing should happen. Almost at the end of my tour, I wound up being PNG'd from Zambia, declared persona non grata. It was a very interesting experience. It happened to myself and the PAO. I was scheduled to leave Zambia in July 1981.

About six to eight weeks before my tour was up, myself as the political counselor and the PAO were declared persona non grata and given 48 hours to leave the country. So this was a diplomatic experience I hadn't had before and I haven't had since. But it was sort

of a commentary on what was going on in Zambia. Kaunda and his one party government were starting to fray by the early 1980s. The unhappiness was starting to bubble up. Kaunda watched this very carefully. So there was a little bit of tension in the air, particularly about Freddy Chiluba who was the mine leader up north I used to go up and visit. He was increasingly finding ways to criticize Kaunda. Then, when this happened, one of the ways Kaunda tried to reaffirm his base of political support was to say that he was being threatened, that somebody there was about to overthrow his government. We had a very active intelligence section in our embassy. We did not have a defense attaché or anything of that nature. Intelligence folks were collecting things on the war, collecting things on the political situation, etc. So it turned out that they had recruited a Zambian intelligence officer to report for them. They were always interested in the relationship between the Zambian military and these militias and how was it going. Well this intelligence agent walked in and confessed to his minister of defense that he had been recruited by us. So they turned him around and doubled him back to us. However we had other sources that alerted us to the fact that they had doubled him and that he was coming back. But when this happened, the deputy head of our intelligence section who had been managing this guy…

Q: You are talking about the CIA station.

FINNEY: The station. The deputy head of the station who had been managing this recruiting effort was sent home immediately. Of course I was oblivious to all this. I know nothing about this. I am pursuing my merry political work. So he was sent home, but this obviously raised a real flag of concern within the Zambian government particularly the minister of defense, Ray Zulu, who was always extremely suspicious of the United States. He had had Soviet training. So that alerted them. Then in late May or early June, a truckload of weapons disappeared from the barracks across the street, the military barracks across the street from President Kaunda's state house. His advisors said that this represented a potential coup. So the combination of the intelligence penetration that we had done with this disappearance of weapons and rumors that a coup may be underway, made President Kaunda and his senior advisors extremely jittery. They felt that we were behind these things. So they came in and said that myself who had extensive contact with Freddy Chiluba as labor reporting officer, and the PAO, Michael O'Brien, a very competent officer with lots of African experience who had been meeting with lots of people in the body politic, they felt that both of us had to go as a sign of their displeasure -- for what they interpreted as U.S. support for efforts to undermine the Kaunda government. So we were given 48 hours to pack. We left. Vernon Walters was a special envoy. He had to go to Zambia and persuade President Kaunda that myself and my esteemed PAO colleague, we were not involved in a plot to overthrow him. We were photographed getting off the plane in Heathrow in London. I stopped by the Foreign Office there and gave them a report on the situation because we were very close to the Brits. They had forced a British ambassador to leave in the late fall of 1979. The British had made some statement in London that infuriated Kaunda. A mob appeared at the British embassy, and they started coming over the walls. The British ambassador and the staff whose compound abutted ours sought refuge in our embassy. As a result of that the Kaunda government asked him to leave. So they were very jittery during this whole

period. Anyway, that was how I left Zambia. By the late 1980s, Freddy Chiluba, our labor leader chief in the copper belt, did replace him eventually. He was clearly presidential timbre. Very smart, very able.

Q: With this early departure, where did you go? You must have had an onward assignment.

FINNEY: In 1981 I came back to Washington and studied at the National War College for a year. Just to jump ahead a little, from there I went to the Political Military Bureau where I served under Admiral Jonathan Howe from 1982 to 1984 and was deeply involved in the planning and execution of the Grenada invasion. Then from there I went as a State exchange officer over to DOD to work for Rich Armitage as his director for Southeast Asian affairs. I was there from 1984 to late 1985. Then I went to be the deputy director of the Philippine desk. From the summer of 1985 through the summer of 1987, I was deeply involved in this whole change of government in the Philippines with Ferdinand Marcos.

Q: John, let's talk about your National War College experience from 1981 to 1982. What did you get out of it? What did they get out of you?

FINNEY: My year at the War College, 1981 to 1982, was one of the best years that I had in the Foreign Service and I would say in my life in general. What did I get out of it? Number one, I got a much better appreciation of the basic elements of our national security, how it all comes together. The diplomacy, the military, the intelligence, the economics, the cultural and political factors, so it was a great immersion in all these classic building blocks of what makes up our national security strategy. Number two, I had the opportunity to study and be with on a daily basis, some really outstanding people from the State Department, from CIA, FBI, National Security Agency and particularly the four military services, army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and I would also include the Coast Guard. Among the students that I studied with at National War College Stu, were two future chiefs of staff, General Charles, "Chuck," Krulak who became commandant of the Marine Corps, and General John Jumper who is today, May 2005, chief of staff for the Air Force. We had four other classmates who made senior combatant commander positions. Head of Strategic Command, head of Transportation Command, and several other key commands, so we had an outstanding group of military officers who obviously were selected because they had the potential to serve at the highest levels of their service. Thirdly, we had some really fine faculty there. Terry Deibel, who is a disciple of John Lewis Gaddis and the whole theory behind NSC 1968 and containment [Ed: National Security Council Report 68 (NSC-68) was a 58-paged top secret policy paper issued by the National Security Council on April 14, 1950. NSC-68 largely shaped U.S. foreign policy in the Cold War for the next 20 years, and involved a decision to make containment against global Communist expansion a high priority.] We had Bard O'Neill, one of the leading theorists of counter insurgency and U.S. military doctrine who was there. We had visits from an outstanding parade of senior people from our government: Henry Kissinger to all the chiefs, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, head of all the services, Les Gelb from the Council on Foreign Relations. So it was a star studded cast of

people who had been practitioners at the highest level of foreign policy and national security or very renowned academics and journalists who had been following it closely.

So the combination of learning about all the basic elements of national security strategy, the opportunity to serve with some really terrific people both military and civilian who were a great help to me at later points in my career, and to get a first education from a first rate faculty and visiting speakers was outstanding. Also, we had some great trips. They took us to visit all the key military installations around the United States. We made a wonderful trip overseas. In our trip we went to East Asia, we went to Japan, Korea, and the Philippines. In the Philippines we had lunch with Ferdinand Marcos, remember 1982. I sat right next to President Marcos, and was able to ask him some questions about the very serious problems he was facing in the insurgency. So it was a terrific opportunity, and I loved every minute of it.

Q: Did you get any feel, John, about the attitude of the military at that particular time? I mean we had gone through the trauma in the 1970s of the unsuccessful war in Vietnam and a difficult transition to an all-volunteer army. What were the attitudes that you were picking up?

FINNEY: There were several different attitudes. We had a Medal of Honor winner from the Vietnam War, a Marine colonel, Jay Vargas, who was a member of our class. He got his medal in Vietnam. Jay and I played on the National War College softball team. Jay was a terrific officer and a great patriot. Colonel Vargas and many of his contemporaries, Lt. Colonels and colonels in our class were profoundly disappointed at the outcome of the Vietnam experience. They went over there and did the best they could according to their professional ability. There was a great sense of discouragement that the major conflict of their generation, the Vietnam War, turned out so unsuccessfully. In the same breath, however, it was also evident that all these officers, despite the bitter disappointment in Vietnam, were greatly encouraged by the rebuilding of our armed forces, particularly the army and the Marines. This had taken place in the late 1970s and early1980s under the leadership of key senior officers who instituted the volunteer army and who instituted top to bottom reforms in the way the services trained to fight, the way they acted in the interagency community and so forth. So the spirit of reform had clearly taken hold. That was a source of encouragement to them. They were keenly interested in Foreign Service officers and what we had to bring to the table. They had a great respect for the overseas experience and the languages and knowledge of the cultures and the other expertise that we had developed. There was a thirst that I detected for greater civilian participation in the national security deliberation process. They wanted to know why things went wrong in Vietnam, and they wanted to do it better and do it right the next time. Many of them had been discouraged by the civilian leadership coming out of the Pentagon, Mr. McNamara and others, but they came with an amazing respect for the value that Foreign Service officers and policy people brought to the table. So that was refreshing to see. Even though there was disappointment I did not detect any embitteredness among them. That would be much too strong a word, or any feeling of shame in their military profession because Vietnam didn't work out. They took pride in the fact that they did the best that they could under the circumstances. Militarily they felt they had done their job

well and trained the South Vietnamese to the best of their ability. I though their attitudes were mature, professional, and positive.

Q: Well was there any discussion, did the system allow for it, of saying OK, if I had to do it again, how would we do it better?

FINNEY: Yes there was. Particularly when some of our speakers like Les Gelb from the Council on Foreign Relations came.

Q: He had been the New York Times military correspondent.

FINNEY: Richard Holbrooke came and talked about what might have been. What could we have done better. You know I guess there were two schools of thought. One school of thought was that strategically we should have made a better calculation of what we had invested in Vietnam and what would we could logically expect from it. Another perspective said, looking at the success President Nixon had during the 1972 Christmas bombing campaign to force Hanoi back to the table for the Paris peace negotiations, there was a school of thought that said we didn't apply the basic principles of warfare correctly in Vietnam; that if we had done in 1967 and '68 what we did in 1970 and at the end of 1972, applying aggressive power at the center of the opposition, Hanoi, rather than tackling the extensions on the Ho Chi Minh trail, that militarily we would have finished in a stronger position. But there was a lot of good spirited discussion about this. People were open and they were looking for better ways. That year the British conducted their defense of the Falklands against Argentina [Ed: Falklands War, April 2 to June 14, 1982]. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Britain's forthright stand that the Argentine invasion of the far flung Falkland Islands would not stand. The highly professional tactical and operational way the British responded to the challenge resonated with our military colleagues and Foreign Service officers like myself as well.

Q: And your follow-on assignment in 1982?

FINNEY: I finished in June of 1982. Then I reported to the Political Military Bureau (PM) at State Department to be the Deputy Director of the Office of Regional Security Affairs (PM/RSA), which was headed by Richard Haass. After later serving on the NSC during the first Bush administration, and being head of the Policy Planning Council at State, he is now head of the Council on Foreign Relations. A very talented officer. Just as I reported to the bureau in June of 1982, Al Haig, who was Secretary of State, resigned [Ed: July 5, 1982]. He was replaced by George Shultz. The head of the Political Military Bureau, Richard Burt, a former correspondent for the New York Times left when Haig left [Ed: The State Department historian's office dates Burt's departure from PM as February 17, 1982]. Burt came back later that summer to be head of the European bureau [Ed: February 1983]. Rear Admiral Jonathan Howe, who had been the military assistant to Secretary of Defense Weinberger, came over as the Director of the Political Military Bureau [Ed: Admiral Howe as the PM Director from May 1982 to July 1984].

So the new lineup was Shultz as Secretary of State, Rear Admiral Jonathan Howe from the U.S. Navy as head of the Political Military Bureau, Richard Haass was my boss in PM/RSA and was replaced in the summer 1983 rotation by Bob Gallucci. Bob went on later to be Director of the Political Military Bureau and then negotiated a North Korea agreement in 1994. Now he is head of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. Arnie Raphel was our Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Political Military Bureau then reporting to Jonathan Howe. Richard Clarke was the deputy head in a neighboring office in PM [Ed: PM/P, Office of Policy Analysis]. So we had a pretty interesting group of people to work with.

The immediate issue that came up was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June of 1982. Secretary Shultz was keenly interested in the progress of the Israeli invasion and particularly that difficult situation where the Israeli quickly trapped Yasser Arafat and the PLO in downtown Beirut. The solution to that standoff was to send Phil Habib to Lebanon to broker an immediate cease fire between the Israelis and the PLO so they didn't destroy all of downtown Beirut, and then let the PLO evacuate to Tunisia. Habib arranged to bring in the U.S. Marines to serve as a buffer between those two forces. After the PLO left, then the Marines left. Secretary Shultz was keenly interested in every step of the way on how all of this was unfolding. Admiral Howe in his role as Political Military Bureau Assistant Secretary and with his ties to the Pentagon, we were providing daily briefings to Shultz with maps and lay downs of all this process worked, the massacre at the Sabra and Shatila camps. All the details of that.

Then, in September, Phil Habib left. Bud McFarland, who was deputy NSC advisor, I guess, he came in in September and brought the Marines back in. That came in September, 1982. They were there for a year. McFarland is the former NSC director, who later became involved in the Iran-contra scandal. We had the USS Missouri off of the coast of Lebanon in mid-September of 1982. McFarland came back one weekend. I remember he sent in a cable saying the second battle of Beirut had begun. He made the request to the NSC and the President that we use the USS Missouri to shell Muslim militia forces that were about to overrun Christian villages overlooking the airport where the Marines were headquartered. So the USS Missouri's guns were brought into play. At that point, we did not fully appreciate it, but at that point attitude toward the U.S. in Lebanon in this particular situation changed. Instead of being neutral people who had successfully intervened to permit the PLO to evacuate to Tunisia, we became seen as taking sides with the Christians.

Q: When the Marines initially went in, it made sense. I mean stopping things. We had done this before in 1958.

FINNEY: Yeah, in downtown Beirut, in this case, to allow the PLO to evacuate, yes.

Q: But putting them in again, was anybody, you had Shultz an ex-Marine, McFarland an ex-Marine. Was anybody on the military side, Jonathan Howe or anything else getting kind of nervous about saying what are our Marines doing there?

FINNEY: The short answer is, yes, they did gradually. So in September, McFarland arranged for the Marines to go back with permission of the President of course. We employed the USS Missouri. It helped to stabilize the situation. As I recall, the concern of the administration and in the State Department under Shultz was that if we didn't re-insert the Marines and bring the USS Missouri to bear to prevent the Christians from being overrun, that Lebanon would disintegrate. We were in the business of trying to get the Israelis to move back. We couldn't do that if Lebanon was disintegrating before that. So that took us into the fall and winter of 1982. Of course we in the PM Bureau kept giving Shultz daily updates on the situation there. Gradually the administration's attention was diverted to other things.

I am trying to recall what was going on in 1982. One problem was the developing situation in Central America, and the emergence of the Nicaraguan Contras. The chain of command in DOD regarding the presence of our Marines in Lebanon became so opaque and convoluted that it was difficult to understand, even from Rear Admiral Howe's perspective, exactly who was looking after them, how the rules of engagement were being defined, and were we keeping track of their mission as the situation in Lebanon continued to evolve. Our attention was diverted. We did not pay sufficient attention to the relationship between the evolving tactical situation in Lebanon and the rules of engagement of the Marines and the relationship to the Israeli presence and their continued usefulness there. So in essence it got away from us. On April 18, 1983, the embassy was attacked by a suicide bomber. So now maybe the Marines, in addition to trying to prevent the Christians from being overrun, were supposed to help secure our diplomatic presence there. So it became rather mixed up, and again in retrospect, we weren't paying sufficient attention. At the same time we had the Marines there, we were also involved in an extensive political, extensive training and security assistance to build up the Lebanese army including many Christians.

Our job in the Office of Regional Security Affairs was overlooking the assistance program to Lebanon and a number of other places around the world, but Lebanon was front and center. We were drawing down. We had the lead in doing the interagency staff work to draw down DOD resources to pay for the security assistance and training of the Lebanese army.

Q: But there is another factor there when you were doing this. It is very political, but any military equipment we give to a country we say it should only be used for defensive purposes.

FINNEY: Correct.

Q: The Israelis were using all sorts of our stuff to pound the Lebanese, which was not what we gave it to them for. Did you feel constrained or was it an issue or how did you deal with this?

FINNEY: We were dealing at the staff level. I was a War College Graduate. I guess I was an FSO-1 or colonel equivalent. We were consumed with the tactical day to day stuff.

Now this is a very good question, but it was answered very broadly in this way: that the Israelis invaded Lebanon in response to these rocketings that were coming out of Lebanon against the Israeli settlements in the north. So the Israelis cast their invasion as a self defense effort to clear out these extremist Muslim elements which were shelling Israel and killing Israeli settlers. So the Israeli argument, which as I recall we essentially bought, was that they were using these weapons we supplied Israel in their self defense. Self defense involved taking out these regions in Lebanon which was the base of operations for the Muslims attacking them.

Q: If I recall this whole issue evolved because the Israelis took the army and didn't just clear the northern border, but marched all the way to Beirut and started shelling it with American military equipment. Were we at least saying, hey what is going on here?

FINNEY: I don't recall. It is a fair point. But I don't recall that being part of the discussion at the Shultz level. Now obviously at this time, Mr. McFarland, the NSC, Secretary Shultz, and people, Casper Weinberger and his people over at DOD were conducting very top level negotiations with the Israelis. What I remember telling the Israelis is you have overstepped. It is time for you to withdraw. You have achieved your basic objective. The PLO and Yasser Arafat have decamped for Tunisia, so now is the time to bring this to an end. I mean I was vaguely aware that those kinds of discussions were going on. At the office level where we were working, we were consumed, as is usually the case in these kinds of crises, with helping keep our bosses abreast of day to day developments. The demand for information for Shultz on the military situation on the ground was constant and intense. All of us, and because most of the exchange officers, the DOD exchange officers from DOD at the Department during that time were seconded to the Political Military Bureau, we were at a full court press to try to get information from our contacts in the military to get to Shultz that he was unable to get formally from DOD. So that is where we were. Of course this was a big issue in the summer and fall of 1982. Then we were doing a lot of other things.

Just one thing we did in my office where I had the lead and worked very closely with Arnie Raphel [Ed: whom Admiral Howe recruited as a Deputy Assistant Secretary in July 1982] as we instituted a series of bilateral pol-mil talks with key allies around the globe to deepen our political military interaction with them. I went with Arnie Raphel to initiate political military talks with Australia, I think in the spring of 1983. Those talks continue to this day. It began a process that I think by the time we left, we had instituted political military dialogues with something like 12 to 15 countries. I think eventually it got up to 23 or 24. So that took up a lot of our time.

Q: I want to go way back to Lebanon quickly. We were very much involved with the training of the Lebanese army. My understanding was the Lebanese army just faded away or never amounted to much. How did you see that? What were you getting at the time?

FINNEY: Yes. Well let's face it, it was a huge disappointment. Some friends of mine from the military side who were involved in that training effort with the Lebanese army I had served with in Vietnam. So here they were, having worked their guts off and spent

their heart helping the South Vietnamese. They were now training the Lebanese. After the Marine tragedy there, we withdrew from Lebanon. Then things continued to descend into the chaos of this terrible civil war. Some of the senior Christian and some of the moderate Muslims in Lebanon were either assassinated or went into exile. Our hard efforts in training the Lebanese army essentially went to naught because it descended into that horrible civil war where we had the kidnappings of the journalists and so forth. So that turned out to be a failed enterprise.

Then one sunny day in mid-October, Admiral Howe called about half a dozen of us from the Political Military Bureau into his office on a Thursday afternoon at about 2:00 pm. He told us he was going to a meeting at the White House at 4:00 pm where consideration was being given to the invasion of Grenada. This is mid-October 1983. He didn't think that this would amount to much, but he was going to come back from the meeting at the White House about 6:00 pm, and he would inform us.

I immediately went back to my desk, and I typed up a memo for Admiral Howe saying that if the decision was indeed to invade Grenada, that we should not agree to that decision unless we had a firm commitment from the administration and DOD that we would follow up an invasion with a commitment to stay and do the necessaries to put Grenada back on its feet. I cited our experience in Vietnam where from my perspective we made a very deep commitment and at the end it turned out we couldn't quite live up to it because of the Watergate scandal, live up to some of the basics. So I said we should avoid this experience, and make sure that if we do go into Grenada we follow up and make a serious commitment. So Admiral Howe, in short, comes back at 6:00 and says, "Well we are going to invade Grenada. It is going to happen in the next three or four days." This was 6:00 pm on Thursday [Ed: October 20, 1983]. So immediately we set up a task force in the operations center.

We met with the ARA (Inter-American Affairs) Bureau, Tony Motley, was the Assistant Secretary then [Ed: Motley served from July 1983 to July 1985]. We convened with Tony Motley later that evening. I will never forget, he had Mike Kozak there from L (Bureau of Legal Affairs). Mike later went on to become the ambassador to Panama and serve in several other senior positions. He may still be in active service. We sat there, as we tried to put together in our heads how we would go about doing this, particularly legally. I remember Secretary Motley turning to Michael Kozak and saying, "Michael, the decision has been made to invade Grenada. I want you to build the proper legal case for doing so." Mike and his legal team turned to that job, and that impressed me. That how important it is from the outset when you are undertaking expressions of our national power like this, that you at the very beginning get the lawyers involved to put together your legal rationale. We were all consumed with how we were going to do it militarily and diplomatically, but that made a huge impression on me in terms of putting together the legal rationale.

So we worked most of the night on Thursday and Friday. We hooked up with Frank McNeil, who had been our former ambassador to Costa Rica [Ed: serving from July 1980 to June 27, 1983]. Secretary Shultz sent Frank down to Dominica to see the Prime

Minister of Dominica, Eugenia Charles. Frank was prepared to rally the Eastern Caribbean states in support of this intervention. Ambassador McNeil was accompanied by Major General George Crist, a Marine officer from JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff), who later became our combat commander in Central Command. To get General Crist and Frank McNeil down to Barbados first and then to Dominica, we had to get an airplane out of Andrews Air Force Base very quickly. So I was told to call the NSC. Whom did I contact but Ollie North. I laid out for Ollie what the requirement was. I said, "Ollie, we have been trying to get through to Andrews. We have not been having much success. Can you help?" He said, "I will be back to you." In about 45 minutes he did get back to me. He did get us a plane, and we got General Crist and Ambassador McNeil down to Barbados, down to Dominica to meet with the Eastern Caribbean nations to get them to participate in the planned intervention and to join us in putting together the diplomatic and legal rationale. That was on Friday.

On Saturday we sent L. Craig Johnstone down to Norfolk, which was then hosted Atlantic Command. He was our State Department. He went down to Atlantic Command to tell them on Saturday morning that we were going to invade Grenada on Tuesday morning. So Craig went down there. By Sunday, at my staff level, again I was working with Ollie North over at the NSC. Ollie was fully engaged with us. I was working with Admiral Art Morro, who was a rear admiral Navy on the JCS. Craig Johnstone came back from Atlantic command on Saturday evening with a rough outline of what the plan was. We were extraordinarily fortunate that a carrier battle group consisting of a carrier and four or five supporting vessels including a Marine helicopter carrier, were about to depart the east coast of the United States for Lebanon to replace the carrier battle group in the Med that was off of Lebanon. In fact, that carrier battle group under Admiral McDonald had already departed.

Q: Yeah, as I recall, it was on its way.

FINNEY: But they had just departed, a day or so out. So the orders came to swing that battle group around. Come down to the Caribbean to Grenada. That was very fortuitous. I recall being in the task force in the State Department operations center. It was Sunday afternoon before the invasion [Ed: October 23]. The invasion was on Tuesday morning. Anyway Sunday afternoon we were beavering away on preparations on the policy side from State's perspective on the intervention. One of our jobs in the Political-Military Bureau and through Admiral Howe was to continue to keep Shultz informed on how DOD was going to do this, and how it would be consistent with our diplomatic strategy. On that day, George Shultz was at the Augusta Golf course, site of the Masters tournament. If I remember correctly, I think he was there with President Reagan. So we got a call from the Masters Golf Course, from Secretary Shultz. They put him on loudspeaker in the op center in the State Department. I think it was Lawrence Eagleburger who briefed him on behalf of our task force on the state of play, what DOD was doing, what the eastern Caribbean folks were doing, about our diplomatic strategy working very closely with Britain as the former colonial power and so forth. Secretary Shultz had been the beachmaster for the World War II Marine invasion of Peleliu. After Eagleburger briefed Shultz about the DOD forces Secretary Shultz said, "Larry, send

more. More forces. I want to send a man to do a boy's job down there." So we took it back to DOD. Secretary Shultz said you don't have enough forces. We have got to do this quick, neat, and discrete. That was Sunday. Now it was either Sunday night or Monday night, the night before the invasion. I am in the State operations center. It is about 1:00 in the morning. A critic message comes in. It was a critic flash. Those were rare messages. It says that a mortar shell has landed on the Marine encampment at the airport in Lebanon. Six to eight marines have been killed, 14 wounded. So we are there working on Grenada and people start clustering on what appeared to be a tragic but still minor incident in Beirut. Then over the next hour and a half, the critic messages started rocketing in. The scope of the tragedy for the marines, ultimately it was 256 marines, became known. So that mushroomed up at the same time that we are in the absolute final stages of kicking off the invasion in Grenada. It was a very taut time. Admiral Howe, from either Friday night or Saturday morning, began to sleep in his office. He was there for a week beginning either Friday night or Saturday morning. He slept in his office.

The intervention in Grenada began tragically when we dropped four seals at night at 4:30 in the morning off the coast of Grenada to help prepare a landing by the Marines on, I think it was, the northeast shore of Grenada, to seize Pearl Airport. The main airport of Grenada was down at Point Salinas. That was where this Cuban construction battalion was. So we were trying to flank that, to send the Marine helicopter carrier and several battalions ashore on the northeast side of the island to seize Pearl Airport. Then we would use that to help invest the main airport which was the administration rationale for invading Grenada after they had the take over, the government and the emergence of this extremely radical communist party. So those four SEALS were dropped too far offshore, and all four of them drowned. Heavy currents, it was very tragic.

Anyway, the Marines couldn't make an amphibious landing because the beaches were too sharp, too steep, so they went in by helicopter. As they were going in by helicopter, the Army Rangers began their drop from 800 feet. You know you jump out of that C-130 aircraft at 800 feet, you have time to pop your chute, count five, and you are on the ground. One of the company commanders in that 75th Ranger regiment that went into Grenada on that Tuesday morning was John Abizaid. He is now a four star commander of Central Command in charge of our efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The intervention turned out to be very successful. The Rangers and the other army troops that followed in, that dropped on the main Cuban force concentration in and around Point Salinas Airport, did well. But they got a little bit bogged down. Particularly we had a situation with the island's Governor General who had asked for the intervention. There was a key part of the legal rationale that Mike Kozak and the L guys put together. We put a squad of 12 SEALS into that governor's house to protect him. They got surrounded by Soviet armored personnel carriers manned by the Cubans. So we were getting bogged down in St. Georges, the country's capital.

The Marines not only went ashore and secured Pearl Airport, they then took about half to two-thirds of that force, put it back on the helicopter carrier with the helicopters, went around the northern side of Grenada, came back down on the south side, and went ashore just west of St. Georges with their armored vehicles. They were able to relieve the

Rangers and the soldiers and SEALS who were pinned down in St. Georges. We were able to rescue the governor. It was quite a maneuver. Another part of the intervention concerned our medical students who were down there. Several thousand U.S. medical students were in school there. Here the genius of Tony Motley came through. He was Assistant Secretary for ARA. Tony knew that getting those American medical students and tourists out of Grenada safely and back to the United States was going to be a key rationale for our going into Grenada. He thought it was very important that when these students got back to the United States, that their first contact with the U.S. media be a positive one. He gave us instructions to go through the halls of the State Department beginning in ARA and get capable action officers to get on planes that we sent down to North Carolina, Pope Air Force Base, and then to go down to Grenada. We used these ARA action officers, one for each plane. So as the students came aboard, 30-40 to each plane, standing in the well of the plane was an ARA action officer who explained to them this is why we did the intervention. This is what we have accomplished. Then the ramp goes up and they brief these students on these planes about the rationale, what we were doing, answered their questions. There must have been ten or eleven of these planes. So they got back to Pope Air Base and the media is there, and the students get off. A number of them got off the C-130's and kissed the ground.

Q: Oh yes, it was very positive.

FINNEY: Very positive, and that was attributed to Tony Motley. So that turned out to be a very successful intervention. As someone who had served in Vietnam and had gone through the CORDS experience there; it was wonderful to be in on an operation that turned out to be totally successful.

Q: What about getting the United Kingdom on board. This was part of the Commonwealth you recall. I understand Margaret Thatcher was not happy with this at all. I mean was this , did we overlook it, or I am told there was a problem with the British high commissioner or something trying to wave the troops off or something like that.

FINNEY: The British Governor General there was Paul Scoon. Maggie Thatcher and the British Government's nose was out of joint because Paul Scoon asked us, asked the United States to come in and save him from this radical communist government, rather than going through the UK channels. This may be a gross oversimplification, but I think that was the heart of it. Shultz had some fast talking to do with Thatcher and her key foreign policy advisors to get them on board. Our focus at the State Department was Eugenia Charles, the prime minister of Dominica and, at that time, head of the Association of Eastern Caribbean Islands. We brought her to Washington. Thank you, Ollie North, for getting another aircraft from the 201st aircraft wing at Andrews Air Force Base. We brought her to Washington. She appeared at the morning press conference with President Reagan announcing the intervention. That was the thrust of our diplomatic effort to justify this exercise. Attention was paid to the UK and to Margaret Thatcher, but maybe we didn't give it all the attention that it deserved.

Q: We must have been looking rather closely at rules of engagement. What the hell do you do about this construction battalion? I mean it was a real construction battalion wasn't it. I mean there was construction of Cubans. You must have been looking at that, well how do we treat them?

FINNEY: I am not an expert on the rules of engagement in Grenada. But I remember there was a general discussion. It was a construction battalion, but it had some arms. It was a construction battalion that was able to defend itself. There were three security elements down there. One was a construction battalion working on this 8000 foot runway at Port Salinas, able to defend itself. Then there was a Cuban security force which was supposed to provide force protection, additional force protection for the construction battalion as well as a number of other Cuban medical officers and intelligence officers and others on the island. Then there was this local militia of this extremely radical local communist party.

Q: The New Jewel.

FINNEY: The New Jewel movement. They were flaky.

Q: But scary.

FINNEY: Flaky and nutty and scary, and they had taken over. They were slavish admirers of Fidel Castro. What alarmed the administration was that as soon as they took over, they killed some of the opposition, and then the Cubans started flowing in. So, about the rules of engagement. I think the construction battalion was about 400 and the additional security force was a couple of hundred. If they opposed us we would apply lethal force against them. I think they shot down two or our cobra helicopters. Altogether I think we had 16 Marines, army, sailors who were killed in the intervention. So we paid a price, but we extracted more than we got.

Now I will add a little footnote. One of the reasons we justified going in is that we were going to restore democratic rule to Grenada. The intervention was in October. I think in November we announced there would be free democratic elections in Grenada the following December. That is December, 1984, to elect a new and free democratic government. The initial intervention was over, I guess, by mid-or late November. I was back to my regular duties in the Political-Military Bureau. Throughout the intervention our PM Bureau, the office that I was working in under Admiral Howe, where we did policy and plans, we were totally integrated with Tony Motley and his senior ARA leadership and worked very well. By the end of November I was back in my regular job. Bob Gallucci has taken over from Richard Haass by now as head of this office.

So by the summer of 1984, I concluded my work in PM and I began a State Department DOD exchange tour in the office of Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs(OSD/ISA), under Rich Armitage. Initially Rich was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for East Asia Affairs in ISA. Bing West was the Assistant secretary. Then West left. By the time I got there Rich Armitage had become the assistant

Secretary for International Security Affairs. Most of my prior experience had been in southeast Asia. The Vietnamese probing of Thailand and the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1979 had raised some real concerns about the security of Thailand. When I reported for duty in the summer of 1984 to Rich Armitage and his office, I was assigned to work Thailand. We were tasked with beefing up, bolstering, strengthening our security ties with Thailand. It was facing battalion size incursions along the eastern border from the North Vietnamese in the early 1980s who were chasing Pol Pot's forces. In late August, Tony Motley and his ARA bureau called over to Rich and said, "Look, can you spare John Finney to come back. We want to send him down to Grenada." They had just concluded a CIA poll in Grenada in late August. This poll showed that the pro-democratic parties down there, small democratic parties, were way behind in the contest with this dictatorial figure, a Mr. Eric Gairy who had been the original strong man in Grenada and whom this radical communist party had overthrown. He sought refuge in New Jersey. After we invaded, Mr. Gairy went back to Grenada. He was a populist leader, steeped in the religion and culture. He was called Dr. Voodo. He had a network of associations with women's associations in all the villages around the island. A CIA poll showed in late August of 1984, out of the 15 seats being contested in the Grenada parliament, 12 of them were going to go to Gairy, the former dictator, and only three were going to go to the democratic parties. So ARA called Rich and said we would like to send John down there because of his previous work during the intervention, to see if he can work with the embassy political officer down there to rally these three democratic parties and improve the prospect for a democratic, and from U.S. perspective, positive outcome of this election. So I went to Rich Armitage and said, "Rich, this is what they asked for. I am prepared to do it." He said, "OK," grudgingly. "What are you going to get out of it?" I said, "They want me there from about August until the election in December, and I am signed up to run the Marine Corps Marathon here in Washington in mid-October. I would like to run in that, Rich." He said, "OK, I will call Tony Motley and say you are not going unless they fund you to run in the Marine Corps Marathon." So under those conditions I was detailed down to the U.S. Embassy in St. Georges in Grenada. So I got down there in early September. I got there just after the three democratic parties, in response to approaches by our embassy, had coalesced into one party. So I was there from September until December, allowing for a four day leave to go up and run in the marathon,

Q: How did you do?

FINNEY: Well I finished. This was about my fifth or sixth. I was anxious to keep the string going. So from September to December, that is what I was doing 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We had at that time a very good friend in the Caribbean who was Prime Minister of Jamaica. He was of Lebanese descent, Edward Seaga. He was a very good friend of Ronald Reagan. Born in Jamaica of Lebanese parents, he lived in the poorest section of Jamaica, a white man, and yet he got himself elected to their parliament and then prime minister. The way he did this was through an amazing political organization. His political party in Jamaica, in the early to mid 1980s, was deep into computers, deep into political advertising, and deep into village organization. They had an extraordinarily effective party and a party that adopted modern techniques to win

democratically. It was the best political organization in Jamaica. Through our friends at Langley out at CIA we were able to get Prime Minister Seaga of Jamaica to send us four of his best political organizers. One of them was a specialist in village organization. Another was a specialist in advertising. A third was a specialist in fund raising. A fourth was a specialist in overall national organization. So I spent four solid months with these Jamaicans. We took this fledgling democratic group and went to every district of Grenada, and I think almost every village. I don't know how many villages we missed, on an intensive recruitment, organization, and publicity schedule. Rallies at night with torches and everything. We were, of course, up against Mr. Gairy who dressed immaculately in white, and a white hat, and had these women's associations and years of experience. So we worked this intensively. Shortly before the election in early December, it turned out that we had a particular challenge from Mr. Gairy. He had brought in some loudspeakers, about 30 or 40 loudspeakers to put on taxicabs. He sent them flooding around the island with his songs and his music and his proposals for why he should be elected. So we again called our friends at Langley and with an additional $40,000 or $50,000 we brought in 30 or 40 of our own taxicabs with louder loudspeakers and ran them throughout the island circulating throughout the day before the election. So on election day, the first or second week of December, the democratic forces reversed the predicted results of the CIA poll of August. The Democratic forces got 12 seats and Mr. Gairy got three, an exact reverse of what the August CIA polling said would happen. That was my last association with Grenada. I spent a lot of time, by the way, preparing for the Marine Corps marathon, running at night on that airport at Point Salinas that we had invaded. I got very familiar with that.

Q: Was Gairy raising hell about your activities?

FINNEY: Yes, but you know, we simply ignored him and pressed on. We developed some fabulous organizers on the democratic Grenadan side who did downfield blocking for us in terms of responding to Gairy's complaints. We were able to recruit a very respected, dignified, and elderly Grenadian politician, Herbert Blaize, who lived on a little island called Carriacou. It was part of Grenada but was a separate island north of Grenada. He was so dignified and so respected, British educated, and in fact held office under the British, that he deflected all of Gairy's accusations. But it was an extremely intense and interesting assignment working with the Jamaicans and the local Grenadians. It took me places I never thought I would see. There was a great sense of accomplishment that the democratic election in Grenada turned out the right way. Herbert Blaize, a democrat, was elected and became Prime Minister. Blaize merged his party with several other center-right parties to form the New National Party and the NNP won fourteen of the fifteen parliament seats. So it was a huge justification for the intervention. It came out the right way. It helped live up to what we who had been through Vietnam had said, when you go in and do these things, you have got to stick with it and make it come out right. So I finished that assignment in April, went back to work for Rich Armitage.

In the summer or early fall of 1985, after about 14 months working for Rich, including this intervention in Grenada politics, again I got a call to be the Deputy Director of the Philippine desk at the State Department. As you know the problem with Ferdinand

Marcos was rocketing up then. So John Maisto who was our director and later became our ambassador to Nicaragua and Venezuela, a very fine officer, asked if I would go come back. Rich knew how important the Philippine situation was, so he released me from my tour at DOD about eight months early. I went back to State to be the Deputy Director of the Philippine desk (EAP/PHL). That was in the fall of 1985, and from the fall of 1985 to the summer of 1987, I was deep into the whole issue of resolving the crisis: of helping, participating, staffing, working on this terrible problem of what was going to happen in the Philippines with Marcos' dictatorship, the assassination of Aquino and, of course, the revolt there that led to Mrs. Aquino's arrival in power.

Q: When you took it over, what was the situation in the Philippines as seen from the American perspective?

FINNEY: First of all John Maisto was the office director; I was his deputy. Paul Wolfowitz was our Assistant Secretary for East Asia. Rich Armitage was Assistant Secretary at DOD for ISA. He had a lot of East Asia experience in the Office of Secretary of Defense. We had a very strong team over at the NSC. Of course everybody was consumed with this in the East Asia Bureau. George Shultz had a particular interest because of his experience in this part of the world during WWII, of what would happen to our base at Subic Bay if the Philippines descended into chaos. There were basically two principal things going on. One of them was trying to resolve the investigation of the assassination of Senator Aquino Sunday, August 21, 1983, at Manila International Airport.

Q: This happened before you got there.

FINNEY: Before my arrival. Two years before my arrival. There had been a series of investigations and court processes going on, and the outcome of this investigation appeared to lead directly to President Marcos. So if President Marcos, as the evidence seemed to suggest, was directly involved in the assassination of Senator Aquino, what would that mean for his future and the future of Philippine politics. The second major thing that was going on was a rapidly spreading Philippine communist insurgency under the New People's Army. That was becoming extremely strong in provinces north of Manila and south of Manila particularly in Mindanao. Then, of course, a third thing was we had concluded an extension of our basing agreement at Subic in 1983 for another 10 years. But that was coming into question. So those three things were going on. What is going to be the future of Marcos with this Aquino investigation? This New People's Army which appeared to be threatening the stability of the Philippines and which had set up urban terror teams in Manila which were targeting Americans and Philippine police. What would be the future of our base at Subic? Our basing arrangement in Subic was a key part of our naval presence in the western Pacific to counter Admiral (Sergei) Gorshkov and his burgeoning Russian Navy in the Northern Pacific. The Russian Navy was starting to appear for the first time in the mid-1980s in the Indian Ocean. So there was a lot of concern about that. So that was the scene.

What then emerged in the fall of 1985 was that on the political front that Aquino's wife, Cory Aquino, called for national elections. She emerged as the spokesman for the Philippine opposition. Rich Armitage and Casper Weinberger the Secretary of Defense had to decide whether we were going to continue our military assistance program to Marcos at the same time that he appeared to be culpable of the assassination of Senator Aquino, and at the same time when the Philippine insurgency seemed to be growing by leaps and bounds. While this was all coming to a head, a key diplomatic move on our part, after much inter agency deliberations which deeply involved the Philippine desk, was to send Senator Paul Laxalt, who was Reagan's close friend, a senator from Nevada, out to Manila to tell Marcos that he should submit to elections. Also, Laxalt told him that if he didn't submit to the election call that Aquino's wife had raised that it might be difficult for us to continue our relationship with him. So he decided to have the elections.

Then the elections were held on February 7, 1986. I was appointed the action officer from State to escort a delegation from our Congress headed by Senator Richard Lugar plus about a 12 or 15 member house and senate delegation, with some others like Mort Zuckerman, to go out to the Philippines to observe this election. So I found myself in late January at Andrews Air force Base on a plane with Richard Lugar and Senator Thad Cochran, and a very ambitious and hard charging young senator from Massachusetts named John Kerry. We go to the Philippines to observe these elections. So on the plane on the way over, there was real concern that Marcos and his election machinery would not permit our delegation to have free and unfettered access to the polling process. So we had a little bit of a crisis, and we got that resolved. We divided up into different teams. Our ambassador in the Philippines was a very able fellow, Steve Bosworth. He later became our ambassador to South Korea. So we went out with Lugar and John Kerry and the others and did the polling. We observed the election. At the end of the day, Lugar, Senator Kerry and others felt that they had clear evidence that substantial portions of the balloting was rigged.

Then that night [Ed: February 9], about 9:00 pm, a group of Philippine vote counters at the Philippine national convention center, where they were headquartered with all their computers, broke from the convention center, sought refuge in a church, and stated that it was rigged. I was down at the Manila Hotel when this happened. Senator Kerry came running out of the hotel, saying, "I have got to have a car. I have got to go to this church where these Philippine vote counters are, because there are rumors that Marcos' police and military are going to move in on them and storm the church and arrest them." So Senator Kerry said, "I have got to go over there." We got a car. I went with him. The church was barricaded. And Senator Kerry was absolutely fearless. It was absolutely surrounded by Philippine military and police. Kerry just shoved his way past and said, "I am Senator John Kerry. I am here to observe these elections." He stormed into the church. I am ten feet behind him, saying am I going to watch a U.S. senator get shot right here before my eyes, because these military were mad as the dickens. Tensions were high; it was an electric situation. Then we went to the back of the church behind the altar and we found maybe 15 to 20 of these vote counters. They were trembling and crying. Some of them couldn't speak English. I got an interpreter for Kerry. We sat there and we interviewed them. They told him how in essence the election was rigged. Kerry took all

this aboard. There was constant noise going on outside and shouting and screaming and searchlights and some kind of muffled explosions. I thought, well, they are coming in here. I was looking for a thick pew to crawl under and see what the heck Kerry was going to do, where he was going to hide. At the end of the day it didn't happen. Kerry said, "I have heard enough. I am going back to the hotel." We went back to the hotel; he reported to Lugar and Thad Cochran. Next day they called a press conference and said, "There is no doubt in our minds that there has been serious malfeasance in this election. We are getting back on the plane and we are going to report to the President."

We got back on the plane and flew back to Andrews. My admiration for Lugar is boundless. I mean his determination, at the same time his calmness. His keeping these 10 or 15 Congressmen, Republicans, Democrats, very ambitious people like Kerry, very smart and retiring people like Thad Cochran and others, and then we had some journalists. Ben Wattenberg was there, and Mort Zuckerman who was head of U.S. News and World Report, and a zillionaire real estate developer, very liberal New Yorker. Anyway, Lugar kept them all together, and listened to everybody. Those who had the most extreme views, those who had a different view, he kept them all together. Got off the plane, and he went straight to the White House to brief President Reagan because we had a serious problem. Don Regan who was the chief of staff in the White House for some reason was concerned because of an article that appeared in the New York Times, which suggested that Cory Aquino was pink and unreliable. If she emerged as the winner of the election all our security relationships with the Philippines would go down the toilet. Don Regan told the president you have got to stick by Marcos because if you don't, we don't know what we are getting into, and it could result in a worse case scenario. So Lugar had to go and tell the president directly, "Sir, this election is not fair. Marcos, even though he declared himself the winner, you know this is not in our view the legitimate outcome. In our view Cory Aquino was probably the outcome." That wasn't enough. Shultz, who found himself in a battle for President Reagan's mind, sent Phil Habib, venerable old Phil Habib, sent him out to the Philippines. I got off of the plane at Andrews, and John Maisto, my office director, got back on the plane with Phil Habib to go back out. So you had a situation where Lugar's report, as persuasive as it was, was not enough. So Habib went out there. Habib came back and Shultz went with him to see Reagan. Habib told President Reagan straight forward that the Marcos era is over. We have a new situation. While this debate was going on rebels under Gregorio Honasan and others within the Philippine army revolted. They took over this big army camp on the outskirts of Manila. Then the chief of staff of the Philippine army, General Eddie Ramos, broke with the Marcos administration and joined the rebels, and so did the defense minister Juan Ponce Enrile. So that revolt which led to the…

Q: These weren't communists; these were regular army officers.

FINNEY: These were regular army officers who were fed up with the corruption in the army and wanted to defeat the communist insurgents. So, that revolt with General Ramos and Defense Minister Enrile joined led to a dramatic confrontation. Marcos sent his military forces out to take over the encampment from the rebels, and the military forces refused to do it. So, we then evolved into a situation where it looked like civil war, and

the American contribution was to arrange for Marcos' removal. So Habib, who went out there to verify that the election was indeed fraudulent, wound up verifying that the Marcos era was indeed over, and "President Reagan," he said, "our contribution is to offer Marcos asylum to avoid Philippine civil war." So Shultz and Habib went over there, face-to-face with the President, made that presentation, and overwhelmed Don Regan's arguments. President Reagan asked his close friend, Senator Laxalt, "Call Marcos and tell him to cut and cut clean." So Marcos agreed to be evacuated. So we did arrange for helicopters, flew him to Clark Air Base, and then flew him and his family and his entourage to Hickam Air Force Base in Honolulu. There he eventually was provided medical support and protection. Cory Aquino was proclaimed President of the Philippines, the winner of the election.

Secretary Shultz arranged for her to come here in September of 1986 to address the Senate. We had a big party for her afterwards. She won the day in the Senate appearing a very courageous and plucky democratic leader. We had a big party for her on the top floor of the White House. Richard Holbrooke came with his girlfriend, Diane Sawyer. It was a cast of thousands. I was one of the spear carriers. George Shultz, I have never seen a U.S. official so smitten with another official as he was with Cory Aquino. He just beamed and glowed and wore one of her Cory Aquino dolls on his lapel all evening. So that turned out a positive transition. Marcos departs in a democratic election. Aquino comes in, and with renewed efforts, you know, we poured in hundreds of millions of dollars to President Aquino and her Philippine military under Eddie Ramos' leadership to go after the New People's army. So I did that work following up on the Aquino success and triumph and the new huge assistance program to the Philippines amounting to close to a billion dollars. That is what we worked on through the summer of 1986 and the fall and the winter and spring of 1887. I must tell you Paul Wolfowitz, our Assistant Secretary, was brilliant. He was the key guy for George Shultz in getting Habib out there and that whole battle to win the President's mind and tell him that the election was flawed and with this revolt we had to arrange for Marcos to leave. Paul worked hand in glove with Rich Armitage and the NSC staff. I appreciated how well the inter agency process worked in the Philippines with State and OSD and NSC all coming together for what I thought was a positive outcome.

Q: Well John, one question. How were we reading Cory Aquino? You have Don Regan's attitude and he was a very firm and difficult man. He came out of the business world and Marcos and Imelda Marcos cultivated tons of friends. They worked very hard in the United States in Congress and elsewhere. On the other hand must are trying to read Cory Aquino before she came in. I talked to people who said, "Oh yes they remember her at Harvard where she would come around and pass out hors d'oeuvres." I mean that was her image, housewife.

FINNEY: Her husband was there on a fellowship, right. There was a lot of serious questioning on this because Don Regan had laid down the gauntlet. His famous term is maybe she is just a housewife. His critical assessment of her rested on two points. Number one, that she didn't have what it takes to be a president, to run a tumultuous country like the Philippines. Simply didn't have the experience, didn't have the moxie to

do it. Only a housewife. Number two, but more deeply from Regan's perspective, she had surrounded herself with lefties. She basically was hostile to our security presence in the Philippines, Subic Bay and Clark, which Casper Weinberger and the White House and State appreciated as well, was the corner stone of our security presence in the western Pacific. Japan and Korea being the other two parts of that security triangle. So that was Don Regan's estimate. Now within State, sitting in on meetings, listening Paul Wolfowitz of EAP and Rich Armitage who often came over to talk about these things, and others in our building and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary John Monjo who was the key DAS on this issue. Listening to them discuss this issue, they appreciated the comments that Regan made, but basically as I recall they came down saying this. "Well, fundamentally, we agree that she is an unknown quantity in terms of her ability to manage and lead the country. But, she is so far and away the best alternative to Marcos or anybody else out there on the left, that we are willing to give her the benefit of the doubt." They didn't see her leftist views as deep seated and worrisome as Don Regan and other conservatives did. Yes she was associated with these folks, many of whom from State's view had been driven to leftist perspectives because of Marcos' oppression and misrule. So State, particularly after she was literally embraced by George Shultz and given a thumbs up by Phil Habib, State accepted the fact that she may not be a strong leader, but fundamentally she appreciates the U.S. and our commitment to democracy in that country.

We thought she will be able to restore democratic rule to the Philippines which from State Department's perspective was the best way, A: get the country back on even keel and B: ensure the continuity of our security presence there. Now, flash forward. I went out to Manila in September of 1989 to be the Political Counselor there. Nick Platt was our ambassador. On the last day of November, 1989, two or three months after I got there, there was the first coup attempt against Cory Aquino. Then I participated as part of Rich Armitage's negotiating team the following year, 1990 through 1991, to extend our basing presence. And at the end of the day, it turned out that President Aquino was not a very competent president. She was unable to keep forces in the Philippines, particularly the rebellious Philippine military officers who led the initial revolt against Marcos, she was unable to really keep them in check. And she was unable to impose consistent economic reform. And at the end of the day she was ambiguous about our continued military presence there, and only at the eleventh hour lent her approval to the hard negotiated treaty that Rich Armitage and our team put together. But it would end up being defeated narrowly by the Philippine Senate. So by that time, in 1992, the bloom is off the rose within State, not only by Ambassador Nick Platt, by his successor Ambassador Frank Wisner, and by our assistant secretaries back in Washington. The bloom was off the rose for Cory Aquino in terms of being an effective leader.

Still, having lived through all that, particularly the bitter disappointment at the end that we couldn't get the base agreement extended, in spite of all that, I and I think people like John Maisto who is one of our really top Philippine experts, come to the conclusion that she was still better because she was able to revive the democratic spirit there. And after she left office, Eddie Ramos the former chief of staff and defense minister, became president of the Philippines, and democracy was restored to the Philippines. And at the

end of the day, despite everything, I think that makes Cory Aquino's performance worth it, although it was much less than sterling.

Then in the spring of 1987, John Maisto left and Charlie Salmon who later became our ambassador to Laos, came to take over the desk. Then I got offered something that I had long wanted to do, and that was to be the Political Advisor (POLAD) to the Pacific Command (PACOM) in Honolulu. I was interviewed for the job by Admiral Crowe, and I was successful. So in the summer of 1987 I went out to Camp Smith in Honolulu, the head of PACOM to begin two years there as a POLAD which was a fabulous experience.

Q: All right, so you went to CINCPAC (Commander-in-Chief, Pacific) as POLAD (political advisor) from July, 1987 until August of 1989. First POLAD assignment?

FINNEY: It was my first official POLAD job. I was a deputy province senior advisor in the CORDS program, and then I did advisory work in Grenada, but this was my first official political advisor job.

Q: OK. Do you want to talk about CINCPAC, what it meant and then about your job, how you fit into this huge empire.

FINNEY: In the summer of 1987, Admiral William Crowe was concluding his tenure as CINCPAC in Honolulu, and was coming back to be the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) [Ed: Admiral Crowe's service as CINCPAC was from July 1, 1983 – September 18, 1985. He was the eleventh CJCS Chairman and served in that capacity from October 1, 1985 – September 30, 1989]. I interviewed with his successor as CINCPAC, Admiral Ron Hays who was a distinguished naval aviator [Ed: Admiral Hays served as CINCPAC from September 1985 to September 1988]. I interviewed with him I guess in January and was selected for the position.

In the spring and summer of 1987 CINCPAC was concerned with a number of things. I guess first and foremost they were concerned with being an effective competitor with the Russian Pacific fleet operating out of Vladivostok. There were major military exercises that CINCPAC sponsored at that time. I remember how excited my boss, Admiral Hays, was to put three carrier battle groups in the northwest Pacific to show our Soviet Union competitors that we had the naval capacity to go right up into their northern areas and confront them. There was a lot of attention being given to the Soviet Bear bombers operating out of central Asia and eastern Siberia which would do these feints at Alaska [Ed: The Tupolev Tu-95 (NATO reporting name: "Bear") is a large, four-engine turboprop-powered strategic bomber]. The Soviet bombers would come booming across central Asia, across the Bering Strait. Then they would peel off just before they crossed into our air space. Our F-16's and other planes defending Alaska would go up to meet and greet them. We were doing a lot of intelligence collection from air platforms along the eastern edge of the Soviet Union. Of course, this was Vladivostok, Petropavlovsk, the whole Sakhalin area. We were keeping track of what their fleet was doing but also trying to look deeper inward. We were also doing some very highly classified submarine operations against those important Pacific bases. Our Navy was quite occupied with the

potential challenge that Admiral Gorshkov and the Soviet fleet represented. We watched very carefully the Soviet fleet, its port calls in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, obviously which we had abandoned in 1973-1975. We tracked very carefully their appearance in southeast Asia through the Malacca Straits and into the Indian Ocean. So a big part of Admiral Hays and CINCPAC operations were focused on making sure that we were prepared to deal with any Soviet naval thrust in the northwest Pacific.

Another primary concern was Korea, where we were continually refining our presence to make sure that we were appropriately postured to deal with a North Korean threat. We were integrated with the South Koreans to make sure that we were a well coordinated team. There was a lot of discussion about the reconfiguration of our forces, a lot of intelligence about what the North Koreans were doing with their tunnels, what they were doing with their training. So Korea was a very significant concern.

A third concern was the Taiwan Straits and Taiwan. Under the Taiwan relations act we did have this somewhat ambiguous commitment to help defend and protect Taiwan. At the same time, we were keen to develop a relationship with this emerging China. The first trip I took with Admiral Hays as his political advisor was an extensive 10-12 day visit to China in June of 1987.It was a remarkable visit to China. They took us to their space facility in the Mongolian desert. We took a special train up to their launching facility. We were the first American military allowed to get a first hand look at that very important space launch facility. We went to the western edge of the Great Wall and visited some military sites there. We visited some of their naval capability in Qingdao, north of Beijing, on the Shandong peninsula. We met the minister of defense.

The fourth area that CINCPAC was very interested in was the five security partners that formed the basis of our security strategy in East Asia. Obviously we did not and do not have NATO there, but it was Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Philippines, and Australia. So we also invested a lot of time in alliance management. Of course, Japan was pivotal. We made a number of trips to Japan, because that was the cornerstone of our security posture. Our Navy relationship with Japan was quite deep. Of course the U.S. Marine presence on Okinawa also presented alliance management challenges. We spent a fair amount of time in Australia because we were reviving a U.S. relationship which had gone through a cool period in the years preceding. So minding those five security alliances required a lot of Admiral Hays and his staff's time. Then beyond that, our engagement with other security partners in the region, so that required a lot of effort as well. The Pacific command covers these two massive ocean basins, the Pacific and Indian Ocean. I forget 37 countries or something in the area. So we were constantly engaged in visiting and traveling. As I recall, I think we did over 100,000 miles a year in travel in the Pacific because it was so vast. Then toward the end of my tour there, this issue arouse about reflagging ships in the Persian Gulf that were subject to this pressure from Iran at the time.

Q: The Iranians were attacking ships and we were putting American flags on Kuwaiti ships.

FINNEY: So that took a lot of effort. And we had that tragedy of that Iranian plane shot down where a Navy ship shot down an Iranian civilian airliner thinking it was a hostile plane. [Ed: Shoot down by the Navy guided missile cruiser USS Vincennes on 3 July 1988. The incident took place in Iranian airspace, over Iran's territorial waters.] So we spent a fair amount of time working that. We spent a lot of time looking at the Philippines too in the aftermath of Cory Aquino's ascension to the presidency and the base negotiations which were looming in the early 1990s. We regarded the Soviet naval threat as something that had to be dealt with. CINCPAC was naturally very interested in insuring, if possible, we continue our presence at Subic Bay and Clark Airfield. So those are some of the issues we worked.

Q: Now a couple of things. One, you didn't mention New Zealand. Had New Zealand because of the nuclear issue opted completely out of our allegiance in that area?

FINNEY: ANZUS, the Australia, New Zealand, U.S. alliance. New Zealand had become the skunk at the garden party. Because they had opted out on the nuclear issue, that led us to redouble our efforts to solidify our relationship with the Australians.

Q: India was developing a fleet. What about its own aspirations in the Indian Ocean.

FINNEY: India was emerging as an important strategic nation for the United States to consider in the Pacific and Indian Ocean area. That was a focus of our engagement strategy. Admiral Hays departed about halfway through my tour, and his successor was Admiral Huntington Hardisty [Ed: who served from September 1988 to March 1991]. We began an engagement process with India, but we didn't accomplish it until Admiral Hardisty was on duty. We went to India. We had an extensive trip and spent a lot of time with their military and their equivalent of the chief of staff. We were very keen to engage them in naval exercises. We had an arrangement whereby U.S. army mountaineering teams could go to India and practice mountaineering. We set up a visit for the Indian chief of their air staff to come to Honolulu and meet with Admiral Hardisty's air component commander of the Pacific Air Command at Hickam. However, as keen as we were to engage with the Indian military across the board, Navy, army, and air force, and as interested as they were in engaging with us, the Indian foreign ministry kept very close scrutiny on this. We found ourselves buffeted by the political currents in India. We believed it was important, but we were never able to achieve the level of interaction that we hoped to because the Indian foreign ministry and to a lesser extent the civilians in their ministry of defense still regarded us askance and kept us a little bit at arms length.

Q: What were you getting from our embassy there? Let me ask, would you in a sense go over to the embassy to get a reading of how they saw things? Was that part of your job?

FINNEY: That was part of my job. Of course when we put together our India trip, our initial point of contact was the defense attaché there who was consulting very closely with the Ambassador and DCM. Then after we got the initial concurrence for the visit, I would plug into the DCM. Very able officer, Grant Smith, who later became our ambassador to Tajikistan. So we worked very closely with Grant in arranging and

calibrating our visit. A key point was a speech that Admiral Hardisty, as CINCPAC, was going to make at their joint staff college, and what we would say in the speech. We sent the draft out to Grant, and Grant marked it up. So the short answer is we had very close interaction with the embassy and it was essential because of the sensitivity of the Indian relationship.

Q: Were we seeing Vietnam as a threat or was it just wait to see how it evolved.

FINNEY: There was a lot of disappointment obviously among the uniformed military in Pacific Command about Vietnam because of the way it turned out. And we had suffered a grievous defeat. We watched very closely the relationship between the Vietnamese and the Russians at Cam Ranh. I mean that got intense scrutiny. Every type of class of Soviet ship that visited Cam Ranh to and from the Indian Ocean was scrutinized deeply. Vietnam was still regarded as in effect an enemy nation. We realized that at some point we would have to come to terms and fashion a decent relationship with them. The POW-MIA issue still loomed. We had a POW-MIA laboratory set up in Honolulu and all the remains of our personnel who were recovered were brought to Hawaii. So Vietnam's collaboration with us on that effort was still in the embryonic stage as I recall during the 1980s. We were beginning to get some cooperation. So that was a very important issue. Our major focus with respect to Vietnam was really on China. I mean we wanted to find a way to develop really good relations with China. That had a much higher priority than Vietnam.

Q: How did we see China at that time? Did we see it as potentially, leaving out the Taiwan Strait, other than that, did we see it as an aggressive state or what?

FINNEY: We did not see it as an aggressive state. We saw it as a state that obviously was going to loom large in the region. It already loomed large and was going to loom much larger. It was a country that we very much wanted to know better. We felt that we wanted to reach out, this was the CINCPAC perspective. We wanted to engage with her military. We saw them as a country where we might be able to work together to deal with this Soviet Navy that CINCPAC was so concerned about. So we were very much in an engagement mode. To get to know them, to share information, to have visits, to understand more what they were about. We wanted to explain to them what we were doing in the Philippines with Clark and Subic. We wanted to explain to them how we saw the strategic situation in East Asia. Politically the State Department was deeply engaged with ASEAN, and from the military point of view, we wanted to support the State Department with ASEAN and the ASEAN countries in addressing security issues in the region. We saw China as a country that should be drawn into that process. At the same time we had our relationship with Japan. We did not want to undermine that relationship in our eagerness to get to know China better. So for all the emphasis we put on getting to know China, and understand it better, we were always looking for ways to intensify the relationship with Japan.

Q: How did we view the Japanese military forces?

FINNEY: We had a high regard for the Japanese Navy. Their naval ability, their naval professionalism was commented upon very favorably by CINCPAC, by the Navy officers that were in our command. Our 7th fleet was headquartered there. We had a carrier headquartered there. We were introducing Aegis Cruisers into Japan at that time. So the naval experts that I listened to and read in our command were very high on the Japanese Navy. The Japanese Air Force also got good marks form our Pacific Air Command. We put in an F-16 squadron up in Masawa in northeast Japan. We went up there with Admiral Hays to visit. Japanese pilots were given a high mark. The Japanese army, I guess, ranked last in terms of their professionalism and capabilities, because in one sense we couldn't do very much with them. We did some exercises with the Japanese army, but they were always pretty modest. Since we were at a command headed by a naval officer with lots of water, most of our emphasis was on the Japanese Navy.

Q: What was our estimate that you were picking up of the Chinese military capability?

FINNEY: Primitive, but growing. During the visit we did with Admiral Hays in June of 1987, they took us to one of their division headquarters in a field outside of Beijing, between Beijing and the great wall. They took us out there for a field exercise and a field demonstration. To a civilian like myself it was quite impressive. They shot recoilless rifles. They shot anti tank weapons. They had a couple of squads maneuvering and firing. From where I was sitting these seemed to be highly trained and very able troops. Maybe four or five hundred in this live fire demonstration. But my military colleagues pointed out that their weapons were dated. AK 47s, RPGs, recoilless rifles. While they performed the ABCs very well, they didn't have the command and control capability, they didn't have the extensive communications capabilities, didn't have the maneuver capabilities. Didn't have the ability to project their military might beyond their installations. So on the one hand, great respect for the tenacity and innate ability and effectiveness of the Chinese troops as far as you could determine, but clearly this was an army that had a long way to go in terms of modernization.

Q: Tell me, from your CINCPAC perspective, now I understand the ethos of the Navy, but at the same time the Soviet fleet is essentially stuck at Vladivostok the end of the line, within missile range of Japan's base. Discount submarines. A fleet can go out and raise hell for a day or two, Peter the Great had the same problem, but it is dependent on its bases. Did CINCPAC, did you feel they were overbilling the threat of Soviet naval power which, you know, dependent on the one base in Vladivostok?

FINNEY: The short answer is as far as I can determine, no. CINCPAC, Admiral Hays and Admiral Hardisty, took the Soviet naval capabilities very seriously for a couple of reasons. First of all, they claimed that the Soviet Union Pacific Fleet was the most capable of the four Soviet fleets. The Black Sea Fleet, the North Sea Fleet, there might have been a Mediterranean squadron, but then there definitely was the Pacific Fleet. And the Soviets, as CINCPAC was always quick to note, had been operating in the Pacific for almost 200 years. Petropavlovsk was their submarine base. It had been set up in the 18th century. So it was a combination of the Soviet surface fleet and what appeared to be expansion and building of their carrier capability with their submarines, and then with

these bear bombers and the blackjack [Ed: The Tupolev Tu-160 (NATO reporting name: Blackjack) is a supersonic, variable-sweep wing, heavy strategic bomber]. So they had the range, that long range. They had missile capabilities that they could fire from these aircraft. So they could cover the fleet out to three or four hundred miles. So it was the combination of the fact that their surface fleet was being upgraded. If I have got it right so many destroyers. They had some very powerful cruisers.

And then their aircraft capability. They were developing new aircraft. Oh my goodness, the way we tracked the construction of their aircraft. Whether it was going to be catapults or whether it was going to be ski jumps. And subs and the aircraft all added to the mix.

By the mid- to late 1980s we were beginning to get a lot more ships in the fleet on the U.S. side because of the buildup under President Reagan and a very vigorous Secretary of the Navy, John Lehman. So we were getting a lot of new assets into our fleet. Like all military headquarters, and particularly a regional command such as CINCPAC, there is constant planning and exercises going on. I mean every other month we had a big exercise dealing with the Soviet fleet or dealing with potential warfare on the Korean Peninsula, how the Soviets would react to that or try to interfere with that. Looking back in retrospect, we were only three or four years from the collapse of the Soviet Union. But I would have to tell you that we were not very prescient about the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Q: Well I was just thinking, I mean obviously if a naval war started there would be a hell of a mess, but rather short order. No place to go. I mean Admiral Togo was able to take care of that before in Manchuria.

FINNEY: You are absolutely right. Our naval planners at CINCPAC themselves were absolutely convinced that if, God forbid, there was a conflict with the Soviet Union, that we would crush them. We would crush their naval capabilities including their surface, subs, and supporting air. We had these war games that we played which were extremely aggressive. I mean when Admiral Hays arranged for three carrier battle groups to be in the Northwest Pacific in an exercise against the Soviet Union, I mean it was hard to understate his glee. They were so excited, and they knew with this kind of capability, that if it came to a conflict we would smash the fleet, no question.

Q: What was the feeling about the Korean Peninsula? We didn't know the North Korean leadership so it was a scary thing. If the wrong guy, Kim Il Sung, would say go just because he got out of bed on the wrong side. How were we looking at that?

FINNEY: The big challenge for us was that North Korea was so difficult to understand, so difficult to penetrate, so difficult to gauge. Kim Il Sung was a total dictator, and everything depended on his personal assessment, his personal whim, so it was very much a guessing game. And as you know the military always plans for the worst situation. Basically CINCPAC spent time doing three things with regard to Korea. Number one: trying to get the best possible intelligence on a nearly impenetrable target on what they were up to in terms of their military planning, in terms of their exercises, and in terms of

their capabilities. Number two: to put together such a potentially powerful, combined U.S. and South Korean military response that we would annihilate the North Koreas and want to make clear to the North Koreans that they should have no doubt that they would be annihilated if they should launch a second assault south. Number three: to work intensively on a daily basis to improve our coordination with the South Koreans. I mean that was pivotal. We could slow down a North Korean assault on Seoul at the Han River but we would probably be unable to stop it. For our counterattack we had to have a capable and committed and closely coordinated South Korean force with us.

A sub set to this was addressing the more manifest evidence of South Korean nationalism. About our presence and how we were postured there, particular there we were in Wong San in the middle of Seoul. There was a lot of attention about developing plans for us to eventually move out of Wong San. Turn that over to the South Koreans so that our presence there did not become an irritant and complicate the security relationship. It was a very intelligence intensive effort on the one hand, and on the other a lot of alliance management to make sure that we and the South Korean military and their civilian masters stayed on the same page.

Q: How did your admirals use you, the two admirals you had?

FINNEY: In a variety of ways. I presented myself to them as someone who could help them understand the diplomatic and political dimensions of their military responsibilities. I mean our CINCPAC was responsible for 50 million square miles, half the surface of the globe. We had the air force component command at Hickam. We had the naval component command at Honolulu and in Japan, the CINCPAC fleet, seventh fleet. We had the U.S. Army Pacific at Fort Shafter. So with these very significant military assets, our CINCPAC found themselves traveling around the region constantly visiting our forces, alliance management with our allies, engagement with other security partners. And in the process of doing this, one of the roles I played was to help them understand how policy developments in Washington in the interagency process could impact their ability to conduct their campaign plan, to conduct their exercises, to conduct their alliance management. One thing I did was help them develop and maintain a situational awareness on policy developments that could impact on their ability to provide military leadership in the Indian and Pacific Ocean basins. Were we going to go fast or slow with China? How much were we going to buff up Japan since we were economic competitors on the one hand, and then military partners on the other? Where were we going with the Philippines? How can we strengthen our relationship with Australia. We traveled extensively. Every month there was a trip to the parish as you can imagine. We had stretched from the west coast of California to the east coast of Africa. So we traveled 200,000 miles in that two years. On these trips I was helping with the J-5, Plans and Policy section, to prepare CINCPAC when he made these calls in these foreign countries.

When we went to Japan or Thailand or Australia or India or wherever, there was a lot of coordination that went into making these trips successful. I would go with CINCPAC when we called on the military chiefs, and always we called on the prime minister or the foreign minister or the president. I would be the note taker. In the course of a trip I would

write up these notes for follow-on tasks that came out of these discussions. On the plane on each trip, CINCPAC would send a personal message. There were two messages. There was a personal message from him to the Joint Chiefs chairman and the Secretary of Defense (SecDef). It was a page or page and a half, giving his personal take on his impressions from these calls. I had the lead in drafting that since I was the note taker in these meetings. I would do the first draft, and then work it with the J-5. He would look at it, his input, and we would craft the boss' personal message to the Chairman and SecDef.

Then there was a staff message which went through every point that was discussed and the follow-on tasks that went back to the command. I had a lot of influence in shaping that as well. When we got back to the command, those tasks that had a political military dimension to them, I usually had the lead in following up on them. We had about 37 countries in the region, 37 ambassadors. The care and feeding of those ambassadors to make sure that they had good channels of communication with my boss, to make sure that when they asked for something, that their request got attention in the headquarters, and then obversely to make sure that they understood what were the priorities of CINCPAC and want to make sure that CINCPAC's priorities meshed well with the priorities of the country team and the ambassador in that country. The ambassadors in a region like that, or in any region, they are always looking for things that the military can bring. They like to have port visits. They like to have senior visits. They like to have exercises or air shows or bands for Fourth of July. There was a constant stream and dialogue between the ambassadors and the C-in-C in the regions.

Of course, I stood astride that and helped my boss manage that and make sure that his wishes and understandings were carried out. Most of the time it worked very well. Sometimes of course, there were personalities and difficult issues that required a lot of careful attention. Now one of the things we did at CINCPAC is that we hosted the annual chiefs of mission conference in East Asia. That was an attempt to try to bring together the military and the diplomatic perspective in a particular region. Hosting these ambassadors at CINCPAC gave my boss an opportunity to present to them his understanding of the region and for him to get the input from the ambassadors. We would bring out assistant secretaries or undersecretaries from Washington. One time Secretary Shultz himself came out. So those were very important things to work on. Also, Hawaii was a stopping off point, a refueling point for presidents and prime ministers and kings coming from Asia going to Washington or from Washington going back to their home country. So often, at least once a month, we found ourselves at Hickam Air Force Base at 1:00 in the morning with, say the Japanese prime minister who had spent two or three days in Washington and is now refueling on his way back to Japan. So I would find myself with the CINCPAC and the Japanese prime minister in the VIP room at Hickam for 45 minutes or an hour and a half, chatting. So being the note taker for that, and you can imagine the kind of work that you can get done when you have got 45 minutes one on one with the Australian prime minister or the Thai prime minister and so forth. That was very interesting.

Another thing was to make sure that my boss stayed plugged into key people at the State Department. Admiral Hays and Admiral Hardisty came back to Washington at least once a quarter. I was always trying to arrange for them to call on the Secretary of State

(SecState) or the Deputy (DepSecState), get them on the schedule so the two sides would have a chance to exchange views. So those are some of the things I did. I remember one time I arranged for Admiral Hardisty to play golf at Augusta National where the Masters is held with George Shultz. I mean it happened twice. You can imagine, my boss, Secretary Shultz, playing golf for four hours. All kinds of things got done. It was extraordinary. I tried to have a very open door to learn from and be a mentor to the staff officers at CINCPAC. I am talking about the majors, lt. colonels and colonels who were who were doing J-5 plans and policy, J-2 intelligence, and J-3 operations. They were doing all the staff work for the commander in chief Pacific and obviously would have questions about how is something viewed in Thailand. Who is the prime minister of Bangladesh and what are his or her views. So I spent a lot of time making myself available to the key staff to help them with their staff work in support of the C-in-C as well.

I was very fortunate to have an outstanding deputy CINCPAC, a three star Air Force General, Mike Kearns who later became Vice Chief of Staff for the U.S. Air force and at one point was Clinton's nominee to be head of the CIA. Mike was a Harvard Business School graduate. He was terrific. One of the smartest and most creative individuals I have worked with. So as the deputy commander, Deputy CINCPAC, quite often I could go to him to test out recommendations or suggestions or get better understanding of what my boss was thinking or where he thought we should be going. Having that sounding board with the deputy CINCPAC was very important, and we worked together very closely in carrying out CINCPAC's intentions and staffing his requests. It was a busy time.

Let me very quickly make one comment because my experience at CINCPAC was a real eye opener for me in terms of the political-military function. It was amazing to be in a place like Commander in Chief Pacific Command in Honolulu and look across the entire region and try and understand the trends and the way things were moving politically, militarily, economically, and how that fit in to our overall strategy. You couldn't help but come away very impressed with the enormous capabilities that a military commander has in this region. And the interplay between that regional military command and the ambassadors was very illuminating to me. Just a couple of quick points.

Number one: I began at CINCPAC in 1987, in the spring and summer of 1987 after the Goldwater-Nichols Act had been adopted in 1986. So the role of the regional military commanders became noticeably more important after Goldwater-Nichols. The regional military commanders could come back to Washington now and testify before Congress on behalf of their own budget. The regional military commanders were giving a lot of assets and resources to support their military engagement and their military activities in a region. Furthermore, under Goldwater-Nichols, officers had to have a joint assignment before they moved on to become flag level. Goldwater-Nichols started that, and as a result the caliber of officers that were assigned to these joint regional commands increased noticeably. Another important point that made an impact on me was the depth of the resources that the regional military command had. I mean intelligence staffs, planning staffs, legal staffs, logistic staffs. In addition to all these instruments and military platforms from tanks to Aegis cruisers to B-1 bombers, they had tremendous

staffs which could do a lot of planning and gather enormous amounts of information. Everything that came out of this was not always good, or the most pressing, but it still was a tremendous capability. One of the things I quickly observed was that this regional military headquarters was holding conferences constantly every month to bring in military, foreign military and defense folks to do medicine, to do legal, to do logistics, to do intelligence, to do planning, to do operations. So the reach of the command into the host militaries around the region was quite extensive and quite deep.

Another important point was that because CINCPAC had its own plane and the ability to travel extensively, we got around the region constantly, and we actually saw more of the region than the State Department regional assistant secretary. It turned out that the regional military commander was probably the only American official who lived in the region and saw the region as an integrated whole because the ambassadors were working the individual bilateral accounts. At the same time, the resources on the civilian side for AID and for other programs that we had were diminishing. This was accelerated in the 1990s but it had already diminished in the 1980s. The importance of the regional military command it seemed to me was beginning to increase dramatically. At the same time the ability of our individual ambassadors in country teams to influence events outside of their own particular country was quite limited. So it just underscored to me the importance of making sure that you got good synchronization and coordination between our regional military commanders and our ambassadors and our country teams, so that we execute our national security and foreign policy in a coherent and effective manner. From my perspective, I think it worked well most of the time. Obviously there were bumps in the road, but it requires, I think, a lot of work and coordination for us to be successful.

September of 1989 I transferred to be the political counselor at our embassy in the Philippines. Nick Platt was our ambassador there, very fine and distinguished U.S. ambassador. The Aquino regime was under mounting pressure from dissident Philippine military who were critical of her performance. The base negotiations loomed beginning in 1990. The question was, was our investment in democracy in the Philippines going to survive?

Q: Well you were in the Philippines from when to when?

FINNEY: September, 1989 to September, 1992, three full years.

Q: From your CINCPAC platform, were we seriously looking at this and saying, let's get out of there?

FINNEY: The short answer is no. We were saying let's extend there because in 1989 we were still focused on competing with the Soviet empire. The role of Clark and Subic was still very important in that regard. The ability of Aquino and democracy to survive in the Philippines, not only in the face of signs of rebellion within the ranks of the Philippine military, but also the aggressive communist New People's Army, was a big question mark. So there was lots of discussion about our stake in the Philippines and the amount of money that we were going to provide the Philippines. Remember when Aquino came to

Washington in September of 1986 after she had won re-election. The Congress was smitten with her and the very impressive speech she made there. So we had ramped up our assistance to the Philippines. Then the question was, were we going to continue this high level of assistance approaching a billion dollars. Were we going to continue to stay in the bases? People looked at whether we should leave Clark? Should we move out? But it never got serious consideration. The overwhelming conclusion was that we need to stay in the Philippines and we would need the bases for another five to seven years.

Q: When you got to the Philippines, what was the view of how things were developing there?

FINNEY: Ambassador Platt and the embassy were cautiously optimistic that Aquino was going to be able to maintain her democratic commitment to restoring representative government in the Philippines. On the other hand, from the military perspective at CINCPAC, and others, there was deep concern on whether the Philippine military could deal effectively with the New People's Army. There was a lot of concern about the effectiveness of our military assistance program because of ongoing problems of corruption and cronyism in the Philippine military. The military assessment was always more negative than the civilian or State Department perspective that sink or swim we should stay with Cory Aquino. All of this got knocked into a cocked hat when we had that very serious coup attempt against Aquino from November 30 to December 9 of 1989, which came within a whisker of overthrowing her government.

Q: Talk about what you and the embassy were doing during this period.

FINNEY: Well I got there in September of 1989. I think Ambassador Platt had gotten there earlier that year [Ed: Ambassador Platt served in Manila from August 27, 1987 to July 20, 1991]. We had a very fine DCM, Ken Quinn, who later became our ambassador in Cambodia. I felt we had a good strong embassy team. We had good CIA representation there. We had a very strong USAID operation there as well. In the fall of 1989 we were focused on implementing effectively our assistance program so that people would see benefit in supporting a democratic solution in the Philippines. Also, we were anxious to help President Aquino be successful from a political perspective. And we wanted to help reform the Philippine military and deal with the New People's Army. The Philippine communist New People's Army had mounted a very large assassination program in Manila directed against us. They assassinated Colonel Nick Rowe in April of 1987 who was head of our army division of JUSMAG, Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group. They were killing Philippine policemen and causing a lot of havoc in metro Manila. A great deal of our efforts was involved in protecting ourselves and the embassy. We brought in CIA counter surveillance teams. We brought in armored cars. We had to change the routes we went back and forth to the embassy. So there was a fair amount of uncertainty how this was going to work out. Then on November 30, these reformers in the Philippine military who felt that President Aquino had squandered the goodwill that she had earned with her election to the presidency, and that she was not providing effective leadership for the country. They mounted a massive military coup against her that came very close to succeeding. This was a very intense ten days or two weeks where we were cut off from

the embassy. Not only had they attacked Malacañang Palace and the airport, they also attacked housing areas where our embassy personnel were stationed. So for about ten days or two weeks there was real question about whether President Aquino's government was going to survive.

Q: Did the embassy take any action, militarily, to use military assets to do anything about it?

FINNEY: Oh yes. The day the coup broke out was November 30 or December 1. Our DCM, Ken Quinn, was out of the country. So as the political counselor I was the acting DCM. The coup broke out about 2:00 or 3:00 on the morning and I was down in the embassy about 4:00 on that morning. I was side by side with Ambassador Nick Platt during the first day in which the insurgents surrounded Malacañang Palace, were bombing it. Surrounded the airport. So about 10:30 in the morning of the first day Defense Minister Eddie Ramos called Ambassador Platt and I was listening in. He told Ambassador Platt there was a boatload of Philippine rebels who were coming up from Bataan. They wanted to land in downtown Manila to re-enforce the rebels efforts to overrun Malacañang and the airport. He asked Ambassador Platt if the U.S. would use our planes at Clark Air Base to bomb these two boats that were bringing in rebels to Manila from Bataan. Then he asked us to use this same air force to bomb and destroy the Philippine rebels armor units, armored personnel carriers and other armored vehicles that were surrounding the airport. Finally he asked Ambassador Platt, this is all one phone call, to shoot down the Philippine rebel aircraft that were bombing Malacañang and threatening to kill President Aquino. Ambassador Platt said, "Eddie, have you cleared this with your president?" Eddie said, "I am sure it represents her interests, but I will check." Then he called back about half an hour later and said, "Yes, will you please do this to save our country and save our democracy." So Ambassador Platt got on the phone and called the National Security Council and relayed this request from the defense minister, endorsed by the president to shoot down the Philippine air force rebels, to bomb the boats bringing in Philippine soldiers from Bataan, and to bomb the armor units. President Bush was enroute to Malta, so vice President Dan Quayle presided over the National Security Council meeting. So they took Ambassador Platt's request.

I remember asking the ambassador, "We are passing on this request. Does this mean that we endorse the request?" It was clear that Ambassador Platt believed, at least from my perspective, that this was a request from the Philippine president and the defense minister, and he had to act. So it went to the National Security Council. At the National Security Council, Vice President Quayle, I am told, had this option on the table. Are we going to respond to this request to save President Aquino by bombing Philippine rebel military personnel? I am told that Colin Powell said, "Look. Before we resort to bombing in response to this request from President Aquino and Defense Minister Ramos, Let's see if we can use suasion or compelence." He put forth a proposal that instead of having our jet planes from Clark air base shoot the Philippine rebels out of the sky, that they buzz these rebels and get them to veer off and stop with the clear warning that if they didn't, we would shoot them down. Colin Powell's suggestion carried the day, and those were the orders that were communicated to our air force jets down at Clark air base. So I

remember standing on the balcony of the embassy overlooking Manila Bay with Ambassador Platt about 1:00 or 2:00 in the afternoon of the first day of the coup. You could see plumes of smoke rising from Malacañang Palace area and sounds of gunfire all over the city. I remember Ambassador Platt standing there saying, "Come on seventh cavalry. Where is the seventh cavalry." Then just before 2:00 if I have got it right, our air force jets from Clark airfield came streaking in over Manila and dived on the Philippine rebel planes that were bombing Malacañang Palace and other places and drove them away from Malacañang Palace, and then dived on them as they were beginning to take off from the airport for other raids and scattered them. So as a result of Colin Powell's suggestion, by using our jets to intimidate and force the rebel airplanes away without shooting them down, we stopped the bombing at Malacañang. The resistance of the loyal Philippine military elements that were fighting the rebels stiffened, and they were encouraged. We did not bomb the rebels coming in from Bataan. We didn't bomb the armored units that were trying to take over the other places in town. And the situation held. It was a very close run thing. Over the next couple of days, the Philippine Army under Ramos was able to hold on with their fingernails. The rebels then moved into Makati and took over large parts of Makati, and there was a long process to negotiate them our of there.

Q: Makati being a…

FINNEY: A suburb. Makati was the business suburb of Manila. So, as a result of that Mrs. Aquino survived by the skin of her teeth. The rebels after a week or two capitulated and their leadership went into hiding. We then began a whole new relationship with Aquino. On the one hand she would not have survived without our military intervention. On the other hand she resented being beholden to us. The big question was what would this augur for the base negotiations that were scheduled to get underway in the spring and summer of 1990? So that was a huge question. She was clearly rattled. The confidence of the country in her was rattled. Our confidence in her was shaken, and it was particularly difficult when our Sec Def in January or February of 1990, Dick Cheney, came to Manila to pay a visit. I can't remember the reason why, but President Aquino would not receive him. This was regarded as a great snub to Cheney and to us. She wouldn't have survived without our intervention in the judgment of everybody concerned. Here she was two months later refusing to have him, Cheney, call on her. It revealed the conflicted position of Aquino with regard to the United States. On the one had we were essential and very helpful to her continued survival. On the other hand, she resented a lot of the heavy handed aspects of our relationship with the Philippines.

When we began the base negotiations, Richard Armitage was appointed head of them. He was a very close friend of Colin Powell. He put together a team. Ambassador Platt assigned me as his representative to Rich Armitage's base negotiation team. We began a base negotiation process that lasted from the spring of 1990 through September of 1991. It was a very intense and difficult process. At the end of the day, even though Aquino endorsed the agreement that we hammered out with her foreign minister, Raul Manglapus, it was too late to avoid the Philippine Senate rejection of the agreement in August 1991.

Q: But the fact that Aquino would not see Cheney, were we seeing this as a political move that we shouldn't get too huffy about? I mean you know, you don't have to be loved if you are a power player and if she has to make a gesture for sort of the independence, anti-American thing, here was that.

FINNEY: We tried to be mature, adult about this. We tried not to let that snub get in the way of a continued good relationship with her and in setting up for the base negotiations. But it rankled a lot of people. They ground their teeth. They bit their lip. Yes we have got to respect Philippine nationalism. We have an interest in proceeding with these base negotiations, so we will do it. But it really soured people in the halls of the Pentagon and the State Department.

Q: What about the Philippine senate? Did we have much contact?

FINNEY: Intensive. We were seeing them. If I remember correctly there were 24 members of the Philippine Senate. As head of the political section I saw that we were focused on the Philippine senate like nobody's business. I had a couple of people who did nothing but contact them. When Ambassador Platt traveled, and he traveled extensively throughout the Philippines, he would always go to a senator's home town. He would bring his USAID representative with him. We would invite the senator to join us if we possibly could. For every senator in the Philippine Senate we had a list of AID projects that was as long as your arm. We were constantly engaging with them. Every time a senior U.S. visitor came into town, we were bringing the senators over to meet them, to talk to them, to get their sense about the bases and where we were going. We had a public information campaign, our PAO (Public Affairs Officer). We were sending people to the States. We pulled out all the stops. We did everything we could. I am not sure we could have done better. I mean there is always room for improvement, but it was a major, intensive effort. We thought about nothing else. Cory Aquino's attitude was pivotal. The senators, there were 24 of them. Obviously we had to have 13. We had to get 13 to approve the result of the negotiations. The negotiations ran from May all the way to August 1991 before we finally concluded an agreement that was blessed by Aquino and her foreign ministry. Raul Manglapus, the Philippine foreign minister, was notorious for his independent attitude and his interest in not being seen as being beholden to the United States. He had deep unhappiness and resentment of the United States. So he was an extremely nationalistic and challenging individual to work with. A large part of Armitage's and Ambassador Platt's efforts were to gain Manglapus' confidence, gain President Aquino's confidence. Of course one of the ways to do this was to put together an aid package that would sufficiently address the concerns of the Aquino government. Enormous effort went into this in our bill and the State Department and DOD, on Capitol Hill and with a wide range of other civilian agencies to put together an unbeatable package, and a package that would be multi-year. Aquino and Manglapus kept insisting that this had to be a multi-year package given the great development challenges that they faced so enormous effort went into that. The opposition to the bases, led by Senator Salonga, was always very coy. They never committed themselves; they were always critical of the obvious downsides of having bases, the social and political downsides of

having bases in Subic and Clark for over 50 years. The prostitution, the orphanages, the snubs to Philippine dignity that happened. All this was under the surface. It was the most intensive negotiations I ever was involved in. Then almost in the middle or two thirds through the negotiations, we had the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, which was this huge volcanic eruption that buried Clark Air Base in ash.

We put together a huge response to this event. We brought in U.S. Army Pacific with people to help with rescue, to help with rebuilding. So that was an enormous effort. We were bending over backwards to show what we could do. Mrs. Aquino was always conflicted about our basing presence. She looked upon our basing presence as something that was a stain on Philippine sovereignty and nationalism and dignity. She wanted to remove the bases on the one hand. On the other hand, she was deeply concerned about the impact the bases would have on the 50,000 or so Filipinos who in primary and secondary and tertiary means were employed by the bases, the impact that would have. She desperately needed the economic and military assistance we were offering her in this multi-year package. So one part of her felt that the Americans should leave from these two bases. Another part of her thought that the impact of our departure would be very severe and unjustified. So she kept weighing this back and forth, and she couldn't make up her mind to agree to the agreement until two weeks before it was to be submitted to the senate. We signed the agreement. We got her grudging approval. She only went public two or three weeks before the agreement went to the senate. In retrospect, that was too late.

Q: How about from our side. The Berlin wall in the fall of '89…

FINNEY: The key point was the communist counter coup against Gorbachev that failed in August of 1991. That was the key thing. That had a big impact on the utility of the bases. People were still in the process of absorbing that. What were the real implications here. I remember Ambassador Platt had left, replaced by Ambassador Frank Wisner. Wisner and I went to see Senator Salonga the morning after the Communist coup in Moscow was crushed. I think it was August 19, 1991. Ambassador Wisner, who can charm the birds out of a tree, made a powerful presentation to Salonga, that even though this coup had been crushed in Moscow, it was still important to have these bases for the next five to seven years to see how this all was going to play out. Nobody could foresee what was going to happen to the Soviet empire. So we were very cognizant of that. Ambassador Wisner made a very strong presentation; the same presentation to Cory Aquino. I think, in retrospect, we probably pushed too hard in one particular area. Cory Aquino was willing to give us the bases for five more years. Armitage pressed for seven. I can't remember whether it was seven or nine. I think it was seven. That turned out to be somewhat of a red line for Aquino. She could agree to five, but we put enormous pressure and got Manglapus and her to grudgingly sign up to seven. That might have contributed to their reluctance to fully embrace early enough our continued stay there. So in retrospect that might have been a bridge too far. If we had settled for five and signaled that early on, we might have gotten Manglapus and Aquino to sign on in the spring of 1991 and to come out forcefully in favor of it which would have given them four or five months before it was submitted to the Philippine senate in the late summer. In retrospect,

the fact that we didn't get the bases extended in the Philippines actually turned out to be frankly the wisest course of action. I think we were up to 900 to a billion dollars a year for the Philippines for seven years for the use of those bases. We could not have sustained that amount of funding for the Philippine bases in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. So we would have been involved in this annual grueling trudge up to the Hill to Congress to ask for these astronomical sums for the Philippines for bases that by 1992 and 1993, when the depth of the Soviet collapse was clearly evident, we couldn't use to justify to defend against the Soviet fleet that was rusting at the harbor in Vladivostok and Petropavlovsk. So we saved ourselves a lot of money. We saved ourselves a lot of personnel assigned to those places that could be redistributed to other bases as we reconfigured our military posture around the Pacific. All of that is of course in retrospect. At the time, it was a humiliating and deeply disappointing outcome. To put the kind of effort that we put forth for this was totally disappointing and exhausting. But you know, that is how diplomacy works out sometimes.

Q: During the Marcos years one has the impression that, many of the embassy officers became entrapped in the social circle of the well-to-do, Now I'm not an authority on it, but they all seem to come from the same family. Anyway, as political counselor were you looking at this and seeing this as troublesome?

FINNEY: Well the short answer is yes. I mean this was one of the pitfalls to working in a place like the Philippines. You had this incredible long standing relationship with the country, and then this intermingled and entangled relationship with Philippine families and politicians, many of whose daughters and sons were educated in the United States or who were shepherding U.S. investments in the country. Since the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s many people who served in the U.S. embassy retired in the Philippines and became consultants to the border police or the Philippine Navy or army or what have you. So there was a lot of inbreeding and intermingling with the Filipinos. That was one of the unfortunate characteristics of our relationship. Particularly, people commented about the tenure of Michael Armacost who was our ambassador to the Philippines in the early 1980s. Then he became our undersecretary of state and then ambassador to Japan. Michael Armacost, as our ambassador, used to go on these yachting trips with Marcos and Imelda that would go on for three or four days as they cruised among the Philippine islands, these all night dancing parties. Because Marcos and Imelda used their political position in social ways. Or a better way to put it, they used social events as a way to advance their political agenda. So if you wanted to engage with Marcos and Imelda, you had to be prepared, if you were the ambassador, to go on these yachting trips, to go to parties at Malacañang that began at 11:00 at night and finished at 4:00 in the morning. I think Mike Armacost and some others kept their heads about them and did a fine job of representing us. Other people in the embassy did not and got sucked into this incredibly social world of Imelda Marcos and her associates. They can be charming and have very nice events, but it is all for very subtle political objectives. Some of our people were not very adept and adroit in not getting sucked into that.

By the time Aquino took over this had changed. These lavish parties at Malacañang during the Marcos era was totally a thing of the past. A lot of the people who were on the

outs during the Marcos regime were now ins. They were not particularly wealthy. They were very progressive and leftist and idealistic. So you didn't have quite the social entrapment. The level of social entrapment that existed during the Marcos years was not there during the Aquino years because the cast of characters had changed dramatically and because Aquino ran a very modest government. As a political counselor you are trying to keep your finger on the pulse of the society. You are aware of the mis-steps we had made in the past. You are aware of how easy it is to be seduced by certain elements of Philippine society. You know you have to go out there and swim amongst them and deal with them and represent to them and gather information from them and you want to be on your toes. We kept most of the people, senior people in the embassy who retired in the Philippines in the 1970s and 1980s and had become consultants there, we kept them at arms length because most of them wound up becoming enmeshed with the Marcos's, and the Aquino regime was a new face on things. We were reporting on the communist insurgency, and we were going out there in 72 provinces in the Philippines. I would say the insurgency was active in 2/3 of those provinces. So we were constantly out there trying to assess the popular support in the Philippines for the insurgency. By traveling like that, you see the tremendous social gaps within that country between a tiny handful of elite families and the vast majority of Filipinos who are struggling to keep body and soul together. So these things were very much in the forefront.

Then we had the election of 1992 in which the defense minister Fidel Ramos was running to succeed Cory Aquino, running against the speaker of the house at that time, who was very close to Aquino. But making that election, supporting that democratic impulse, on the one hand the very big disappointment on the outcome of the base negotiations approved by the president, rejected by the senate – by one vote by the way. But then putting that behind us and becoming deeply involved in the proper way of course in supporting this democratic transition from President Aquino to whoever was going to be elected in 1992. Tracking that election process and trying to assess that, keeping in mind what was going to be the future of the Philippine communist insurgency and looking after the declining USAID and other assets and military assistance assets that we had. That was an enormously busy time as well. General Ramos, a West Point graduate, was elected President of the Philippines to succeed President Aquino. That was a big plus for the Philippines. And it was positive for U.S. foreign policy because it was a democratic transition, and he is a responsible and reasonably capable individual. I think he brought more effective government than did President Aquino. He was a more decisive and experienced leader. So from that standpoint my tour there ended on a high note. I think the election was in June of 1992. I left in September. My tour ended on a positive note. Our fundamental objective in the Philippines was to help support the return to democratic rule and with the successful election of Fidel Ramos the Philippines did that. We played a successful role in helping them and that was a big plus.

Q: Well then in 1992, whither?

FINNEY: In the fall of 1992 I came back to the department to be the Director of the Office Thailand and Burma Affairs (EAP/TB). We had a new administration. President Bush had lost. President Clinton was elected. After 12 years of Republican direction, the

new administration had a fresh outlook on our interests in East Asia. So when I came back in the fall of 1992 and took up my assignment as Director in November of that year, it was quite a different scene. Our assistant secretary had been our ambassador to China, and previously a special assistant to Kissinger and was very articulate, Winston Lord [Ed: Ambassador Lord also recorded an oral history with ADST]. We became very deeply involved in the whole issue of Burma and Aung San Suu Kyi.

Q: John, to start, your assignment to the Thai Burma desk was from when to when?

FINNEY: I was at the Thai-Burma desk from November, 1992 until September, 1994. [Ed: The Assistant Director in 1994 was Karl Wycoff, according to the State Department phone book.]

Q: Let's go to Burma first. In the first place, a little bit of atmospherics. Winston Lord obviously was an old hand. He had been a Foreign Service officer. He had been a Kissinger person in the Republican ranks and now he was in the Democratic. He was not a political player; he was a foreign affairs person. But did you get any feel for a new administration coming in.

FINNEY: Winston Lord, one of the key national security advisors for Henry Kissinger, played a pivotal role in helping prepare Kissinger for Nixon's breakthrough and overtures in establishing new relations with China. He did a superb job as our ambassador to China in the late 1980s. In East Asia there was a renewed emphasis on human rights which ranked high on the Clinton agenda. There was a lot in working with ASEAN, the Association of South East Asian Nations, and APEC, the Asia Pacific Economic Council to put renewed life and vigor into these institutions and linking the maturing of these institutions with U.S. economic interests in East Asia. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Japanese economy was riding high, and Japan was making significant inroads into our economy and buying some very prestigious properties such as Rockefeller Center and so forth. So Assistant Secretary Winston Lord and Secretary of State Warren Christopher and the White House were very interested in improving our economic posture in Asia. They made that, in addition to human rights, and in addition to maintaining our security alliances, the centerpiece of our East Asia policy.

Q: Let's talk first about Thailand, our relations with Thailand, what you were involved in.

FINNEY: Thailand actually wound up being the less of the two countries because we gave most of our attention to Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma. On Thailand, part of the three pronged approach that the Clinton administration brought to East Asia was reinvigorating our security alliances. With the Thais we had a long standing security relationship as you know, dating from the early 1960s. They were key partners for us during the Vietnam War. We had our ups and downs with them. The North Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1979 reinvigorated a security relationship with Thailand that had lapsed a bit in the immediate aftermath of our defeat in Vietnam. In the late 1980s and early 1990s we were interested in plussing up that security relationship. Under Winston Lord's

encouragement, we initiated annual political military talks with the Thais. The Thais were anxious to get Washington's attention. Like a lot of our security partners, they want to believe that their interests are being taken into account. The Thais had initially felt that we took them for granted. We had a half a dozen air bases in Thailand that we used to project air power into Vietnam and Laos and Cambodia in the Vietnam War. We did this on the basis of a letter between our defense minister and their defense minister. So we had tremendous cooperation from the Thais. They never felt fully recompensed for being steadfast allies throughout what turned out to be an unpopular war.

When the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia a huge outflow of refugees came from Cambodia into Thailand numbering 600,000 to a million and this put enormous strains on Thai society. It caused a lot of political tensions in Thailand. We played a large role in persuading the Thais to, in effect, suck it up and take these refugees and offer them refuge. It caused a lot of problems in Thailand not the least of which was that many Thais perceived the U.S. and international aid going to the hundreds of thousands of Cambodian refugees on their border as providing the refugees a better life than at that time many of the Thai rural people themselves enjoyed. So coming up into the early 1990s, we were looking for ways to assure the Thais that we took them seriously in terms of our security partnership.

So we organized these annual political military talks with Thailand so that we could help insure their security concerns received appropriate attention in State and in DOD. We greatly expanded our annual military exercise with the Thais which we named Cobra Gold. When I was first in Thailand, in 1976-1979, we had a very modest amphibious exercise with the Thais involving maybe a battalion of U.S. Marines. By 1992-1993-1994, that had evolved into Cobra Gold which became the largest single military exercise, first in Southeast Asia, and then in all of Asia, when we for a variety of reasons suspended our big annual exercise in South Korea. Cobra Gold became not just a bilateral event, but one in which we drew in a lot of our other security partners throughout the region such as Australia and the Philippines and other important security partners like Singapore and Malaysia. It became a very significant event, and we spent a lot of time working on that issue.

We spent a lot of time working with the Thais on the drug issue. The Golden Triangle was still a real challenge. A lot of that opium and heroin in the aftermath of the Vietnam War was finding its way to the United States, so we had a very substantial DEA establishment in Thailand. I think it was 25-30 people. We used the DEA force in Thailand to try and get a grip on this torrent of opium and heroin flowing out of the golden triangle into the United States. We were also using our influence in Thailand to broker an end to the simmering conflict in Cambodia where the remnants of Pol Pot's forces were still engaged in guerilla warfare against the remnants of the Vietnamese and the fragile new Cambodian government. So we had a pretty full agenda with the Thais.

Q: Were we concerned at this point with the Thai economy?

FINNEY: We were astonished at the progress of the Thai economy. In the early 1990s the Thai really started to get traction. Every time you visited Bangkok and some of the major cities, Chiang Mai, they were mushrooming. There were building cranes all over the city, again not just Bangkok, but Chiang Mai and other regional cities. There was a huge real estate bubble going in Thailand. A lot of Thai financial services and high tech firms were coming to the fore. Everybody was marveling at what was once almost idyllic and picturesque rural Thailand of the 1960s and early 1970s, by the early 1990s converting into what we were calling an Asian tiger. Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia were beginning to race ahead economically. This was linked to ASEAN and ASEAN's increasing economic prowess. It was linked to the Asian Pacific Economic Council which our President attended every year with the Secretary of State. We set up a separate office directorate in East Asia simply to work the APEC, Asia Pacific Economic Council forum and the ASEAN. So there was tremendous emphasis on the growing Southeast Asian economies. What we didn't realize then was a lot of the Thai banks and businesses that were emerging were operating on very shaky financial grounds. The Thais banking system wound up involved in a lot of loans that were non-performing. So it was in the mid- to late 1990s that this started to come apart. But in the early 1990s we were all astonished at the tremendous leap forward economically by Thailand and its ASEAN neighbors.

Q: How did we view the Thai government? You know for years there had been a series of coups. Were we beginning to feel that coups were history and now we are moving to something else?

FINNEY: As I remember, we were. The Thais it seemed to us had broken the cycle of shaky civilian rule followed by military dictatorships, then followed by a gradual return to a democratic system, then the collapse of the civilian government and another military coup. By the early 1990s, the Thais seemed to be getting it together. So I think we saw encouraging signs on that front. They had, I think, provincial elections. Maybe they had national elections, I can't remember. But the system seemed to be gradually improving. Having said that, two factors emerged, number one: the Thai military and particularly the army remained the key behind the scenes power brokers. The civilians were out there trying to run the government, make these ministries function effectively, but at the end of the day, it was the Privy Council to the king and the Thai military which called the final shots. Now the prestige of the civilians during this period in the early 90's increased because of the economic growth. So when the North Vietnamese pulled back from Cambodia, and the refugees were being distributed around the world, the threat to Thailand's eastern border seemed to diminish significantly. The insurgency in the northeast had been brought under control. And as Thailand's economic growth continued at a somewhat remarkable pace, the civilians began to get more credit for the first time, that they could run the place.

Q: Were there any concerns or glimmers of concern about Thailand, this applies to other countries too in Southeast Asia, South Asia, all of Asia, about their industry taking jobs away from American industries? Was that a factor then?

FINNEY: There was almost, very little. I mean I can not remember a lot of angst or concern expressed at that time. What we were focusing on was opening this place up to American investment. That was the focus. To get their commercial code and their civil court system at a level of proficiency that foreign investors would be attracted. Rather than worry about outsourcing at that time, our big worry, and we spent a lot of time on this, was to get the Thai to sign up to international intellectual property standards. Because all the music and the movies and a lot of the new digital stuff, videos that was coming more and more into play, were being pirated throughout Asia. The Thais were masters at this. The Thais and the Chinese were way ahead of everybody else. So a key piece of our bilateral relationship with Thailand, and particularly the economic dimension of that relationship, was to get them to sign on to appropriate international copyright protection standards. After two years, at the end of my tenure, the Thais did sign on. We worked very closely with the White House trade office and State and our desk. And the Thais earned a lot of points for signing up to an effective copyright protection. There was still a lot of piracy going on in the streets, but the agreement triggered a huge new inflow of U.S. and foreign investment. So it all worked to the better. We were in a boom period then.

Q: Were we concerned about the Chinese having too much influence in Thailand?

FINNEY: Always something that we watch very closely. The Thai business community is primarily Thai-Chinese, and almost like the military, which is almost entirely native Thai, businessmen exercised fundamental political influence behind the scenes. It was the Thai-Chinese business community which financed Thailand's economic surge and who were extremely proficient in putting together these banking systems and new businesses and in promoting a lot of the industrial growth, and the tourism industry rocketed ahead. Thailand became a gem. It was already important in terms of gems, but it became even more important, and textiles and so forth. So the relationship between the Thai-Chinese and the Chinese in Beijing was something everybody watched closely but to the Thai's credit, they paid a lot of attention to Beijing. The Thai foreign minister and the defense minister and the economic minister made regular trips to Beijing. They worked out arrangements so that the Chinese could open up banks in Thailand and in Bangkok itself. We were watching very closely some of the collusion between Thai drug trafficking and Chinese drug trafficking in southern China. By and large the Chinese were not exercising negative influence as far as we could determine. The Thais managed that connection very deftly.

Q: What about the drug manufacturing and trafficking there. Were we seeing maybe the militaries, the military getting too involved? How was it, what were you seeing?

FINNEY: The short answer is yes. Thai opium growing and laboratories to convert the opium into heroin, and the trafficking of that heroin out from Thailand, sometimes through Burma, sometimes through Bangkok seaward and then through southern China, this was a huge concern because of the poison it was introducing into our society. A lot of these drug traffickers had struck deals with the local Thai police or military commanders to enable them to do this trafficking, to grow their poppies, to bring in chemists, to bring

in precursor chemicals. So rooting out the corruption in the Thai border police, in their national police, in their military was a key step to taking down these drug networks. Just as with the drugs coming in to the southern United States from Colombia and South America, the economics of the drug industry just overcomes so much of the effort to combat it. So your Thai district chief or your Thai governor are out there in these rural provinces making very modest salaries. They are easily seduced or overwhelmed by the drug money that co-opts the civilians and military. It was a huge problem. But gradually the Thais did this with our cooperation and our urging, and with the UN drug agency which came in. I must give special recognition to the King, King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand. He is still alive today. He is the longest serving monarch in the world today. He had been the king since 1946. He was an enormously revered figure, and the king went up to the hill areas every year to speak out on behalf of the hill tribes who were co-opted into growing opium because there was no other really effective means of supporting themselves. The king's enormous prestige and moral presence up there helped ease and support an alternative livelihood program for the tribes people. He took it upon himself, as well, to support efforts to weed out corruption among his military and police. So a huge share of the credit goes to the king and his royal family.

Q: OK, let's turn to Burma. What were our concerns; what was the situation in Burma at this time, 1992-1994? What were our concerns?

FINNEY: When I took over the desk in the fall of 1992 it had been about 2 ½ years since serious political unrest in Burma broke out in 1989 coincident with the return of Aung San Suu Kyi to Burma. Her father was a very famous Burmese general who was regarded as the founding father of Burma. He was the George Washington of Burma who led the independence struggle against the British, about 1948-1949. Just after they achieved independence from the British, he was assassinated. Aung San Suu Kyi and her mother went overseas. Her mother was a very talented diplomat in her own right. Aung San Suu Kyi wound up marrying a British academic, Michael Aris. He wound up at Oxford. He had been a specialist in South Asia working India and Sikkim and Nepal. She was very happily living the wife of an academic in Oxford in the late 1980s when her mother took seriously ill. She left Oxford and the side of her British husband and went to Burma in 1989 to minister to her mother. Because of her father's enormous prestige, she was someone whom Burmese knew about. So she returned after 15 or 20 years absence from the country. Six months after she arrived tremendous student riots broke out in Burma which were brutally suppressed by the Burmese security forces. Many of the students died. Burma had been ruled by a succession of military dictatorships in the aftermath of the assassination of her father in the late 1940s. Ne Win was the latest dictator dating from the 1960s. By 1989 unhappiness with him had reached the point where student riots broke out, brutally repressed six months after Aung San Suu Kyi arrived. So after this tremendous uprising people began to look to or gravitate to Aung San Suu Kyi. She began speaking to people and talking about the need for change. So in 1990 or 1991, the military government of Ne Win was forced to step down. The military generals who succeeded him agreed to hold an election in late 1990 or early 1991. Aung San Suu Kyi headed up a party. She formed a political party as all these people came to her after these tumultuous times and asked her to provide some leadership. That party, by all reasonable

accounts, won the election, and she should have been appointed prime minister. But the military intervened and aborted the election results, and Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest. The results of the elections were annulled. A new set of generals declared themselves the rulers of Burma.

This brought widespread condemnation by the international community, and particularly the United States. Our serving ambassador there departed [Ed: Ambassador Burton Levin departed post September 1990], either just before or just after the election of '90 or '91. To demonstrate our displeasure we did not replace the ambassador. So there was a lot of concern about this missed opportunity for the Burmese civilians to have a chance for representative government to be installed in Burma after decades of very rigid military rule. Then Aung San Suu Kyi won the Nobel Peace Prize. I think it was shortly after she was placed under house arrest. So that raised her visibility enormously. So when I took over the desk in the fall of 1992, we had two big questions in Washington. Number one: were we going to send an ambassador back to Burma? Number two: what were we going to do to try to encourage the Burmese government to respect the outcome of that election and free Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest.

Now at the same time that those two political questions were in the forefront, we also had a situation where a major American oil company, Unocal, was doing a lot of business in Burma. They had been awarded some offshore concessions. The Burmese looked at Unocal to significantly develop their oil and gas industry. This was a very lucrative undertaking for this American oil firm. So one of the policy debates in Washington was how do we balance our outrage with the human rights violations in Burma and the abortion of this election, mistreatment of Aung San Suu Kyi, with these important economic concerns. Unocal was constantly coming to the State Department saying you need to improve our relations with Burma rather than harshly criticize the government, because if you don't we are going to lose our ability to develop this very lucrative oil and gas field. So those were the issues we were grappling with.

Parker Borg, a career Foreign Service officer who had been our ambassador to Iceland, was nominated to be our new ambassador to Burma. [Ed His ADST oral history interview can be found at adst.org.] He was nominated before George H.W. Bush left office. When the Clinton administration came in, they refused to schedule a confirmation hearing with the Senate for Ambassador Borg because they wanted to show the Burmese government how unhappy we were with their performance. So the immediate question for us on the desk and for Winston Lord was: were we going to forward Parker Borg's name to Congress to be considered to be ambassador to Burma or were we going to continue to downgrade the mission and keep it at the DCM level. And what were we going to do to get the Burmese to lift house arrest on Aung San Suu Kyi, and how were we going to balance these concerns with the economic interests of Unocal? Winston Lord asked the desk for our recommendation with regard to the ambassador. We wrestled with this for a couple of months as we put forth our options for Winston Lord, the Assistant Secretary for East Asia, to consider. I was much influenced at that time by the role of our ambassador in Chile in the early 1990s. It might have been Tom Boyatt. The Pinochet regime ended in March 1990. There was again the same kind of debate, should we keep

an ambassador back to show our displeasure with Pinochet's depredations against his own people or should we send someone down there and try to work the system and look for ways to promote a democratic transition. [Ed: Career FSO Charles Gillespie was ambassador to Chile from 1988 to December 1991. ADST interviewed him. Career FSO Curtis Kamman was ambassador from January 1991 to October 1994.] In the case of Chile we sent an enormously capable ambassador, Tom Boyatt if I have got it rightly. With great skill, Ambassador Boyatt was able to help move Chile away from a Pinochet dominated government to a situation where I think they actually had an election and proceeded to a civilian government. So in essence that was my recommendation to Winston Lord from the desk: that we ought to take a page from Tom Boyatt's experience, send an ambassador there who is top notch, who is carefully instructed, who will make clear to the Burmese government and to our friends in Southeast Asia that we were committed to a productive relationship with Burma, but we had to have significant improvement in the political and human rights situation. At the end of the day, Assistant Secretary Lord and Secretary Christopher decided that was not the way to go. Parker Borg was allowed to actually hang around for about 18 months, almost my entire tour, as the administration could not bring itself to establish full diplomatic representation. So we maintained a DCM there.

The administration decided to send a U.S. envoy, Bill Richardson, a very able Congressman then and who is now governor in New Mexico. He was also later our UN ambassador. He was later Secretary of Energy. So that was the route the administration chose. We at the desk saluted and moved out smartly to support his visits to Burma. He turned out to be very astute. He was an able representative of the White House and a good negotiator. It was enormously interesting to work with him, because he was fast moving. He was very unpretentious. A guy who rolled up his sleeves and jumped in there, a politician, understood some of the political pressures the Burmese generals were under and so forth. He did a terrific job of not only emphasizing to the Burmese military that there was need for change, but in also establishing good connections with Aung San Suu Kyi and the UN community. He made clear to Aung San Suu Kyi that America stood with her and for her. I wound up supporting several missions out there. I made several trips out to Burma myself. I would up working closely with her husband, the academic who is now back at Oxford. They had two grown sons. They were in their late teens or early 20s. Both of them were somewhat traumatized, it appeared to be, by their mother's experience. She went to Burma to care for her mother in 1989. Here it was 1992 and she couldn't come back to England because she was under house arrest. Actually the government adjusted its position and said you can leave if you want to, but you can never come back. So the boys' mother became the center of this huge human rights issue in Burma permanently separated from them. Her husband was trying to hold all of this together. The White House gave him carte blanche in terms of access to Secretary Christopher and to the white House and our national security advisor, Tony Lake. He would come to town from Oxford to get our latest assessment of how we were doing in trying to lift house arrest on Aung San Suu Kyi. He would meet with Tony Lake or get five minutes with the President. He would get in to see Christopher. So the administration took this very seriously.

Q: What about the British?

FINNEY: The British were helping out. They didn't have the clout that we had, either the economic clout or the diplomatic clout. But I don't want to not pay proper acknowledgement to the Brits for what they did. They were in there slugging away too. But because of our powerful position, we were weighing in the hardest. I used to spend an hour on the phone, long distance with her husband in Oxford, as I kept him informed on what were we doing, what was the result of our envoy's visits to Aung San Suu Kyi. What the UN was doing. They appointed a special representative and were keeping the husband informed. Her husband was a very impressive individual. Tragically, after I left the desk in 1994, he was diagnosed with cancer. I think this was about 1996 or so, and the Burmese would not give him a visa to get to see her, and he died without ever getting to Burma. He saw her once or twice, I think, before I came to the desk. He didn't get out there when I was on the desk. So he died in the mid- to late 1990s and never was able to see her again. Of course you can imagine the strain on her and the children as she continued to hold steadfast out there. Although I never had a chance to meet her face to face, Aung San Suu Kyi is truly a remarkable individual. We had been dealing with Cory Aquino in the Philippines who was far from perfect and had deep flaws as president but nevertheless helped bring democracy back to the Philippines. Aung San Suu Kyi is one remarkable individual. Here we are 15 years later. She is still in Burma trying to bring about this democratic change. Nobody is perfect. She can be very stubborn and very set in her ways, but her courage and her commitment and her conviction to bring about democratic change is just phenomenal. I think she is one of the most impressive political leaders in the world today. So we worked very hard to try to bring about change, to try to help Aung San Suu Kyi. I spent a lot of time working with the Thai on behalf of course of Winston Lord and Secretary Christopher. They worked at their own levels to get the Thais and the Japanese to do more to put pressure on the Burmese military to respect the results of the election and to lift the house arrest on Aung San Suu Kyi. I was very disappointed.

Every time I went to Burma I debriefed the Thais and the Japanese. And at the end of the day, from my humble perspective, they don't want to apply pressure the way we want to apply pressure. Of course, not only were we doing it bilaterally, but we were doing it within ASEAN, within the UN, within APAC, within every forum we could find we were trying to push people to bring pressure on the Burmese military to do what we thought was the right thing. The Japanese were the most significant aid provider and foreign investor in Burma, and, I want to tell you, they kept us at arms length. The Thais would not step up to the plate. They wouldn't sit down and really deliver hard messages, carry the tough mail from my humble opinion. Not to say they didn't do anything. They would make nice representations. But when it came down to it, you know, you really had to think of ways to inflict pain on the Burmese military on the one hand and I guess offer them carrots on the other. In fairness to the Thais, the Thais had a long border with Burma. They had a long history with Burma. Thai fishermen got picked up periodically in the gulf there and thrown into Burmese jails where they were left to fester for months at a time. So the Thais had to think about that. The Thais had border concerns with Burma and border clashes from time to time. So the Thais had a lot of concerns about

Burma, which led them not to be in our view vigorous in bringing appropriate pressure. And both the Thais and the Japanese took the line we are Asians. We understand the Burmese. Let us talk to the Burmese military. They will listen to us. There are Asian ways for doing this. The Singapore foreign minister at that time was advancing the proposition that Asia should cast a wary eye on attempts to import democracy and representative government and human rights because it didn't necessarily reflect the history and the culture and the traditions of those societies. So I had to endure a lot of lectures from our Singaporean and Thai and Japanese friends who said, "You just don't get it. The way you get the Burmese military to change is with honey and not with vinegar." The Singaporeans, by the way, are wonderful allies and we visited Singapore often. But the Singaporeans had a real quiet but effective relationship with the Burmese military. They ran C-130s in there once a month to provide a lot of key military supplies for the Burmese military. At the same time we were pleading with ASEAN not to play footsie with the Burmese military.

Just a quick comment on the Burmese military. From one perspective, the Burmese military were intensely patriotic. They were a professional and tough military force. They believed passionately in their country. They wanted to defend themselves against depredations from some of the tribes. On the other hand, they were brutal. They suppressed the Karens and the Chins and others in Burma. They had no time for democracy. They loathed Aung San Suu Kyi as a preacher who has sold out to the West. These were real thugs, and they were deeply involved, some of them, in the drug trafficking coming out of the Golden Triangle. So we didn't have much sympathy or time for them. But I must say the support from the White House for Aung San Suu Kyi and for our human rights interests was absolutely impressive.

Finally on Unocal, the gas and oil company in the United States. They got a big contract to build a pipeline from under the Andaman Sea to bring the gas and oil ashore across Burmese territory into Thailand. It was a huge multi-billion dollar project, and it was hugely lucrative. Of course they were making representations all around town. Don't push these Burmese too hard because we have got these important business concerns. So it was a good experience in learning how to balance our political and human rights concerns against business concerns. There is no easy answer. It was also instructive for me to work with our allies in the region and the ASEAN community to try to establish common ground.

The Japanese had a very interesting relationship with Burma. Before the Japanese invaded Burma they took Aung San Suu Kyi's father and 29 other Burmese military officers to what was then Formosa which belonged to Japan. They trained them and developed them as Burmese nationalists before WWII. Very prescient of the Japanese. So when the war broke out the Japanese rolled into Burma with Aung San and his cadre of 30 nationalist military officers whom they trained. Of course the Burmese army, the majority of them fought with the Japanese. Some of them remained loyal to the British. So the Japanese had a soft spot in their heart for the Burmese, some of whom had sided with them in WWII. And they looked upon the Burmese as country cousins they could nudge along and gradually bring about change.

The final point about Burma is that the China relationship with Burma was very critical. China was the largest military supplier to the Burmese. Singaporeans were second. India feared that China was going to establish a naval base or a naval lodgement off of Burma to flank India. This was a huge concern in New Delhi. The Chinese were providing navigation devices and some radar installations in addition to the huge amounts of guns and planes and bullets and other stuff they were supplying the Burmese. So that was a huge preoccupation on our part to see whether the close Chinese military relationship with the Burmese would translate into a permanent Chinese presence there to flank India. It didn't happen. But the relationship was very tight. At the same time, within the Burmese military there was another contingent that worried about getting too close to China. I think that is why they didn't permit the Chinese to establish a base in their area.

Q: On your trips there did you get any readings on the Burmese military?

FINNEY: They were very standoffish and hard to reach. You could admire them from a narrow professional analysis as a light infantry mountain warfare force. They were tough as nails. They could fight in the river valleys. They could fight in the jungles. They could fight on the ridge lines. Unfortunately, of course, they were fighting native peoples whom they outnumbered. Not only outnumbered, but outgunned, and whom they badly abused. So they were professionally very capable, and there is no question that they were deep nationalists and truly loved their country, but they were xenophobic. They took nationalism too far. They felt that civilians were incapable of ruling Burma, that they had tried. After Aung San Suu Kyi's father was assassinated they had a couple of civilian governments, one or two, and they basically stumbled along. Then the military finally took over in the 1960s to get it from their view running right. So from their perspective, they were saviors of their country. They bitterly resented colonial rule etc.

Q: My understanding is these might be very patriotic but they were going to do it by doing very well.

FINNEY: Yes.

Q: This was not an obscure group of generals?

FINNEY: Well you are fundamentally correct. I went up country a couple of times, and I got to talk to majors and captains, lt. colonels, battalion commanders and below. You could see at that level genuine good professional soldiers. Meanwhile back in the capital of Burma, Rangoon, these generals were doing very well for themselves. They lived in villas behind high walls. And they dashed through towns in heavily tinted and curtained Mercedes. The kind of corruption that they practiced was not the flaunting flagrant massive visible corruption you saw with Trujillo in the Dominican Republic or Somoza in Nicaragua or even our friendly Thai generals in Bangkok. The Burmese generals in Rangoon kept their largesse relatively hidden. But it manifested itself first of all in medical care. I mean they and their families went to the best clinics in the world. Ne Win was an annual visitor to Switzerland for, it was rumored, all kinds of implants and so

forth. Then, of course, the businesses. The sawmills, the emerald industry, the drug industry, the traffic on the rivers, they were deeply involved in this and they profited enormously and corruption was huge.

Q: There is another accusation that the troops used rape as a weapon.

FINNEY: Yes.

Q: I mean and subjecting these hill tribes to as nasty a campaign as one can think of.

FINNEY: The depredations they inflicted on the hill tribes people as well as on students who opposed them or on Burmese political dissidents would make your blood freeze. These were brutal campaigns, and it was a human rights disaster and remains one of the most miserable oppressive and vengeful governments on the face of the globe in my humble opinion.

Q: Well by 1994 how did you feel? Did you feel any progress had been made?

FINNEY: I couldn't finish my tour there with the feeling of much accomplishment other than the fact that we had raised the visibility of the Aung San Suu Kyi issue, that we had laid a basis of support in ASEAN and surrounding southeast Asian nations to do more if they wanted to, that we had kept the idea of Democratic transition alive in Burma. That we had put together some assistance programs for the tribal people who fled Burma and sought refuge in Thailand. That we had energized the UN to appoint a special envoy to Burma to deal with Aung San Suu Kyi. So these were pretty modest accomplishments. Towards the end of my tenure there we did a long options paper for the NSC. I think it came out as a presidential decision directive about the issue of sanctions. Should we apply economic sanctions against Burma to underpin the human rights campaign. The familiar arguments are a lot of these economic sanctions are rhetoric. It is hard to back them up. To be effective you have got to involve other nations like Japan and Thailand with strong economic relations. Not to mention China, but at least Japan and Thailand, Singapore who have economic relations with Burma to observe these sanctions. That was like climbing up Mt. Everest in shower shoes. This was hard. We talk ourselves blue in the face. Unocal was hiring high powered lobbyists here in Washington who have the kind of access that we in the State Department can only dream about. At the end of the day I think we did get a presidential decision that we would impose some economic sanctions against Burma. I think that was a small measure of satisfaction. Now after I left the desk in the mid-to late 1990s, they did lift the house arrest against Aung San Suu Kyi. She was able to go out and do some modest campaigning. They did release some of the people in her party who were in jail. These gestures were made. But at the end of the day they had never respected the results of this election in 1990 or 1991. I think she is back under some kind of…

Q: She is under house arrest again.

FINNEY: Yeah, she is under house arrest again. The succession of UN envoys continue to go there. I think our trade sanctions with Burma are in place and have begun to bite. Victoria's Secret which used to make their brassieres in Burma that some of us have admired. Gap, Levis and others, they have pulled out. So good for the USA. I don't know what Unocal is doing, but I became persuaded that our political rights and human rights concerns outweighed economic interests of one company. So I think those sanctions are still in place, but the Burmese military junta and that senior leadership are a wily, tough, inbred, recalcitrant, reclusive group. It is one of those stories that does not have a happy ending.

Q: Well in 1994, whither???

FINNEY: In 1994, I went back to the Bureau of Political Military Affairs (PM) to take over a large office. In East Asia I headed up an office with four to six of us at most. When I went to PM I took over an office of about 25 people, civil servants, military and Foreign Service officers [Ed: According to the State Department telephone book of Fall/Winter 1994/1995 Mr. Finney was the Director of the Office of Defense Relations and Security Assistance (PM/DSRA). This office was large enough to have two Deputy Directors. DepDir for Regional Affairs, John Scott, and DepDir of Security Assistance, Arms Transfers and Global Issues, Robert Maggi]. The Assistant Secretary was Robert Gallucci who departed in October 1994 and Thomas McNamara who immediate succeeded him and who previously was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary.] So for two years I worked in the bureau overseeing, providing, at the office director level, State Department policy oversight over all our security assistance funding and arms sales around the globe. When you count that Israel was getting $3 billion a year and Egypt was getting $1.8 billion a year, we were dishing out close to $7 to $8 billion a year in security assistance and IMET funding. At the same time, we were providing policy oversight of about $25-$30 billion in U.S. arms sales.

When I went there in 1994 this was three years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. So interest in providing security assistance funding including IMET, International Military Education Training, to countries around the world began to subside significantly because the Soviet threat was no longer there. So our budget shrank from around $8 billion to around $6 billion or so. Our IMET account which had been up around $30 million had shrunk to around $22 million. We were actually able to build it back up. But at that particular time the security assistance resources over which State Department had policy oversight were beginning to reduce dramatically. At the same time the resources available to our geographic combatant commanders on the DOD side were increasing significantly. We were still the major arms supplier in the world. We dropped from about $51 billion a year to the high 20s or low 30s. But providing policy oversight for these arms sales was also fascinating. On any day of the year we had a half a dozen really significant arms sales going on with countries in various parts of the world. Among them was providing upgraded jet aircraft to Thailand, jets for Saudi Arabia and UAE. Whether we were going to sell advanced aircraft to Latin America. So it was very interesting. I had a large office with challenging issues.

Q: Well am I correct in saying that essentially the sale of military equipment to Israel ranks highest?

FINNEY: Absolutely. Under the terms of the Camp David Peace Accords of 1979, we were committed by law to provide $3 billion a year to Israel and $1.8 billion to Egypt. Now on top of that there were all kinds of extra things we would do. One of the things for Israel was we gave them all their money the first day of the fiscal year. I mean there are all kinds of extra things that we did. It was untouchable. We went up to Capitol Hill a lot to talk at the staff level and then to support our principals who went up the hill each year to negotiate and talk about these funding levels. Only then did I became fully aware that while we were providing $3 billion a year in military and other aid to Israel, a country of four million people, if it wasn't for the Israeli lobby, and this was particularly driven home to me in the 1990s when America was looking inward a bit, if it wasn't for the Israeli political lobby in the United States we wouldn't have had a foreign assistance bill at all. So people could rightly point out that out of from eight to ten down to six or five billion dollar assistance program, 95 percent was going to Israel and Egypt. The fact of the matter is that if we didn't have the Israeli lobby on our side, we wouldn't have gotten a foreign assistance bill at all. So that was the context of the environment we were operating under.

Q: What was our policy towards Latin America? For years we didn't want any jets down there.

FINNEY: Latin America was fenced off.

Q: The whole idea was, to keep these countries from getting into an arms race.

FINNEY: Exactly.

Q: And, you know, they all had the same kind of equipment, antique equipment fairly modest.

FINNEY: Yes.

Q: What was our policy in your view. I think this is 1994 to 1996.

FINNEY: The general policy was to avoid any arms race in Latin America and not contribute to a situation where they would be competing among themselves to constantly upgrade and modernize their military platforms. We were concerned of course that the Soviets had sold these MIGs to Peru, and the critique against us was that if we didn't sell modern aircraft, for example, to the Latin American air forces, there were others out there like the Israelis, like the Russians, who would. So were we were kidding ourselves? The fact of the matter though was that all the Latin American militaries, basically if they had a preference, preferred American military equipment that is in the U.S. inventory. Because it is not just the purchase of the initial platform, as you can well appreciate. It is the follow on stream of spare parts and so forth. So if the Russians sell you a MIG 29

after the collapse of their empire, you may be able to fly for two or three years, but since they are not producing MIG 29s anymore, you are going to become really short of spare parts. So the clear preference was for our aircraft. But the bottom line was that Secretary Christopher, with President Clinton's support if I remember correctly, felt that we had enough challenge on our part to prevent arms races in the Mid East and elsewhere in the world. We don't want one in our own hemisphere. So we held the line. And one of the key weapons systems that was in debate at that time was this air to air missile that you could to put it in the vernacular, fire-and-forget. Once you fired it, you no longer have to point your plane at the other plane, because this particular missile had a homing device which enabled it to hit your opponent. So this was a nice feature to have, and the Latin Americans were anxious to get them. But our position was the United States would not be the first to introduce that system into the hemisphere, since nobody else had one quite as advanced as ours. Now in Thailand we were upgrading them. They wanted F-18s; they wanted these air-to-air missiles. Of course the Mid East was still awash in oil funds so the Saudi Arabians and UAE and Kuwaitis and others of that world were interested in getting new military platforms, not only aircraft, but tanks and ships because they lived in a dangerous neighborhood. The prevailing policy guidance which was hallowed, which was revered, was that we can not sell any weapons system to a Mid East country that undercuts Israel's military superiority. So any weapons sale in the Mid East was gauged against that standard. I can assure you my experience during these two years was that the folks up on the Hill in our congress were keenly interested in the success and survival of Israel and followed that like a hawk.

Q: What about Taiwan during this time?

FINNEY: The issue was how are we going to interpret the Taiwan Relations Act where we are committed to assure the continued ability of the Taiwanese to defend themselves. It is a broad ambiguous statement. So they wanted submarines, and we would not provide them submarines. They wanted surface ships; we would provide them with excess U.S. navy surface ships. They wanted missiles to defend themselves against the appearance of missiles appearing on the Chinese side of the straits. They wanted to have the ability to counter fire. The Taiwan lobby was, as always, very discreet but very active in Washington. The Clinton administration lived up to the letter of the Taiwan relations act of 1979 that we would assure Taiwan's ability to defend themselves, but they didn't go beyond that as some conservative Republicans want to go much farther. The Clinton administration was very mindful of our larger obligations to China.

Q: Did you feel any pressure from people who were producing aircraft or whatever to open up? Was there much of that?

FINNEY: We had lots of visits from them. They would come by regularly, tell us about what they were doing. Remember this is at the desk level, so I wasn't talking to vice presidents of sales. I was talking to program managers. So their program manager would come by with their brochures and show us what they were doing. They were saying, "Now what is our policy in Latin America exactly?" And, "Oh I can assure you that if we sell this system to UAE, we can put certain things inside the cockpit of this plane which

will make it less effective than the same version of the plane we sold to Israel five years ago." One of the key issues we had was providing air tankers to Singapore. I am a student of this. These are refueling tankers to enable you to refuel aircraft in the air. No one in Asia had this capability except the United States. The Chinese were seeking it. So this was this issue.

Singapore had bent over backwards to encourage us to keep our military in Asia, forward deployed, in spite of the fact that the Soviet fleet was rusting at its moorings in Vladivostok and Petropavlovsk, and even though we had been booted out of the Philippines. Singapore said come on over. Singapore, from a decade previous, had, in effect, an air base in the United States out at Luke Air Base or one of these places where they trained their F-16 pilots and some of their transport pilots. They were very tight with us. Singapore carried a lot of water with us in our security discussions in ASEAN as we tried to build an effective security community in Southeast Asia. So we were very tight with them, and they wanted these air-to-air refuelers which are great force multipliers. No one else in Asia had them. It was a huge debate. At the end of the day we decided to do it.

Q: How did you find your relations with the Pentagon on these issues?

FINNEY: Well, in general they were pretty good. We spent a lot of time working those relationships. The former dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Public Affairs at Harvard, Joe Nye, was the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs in the Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense. He had written that book on soft power. He was a very astute and able individual, and we set up monthly meetings between my boss, head of the political military bureau, Ted McNamara, or his deputy, where we would go over to Assistant Secretary Nye's office in the Pentagon. We would go over these arms sales issues, go over our bilateral defense relationships with the key countries in the Far East, Japan, Thailand, Korea, Australia, and the Philippines. There was a lunch once a week in which Sec State, Sec Def and the NSC advisor met. We met and worked out a lot of issues with DOD in that forum as well. So that was our effort through these monthly meetings at the assistant secretary level and then at the lunches between the principals we tried to work this. We worked a lot with the international affairs staff of the Air Force because our aircraft sales were a big part of our overseas arms sales, because many countries for a variety of reasons like to upgrade their aircraft. We didn't always agree with the Air Force. We didn't always agree with OSD but I am trying to think if there is any huge fundamental issue in which we had a major fallout. One doesn't come to mind. But without a major effort to coordinate with OSD, JCS and then a particular service like the Air Force where aircraft sales loomed large, your ability to effectively work together is at risk.

Q: Did you find that particularly the Soviets because the Soviets were the only persons who had, maybe the French, had weapons systems that could challenge ours. Were we keeping an eye on them all the time?

FINNEY: Absolutely. We followed three countries very closely. We followed the Russians. We followed the French, and we followed our friends the Israelis. It turns out

the Israelis have a long standing relationship with Singapore. They have a keen interest in military modernization in China. They have a lot of inventive and clever ideas about how to do refueling, about how to hang missiles on aircraft, and things of that nature. We bumped into Israeli arms salesmen all over Asia. So we didn't have any big fallouts with OSD, but we did have fallouts with Israel. We had annual pol-mil talks with Israel. They were quite contentious. The single most difficult issue that I am aware of that we had with Israel, aside from of course the Palestinian issue, was arms sales. Because the Israeli arms industry was desperate, and they didn't have the same restraints that we had. They were competing and knocking us out of the market. In some of our perspectives they were performing irresponsibly. Now the French had missiles and aircraft that rivaled ours. I would say we probably beat the French seven out of ten times. The Russians were good with a lot of the cheap stuff. People were buying in bulk. This was Sam's Club. For example, Iran bought a lot of used submarines from the Russians. A lot of Russian scientists were making themselves available. Weapons scientists were selling themselves to the Chinese. The Chinese Navy was and is, maybe less so today, but in mid-1990s they were homing in on the ex-Soviet Russian fleet, and picking up their destroyers and many of their cruisers and their submarines. So that was always a concern to us.

Q: Well, after PM whither?

[Ed: As some point in 1995(?) the PM Bureau reorganized. The March 1996 State Department telephone book listed Mr. Finney as the Director of the Office of Security Relations, Policy and Resources (PM/SRP). PM/SRP had two Deputy Directors: DepDir for Policy Formulation and Coordination, Richard Davis, and DepDir for Policy Implementation and Operations, Richard Dotson.]

FINNEY: Let me note two other things we spent a lot of time on. One was political military talks with our security partners around the globe. When I came out of the National War College in 1982 I spent two years in PM. We were able to inaugurate the first PM bureau military talks with Australia. By the time I returned to the political military bureau in 1994 I think we had gotten it up to 21 or 22 bilateral political military talks. So my office, because of our involvement in arms sales and regional security affairs, a couple of times a month we were involved in supporting these political military talks with treaty allies as well as security partners. That took an enormous amount of time. And we were able to continue to support the pol-mil talks I was able to initiate with Thailand in my previous capacity.

The other issue that we got deeply involved in was Haiti. In the fall and winter of 1994 we intervened in Haiti. Ex-JCS chairman Colin Powell was down there. Jimmy Carter was too. We had the 82nd Airborne Brigade in the air for a combat jump. At the end of the day they persuaded the Haitian military commander there to stand aside and it became a peaceful airborne insertion instead of a combat air force mission. But our political military bureau got deeply involved in organizing and rallying the political military aspects of our major intervention in Haiti in 1994. Out of that, came this issue of PDD (Presidential Decision Directive) 56 [Ed: Entitled "Managing Complex Contingency Operations"] where we resolved that we would do a pol-mil plan before we intervened in

countries in the future. This pol-mil plan would be tasked by the NSC, National Security Council, for DOD and State essentially with input from Justice and CIA and Treasury and others, to put together a pol-mil plan that not only outlined what the military part of the event was going to be, but what was going to be the follow-on part. That was an innovation that to the credit of the Clinton administration they initiated. I can't remember whether it was just before the Haiti intervention or after the Haiti intervention. But it was an attempt to try to impose some kind of order and systematic planning.

Q: Well, I must say that at that point you couldn't have avoided looking at Bosnia. I mean more than Bosnia which was pretty much part of Croatia versus Serbia. Was this the instigator for this?

FINNEY: The Bosnia-Croatia issue kicked off in the summer of 1991, and by 1992 was running full bore across the Balkans. The big debate in the U.S. Congress was that we had declared an arms embargo on the Yugoslav states as a way to try and damp down this conflict which we were desperately trying to understand. However, two years after the arms embargo was in place we found ourselves observing a situation where the people who were benefiting from the arms embargo were the bad guys. The Serbs were able to arm themselves with the inventories and armories of the Yugoslav army, while the Croatians and the Bosnians had nowhere to turn. So they wound up turning to people like Iran and others who wanted to help them. So there was a big debate about whether we were going to lift the arms embargo to even the battlefield. So we in PM were there because it involved arms embargo and arms sales, and that was something we were watching. Then Dick Holbrooke began his intensive negotiations in the summer of 1995, after the July tragedy in Srebrenica, and that whole buildup to the Dayton Accords which were signed I believe in November. So we were very much involved in supporting that effort at a staff level in the PM. We set up a Bosnian task force. We had a lot of questions: if the Dayton Accord was signed and then we demobilized the Serbs but tried to build up the Croatians and the Bosnians what kind of equipment would they need? How could we get it to them? How could we retrain their armies? What kind of military education and training might they get in the United States? So we set up in my office a small directorate of about four people. They were working that very closely. We worked with Jim Dobbins and others in Holbrooke's leftover staff in EUR to support the implementation of the Dayton Accords which were signed in November 1995. Then of course, our U.S. led NATO intervention in the Balkans began December 19, 1995. That was a massive U.S. commitment to an area on the edge of our vital interest in Western Europe. A lot of people deeply questioned it. So we were pretty much involved in that as well. So it was a busy time, but a challenging time.

In late spring of 1996 I was coming up on the conclusion of my two year tour as office director. The Political Military Bureau, with an agreement from the U.S. Navy, set up a new position as political advisor to the Chief of Naval Operations. So I was asked if I was interested in doing on that as a follow-on tour. I said, I definitely was. I went with our deputy assistant secretary Mike Lemmon to meet the chief of Navy Operations, Admiral Jeremy Boorda. We had a nice lunch with Admiral Boorda in his private dining room. Boorda interviewed me for the job as his political advisor and afterwards sent word that I

had passed muster. So in late spring, May-June, I was assigned as the political advisor, starting that summer, to the Chief of Naval Operations. In early summer, about six weeks after I interviewed Admiral Boorda, he committed suicide at his house in the Washington Naval Yard. The Navy moved quickly to designate Admiral Boorda's vice Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jay Johnson, to be the new Chief of Naval Operations. So in the late summer of 1996, I completed my tour with the political military bureau and reported for duty at the Pentagon to be the political advisor to Admiral Johnson. I spent three wonderful, interesting years with Admiral Johnson as his political advisor.

Q: As POLAD to the Chief of Naval Operations what were your impressions of Admiral Johnson and his operating style.

FINNEY: Admiral Jay Johnson was a very distinguished naval aviator. Previously he had been the fleet commander in Norfolk, the Atlantic Command. His top operational priority as Chief of Naval Operations was to get Congressional approval for funding of the new F-18E fighter attack bomber so it could go into serial production and be entered into the fleet. We had the F-15, earlier versions of it, the A, B, and C versions. I think there was a D trainer version. Admiral Johnson, who I think primarily trained on F-14s, had flown the earlier version of the F-15E, but he felt that it was terrifically important for the Navy to have this advanced upgraded F-15E capability. The key thing about the F-15E was that it had longer range and could carry more ordinance. This enabled the aircraft carriers to project naval power deeper ashore. This reflected the fundamental change in strategy that the Navy was going through in the mid-1990s to which Admiral Johnson and others were contributing. The fundamental shift was a re-alignment of focus from defeating the Soviet Navy at sea to projecting power ashore. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and 1990, and the fact that the Soviet Fleet was no longer patrolling the seas but most of it was tied up in the harbor, the U.S. naval strategists had to decide what the focus of what the American Navy was going to be now that the Soviet Navy was tied up and rusting away. Given the collapse of the Soviet empire, the United States Navy was not going to be faced with contesting an enemy on the high seas. There was no other single navy in the world that posed a threat to us on the high seas. So the focus of our Navy should be to project power ashore. Part of that was on the basis that 80% of the world's population lives 200 miles from some coast. It was seen that the United States was going to be engaged in combating a different kind of threat. The Navy's role in this was to support our efforts ashore to deal with the new threats out there. So the Navy began redesigning its ships, redesigning its strategies and its exercises, and the F-18E was…

Q: The F-18E was basically an upgraded F-15 was that it?

FINNEY: Well, no, it was different in this sense. The F-15 is an air force plane that is designed to shoot other planes out of the sky. The F-18 on the Navy side can shoot other planes out of the sky, but it also delivers ordinance. So it is not only an interceptor, but it is also an attack bomber. So it is dual missioned. So getting the F-18E fully funded and into production and into the fleet was a primary concern of Admiral Johnson. He had a lot of other concerns, but that was one of them. He was an extremely hard working,

intelligent, dedicated naval officer. I accompanied him on his overseas trips. We visited all the fleets, and I watched him talk to his sailors and his officers. He was an inspiring and capable officer and a wonderful person to serve. I have talked about the importance of the F-18E to him. He emphasized this over and over again that the strength of the Navy is not about platforms. It is not about high tech weaponry. It is not about communications. It is about the people. So a key part of his tenure was about improving prospects for the enlisted people, the NCOs and the officers in the Navy and making sure that they had the kind of support that he felt they deserved. There were a number of programs, pay increases, bonuses, better housing. He spent an enormous time on those kinds of issues testifying before Congress and working the halls, just as he did in support of the F-18.

Q: Well John, your bailiwick was getting naval officers and planners to think in terms of the Foreign Service, the diplomatic part of the military equation. There's an old saying, there is the right way, the wrong way, and the Navy way. Reflects the idea that the Navy tends to be more parochial than I would say the Army. You know it is important for the Navy at the higher echelons to understand the diplomatic part of the situation. Was he working on that?

FINNEY: Absolutely. Serving as a political advisor in Vietnam, in Grenada, and working in the Pentagon I have had a chance to look at all the different services. The Navy is the most keenly attuned service to our diplomatic needs. In the history of the United States it is the United States Navy that has taken the lead over and over again in many of our most important diplomatic initiatives. One of the most obvious was the opening up of Japan. That was done by the Navy. Thomas Jefferson sent the United States Navy to subdue the Barbary pirates. Theodore Roosevelt sent the United States Navy and the great white fleet around the world during his tenure. It was the United States Navy that President Truman sent to Turkey just after WWII to deliver the body of the dead president or the dead prime minister which solidified our commitment to Turkey. It is the U.S. Navy which in my experience is far and away the most attuned to the diplomatic world. That is because historically in the United States, it is our Navy that has supported our consuls, our ambassadors, and the Foreign Service across the globe from the earliest days of our founding. One of the key ways they do this is of course the ship visits. One of the great diplomatic tools that we have in our national kit bag is the United States Navy through port visits. When the Army visits a foreign country as we see, sometimes the Army stays. The Navy doesn't. The Navy goes into ports, conducts its visits, showcases the ambassador and the country team, and then the Navy pulls out and goes on to visit the next port. So as his political advisor, a good deal of my time was spent in responding to U.S. ambassador requests through the fleet for port visits, for better arrangements for our sailors when they went ashore. Over the past 230 years of our republic, the relationship between the U.S. Navy and the consulates and our sailors ashore has been a long one. So we spent a lot of time making sure that our ambassadors got their port visits, that our ambassadors got their Navy bands for the Fourth of July and ensuring that the arrangements of the different ports that we visited reflected ambassadorial and State Department concerns. We had key diplomatic issues like the Taiwan Strait. In 1996 we had an incident involving our carrier transit of the Taiwan Straits and the Chinese were

unhappy about some aspect of that. We worked intimately with Secretary Warren Christopher and the Secretary of Defense William Perry to arrange that we could conduct our naval transits of the Taiwan Strait, which is 100 miles wide, which is international waters, in a way that served both our national security and our foreign policy interests.

Another key issue is maintaining freedom of the seas which has been a fundamental plank in our national security policy for decades, centuries, because the sea is so essential to our defense and to our trade. I worked very closely with Admiral Johnson and ambassadors and country teams around the world when the U.S. Navy conducted, at the request of the National Security Council, what we call freedom of navigation challenges. We would send our ships inside waters that some countries claimed to be their territorial waters which was beyond the 12 miles. You can imagine the negotiation with an ambassador to inform him that we are going to send Navy ships inside what his host country claims as territorial seas, that we do not recognize as territorial seas. We did this under the instructions of the National Security Council which is above the State Department and the Department of Defense. So that presented challenges.

Q: Where were some of the seas that you were running these ships through?

FINNEY: The Mediterranean Sea, a number of places off of Vietnam in Southeast Asia, off of China, off of Russia, off of Syria, off of Libya, off of Egypt. These are difficult because invariably when we conduct these challenges the ambassador is summoned right away into the foreign ministry and is read the riot act. Of course Ambassadors have a lot to do. This is not something that they would look forward to, so we had to make the case. Japan was another one, and South Korea, our allies. So we had to line this up for the ambassador ahead of time. This is what we are going to do. This is what likely is going to happen, and these are the reasons for doing it. I would say that 80% maybe 90% of our challenges actually went undetected because in most countries in the world they don't have the systems along their coasts, or they don't have the extended maritime air to keep track of what we were doing.

Q: How about Canada and going across the top of the globe?

FINNEY: We did not have a Canadian challenge during the three years that I was with the Chief of Naval Operations, but this northwest passage has been one of the prickly things we have with Canada. Each year we compile a list of all the challenges we have conducted, and we attach it to the annual report of the Secretary of Defense that we send to the Hill, which is a public document. So any nation can turn to appendix two or three of the Secretary of Defense annual report and he will see every one. And we usually do 20 to 25 a year. He can see every list of challenges we conduct to assert that we regard these as international waters and the right to sail there. So this makes for interesting exchanges. Admiral Johnson, as you can expect, was a strong supporter of freedom of the seas. He was also a broad gauged officer who understood State Department concerns and enjoined us as his staff to make sure that we had dotted the I's and crossed the T's and had done everything we possibly could to reach a satisfactory approach. Sometimes, quite often a State Department request would involve postponing. We would postpone a

challenge because there was an election coming up in the host country or there was a critical juncture in our bilateral relations. So there was give and take. This does get to the point about the independence of the Navy. We were flexible and we did postpone. Sometimes at the end of the day, we simply had to go back to the NSC and say the State Department has some reservations about this but we in DOD feel we need to proceed. So we would bring it up to the NSC level to make the decision. This is a Navy that is deployed and overseas a good deal of the time. When you are on the ocean, of course, you develop a sense of independence. Then of course this tradition of being able to make decisions on their own at sea. So the Navy, you are right, they are proud. They have an independent streak, they have this tradition of making a lot of decisions on their own. When you come into contact with gifted four star admirals like Jay Johnson, they understand the big picture. Down the chain of command you will run into people who may not have had sufficient exposure to be more flexible.

Q: Well what was your role in this sort of thing?

FINNEY: From serving as a political advisor to a combatant commander such as our Pacific command, I knew there are certain things that you can do as a political advisor to support a combatant commander which don't necessarily apply to a chief of service back in Washington in the Pentagon which is what Admiral Johnson was. For example, Admiral Johnson did not command forces. The naval forces are commanded by the fleet commanders. Of course, he is in daily touch with his fleet commanders, and because of their professional associations there is a lot of give and take between them. The fleet commanders report not to Admiral Johnson the CNO. They report to the combatant commanders who report to the Secretary of Defense. The main responsibility of chiefs of service like Admiral Johnson is to help equip, train, supply, and prepare the force. So his job is to make sure that his fleet commanders, in simplest terms, have the tools they need to accomplish their navy mission under the direction of the combatant commander. All these fleet commanders, whether it is the seventh fleet, the fifth fleet, the sixth fleet, whatever the fleet is, they report to a combatant commander and they are a component commander. So the combatant commander, in addition to his Navy commander has an air force and an army commander. He is the one that basically lays out what the requirements are, what the roles and missions are of the Navy in that particular area of the world. Now I can tell you there is a lot of negotiation that goes on. If a fleet commander gets a role and mission from a combatant commander that he thinks is inappropriate, he privately lets the CNO know, and the CNO works his channels through the JCS chairman and then maybe if he knows the combatant commander. So a lot of that stuff goes on. Basically that is how it is structured. Admiral Johnson had a huge number of issues on his plate every day. In terms of his overseas interests, mainly keeping his naval fleets trained, equipped, staffed, and fully supplied, he focused on three areas: the Persian Gulf in the mid east, the Med, and the Northeast Pacific. That is where he spent the bulk of his time in terms of his overseas interests. As his political advisor one of my key jobs was to help him with his situational awareness of significant foreign policy political, economic, information, diplomatic activities that would impact on his fleets in those three areas. So that he had good situational awareness. What were the developments in those countries abroad that could impact on the ability of the navy fleets

to conduct their operations. And at the same time to help him stay abreast of policy developments back here in Washington, and how those could impact on his ability to support the fleets in those areas. Such as whether State Department was not being sufficiently aggressive for example, in prosecuting a SOFA agreement with a mid east country.

Q: SOFA being a status of forces agreement.

FINNEY: We had a number of key SOFA agreements in the Persian Gulf which were critical given the huge investment of the Navy there to enable our sailors to go ashore and to get some R&R. Of course this is a very difficult situation. The Navy will insist that when these sailors are ashore everything they are doing is in the course of their duty. So if they beat up a taxi cab driver or if they victimize somebody at a bar, the Navy will insist that they will be tried by the Navy. This creates a lot of bilateral tensions in a relationship and makes it difficult for the State Department. So negotiation of these SOFA agreements was a huge issue. The Chief of Naval Operations received counterpart visitors about one a month or every other month. These are chiefs of navies from other navies around the world who come and visit him. So I was preparing him for these visits by his counterparts and making sure that the pol-mil aspect of those counterpart visits worked well. Conversely, we would be traveling overseas about every other month and he would be calling on his Navy counterparts as well as sometimes defense ministers and prime ministers. I would go with him on these trips, prepare him for these meetings, help him define his objectives and then report the results of his meetings to the chairman, be involved in drafting his reports, keeping the State Department informed of course, and then following up on military issues that came out of his foreign trips abroad. I also represented him at naval war games. The Navy invented war games here in the United States through the Naval War College founded in 1884. They have the deepest and richest edition of military exercises and war games. War is an intrinsically political action so there was always a pol-mil dimension to these war games. So I represented the CNO at these war games to ensure that the pol-mil dimension was being sufficiently addressed. One of the most famous series of war games conducted by the Navy, was during the period between WWI and WWII. These were the red/blue games that our Navy conducted at the Navy War College in which they exercised how we would deal with a Japanese naval threat. This didn't prevent us from suffering a strategic surprise at Pearl Harbor. When I came on in the mid-1990s we had what was called the global game. Every year from the mid-1980s through the 1990s the Navy brought together 200-300 people at Newport for two weeks of navy war game which had land components. We basically did Korea, and we did the Taiwan Straits against China, and we did the Mid East, Iraq. It was fascinating to observe, the huge amount of effort and work and detail and creativity that went into this. Then at the end of the game, Admiral Johnson and the entire senior Navy leadership would come up and we would brief him on the results, and they would play through the results. This was all taking place during the 1990s when the Navy and the Marine Corps were reshaping their entire strategy to project power ashore.

These global war games in 1996 to 1999, I actually attended four of them for Admiral Johnson, were taking place at a time of great strategic ferment in the Navy-Marine Corps.

Chuck Krulak, the Marine commandant, a National War College classmate of mine, was developing amongst the Marines the capability for urban warfare and its chemical, biological attack response capability. James Schlesinger would come up, our former Secretary of Defense. He would play the role of secretary of defense. One year I played the role of secretary of state. We had people from across all the agencies there. Then because of the associations I had, as Admiral Johnson's representative, developed in the global war games, I was asked to join war games the Navy War College was doing with a new institute in Switzerland, the Institute of Policy Studies. This was set up by the Swiss as their contribution to the NATO effort to intervene and bring stability to the Balkans. So for three years, I spent a week each year in Geneva in a Swiss military headquarters, doing war games. We did war games on Kosovo two years before we went into Kosovo. We did a war game on the Caucasus. We invited the Russians. And one of the war games had us intervening in Georgia, leading a NATO force to intervene in Georgia, to prevent its collapse. You can imagine the hair standing on the back of the necks of our Russian colleagues. Another example of the kind of support I provided him was that every other year the chief of Navy Operations of the United States invites every chief of naval operations in the world. Eighty or eighty-five of them come to the Naval War College. It is called the CNO symposium. There are sub groups of chiefs of naval operations that meet around the world. Latin American navies, the European navies, the Asian navies, and so forth. The CNO participates in that. We all have representation. Some times he can't go and he sends his fleet commander. But every other year, he hosts them all. They all come to Newport, which is a stunning setting. They are on Narragansett Bay, and we have a two day conference in which we look at common navy issues among navies across the globe. I was helping to fashion the agenda for this, going with him there, and participating in this symposium. Also, he has bilateral meetings. He meets with 15 or 20 CNOs who have got to get part of his time. So I am there as a note taker with his other staff working these meetings and helping prepare his agenda, do his talking points, all the follow up, all the pol-mil dimensions of that.

Q: Well you were there when we began to move into the Balkans. The admiral down in Naples was very much involved in this. But how did this play?

FINNEY: Our involvement in the Balkans was controversial because basically it was seen by a lot of people as an area not of vital interest to the United States. But the Clinton Administration felt that the war had dragged on long enough and that we had to take a role. Ambassador Dick Holbrooke did an incredible job of putting together the Dayton peace accords. There was always tension between our military commanders and our civilian policy makers and our civilians on the ground there, about how vigorous to be in the execution of the Dayton accords. Many in our military felt that this was not an area of vital interest to us. The Secretary of Defense, William Cohen, and DOD had a very negative reaction to anything smacking of nation building, because of the unhappy experience in Somalia. Our military was taking a very cautious and risk averse view. On the civilian side, the State department and the White House civilian staff wanted us to be as vigorous as possible in carrying out the accord: going after people like Serbian General Ratko Mladic, responsible for the massacre in Srebrenica, and Radovan Karadzic, the Serbian-Bosnian political leader. The civilians wanted us to go after them as a way to

bring justice to the situation. The military was afraid of casualties, and because we were in an area in their view which was not critical to us. So Admiral Snuffy Smith, for example, was not a favorite of people in the State Department because he was not seen as forward leaning and cooperative. His successors were all army three stars. Each one became more flexible. Admiral Johnson was not in a command position. From a Navy perspective it was CINCSOUTH in Naples who had the forces. He had two very important forces. He had the air power. It was naval air, together with air force air from our Aviano base in Italy. That was very important to providing the military muscle to enforce the Dayton accord. The quick reaction force, the strategic reserve if things suddenly turned bad in the Balkans, was Marines that were under the command of CINCSOUTH. So Admiral Johnson wanted to make sure that the policy in the Balkans from a military perspective was sensible, and that the Navy was not being asked to do things that from his perspective weren't appropriate. The venue for that, of course, was the Joint Chiefs of which he was a member. He participated in what were called the tank meetings, three or four times a week, and for which I helped prepare him. These were meetings of the Joint Chiefs to discuss issues that impacted on Navy roles and missions. So he wanted to make sure this was working out. During his tenure the U.S. and NATO launched the air campaign over Kosovo. A lot of that air campaign was done with Navy air. Also, the combat search and rescue for the Kosovo air campaign was helicopters launched from Navy and Marine Corps ships in the Adriatic. One of our Navy pilots was shot down, and we did launch a mission to rescue him. In my discussions with Admiral Johnson I felt that he believed that our effort in the Balkans and in Kosovo was worthwhile. He fully supported the Clinton Administration who tried to do this right and bring stability. At the same time he was in touch with his fleet commanders. He always wanted to make sure that the roles and missions assigned to the Navy made sense. So that is basically where we were on that.

Q: Well did you, I guess we are talking about the Navy, but being over there, did you sense any disconnect between Clinton and the military?

FINNEY: The short answer is yes, I did. From where I was sitting, as political advisor to the Chief of Naval Operations, and then particularly when I went over to the Balkans immediately after this to be the pol-ad to the U.S. contingent over there, there was a very noticeable divide. On the one hand we had General Wesley Clark, who was both our commander in NATO, and also commander of our own European command. So Wes Clark was the military man on the spot in executing and providing oversight for the Clinton Administration policy to try to bring peace and stability to the Balkans. This was underscored during the Kosovo campaign which was controversial here in the United States and in Europe as we were intervening in the internal affairs of Serbia for a humanitarian issue. The Serbs were, in our view, butchering the Muslim inhabitants of Kosovo. So we intervened directly in that. This was a precedent shattering event. We did not have UN approval to do this. So General Clark was faced with that, and he was faced with keeping the then 19 member NATO organization together in support of the campaign. We bombed the Chinese embassy and we bombed and killed some civilians.

Q: We need to remind that the Chinese embassy was a horrible mistake.

FINNEY: Yes. We inadvertently bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, a terrible mistake. Then we killed a lot of civilians, a terrible mistake. So Clark was trying to do this. From where I was sitting, I thought he did an incredible job. I thought he was masterful in trying to carry out the mission of our commander in chief, President Clinton, and at the same time finding ways to keep the other European members of NATO on the team. It wasn't perfect. It was messy. Mistakes were made, but he was doing the job. What I observed back here in Washington was that the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, an army special forces officer, Hugh Shelton, a very fine officer, belonged to a traditionalist army school that did not look favorably at getting into stability and reconstruction activities. Because in his view, if I understood him correctly, it distracted the Army from its basic combat role. So he was not an enthusiastic or strong supporter of the intervention in the Balkans. For some reason I never quite divined this was also reflected in SecDef, William Cohen. He was a member of President Clinton's cabinet and supposedly wants to carry out the President's wishes. But a problem emerged I guess in terms of personality. I am just basing this on what I have read, David Halberstam's books, and what I have observed. But General Clark was seen by General Shelton and SecDef Cohen as too enthusiastic an executor of the Clinton administration policy. And it appeared to them that not only was he too enthusiastic, but that personally he was achieving too much attention. I don't know if they felt he helped diminish their role or what, but there was also a personality factor involved. So consequently in my humble opinion, there was a divide. Unfortunately this complicated some of our efforts. Having said all that, the U.S. did lead the NATO mission into Bosnia. We did conduct a campaign into Kosovo which led to the resignation of Milosevic and saved a lot of lives. So at the end of the day it came out OK, I think, largely through the efforts of General Clark and others.

Q: Did you get involved in helping with any embassy or American citizen evacuations? I am thinking of Liberia or Sierra Leone or others. Were they going on while you were there?

FINNEY: I had a couple of delicate situations. Here we were supporting the presence in the Balkans, and at the same time, obviously, trying to deal with other situations around the world that required our attention, particularly these developments in what was then called Zaire and then that change of government produced the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There was a lot of unrest. We assigned carriers to support our fleets in each of the major areas of the world. With those carriers go what we call Marine expeditionary units or MEUs. So the carrier force consists of the carrier, three or four destroyers, maybe a cruiser, an oiler or two, and then a submarine or two. So basically seven to nine vessels. Then the Marine expeditionary unit consists of the Marine helicopter carrier and two support ships, so an additional three total. The carrier group and the MEUs deployed together 10,000 sailors and Marines. They go out for six months and then come back. No Navy in history dominates the seven seas like the United States Navy does and has done particularly since the demise of the Soviet Union. We have a carrier battle group and 10,000 sailors and marines covering every major ocean area of the globe all the time. This is the payoff. Here we were in the Balkans. The strategic reserve in these events in

the Balkans and Kosovo was the 26th MEU the 24th MEU, which has that flat top carrier and the vessels with it there in the Adriatic, in the Med. The Sixth fleet carrier has gone through the Suez Canal to support operations in the Persian Gulf.

So when this evacuation took place in West Africa, we took the carrier from the MEU that was providing reserve in the Balkans and sent it 2,700 miles down to the west coast of Africa. We left its two other ships back up in the Med, and there we were offshore the Congo and offshore Liberia to help with evacuations. We run into a typical issue here. Our ambassador in Congo, a very able and competent officer, Dan Simpson, had one view of the threat to the Americans. Then, of course, European command which is responsible for sub-Saharan Africa had another view. The military view -- I am simplifying for the sake of discussion -- but the military view is basically if there is a serious threat to Americans, let's get them out of there, and let's get them out of there early. The ambassador, of course, can take a different view. Moving our people out of a country is an expression of a lack of confidence in the government, and this complicates his bilateral relationship. So we had a situation in the Congo where the European command (EUCOM), the Navy, Joint Chiefs wanted to move the Americans out, and Ambassador Simpson thought this was premature. He wanted to wait until the situation clarified. So you have that tension back and forth. So I am trying to help the CNO understand what is going on and why Ambassador Simpson feels this way, why State takes this position. Another key issue is this: When you have this kind of a situation, combatant commanders like EUCOM, they want to put the planning element inside the embassy to help the ambassador plan for the contingency and at the same time communicate a picture back to the EUCOM and our ships offshore. And the ambassadors get very goosey about this. If you put a planning element with communications inside the embassy, and they are sending out reporting about the situation, and it may not square with the ambassador's appraisal, you can understand the tensions involved. And then another element: Ambassador Simpson didn't want the Marine helicopter carrier to be visible, if I have got it right. I think it was in the Congo. He wanted it far enough offshore so it wouldn't be visible. Because if our ship that was going to conduct the evacuation were visible, it would incite events inside the country. On the other hand, the Navy is saying the farther you move the ship out, the longer the helicopter flight in to pick up your people and so forth. So these kinds of issues, everybody has their different perspective. They have to be worked out. In this particular case, we had two things going on. One in the Congo (Kinshasa) and one in the other with the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Brazzaville. That started to go bad, and that is actually where we did an evacuation, and we wound up doing it with a special forces contingent that came out of Europe and was flown down and went in with C-130s. Basically what you are trying to do for the Chief of Naval Operations in that kind of a situation is to make sense to him of what is going on, the dynamics between State and DOD, and making sure that the Navy's interests are well served. He would get phone calls from a fleet commander saying, "Jay, can you help me out with this. These guys at State or at DOD don't seem to get the picture. They don't want to understand what we are being asked to do." Who should he call? Should he make the call? How should he say it? This is all the inside baseball that is going on. At the same time we were using our naval assets to support what was going on in the Balkans, and in the Mid-East, we were conducting evacuations of American

citizens off the west coast of Africa. Remember we also did Albania with Navy helicopters. We evacuated our embassy in Albania in Tirana. That was a very successful evacuation again. We had to work very hard with the ambassador there to get her to permit us to put a EUCOM planning element and communication element inside her embassy to do the necessary planning and do the necessary coordination. That is all part of the national security process, and this does get done. These evacuations do take place, and we basically achieved our objectives.

Q: Did you sense, sitting with the chief of naval operations, a problem for the Navy in its large investment in submarines, yet the Soviet fleet is much less active. I sometimes had the feeling that you had American subs cruising outside the entrance to the Kola Peninsula shouting out, "you come out and play."

FINNEY: That is exactly what was going on in the 1990s, as the Navy and the Marines grappled with this realization that we are not going to be fighting major battles on the high seas. We are going to be projecting power ashore. So not only what is the role for the Navy or Marines at large, but what is the role for the various branches. The submarines that you cited are absolutely pivotal. Of course, we would like to believe our submarine force is second to none. Not only are they capable, but they are very aggressive. We train our people to take the fight to the enemy, and we want to fight them over there. We don't want to fight them here. Yes, we had our submarines in the gap between Iceland and Europe and Russia, and we had them up in the Pacific Northwest, and we had them around China, and they are in the Yellow Sea and they are outside, and they are ready to pounce. Absolutely, if the balloon goes up. Another thing they are doing is intelligence collecting. These subs are incredible intelligence collectors. They don't call it the Silent Service for nothing. Where do you want to collect the intelligence? What choke point do you want to patrol? What undersea cables do you want to…

Q: Plug into?

FINNEY: Exactly. So now you are a fleet commander, you are Chief of Naval Operations. These are not things you are going to give up easily to have this kind of capability. Obviously, common sense comes to the fore here. The Soviet sub fleet has vanished. The Chinese sub fleet is a very serious concern and protection of our carriers absolutely vital. You can imagine if somebody takes out a carrier, the blow, the prestige. I mean this is enormous, so you have got to be able to protect those babies. But the short answer is the sub fleet has shrunken dramatically. I mean I think, all sub fleets are pushing about 100 subs. I think we are down to about 54 or 55 now. We have come down tremendously. Of course they are awfully expensive. They have also looked at ways to use some of these subs in new ways.

When I say the 54, coming down from the high 90s to the 54, I am talking about attack subs. I am not talking about the boomers which are the ones with the ballistic missiles. We have signed these treaties with the Soviet Union. I am not up to date on the results of the latest negotiations. But what I remember in the late 90s is that we were pulling back on the boomers, which was a key part of our nuclear weapons triad. Underwater, in the

sky and the missile silos out in North Dakota. That was the triad. Of course, the most valuable part of the triad was the subs because they are hidden. They are hidden, and we can move them all around. So we were reducing the boomers. As I remember we had about 16 ballistic missile subs. They are converting four of those ballistic subs into ships where we can put 100 to 110 special forces and SEALS to project power ashore. You remember the strategy. We are not projecting at sea; we are projecting ashore. So now we have these subs which will carry 100 to 110 special forces and SEALS that we can use to put key people ashore at key places to do key things.

Q: I mean there are two countries that had the potential for, I would say within their localities, being a problem to the United States. One is India, and the other is China. Can you talk about the China situation while you were there? How did we view China?

FINNEY: With the collapse of the Soviet Union, I know of no other single country that is as important to the Navy as China. China is the incredible focus of the Navy on a wide range of concerns. Whether for weapons, whether for threats to Taiwan, whether for amphibious capabilities. The war games that are conducted by the United States Navy about China must number at least a dozen a year. Obviously when you have something like Kosovo where naval air support was required, or we had a couple of other situations, such as with Iraq where Hussein seemed to be making a couple of feints. I think Desert Fox was one of them, where we rushed forces to the Gulf. You have got to address these immediate concerns. But aside from the immediate concerns, China is a huge focus for the United States Navy.

The first important commitment is how our national security leadership is going to interpret our commitment under the Taiwan Relations Act to defend Taiwan. The Navy thinks that if, God forbid, we are in a situation where China makes a lunge at Taiwan, it is going to be the Navy and the Air Force that is going to provide the primary response, because the conventional wisdom is we never want to engage in a land war with China for the obvious reasons. So it is going to be the Navy and Air Force, and primarily it is going to be the carriers coming from the seventh fleet and elsewhere to enable us to project air power to provide an air umbrella for Taiwan against a Chinese assault. And then the second thing is to have our missiles to shoot down the Chinese missiles that would be heading for Taiwan. So this is an incredibly challenging and complex scenario. The third element is the Chinese sub fleet. Because to bring two or three carriers within 100 miles of Taiwan to engage Chinese amphibious or Chinese air and Chinese missiles, we have to protect those carriers. So the Chinese submarine fleet is a huge concern to us. We spend a lot of time mapping the floor of the Yellow Sea which unfortunately is very shallow. It is only about 200 to 300 feet. This is hard to do. Of course the Chinese Navy and the Chinese Marines are conducting their war games, a couple of big ones during the year, and naturally we are trying to figure out what they are doing and what their capabilities are. So it is the missiles, their amphibious capability, and their subs that we are most concerned about.

Now having said that, I mean the folks in the Navy are totally committed to engaging China. I mean we do not want to get into a conflict with China. We want to find a way to

work with them as partners. We have found a way to work with them to continue our ship visits to Hong Kong, for example. We want to engage with them. We want to engage them with senior leader visits. We invite the Chinese for senior leader visits, port visits, us going there, they going to Hawaii or to the U.S. West Coast. We invite the Chinese to participate in our Asia-Pacific study center that DOD has in Honolulu, one of PACOMs, Pacific Command's, important schoolhouses. We invite them to come to our war colleges in the United States. The Chinese accept some of this; others they don't accept. One of the most exciting things I did with Admiral Johnson was to make a week long trip to China. And for the first time in our military relationship with China, the Chinese invited Admiral Johnson to go to sea with the Chinese fleet. Unprecedented. I was extremely lucky to go aboard one of the destroyers. The first time in U.S.-Chinese history that we had U.S. Navy people aboard one of their vessels. We went out into the ocean and did drills with one of their submarines. Then we visited their naval air unit ashore as well. It was a tremendous opportunity, and following Admiral Johnson's visit there, that led to us inviting them to come to Hawaii and then come to the West Coast. When they came to the West Coast, not only did we take them to San Diego and Bremerton up in Washington, but we took them to the Navy Top Gun air fighter school in Nevada. We took them up to Boeing. We took them here; we took them there. So while one part of the Navy is planning for the worst case situation, the other part of the Navy is fully engaging with DOD, State Department and of course the National Security Council support in engaging. Not only did we go to sea with the Chinese Navy with Admiral Johnson, but we went to a university. We went to a civilian university, Wuhan University near Shanghai. Admiral Johnson gave a brief to a 200-300 Chinese university students with their faculty about here we are, I am Jay Johnson. I represent the United States Navy, and this is what the United States Navy does. And this is why we are in East Asia, and this is why the 7th Fleet is constantly going between China and Taiwan. We laid it on the table. Then we invited our consul general in Shanghai to come with us and make the presentation, Ray Burkhart. So, we did this together. You go to a Chinese university and meet these professors, and they blow you away. They are speaking English as well as you and I are. It is humbling. So engaging with the Chinese dynamo and assessing their military prowess is one huge part of what is going on between our Navy and China, but the other part of course is preparing for the worst.

Q: Well when you were there, did the Chinese raise any problems with intelligence spy planes. While we had an incident later, our flights are fairly routine and obvious. Is this something that came up while you were there?

FINNEY: Yes. We are aggressive. We are flying our planes up and down their air space all the time because we are trying to find out what is going on. And because we all are human beings people on our side make mistakes. Some of our pilots or some of their pilots or some of our ship captains or some of their ship captains get lost, get confused or get too aggressive. This is part of the great game that is going on. We are constantly feeling each other out. So when our ships go into Hong Kong, they will race. Some of their boats come right up to us and then peel off. Or when we come out of the Taiwan Strait, the same thing happens. When our subs are tiptoeing around through the Yellow Sea, there are frictions that happen. So this goes on all the time. This incident I guess in

the first couple of months of the Bush administration where they forced down our plane was a particularly egregious one, but something like that can happen in any day of the year. [Ed: An American EP-3 and a Chinese F-8 jet crashed into each other April 1, 2001.]

Q: OK, what about naval relations with India?

FINNEY: The way the Navy looked at it, India potentially is a strategic balancer to China because they have had their difficulties with China. So on the one had we see them as a strategic balancer. Through our Pacific commander in Honolulu and through our 7th fleet we are constantly courting the Indian Navy to come and play with us. Out in Pacific command, every month of the year there is some kind of conference going on. So we are inviting the Indians to come to the conferences, come to our schools, participate in our war games. A good part of the Indian Navy wants to do this. Of course they have a democratic government and their foreign ministry and who ever the prime minister is, is very particular about the extent of their collaboration with us. So one of the most disappointing efforts of my three years with Admiral Johnson as his political advisor was trying to deepen the engagement with India. It was like mating with a porcupine. They are so sensitive, they are so prickly. They are so worried about being co-opted by us. And we have got issues with them in the Indian Ocean. This is where this comes a cropper. Because we are running a lot of fleet stuff through the Indian Ocean. Some of it is related to our presence in the Middle East. Diego Garcia is a huge strategic platform for us. I mean we have our fleet activities there. Our subs transit there. But mostly we have our big bombers there. This puts the Indian nose out of joint, that we have that. And then our fleets are rolling through there, and we do freedom of navigation challenges against Indians. It drives them nuts. So it is a complicated relationship, the balance. The Navy fully agrees with assessment of the importance of India. We strive mightily to engage with them. They have real issues with our fleet activity in the Indian Ocean, and just like we are always on the edge with another incident with China, we have had a couple of incidents with the Indians. You know, we have this thing, if I understand this right, there is a 200 mile defensive ring around the aircraft carriers. That is the radius. So the planes from the carriers are out there at the edge of the 200 mile ring looking for anybody who dares come into that 200 mile ring. Well, it is international air space, so there is jockeying. And sometimes we jockey with the Indian pilots, so we have had a couple of situations there. That, plus our freedom of navigation challenges, and our role in Diego Garcia, all complicate our attempts to engage with them. I think since my tenure there, we are coming along in expanding the navy relationship with India as well as other military sides. The tone is really set by the Indian prime minister. Under the Congress Party it was difficult because the Congress Party in my view had a little chip on their shoulder about the U.S. They think we are arrogant, and sometimes, let's face it, we are guilty as charged. But the other parties that came in seemed to be more flexible. Then there was this important decision in India to allow foreign investment and to decide to participate in the globalization process. I think when those political decisions were made that loosened them up a little bit. Of course, I have left out the most obvious thing, and that is our military relationship with Pakistan and where we stand with that and the history of that. As you know, we have had a troubled relationship…

Q: At the end of this POLAD assignment what did you see as a next promising assignment?

FINNEY: I volunteered to become the political advisor to the U.S.-led multi national Division North in SFOR in Northeast Bosnia in Tuzla. I thoroughly enjoyed my three years with Admiral Johnson. I was up against the six or seven year rule for service in the U.S., so I had to go overseas. I believed the U.S. was doing the right thing, that the Clinton administration did make the correct decision to deal with the terrible problems there and, through NATO, contribute to stability. So I volunteered to go out as a political advisor to our U.S. multi-national led division, which was in Tuzla in northeast Bosnia under SFOR.

Q: You did that from when to when?

FINNEY: I did that from July, 1999, until August, 2000. Actually, I had two tours. I served there from July, 1999, until August of 2000, and then I went back the summer of 2001 from July to September of 2001.

Q: What was the situation when you first got there?

FINNEY: There were three multi-national divisions. The American led division was in the north in Tuzla. The British led division was in the southwest in Banja Luka, and the French led division was in the south in Mostar. Then we had the SFOR NATO headquarters in Sarajevo. So I went out as the political advisor to the commanding general of multi-national division north which was a U.S. division. It included a Russian airborne brigade. It included a Nordic/Polish brigade, and included a Turkish brigade. What was the situation there? You will recall our troops went in, in December 1995. There were approximately 60,000 NATO forces. It was called IFOR then, intervention force and included 25,000 American troops. The military situation was that the number of our forces had declined significantly. We had gone into Bosnia December, 1995, with a U.S. NATO force of 65,000, and 24,000 of that NATO force was U.S. When I arrived in Northeast Bosnia, the 1st Cavalry Division was in Tuzla. The overall NATO force had shrunk to about 26 or 27,000 down from about 65,000, and the U.S. contingent had shrunk to about eight or nine thousand. That was on the military side. There were still major issues that we were working which still provided for significant tension.

On the political side, we were trying to move ahead with implementation of the civilian provisions of the Dayton Accords to keep pace with what we had been able to achieve on the military side. Progress was slow because the political process is always more difficult in many respects than the military process. There was a lot of frustration across the board in the U.S. government. There was frustration among the Bosnian Muslims, the Bosnian Croats, and the Bosnian Serbs. There were troubles with the lack of progress. The economy was still in the pits. Unemployment was fifty or sixty percent. There was no foreign investment. When I say no foreign investment, I mean no foreign investment. They were living off the dole of the United Nations and the U.S. and other donors. There

was very little privatization. It was a basic bare bones economy. The strong negative feelings among the different ethnic groups was still prevalent. The return of refugees to their original villages had hardly begun because of the resistance. The Serbs were resisting the return of the Bosnian Muslims and vice versa. Same for the Croats. So it was still a pretty tense place, and there was a lot of impatience about getting on with things.

On the military side, there was significant progress to report. Number one: obviously, they had stopped fighting each other. Number two: the forces had been separated. Number three: they had put their heavy weapons into cantonments. I think when I was there a third of Bosnia had about 140 heavy weapons sites. We had set up a joint military commission that was meeting regularly, and we were insuring freedom of movement in our sector which was a key point for the return of the refugees.

The situation was substantially calmer in the summer of 1999, than it was in December and January of 1995 and 1996. There were still major issues that we were working which still provided for significant tension. One was the return of refugees. We had just made a slight dent in returning more than a million refugees who wanted to return to their homes in Bosnia. We still had to deploy our military forces to insure freedom of movement across the boundary lines between the Republic of Serbska on one hand, and the Croatian and Bosnian sector on the other. We still had a lot of low level harassment that was going on by renegade and hard core folks on actually all three sides. On our part of Bosnia, most of the miscreants of the hard core that refused to observe the Dayton Accords were Serbs, but not all by any stretch of the imagination. But the majority. So, on the civilian side we were trying to use our military presence to leverage the civilians to get cracking in bringing these refugees back to their home towns, those who wanted to come back. So that was the situation. Within the U.S. government our ambassador and our State Department were always asking our military to be more vigorous in promoting local security so that the return of these refugees could get going. We had these economic undertakings to begin to take root so that we could begin the shift of focus from this kind of sullen bitter standoff to move things to the next level and shift the political discussions from resentment and revenge and bitterness to talking about schools and economic development and reconciliation.

When I arrived there, the 1st Cavalry Division in the U.S. was our lead element. They were in the process of turning over command to the 10th Mountain Division out of New York. I had the opportunity in June of 1999, before they deployed, to go up to Fort Drum, New York, to spend a week with the command group of the 10th Mountain Division. We war gamed the kinds of things that they might expect when they took over command in August in Northeast Bosnia. They had a crackerjack command group in terms of the commander of the division who was Major General James Campbell. General Campbell had been in Somalia for most of that event. He left just before Black Hawk down in October of 1992. He had been working with the UN and the 10th Mountain and the State Department, Bob Oakley, in trying to make the Somalia process work. But he came out of that not embittered. He came out of it realistic, but with a full appreciation of the political-military dimension of these kinds of undertakings. So he was someone who reached out and embraced me as a political advisor from day one. The first thing he did

during this week I spent with him was bring me immediately into his command group, himself, his assistant division commander, his chief of staff, his intelligence folks and command sergeant major. He brought me inside from day one, said, "This guy is now with us. He is part of us. He is a member of our team." That was critical for me being effective. Before I got there, they had already spent two or three weeks down in Fort Polk, Louisiana, going through exercises down there with the Department of Defense, and brought in 150 Serb and Croat Muslims from Cleveland, St. Louis, and Chicago. They came to Fort Polk, Louisiana, and they set up a village. It was inhabited by Muslims, Serbs, and Croats, and you had to go in there and work the village. That was the training exercise.

Q: What about NGOs? Having dealt with five years in Belgrade, I assume there were coordination problems in the field and back in the States.

FINNEY: You are right, but they were all getting paid by DOD, so they were polite. So that gave them a flavor, and they would do demonstrations and so forth.

Anyway, I was extraordinarily fortunate to be associated with the 10th Mountain. Major General Campbell got promoted to a third star, became commander of U.S. Army in the Pacific. Now he is director of the Army staff in the Pentagon. His assistant commander, then Brigadier General John Brown, got promoted to a two star, commander of our forces in Alaska, and then promoted to a third star. Now he is commander of our army in the pacific. Galen Jackman who was a colonel and chief of staff, is now promoted to two star. He was head of the military district in Washington. I don't know if you saw the Reagan funeral with Nancy Reagan or with these other very significant events. He was escorting them for that event. Now he either is a two star or maybe he is a three star, head of all the army legislative liaison with the Congress. Such tremendously capable people. General Jackman, by the way, was a former Delta Force commander. So these guys are very capable, very smart, and they were great folks to work with. So we got there on the ground, and then beginning in August we had to figure out how we were going to be more effective in expanding our presence there to jump start this return of refugees back to their home communities. That was a major focus for us.

One of the things I did for General Campbell and his senior staff was to work with the Serbian police and the Muslim Croat police, work with the mayors, work with the town council members to say to them, "Gentlemen, we are here to implement the Dayton Accords which your representatives have signed. The responsibility for the return of the refugees is guaranteed in the Dayton Accords, and the responsibility for executing these guarantees, gentlemen, rests with you. Now we are here to help, and please let us know what we can do to stitch this together and support you. But Mr. Mayor, Mr. Serb brigade commander, Mr. Bosnian Muslim battalion commander, the responsibility for making sure these people can come back and do it peacefully rests with you. Let's get on with it." I remember General Wesley Clark came down. He was still commander, and he came down to visit us. He was quite inspiring I have to say. He sat us down, General Campbell, and three or four of us in the back room of the Capitol operations center, and he told us, "Gentlemen, a lot of peace keeping is about bullying. You have got to get in there and

persuade people to do things they don't want to do." Honest to God he told General Campbell, "You know in war college Jim, you weren't taught how to be cunning, how to be, I don't want to say deceitful, but how to be tough, and at the same time be clever and be realistic, and not be stupid. But these are the people we are dealing with, and you have got to get in there and you have got to put your finger in their chest." And he said, "We are here to execute what your representatives signed up to, and you can be part of the problem or you can be part of the solution. We want you to be part of the solution; let's work together." So in essence that was a key thing I was working on with General Campbell, and I have to say he had the right blend. He had the right blend of traditional army toughness with sensitivity to the political-military situation.

Q: Let's go back to some of the first issues you and the command had to face.

FINNEY: Another big issue was rounding up war criminals who had been indicted by the international court in The Hague. That was a significant symbolic issue in terms of completing our commitment to bring these people to justice. It was unsettling to a lot of the people who had survived the war and thought it was only a matter of time before the bad guys came back. We had pretty stringent force protection rules. It was a dramatic contrast to the time when I was in Vietnam when again I was on an advisory team, a district and provincial advisory team. Although we had our house where we lived, we were mixing in among the community. In northeast Bosnia at Tuzla at Eagle Base, we were on an old Yugoslav air base where everybody came inside the wire at night. There were some exceptions very quickly I will note, but all people came inside the wire at night. There was no fraternization with the local people meaning there was no going out to local taverns to have a beer or going out to local restaurants. This is in the evening hours. During the day, of course, we fraternized with them all the time because we were in and out of their towns and villages and districts and talking and so forth. In the evening everybody came inside the wire. Also, in contrast to Vietnam, there was no drinking. General order number one is that American forces will not consume alcohol, so you can imagine up in northeast Bosnia. Here we are at an air base with close to 7,000 Americans and everybody came inside the wire at night. There was no drinking. There was no fraternization, supposedly between the males and the females. And you worked seven days a week. It was quite a unique situation. One upside of this was we didn't have the kinds of liaisons with the local people that produced scores of illegitimate children and the orphanage and stuff like that. There was none of that contact. Now the one exception was, we had special forces teams that we put in team houses outside the wire in certain key areas in our area of responsibility which was northeast Bosnia. The word for county up there was "Obstina". I am thinking off the top of my head we probably had 30 or 35 Obstinas or counties in our area of operation. And we probably had six to a dozen special forces team houses in key areas around these 35 Obstinas. They did go into the bars, and they did go into the restaurants, and they did hang out with bad and near bad people, mostly in soccer clubs, hunting clubs, and other people where a lot of our opposition was coming from. So they were part of our eyes and ears.

Q: Well now, what was your feeling about this American stand operating procedure? The Brits when I had been there, I am talking about in 1967 I guess, they were going around

unarmored with berets on and chatting people up and all that. Now, I mean why the difference in philosophy?

FINNEY: There were a couple of reasons. I am giving you my personal assessment. We talked about this a lot. One of the fundamental reasons why the U.S. military had stringent force protection rules there was because back in Washington key was the attitude of the Congress and the executive branch was toward this intervention. This was an intervention in Bosnia on the edge of traditional American interests in Western Europe. If SFOR had been organized to defend Northern France or to help defend the English Channel, there would have been broad support and understanding of what we were doing because Normandy and the English Channel is squarely in the middle of Western Europe which the American public understands is a vital interest for us. But we were in Southeast Europe. We were on the edge. We were on the seam of our vital interest. So when President Clinton went to the Congress, the intervention in Bosnia was controversial and one of the ways the President got it through the Congress is that he promised we would only be there for one year. We would get in and get out because there was significant body of opinion in the Congress that this is not what the U.S. should be doing.

Number two: again reporting from the executive branch perspective. We were told that because the political support for our intervention in Bosnia was so tenuous, it was imperative that casualties be kept to an absolute minimum. If the DOD had to be explaining to the American people why their sons and daughters were dying in the Balkans, it was going to be a very difficult sell because of trying to articulate what vital interests are at stake here. So the DOD civilians hammered home to the DOD military that you must take significant precautions to avoid any possible loss of life of American troops. Not only because the political consensus for the intervention was fragile, but for this very point, that if we incurred significant U.S. casualties in the Balkan intervention, and it resulted in us pulling out, remember Somalia in 1992? This was only 1995 and 1996 when we were making the argument to go in. If after some casualties we had to pull out of SFOR the judgment was that the whole mission would collapse. If the Dutch took casualties and they were pulled out, SFOR wouldn't collapse. If the French took casualties and pulled out, SFOR wouldn't collapse. But if America pulled out, the mission was over. That was the general thinking. So it was because of the fragility of the political consensus here at home, because it was difficult to communicate what vital interest the United States had in southeast Balkans, and because the consensus was if the Americans didn't do it, this thing would collapse. I went to the training events with the 10th Mountain where they were certified to be able to go over and do this peace enforcement mission. And the military mentors from the Pentagon emphasized this to our commanders over and over again. And it was a source of friction in a number of respects. One of them was the State Department officers over there and the embassy were constantly pushing the U.S. contingent within SFOR to do more, to be more aggressive, to go in hot pursuit of the indicted war criminals. From the embassy's perspective the military was being too cautious, that we had to execute the Dayton Accord and complete all the different items on the Dayton accord. But from the military perspective, the embassy was asking us to go into areas where we could suffer loss of life or limb and put

the entire thing in jeopardy. So that was one of the tensions, and that was one of the constant issues being discussed. A lot of people ridiculed the U.S. approach, and ridiculed the fact that even as a political advisor, when I went out, I went out in a convoy of three vehicles. I had my vehicle, and then I had a Humvee in front and a Humvee in back. That was my personal security detail. When my general went out, he had his vehicle plus four. Our troops, when they went out into the villages and did their patrols, wore their body armor, wore their helmets, had their weapons locked and loaded. This contrasted with the British who went out with no helmets. They certainly had their weapons but could go out in individual vehicles without having security vehicles with them. We were ridiculed for that, and we were told we were unable to engage effectively with the local people because of these strict force protection requirements. We were also ridiculed because we were prohibited from drinking. The British troops could go into a village and sit down and have a glass of beer with the mayor; we could not. The commander of the entire NATO SFOR force, it was a NATO undertaking, but it was an American four star, Four star or three star, I can't remember. He was very sensitive with this, and this was a constant issue of discussion within the SFOR camp. After all, we were meeting and talking with our French and British and Russian and Polish colleagues all the time. This was a constant issue of discussion.

Our commander in Sarajevo, commander of SFOR, gave the leeway to our commander in Tuzla, in the northeast where I was, to take a review every sixth month to see if from his perspective as operational commander on the ground in the northeast, whether he thought we should make adjustments. So every six months we went through this drill. You know, in this part of the AO do we wear helmets or do we not wear helmets? In this part of the AO do we still have to button up full? So there was a dialog going on, and it was a major issue. As the political advisor I was in the middle of a lot of these discussions, but I came to this conclusion: If by buttoning up, and wearing heavy force protection we were 90% or 85% effective instead of 100% effective, I was willing to take the 15% degradation in effectiveness in order to preserve the entire mission. Because if we started losing men and women in the course of our patrols and then the Congress started coming after the administration demanding that we bring the troops home, that in my humble view would undermine the entire SFOR mission. I looked and compared. We were particularly close to the British, who had been doing peace enforcement in Northern Ireland for 15 or 20 years. I went over there a lot; my commander went over there a lot because we had to constantly evaluate the effectiveness of what we were doing, and we learned a lot from the Brits. I can't say that the Brits qualitatively were successful in settling more refugees, cantoning more weapons, cantoning weapons between the warring forces, harvesting weapons from people who shouldn't have them or de-mining. On all these categories I didn't see any dramatic difference in numbers of refugees returned, in numbers of weapons picked up, in the effectiveness of elections, any of the key indicators between what they were doing and what we were doing. Not that there wasn't any difference. I thought that the Brits, for example, were better than we were in going into villages and persuading people to turn in weapons. They did a little bit better, but it wasn't dramatic. It wasn't like they were getting 50% more weapons than we were, but they were getting 10 or 15 or 20% more. But we returned more refugees than the British did and so forth. So at the end of the day, I felt it was an issue that deserved careful scrutiny. I didn't think

it was decisive in terms of the effectiveness of implementing the terms of the accord. But it exposed us to a lot of questions and some ridicule.

Q: Well it is a very clear explanation of why it was being done. But how by this time, this 1999 to 2000, do you evaluate the threat. You know I mean when I wandered around there, in private vehicles and taxis and all, a couple of years before I didn't hear any shooting or anything like that.

FINNEY: This was before the war, Stu or after SFOR intervened?

Q: After, well after SFOR intervened. This was the first and second major elections.

FINNEY: Yes, that was probably 1997-1998. What part of Bosnia were you in?

Q: The first time I was in Goražde I think.

FINNEY: In the central area. That is right.

Q: Then I was working on Tuzla.

FINNEY: Yeah that was a tough area. That was a traditional Serb area.

Q: Oh yeah, and Srebrenica was not very far away. Then I was down near I think it was called Bosanski Brod in the British.

FINNEY: Bosanski Brod was a devastated area.

Q: Well now as I say I didn't feel any tension. I mean people I would get both sides of the argument, but there was no feeling buddy you had better watch out here. It is just you don't step off the road because there might be mines there.

FINNEY: That was critical; you are right.

Q: That being said, anyway what I am really saying is, were the armed forces or the guerillas wandering the hills?

FINNEY: The answer in our area was no. The focus of our efforts was the west bank of the Drina, the Drina River valley. That was the area where the Serbs came in and drove out almost 400,000 Muslims, because the Serbs wanted both banks of the Drina. The east bank was in Serbia. They wanted the west bank. That is where Srebrenica, Sabornic, and I can't remember all the towns. So that was in that area. What we had was, we had snipers, and we had remnants of the red berets and these other para military forces that had joined hunting clubs and soccer clubs. So we had during the year I was there, we probably had at least half a dozen or so rocket propelled grenades, weapons fired at our team houses. I visited one team house; the rocket propelled grenade came through the wall, and the team members were sleeping on a mattress. It came through the wall at

maybe 2 ½ feet right over their heads. In one wall, across the mattress room and out the other wall. Nobody was killed. We had grenade attacks. Rocket attacks and grenade attacks on the team houses, I would say three or four. Then we had a half a dozen instances on our patrols. We had grenades thrown at our patrols. We had a couple of guys injured. We had sniper attacks, a couple of guys injured, but we never had anybody killed.

Q: So it was much more benign…

FINNEY: Yes. More like my experience in Vietnam. We were out in the midst of a local insurgency. It was benign, but at least once a month we were having an incident like this, and of course we were getting lots of intel about their plans to do things. Now, in Eagle Base, we had a seven mile perimeter fence. We had breaches of that fence every other month. Somebody was tossing a grenade over the fence or taking a pot shot at our guard post. That was happening on a regular basis. But it was nit pricking like that, testing us, testing our defenses. Now at this same time that was going on, they were blowing up houses. Returning refugees would return, they blew up the house, and they would kill the returnees. So we had these pin prick incidents coming at our special forces houses and occasionally coming in at our night patrols, and then breaches of the fences around Eagle Base. The people that were getting killed were primarily the Bosnians and the Croatians and sometimes vengeance was taken against the Serbs. So it was a situation where people were getting killed; we were being pin pricked, but no American lost their life in combat. I say from combat because when I was there we lost a half a dozen folks from automobile accidents.

Q: What about war criminals? What was that situation, and your view was at what the French and the Brits were doing about it.

FINNEY: The war criminal issue to me was a very important issue, primarily psychologically. One of the things I did for my commander when I went out to meet with the mayors and the village chiefs and the provincial council members, one of the key questions I would ask them is when do you think our job is going to be done here? When do you think SFOR can go home? One of the key responses I got to this question was when you turn in Karadzic and Milosevic and the others, some of whom are still here. So that was one of the key responses I got. It also seemed to me that when I read about Balkan history, so much of the turmoil seemed to be based on vengeance and revenge and the fact that justice hadn't been done in the past. So if justice wasn't done with one generation, the next generation found a way to settle the score. So for me this was important. I can tell you from my perspective as a political advisor, I wished that my command and my SFOR people, whom I had the utmost respect for, had been much more aggressive. I could not get my American military commanders to take more chances in going after these war criminals. We had a big intelligence operation. We had a very sizable, I mean 30 to 40 person intelligence station down in Sarajevo, which had teams that were focused on this. I tried to be a liaison between very compartmentalized programs the agency had down there with the intelligence we were getting up in our area, so I could encourage my commanders to act on the intelligence that the agency was

producing. They would come up and brief my commander about every other month. I served with two. I served the 10th Mountain for seven months, and then I did about five or six months with the 49th armored division, a National Guard unit out of Texas. So I saw two, both the guard and the active, but the commanders has the same attitude. They were very reluctant. We should have been more aggressive. Now the British excelled. They had that Northern Ireland experience. And the SAS was there. The Special Air Services. If we got one war criminal, the British got ten. So hats off to the Brits. They had better intel. They had better coordination. They were prepared to take more risks than we were. I thought it was a key part of the Dayton Accord and we on the American side, for whatever reason, had not been able to get the kind of civilian and military coordination to do a better job. Everybody talked about Milosevic and Karadzic. Down in Bratanach outside of Srebrenica, Insuvornic. Then there was another town right up on the Saba River. It escapes me right now. There were guys still those towns who were indicted war criminals and were walking around that we weren't going after. Now eventually, I can tell you here we are in 2006, these guys were winkled out. Most of these guys are now in The Hague, but we are eight years too late.

Q: And Milosevic and Karadzic are still at large.

FINNEY: Thank you. They are still at large, and that is in my humble opinion in spite of all the hard work and everything that is going on, that is a significant failing that we haven't gotten these guys. [Ed note. Both these men subsequent to this interview have been tried by the Hague Tribunal.]

Q: Well let's talk about this for a second. What was the feeling, let's say you find out that Milosevic is in the next town and he has got his bodyguards around him or something like that. I mean in order to get him, what was the thinking? Are you going to have to go in shooting? I mean and that was a no-no.

FINNEY: Part of the issue was actionable intelligence. Had to have that. Number two: was sorting out between our military and between the CIA para military capability, who was actually going to do what. In our sector, our American military would do the outer circle. Let's say that we got word Karadzic was in a Serbian Orthodox monastery. So our job as the SFOR contingent northeast was to go in and set up an outer perimeter.

Q: Who was Delta? Explain that.

FINNEY: Well these are the special operations capability. It is referred to in the press and the media as the Delta Force. This is a highly trained group that belongs to the Special Operations Command and specifically operates out of Fort Bragg, North Carolina. They are the folks, for example, that we used when we tried to capture Mohamed Aidid in Mogadishu [Ed: 3 and 4 October 1993]. You saw in the story about Black Hawk Down. The Army Rangers did the perimeter security for the takedown of that hotel where Aidid's lieutenants are, but it was the Delta Forces that actually went inside the hotel to round him up. So it would be the same type of arrangement in the Balkans. You had to have that capability on hand, and you had to work out arrangements for that kind of

operation. Technically this is a difficult thing to do. It is not impossible, but you have to practice it and you have to execute. During my first 13 months there, I think we had at least two or three occasions where we tried to do this. Two or three times that we did this we were late. We were not successful. It got more complicated when we picked up intelligence on the American side particularly we shared the west bank of the Drina River with the French. And Karadzic and Milosevic were moving back and forth across the Drina. It was particularly difficult and we were unsuccessful in launching an operation in the French sector with just U.S. forces. Technically we had to go to the French division commander and say, "Sir we have this information that Karadzic and Milosevic are going to be in this town at this particular time, and we want to move in and do it." Well then the French would say, "No you are in our sector, we are going to do it, and we are not going to use your troops. We are going to use our own troops." There were a number of misfires in that regard. But we did other things.

Q: On that point, was there the feeling that the French didn't want to do it, or was it just didn't work?

FINNEY: I don't know if the feeling or attitude is justified, but absolutely that was the feeling on the American side: that for whatever reasons, the French not only didn't want to do it, but the view of our military commanders when I was there, they felt the French were complicit. Now maybe that was an unfair…

Q: But that was the attitude.

FINNEY: Absolutely. Now, we did other things that were helpful. There were various ways to get people. Our military command didn't do it, but let's say our friends working out of the U.S. embassy in Sarajevo, they would hire bounty hunters. Those bounty hunters would go in, and then they would pick up the guys in Serbia. Then on at least one occasion, maybe two, but absolutely one that I was involved in on the periphery, they went over, grabbed a guy, and brought him to the west bank of the Drina.

Q: Are we talking about Republic of Serbska or Serbia itself?

FINNEY: Serbia itself. Sending bounty hunters into Serbia proper, into the outskirts of Belgrade, capturing two people, bringing them to the west bank of the Drina. Then we had our special forces bring them to the east bank of the Drina. We had our special forces on the west bank. Then we would go over and meet them, and in this particular event, we brought them to our side of the Drina. Then we had a facility at Tuzla Airbase for processing all the war criminals that were going to The Hague. So they were brought to that facility. So we cooperated in that regard. But in the case of Karadzic for example, there was apparently an extensive network consisting of Serbian Businessmen, remnants of Serbian security forces, and unfortunately, and I don't mean to demean them, but the Serbian Orthodox Church. An extensive group of underground networks. And if you go back in history, the Serbs lived under the Turks for 500 years. They know how to hide people. Now in the case of Milosevic, during the time I was there, our best assessment was Milosevic was still being protected by active Serbian military. Then it seemed to

shift after that in 2000 or so to where he was being protected by remnants of Serbian ministry of interior forces and former Serbian special forces who had their own informal security network.

Radovan Karadzic was the political leader of the Bosnian Serb population in Bosnia. And Ratko Mladic was the Bosnian Serb military commander, member of the Yugoslav army originally. A lot of effort went into this; you would be amazed. These are extremely difficult things to accomplish and despite the millions, not millions, tens of millions, maybe scores of millions of dollars that went into paying informants, organizing search teams, conducting strikes, bribing people from A to Z, and you know having these rewards for Karadzic, Mladic, it is either ten or fifteen or twenty million dollars apiece now, we couldn't get the job done.

Q: Well now what about other things?

FINNEY: One quick thing for the historical record on the French. I think it was the spring of 2001. Our unhappiness with the French over what we regarded as their refusal to cooperate effectively and sometimes in our view even block us, resulted in a special mission from the White House to Paris. They met personally with Prime Minister Chirac in the spring of 2001. They got a pledge from Prime Minister Chirac.

Q: He was the president at that time wasn't he?

FINNEY: President Chirac in 2001 said that the French would do better. So everybody got very pumped up in the late spring and summer of 2001. Chirac has committed the French to cooperate. Now we are going to get them. Very tough targets. It is one of the things that we have failed to do. I will be one of the first to tell you the really good things we did in the Balkans and I think overall a very positive thing for us to do. We have accomplished a lot; we have a lot more to do. But, unfortunately, one of the things on the negative side of the ledger, we were unsuccessful in delivering the principal war criminals. Having said that, in numerical terms I would say we are probably close to 70% or even 75 %. But we didn't get the major actors.

Q: Well let's talk about the other side of what we were doing, particularly the resettlement of refugees. I know again, I go back to my short time near Bosanski Brod.

FINNEY: That was a devastated area.

Q: It was a devastated area and particularly going around basically with Serb informants. I would ask who lived there. And every time there was a flattened cement floor plan and nothing else. That was where a Croat had lived. And it hadn't been too long before in Banja Luka that they had destroyed a rather elegant mosque that had been there for centuries. During your time how did we view the resettlement of refugees and how was it going?

FINNEY: Our number one goal was force protection, then insuring freedom of movement, then war criminals and next returning refugees. In terms of what we were doing on a day to day basis, return of refugees when I was there was the single most important thing we were doing. It was our responsibility. Elections were very important and we participated in those. But return of refugees was absolutely critical, and the secure environment we were seeking to promote through our patrols and through our presence had as its primary function to create a situation where the refugees could be returned. It was in the summer of 1999 that a combination of factors came together to enable us to begin returning refugees in significant numbers. There was a huge push on SFOR, there was a huge push by the UN and the EU (European Union) and the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) community. We had gotten hold of the security situation 90%. Within Bosnia the refugees had concluded they don't want to be on the dole anymore. They want to go back home. So this was the forefront of what we were trying to do there. In our sector, we were trying to get possibly 400,000 Bosniacs to return to the towns along the west bank of the Drina River, Zabornic and Bratanac and Srebrenica and Zepca and all the way down. At the same time, we were trying to get Serbs who had fled to the west bank of the Drina from the interior of the Tuzla area, we were trying to get them back to Tuzla and back to several areas, valleys in and around the central part of this area where the Serbs had predominated. Politically the Croat Bosniac government was all for the return effort. So it was easier to work with them to get the Bosniacs to return, but the Serb local political leadership said, we don't want you to go back to the central area. We want you to stay in these towns along the Drina River valley and stay here because from the hard core Serb perspective they wanted to secure that valley. They have a name for it in Serbian. It escapes me at the moment. But this is part of what they considered greater Serbia. So we were much more successful in getting the Bosniacs and the Croats back than we were the Serbs. But we had to work just as hard to get the trickle of Serbs back as we did to get the flood of Bosniacs and Croatians back because we were even handed. We were there to implement the Dayton Accords. We were not there to take sides. But as a practical matter, because the political leadership on the Croatian and Bosniac side were totally committed to the return process, we found ourselves working most of the time with them.

That opened us up to criticism from the Serb side that we were not serious about returning the Serbs and we were only pro Bosniac and we were pro Croatian, and we were not being even handed. So we were constantly trying to reassure them. We worked with the Russians. Ugljevik on the west bank of the Drina was where the Russian brigade was. We were working with the Russians constantly to tell them to help us to work with the Serb mayors and the Serb council members and the Serb prelates in the Orthodox church and the Serb community leaders to tell them that returning to Tuzla and returning to the central towns there was feasible. As SFOR we were committed to protecting the Serbs as we were committed to protecting the Bosniacs returning to Zvornik or the Croats going back. The way to return the refugees, the displaced people, was through the local governments and the NGOs -- with us providing an outer ring of security. So it was the mayor, the police chief, community leaders, and the NGOs. And it was actually the NGOs that went in and sat down with the local town refugee coordinator to map out a process of taking these Bosniacs or Croatians to this village or taking the Serbs to that

village. To go to this village, when were they going to make their reconnaissance visit. After they made the reconnaissance visit, when could they refurbish their homes. If there were Serbs living in their homes, when were we going to arrange for the Serbs to move out. We were constantly in discussions with them as providing the security umbrella. Let's say they decided we were going to move the Bosniacs back to this village. There were Serbs living in these houses. So when the recon would go in, invariably they would be attacked. They would have grenades thrown at them. Sometimes they were killed. Sometimes they were chased away. So we were the security. So we had to go in and tell the police chief and the mayor you are responsible for the security in your town and in your village. This is your responsibility to insure under your leadership signed up for in the Dayton Accords. These people are coming back. You have got to help this process, and if you don't do it, we will fire you. We will take you away from your job. That was the big hammer that we had. Our commander worked with the high commissioner. About every six months we would send a list down to Sarajevo for our military commander to take over to the high commissioner in coordination with the embassy saying, "Here is a list of ten mayors and six police chiefs. Get them out of there. They are not cooperating." So that helped. And the governors. We had three governors, and we were able to relieve one governor, also half a dozen mayors, lots of police chiefs. So we were involved in that. But it was slow. Money to support the refugee return, getting the Serbs out of their houses. In some cases getting Bosniacs out of houses so the Serbs could come back. Arranging for them to be supported. You can't imagine, each valley, each county, each town had its own history, its own mix of personalities. Some people understood that the war was over and said, goodness, let's move ahead; let's get beyond this, and let's get going. Others deeply, profoundly, and bitterly oppose. It reminds you of what was going on in the hills of Kentucky and Tennessee and backwoods Mississippi after the Civil War. That is what it was like.

Q: The thing that struck me is a lot of the war was really the hillbillies versus the flatlanders.

FINNEY: Right you are.

Q: I assume you were seeing the return of commerce? I mean commerce particularly since Croatia is the easiest place to get to and with Serbia too, and business opportunities opening up?

FINNEY: It was a trickle. You are picking out the hard areas for progress. Progress was very hesitant. Now a couple of things happened. A couple of positive signs of commerce. Number one: gas stations. Once you had freedom of movement, and once people were stopped by SFOR security people from sniping at cars, and you could go visit. Even though you were a refugee in Tuzla you could drive down to Srebrenica and visit the graveyard at the appropriate time of the year and drive back without getting sniped or ambushed. So once that happened, the first thing we started to see was gas stations. Number two: the next thing you started seeing as the security improved was a brick factory for reconstruction and for the tile roofs. Then along with the brick factory you saw the sawmills. So again with the refugee return, the rebuilding of the houses, and then

the cement. Then you saw little cement factories coming in. Then it was cell phones. The cell phones started to come in, and then that helped. But there were some huge obstacles.

Yugoslavia, even though it was regarded as a liberal regime, was still basically a state run economy. There is plenty of entrepreneurship out there at the local level, but it was still an idea that had to be fully developed. It was slow to develop. They expected Sarajevo, the central government, to build factories and do things for them. No, you have got to do it. This thing about privatization. In our AO (area of operations) I think there was something like 400-600 salt mines, chemical factories, detergent factories, battery factories, light bulb factories, coal mines. Mini light steel mill assembly plants. 400-600 of them which needed to be privatized. The Serbs and the Croats and the Bosniacs working through the process to determine who owned the factories because they were state owned. That was a huge tar baby. Another factor was a commercial code. So that to bring in a McDonalds or to bring in a Deutsche Bank or bring in an Italian design firm or whatever, these investors had to be assured if they had a disagreement with their work force or with their Bosnian management, that they could go to court. So you had to put together a civilian code, a commercial code. You had to put together a banking system which was, believe me, hand to mouth. You had to develop a sense of entrepreneurship. You had to attract foreign investment. Another thing that drove us nuts was establishing a single commercial space. Under the Dayton Accords you had the Republic of Serbska, and then you had what was it, the federation. But you had several customs regimes. You had separate telephone systems. You had separate tax collection, and the railroad that ran from Brcko down to Sarajevo connected with Hungary and then down to Sarajevo, went through the Republic of Serbska and then through the federation, was not going through a single commercial space. I was there from 1999, in effect to 2001, and we couldn't get the railroad going. And what was this, a 200 mile strip, a 300 mile trip from Brcko to Sarajevo. It drove you nuts because they had to change trains. So these were huge obstacles. The Croatian sector upon the Sava profited from the fact that in effect they became a Croatian economic zone.

Q: Croatia was much more keyed to the west…

FINNEY: Yes. And the Croatians had that Adriatic coast, and the tourism by the time I got there was starting to come in. That worked for them. But on our Serb side, it was dealing with molasses. Also the politics of the situation. So much of the politics was still dominated by the old nationalist issues. We had a couple of elections from 1999 to 2001, and started electing women, and started electing sort of a new generation. That helped shift the political agenda away from the old nationalist issues to school, transportation, public health, and investment in these economic issues. But it was hard work.

Q: You mentioned a new generation was coming in, but you know, hatreds have to be passed on, but you are moving in to an era in Europe where people, kids aren't going to church much anymore. The other thing would be just plain the attrition of young people saying the hell with this and heading for England or Germany or someplace else to get jobs. I am not going to play the game. Were you seeing these happen?

FINNEY: Yes, you were seeing that phenomenon. Unfortunately many of the young, let's take the ages from 18 to 25 in that area, unemployment was high. They were fed up with the slow pace of these governments to get the economy going. They invited me to go down to the university in Tuzla. Once a quarter they would invite me to come down and talk to these university students, believe it or not, about democracy and things like that. My take on that in encountering them was that at least half of these students, or at least half of these people from 18 to 25, 18 to 30, would be interested in leaving Bosnia and going to Austria, Switzerland, Germany, England, to get work, to have a better future. So a lot of them were extremely impatient and disillusioned. Now some of them were wanting to stay and try to make the country better, but I think there was a great deal of alienation and disaffection within that sector from 18 to 30. So it was very important to get them involved in the political process. It was important to get them decent jobs. It was very important to get them in contact with each other so that they could get past, whether it was through soccer or through youth camps or whatever, to get past the past. A slow process. I think the economic aspect of this was absolutely fundamental. When people have jobs and when people can take care of their families, and when people can have access to higher education and when people can have hope, it changes the dynamic. This has been slow to come.

Q: How did you find the morale among the troops, particularly among the young American officers. How did you find them responding to the situation?

FINNEY: I thought it was excellent. I thought morale was high. I thought the military did a good job of explaining to these people why they were part of SFOR, and the importance of the mission. And for all our forces that went over there, the routine was a six month train up. A lot of effort went into properly training these troops so when they were deployed, they had some idea of what they were doing and what their purpose was. So I thought that the young Americans, both the active army, the 10th Mountain, and the 49th Division from Texas and the 3rd Division out of Fort Stewart, Georgia that I served with the following summer were top notch units. Our young men and women react very well to these kinds of challenges and did the job. And they reacted very well when they encountered the local people in the course of their patrols. There were some people who looked around and said, "Look, I came here to engage in combat and kick down doors and shoot bad guys. I am not doing that. I am going on a peasants patrol, and I am sitting here sipping tea with the mayor or I am going on a radio talk show in Zabornic." These are young Captains and company commanders and senior NCOs. Some of them were unhappy that they weren't in combat as strange as that may seem to you, but that is their ethos. Others were disillusioned at the obvious slow pace of progress. There was a dramatic difference between what the military's essential tasks were, to establish security, get the warring sides to canton their weapons, secure the weapons, inspect the weapons, have these monthly meetings with both sides, get them to come together, do joint projects, do some engineering on civic action projects. And there was the dramatic difference between that and getting the economy going, get the election process started and bring in differences in the situation that some of our enlisted and officers said, "These people are never going to get together. This is a waste of my time." Then there is another group, of course, that misses their family desperately and never made the

adjustment. We struggled with two big things. I thought the sniping was real, the attacks on our patrols and the team houses were infrequent but real.

But two other things that we really focused on were driving accidents and suicides. It is absolutely gut wrenching to see an 18 or 19 year old kid get a Dear John letter from Suzie back home, and then we walks into the chapel and blows his brains out. So you have that and then the automobile accidents which was also heartbreaking where an APC would drive off a bridge into a river, or the kids impatient behind a hay cart pull out on a mountain road and get hit by a truck coming the other way. But I would have to say overall that I thought the morale was excellent. And it didn't happen by accident. I would say two quick things. Number one: the training before they came over. Nobody asked, the army did not volunteer to go to Bosnia. Our senior leadership sent them. But once you tell them you and your brigade are going to Bosnia, then they get together. They say OK, we are going to do this right. So I give them high marks for training the folks that go over there. I also give them high marks for the terrific attention they pay to morale. You don't avoid suicides, and you don't avoid automobile accidents, and you don't avoid accidental gun discharges without getting in there among those kids. So the relationship among the company commanders, the NCOs and squad leaders, platoon commanders, this is absolutely critical.

One of the key people is the chaplain. The military is religious oriented. And in that situation, not religious. How should I say it? The people who join the military are basically from that sector of society. So our chaplain worked hard, counseling while they were there. Then a huge effort to prepare these young men and women when they are going home. From our civilian experience in the State Department, we had tremendous people whom we worked with who paid attention to our morale and our personnel issues. We had a lot of good people, and that is one of the reasons the Foreign Service is great. The military really takes it up to a high level. I was very fortunate to work with outstanding units. There are some units where you didn't have that quality of care and communication with the troops in keeping them informed and letting them know that what they are doing is important and looking after the emotional needs; we paid a price. But overall I give them high marks.

Q: How did Kosovo play during the time you were there?

FINNEY: It played importantly in several key respects. Number one, it ratcheted up the force protection. Kosovo took place in May and June of 1999.

Q: You are talking about the bombing of Serbia essentially.

FINNEY: Yes. The NATO military intervention for 79 days in late April, May and mid-June in which NATO intervened militarily in the province of Kosovo, bombed Kosovo, but also bombed Belgrade proper, hit the Chinese embassy by mistake and inflicted casualties on not only the Serbian military but Serbian civilians. One effect was it ratcheted up the force protection in Tuzla in Bosnia dramatically. When I arrived there in July, the 1st Cav was in the process of turning over responsibility for this multi national

division to the 10th Mountain Division. The 1st Cavalry Division were buttoned up like it was a combat zone. In response to our bombing the Serbians sent jets to bomb Tuzla air base. I am happy to report the NATO air force shot them down, but they both crashed within 10 or 15 miles of the air base. Then we had intelligence that the Serbs were planning to send commando units across the Drina to take out our capabilities in Tuzla. The intelligence was ominous. The other thing that happened that affected us directly was that the Russian airborne brigade moved. Part of our beloved multi national division, they got into their jeeps and tanks and APCs one moonlit night, and they drove. They left a battalion behind, but they took two other battalions and they drove down to Kosovo. That fractured the relationship with their brigade and our command. So they're part of our division command. So for the first four or five months there was an intensive effort to try and repair that relationship.

Q: What were, I mean this movement of the Russians. Outrageous, but there was speculation that one this was kind of a military thing. I mean who was in charge? Was this directed from the Kremlin or was this directed from somewhere else?

FINNEY: This gets at the very guts of the multi lateral diplomacy that produced the intervention in the first place and the relationship between that Russian brigade, our command in Tuzla and NATO. It is a fascinating story. I was in the middle of it.

Q: OK, let's talk about the Russian brigade, and then let's talk about other forces there. I don't know if you had Romanian or what have you because this is where you bring your expertise in. But let's talk about at that time it would have been was it Russian or Soviet? It was Russian.

FINNEY: We are talking about May, 1999, late April, early May, 1999. A Russian airborne brigade was stationed in Ugljevik in northeast Bosnia in the AOR (area of responsibility) of the SFOR multi-national battalion north which was under U.S. command. That Russian airborne brigade was under the operational control of our commander of the multi national brigade north in Tuzla. When that event happened, in late April or early May the 1st Cavalry had the leadership of that multi national brigade under the command of Major General Kevin Burns. Let me give you a very quick background on the arrangement with that Russian brigade. In addition to the Russian brigade there was a Nordic-Polish brigade in the western part of the AOR area of responsibility of our multi national division north. That Nordic-Polish brigade was made up of a Polish battalion plus Danes, Norwegians, and some Baltic countries. Then there was a Turkish brigade assigned in the south at Zenica which contained a battalion plus of Turks. The arrangement with the Russian Brigade was a very special one. The negotiations for the Dayton Peace Accord were led by Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, supported by then Joint Chiefs of Staff J-5 Lieutenant General Wes Clark. They put together a multi national force as part of the Dayton Accords. The Russians made clear they wanted to participate. The Russians had an historical, long standing relationship with the Serbs, going back several hundred years, and had been seen as one of the protectors of the Serbs, also orthodox Christians, against the Turks. This relationship with the Russians had endured for several hundred years through WWI and WWII as well. So the

Russians wanted to participate in the multi national intervention in the Balkans. They saw themselves as defenders of the Serbian and Bosnian Serb interests based on their long standing historical relationship. Who would be in charge of the Soviet Brigade, the Russian brigade, was a difficult political issue for the Russian leadership. I am told that General George Joulwan who in the mid-1990s was our commander at SHAPE Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe) or SACEUR (Supreme Allied Command, Europe) as the premier allied commander in Europe, sat down with a senior Russian officer at a restaurant. On a napkin they drew up an arrangement whereby the Soviet Brigade in Northeast Bosnia in Ugljevik was not put under the command of the SFOR commander in Sarajevo. Rather, it was put under the command of a Russian three star who was assigned to NATO headquarters in Mons, Belgium. That Russian three star delegated operational oversight of that Russian brigade to the U.S. led multi national division commander in Tuzla about 40 miles from Ugljevik in that same general area of northeast Bosnia. Consequently, the Russian brigade commander took his command instructions from the two or three star Russian officer who was assigned to NATO in Mons; but for daily operational purposes he took his guidance from the U.S. commander of the U.S. led multi national division north in Tuzla. This was a curious relationship because the Russians had signed up to chapter 6 under the UN Charter, which is peace keeping, but they hadn't signed up to chapter 7, which is peace enforcement. Ourselves, the U.S. contingent up in this area of northeast Bosnia, the Turks, and the Nordic-Polish brigade, had all signed up to both chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 7, the peace enforcement, was particularly important because it meant that in the process of implementing the provisions of the Dayton Accords, specifically military annex 1-A, that you could use force to carry out the provisions. One of the key things was freedom of movement, providing public order. And so this is where we had a very delicate relationship with the Russians. For example, if we detected an arms cache in a house through intelligence in the Russian sector, and we wanted to conduct a raid to go into the house and collect this arms cache and pick up the people who were there, under chapter 7 provisions of peace enforcement we could do it. The Russians couldn't. But if this house was located in the Russian sector, we had this delicate situation where we had to get everybody on our side together to do this operation. It was usually directed in this particular sector against hard core Bosnian Serbs who were not complying with the Dayton Accords. So we had to get everything in place. Then, two or three or five minutes before we actually went in and knocked on the door or kicked in the door, we would tell the Russians we were doing it. This, of course, made the Russians extremely unhappy that we, the U.S., were in their sector carrying out an operation.

Our SFOR commander in Sarajevo would sometimes want the U.S. commander of the multinational division north to do something with the Russians. But he, the SFOR commander, had no operational authority or control over the Russians. He had to come to us to ask us to do things with the Russians. Obviously we took his requests seriously. Then, the commander in Tuzla northeast Bosnia had to notify our contact at Brussels saying SFOR commander has asked us to do this. We think it makes sense. We are alerting you that we are going to call in the Russian brigade commander or we are going to go over and see him, and we are going to do this. Sometimes we would get a request from Sarajevo to do something which we thought based on our situation on the ground,

didn't make particular sense. So not only did we have to work with Russians through NATO, we also had to work with our Sarajevo SFOR commander to make sure that he understood the command relationship. He was never too happy. The SFOR commander in Sarajevo was a three star U.S. general. He was never too happy that he couldn't pick up the phone and tell the Russian commander what to do, that he had to come to us, my commander who was a two star, and suggest that we do something. So this relationship with the Russians was a delicate one. From my perspective as a political advisor, it worked because of the sense of camaraderie and respect that exists, this professional bond that exists between soldiers. So we would go through a lot of relationships with the Russians where we would go up there with our senior officers; we would have lunch with them; we would go to their sauna; we would drink vodka with them. We would then invite them to come down to Tuzla 40 miles away, have dinner in our mess hall and maybe see a movie, give them access to our PX. Then we had these occasions when we exchanged professional skills and so forth. We tried very hard to get the Russians to go on joint patrols with us. We were never able to do so during the tenure I was there 1999-2000. I think after that, when the Russians replaced their airborne brigade with regular infantry, that we were able to get some joint infantry patrols going. We exchanged medical information. We also had a contingent of U.S. special forces officers, and then army foreign affairs officers (FAO) from the Marshall Center in Garmisch, Germany, who were attached to the Russian encampment in Ugljevik. The Russian encampment was on the other side of a small river next to a highway. But on the side of the road closest to the river, and outside the encampment, we built a small establishment originally for the U.S. special forces contingent, and then for army FAO officers from the Marshall Center. They were there right there with the Russians staying in touch with them on a daily basis and making this coordination work. It took a lot of work.

Q: Did the Russians have the equivalent to a political advisor or political commissar or somebody of that nature for whom you had contact with?

FINNEY: Yes they did. He was a Russian consul general who had been based in Belgrade. He came forward, and he was their political advisor. So I also invested a good deal of time. Every time my commander went up to deal with the Russians, I went with him. Then at a certain time I would peel off and spend time with their political advisor. I developed a relation with him on my own which we worked assiduously. Although we respected them militarily, and we wanted them and took seriously their role as part of the multi national division, we could not trust the Russians because they were so tight with the Bosnian Serbs and so sympathetic to the Serbs. We couldn't rely on them as an objective party to this whole issue of implementing fairly the provisions of the Dayton Accords.

Q: Did you ever spell that out to your contacts saying you know, I mean why we can't tell you except for maybe 30 seconds before we kick in the door. I mean these are the facts of life.

FINNEY: We did tell them. They did understand it. We had to make sure we had all our facts in order. We had to make sure that the intelligence we had, that there was an arms

cache or some activity opposed to the Dayton Accords, was solid. Then this happened during my year there. It probably happened about three or four times. And each time we had to prepare the situation very carefully. We did have to give them advance notice no matter how slight. Then we would always have a lot of work afterwards to explain what we were doing and why we did it. They, themselves understood they couldn't do chapter seven enforcement actions. But there was always friction on this issue. By the end of the day they understood it. Of course, then we looked for other ways to acknowledge the fact that we regarded them as equal and important partners. When we went up to visit the governor in their sector, or to visit the Bosnian Serb Orthodox bishop, or to discuss with them when there were riots, rock throwing, sniper incidents, prevention of refugees from returning, we went up there and we sat down with them. We would say, colonel so and so, this is the information we have on why this incident happened, and it seems based on our information there are Serb hard liners who are blocking the return of the Bosniac refugees. We need your cooperation. You are responsible under Dayton Accords to see, in cooperation with the local Bosnian Serb police, that there is freedom of movement under the guarantee by Dayton, and there is freedom of refugee return. This is your responsibility. They could come back to us and say, "Well our intelligence is different than yours. This incident when the refugees tried to return was provoked by the Bosniacs. It was not provoked by the Serbs." So we would have to work through all these discussions with them. But it was part of the process of making the whole international effort work. Even though we found ourselves on opposite sides of issues with the Russians, there were some issues where the Russians did have it right and did have good information. So it was not a black and white situation. It involved close coordination and consultation. Remember the broader political picture of what the U.S. and Europe was trying to do: number one, solve the Balkan crisis to this point in Bosnia, and number two, to try to get Russia integrated into the West. So there were bigger purposes here. It worked because our professional U.S. officers and NCOs engaged directly with the Russians and gained their respect as professional military colleagues, and so we were able to get the basics done.

Then we had this incident that you mentioned which really set back our relationship. It didn't fracture it; it didn't terminate it, but it put an enormous strain on the relationship. That was when about half of the Russian brigade in Ugljevik got in their vehicles at 12:00 midnight and drove out of northeast Bosnia into Serbia. They crossed over to the east bank of the Drina River, and then drove through Serbia. They entered Kosovo and showed up at the airport in Pristina and took it over on June 12, 1999 arriving just before a British unit. Occupying the airport was part of the implementation of a settlement that ended 78 days of NATO bombing of Yugoslavia and requires the withdrawal from Kosovo of all Serbian forces. General Clark was now allied commander, Europe. So he directed the senior NATO representative in Kosovo, a British three or four star, Sir Michael Jackson, to seize control of the airport in Pristina from this Russian element. General Jackson disagreed with the order that General Clark had given him. He used what is called in NATO parlance the red card option, whereby a senior NATO commander disagrees with the order given to him by SACEUR and he invokes his national option not to accept the order. So he informed his chief of staff in Britain and his prime minister. They then communicated their concern about General Clark's order to

displace the Russians by force if necessary at Pristina, conveyed that to the American political leadership. At the end of the day, the American political leadership decided that the UK could co-locate at the airport with the Russians, but they would not expel them, and resort to force if necessary. Much to the chagrin of General Clark. He is an aggressive commander, and felt that he had to make a point here: that the Russian presence, the departure from northeast Bosnia, was unauthorized. He felt their presence in this airport was part of an effort by Belgrade to maintain its presence in the area and that it was counterproductive to what NATO was trying to do. But at the end of the day the political leadership in London and Washington worked it out so that we co-located at the airport and did not expel the Russians. And I think the Russians stayed down there for several months. So this naturally deepened U.S. and NATO suspicions that the Russians were not really interested in working with NATO in seeking equitable solutions to this Balkan crisis, and that they were not really supportive of the Dayton accords. But nonetheless, the Russians stayed at Ugljevik. This unit eventually left the airport, came back, and rejoined the Russian forces at Ugljevik. We got past this very difficult relationship with the Russians and this incident and resumed our relationship with them, kept them in the multi national brigade. They maintained their presence up north and we pressed on with the mission. It was a very tense, difficult situation and produced a lot of suspicion, unhappiness on both sides.

Q: Well when this happened, the guys all of a sudden are going off at midnight, how were you interpreting this at your level; what was sort of the analysis coming to you from other places? It was being portrayed in the press as perhaps almost a rogue operation or perhaps a military operation not sanctioned by the political leaders in the Kremlin. You know, it was all very murky.

FINNEY: This took place as I recall in June of 1999. I had not arrived in Tuzla until the end of July. So this happened weeks before I got there. The officer in our headquarters in Tuzla, multi national division north, was Major Ken Chance, a Russian FAO. When I got there he became one of my deputies, so I became very close to him. He told me in great detail his perspective on that situation. So what I will tell you is what Major Chance, who was directly involved and a Russian speaker, told me. The first thing he told me was that we were caught flat footed. This movement by a substantial part of the Russians from Ugljevik into Serbia and on to Kosovo to appear at the airport caught us totally by surprise. Everybody was scrambling to try and determine what was the Russian aim here, and who in the Russian hierarchy had directed this movement. At the end of the day what Major Chance and others were able to determine was that this order was a military order. It came from chief of staff of the Russian forces. I think our impression was that kind of an order ultimately had to receive some kind of political sanction. But the fact of the matter is it was a direct order from the Russian military. Now whether they did this on a written order, whether they did this on a phone call from the political side, to this day it is not certain. But we did confirm that it was a direct military order from the chief of the Russian military staff.

In retrospect, with 20-20 hindsight, General Clark's order to remove the Russian contingent, by force if necessary, appears to be too aggressive an order, and would have

caused more problems than necessary. At the end of the day the British general, Sir Michael Jackson, had the better analysis. General Jackson moved to the airport, and it turned out that the Brits and others immediately had the technical wherewithal to man the tower and to start running the airport. They also had the logistic backup so that they could bring in spare parts and food and so forth. The Russians became marginalized. In retrospect, it would seem that this was a desperate effort by the Russians to in effect lay down a card in Kosovo and try to establish a presence there, I guess in a rather desperate effort to protect Belgrade's interests. But they didn't have the follow on support and the follow on backup for it to develop into something that would block the Kosovo operation. So General Jackson made the right call. The Russians were marginalized. The flow of equipment and forces into the Pristina airport proceeded. This didn't happen by accident. We have got to tip our hats to Sir Michael Jackson and the British and their skill in dealing with the Russians. They were tough with the Russians and made clear to them that this was all authorized and we were going to proceed with this, but they did it in a way that didn't lead to an international conflict. So we have to tip our hat to the UK on this one.

Q: All right, a couple of things. One, you must have been there, relations couldn't have been great with the Russians when you got there.

FINNEY: They were very tense and hanging on by a thread.

Q: So did you find, and did your military commander for whom you were working, did you see this as being a big job?

FINNEY: Yes. It was one of his most important jobs. When I arrived there General Kevin Burns was the 1st Cavalry division commander. Of course he was very conscious of the fact that we had had almost a severing of relations with the Russians and we needed to rebuild this. Then my later commander, Major General Jim Campbell, 10th Mountain Division, had as one of his priorities tried to restore communications and relationship with the Russians, because they were up in the Serb area in northeast Bosnia and they were still part of our international contingent and part of the multi national brigade. We had to make it work. So this was one of his top priorities.

Q: What about your relationship with the Serbs in that area. Were there you might say good Serb-bad Serb or was it a hostile environment. Let's talk about this.

FINNEY: It was a rather hostile environment in terms of dealing with the Bosnian Serbs for a couple of reasons. The first was the headquarters of our multi national division north in northeast Bosnia was in Tuzla. Which was a Bosniac dominated city. Maybe 20% or 30% of the population was Serb although a number of those had left during the war. But because we were located in Tuzla, a Bosniac majority city, the Serbs looked upon our multi-national SFOR division as pro Bosniac. The second reason is that in implementing the Dayton Accord and the refugee returns, about 3-400,000 Bosniacs had been driven out of towns along the west bank of the Drina. So we found ourselves establishing security to allow the Bosniacs to come back. Most of the refugee returns, because of the

nature of the situation, involved returning Bosniacs to currently Serb dominated areas. This led the Serbs to believe that we were pro Bosniac. We also made it a point to do everything we could to help the Serbs get back to Tuzla and other Bosniac developed areas. That was difficult because the local hard core Serb leadership were telling the Serbian refugees who had fled to the central part of our AO and gone to the west bank of the Drina, not to return. If they returned, they would supposedly be discriminated against. They would not get jobs and life was not the same anymore, and they should stay on this west bank of the Drina. Then, of course, there was still a contingent of Serbs in the northeast part of Bosnia who simply didn't accept the Dayton Accords. These were some hard core police chiefs, some mayors, some councilmen in the Opstina or county councils. The Serbs had many of the para military Serbs, they had served in the para military or even the military organizations, they had set up hunting clubs, soccer clubs. They were very resentful people. It was much like I think the situation I read in the American south after the Civil War under Reconstruction. They were very resentful people in the hills of Tennessee, Kentucky, the Carolinas, rural Mississippi and Georgia, who never accepted the outcome of the Civil War, the defeat of the south and did everything they could to oppose change.

So we had to work very assiduously with Serbian political leadership, the military leadership and the police leadership and the religious leadership. There were hard core Serbian Orthodox priests and bishops who were bitterly opposed to the results of the Dayton Accord and looked upon our multi national division as pro Bosniac. We had the power through the high commissioner to remove any Serb official from any position, whether he was a police chief, head of a provincial council, member of a political party, governor or mayor, we could remove them if we could demonstrate that they opposed the implementation of the Dayton Accord. We removed a lot. When I say a lot of people, we removed during my time there probably 100-150. Now eventually we were able to engage with Serbian leadership who were still very nationalist, but they recognized that the way to pursue Serbian national interest was through the political process and not through armed opposition or organized mobs and so forth. So eventually we were able to come to grips with the Serbs and work out a satisfactory working relationship. Sometimes the Serb leaders were responsible, but other times they didn't have control over hooligans and hard core reactionaries in their own midst. We told them over and over again that we were in the business of implementing the Dayton Accords. We were not pro Bosniac, pro Serb or pro Croat. We were pro Dayton Accords. All the leadership of all three groups had signed that accord. Our job was to implement it. We were committed to implementing it objectively. We were just as interested in getting Serb refugees or Croatian refugees back to their places as we were to support the Bosniacs. Most of the refugees coming to our zone were Bosniacs, so we found ourselves working with the police to set up secure situations to permit refuges to return. Since most of the people expelled were Bosniacs we found ourselves working on that area. But we made a real point of bending over backwards to help the Serb refugees get back, to make sure they were fully supported, to get the NGO's and the UN there to make sure they had police protection. There were hard core people on the Bosniac side and the Croatian side as well who never got over the war, and who bitterly opposed any return of Serbs who had been expelled from their area. So there was hard core opposition among all three groups. But

in our particular sector most of the opposition to implementation of the accord came from the Serb side.

Q: Were you seeing any consequences from our bombing of Serbia?

FINNEY: The bombing stopped in mid June. I got there in July. The immediate consequence was that force protection was very strict on our side. Several jets from Belgrade had been shot down 10 miles from our base at Tuzla which they had attempted to bomb. So the security situation deteriorated markedly. The attitude of the Serbs towards us and the implementation of the Dayton Accords as far as I could tell, became even more embittered. And the prospects for refugee return were just absolutely nil at that point. The whole process on the civilian side, of moving ahead with elections, moving ahead with refugee return, insuring freedom of movement, proceeding with reconstruction, all this in effect was frozen for two or three months until tensions began to subside and we could move ahead with the process. So it set back all those areas of effort for two or three months.

Q: Did you have much contact with, I guess they were, I am not sure whose auspices they were under but foreign service officers at Brcko and other places? What were they and how did they work?

FINNEY: They were doing a good job. We had up in Brcko an outstanding retired Foreign Service ambassador, Bill Farrand.

Q: Yeah, I have interviewed Bill.

FINNEY: Bill Farrand I think, is one of the heroes of our effort in Bosnia. As a result of the Dayton Accords Brcko was given the status of a condominium jointly administered by all three, but it was under American supervision. Ambassador Farrand had Douglas MacArthur-like powers in Brcko. He had a staff there, military people assigned there, foreign service officers there. We had NGO reps, UN reps. So Bill presided over an interagency headquarters. It was there for three years. It was a very difficult and tense situation. He did a superb job. The FSOs who were up there with him were very key to his efforts. Of course I was in regular contact. Every other week we went, my commander went up to Brcko to have lunch with Ambassador Farrand and his staff. The next time we invited them to come down to our headquarters. So we had these meetings to exchange information and do coordination. The preparation for those meetings involved a lot of contact with his staff. In addition we had foreign service officers who were serving with the office of the high commissioner, who were serving with OSCE. We had one or two of them working in Tuzla. Of course they were very important to our effort to support the refugee return and civilian reconstruction. On almost a daily basis I was in touch with the Foreign Service officer who represented the office of the high commissioner in Tuzla and with the Foreign Service officer who was with OSCE. We had a very fine USAID officer there who was responsible for overseeing the reconstruction of all of these destroyed villages and roads and public health works and so forth. So we met with those folks at least once a week. Coordination was a key part of our whole effort there.

Q: How did you find the OSCE? Did you find you know, this is sort of a peaceful outfit. You are working with a military outfit. How as the fit there?

FINNEY: Well, two different cultures. Not only was OSCE a civilian outfit, but it was a European outfit. So you had a couple of different cultures there. First of all let me talk about the good parts of it. The good parts of it was OSCE played a pivotal role in the elections. When I was there, retired ambassador Bob Barry was head of the OSCE in Sarajevo [Ed; Ambassador Barry has an oral history interview on file with ADST. He had a number of Foreign Service officers on his staff. The political director for OSCE working for Ambassador Barry was also a Foreign Service officer, and the head of his research department I think was a Foreign Service officer. So they were very key to me in terms of my ability to gather information about the election process to keep my military commander and his senior staff informed about elections. Was it going to be local? Was it going to be at the governor level? What were the procedures? What exactly was the role of the military? So they were invaluable. Ambassador Barry was always very gracious when I made my trips to Sarajevo every three weeks or so. I always got time with him. The frustrating part of it from our side was that sometimes the Europeans that made up most of the staffing on the OSCE side, from our military perspective, didn't seem to have, you know this is very subjective, didn't seem to have the sense of commitment full time 24/7, seven days a week that we had who were working on the military side. Come certain parts of the year, one was August, and all of a sudden the entire OSCE was shut down, they were on vacation. And then there was the skiing holiday they seemed to go on in the fall. Then there was Christmas. So there were frustrations when our military commanders were looking for immediate answers and moving ahead and planning.

You know our military is planning constantly. We had two or three planning groups in our military headquarters. One was doing daily operational planning. One group looking up 60-90 days and another one was looking out further. So there didn't seem to be any planning capacity on their side. So there were the occasional frictions, but we all understood the pivotal role on the military side. We understood the pivotal role that OSCE played and that we had to adapt ourselves to their planning cycle and to their method of operation, their hours of work, and we just tightened up our belts. We were determined to coordinate. That was the name of the game. At the end of the day the OSCE I thought, backed up by a lot of good NGO work, did a superb job on putting on these whole series of elections. It wasn't easy. Our military leaders understood that, at the end of the day, we were providing a security environment so that this political process could move ahead.

Q: As I mentioned before I took part in two of those as an OSCE employee, I guess.

FINNEY: Yes you were. One of the points I constantly made to our military commanders was that elections were part of our exit strategy. The sooner we have the elections and the more successful they are, the sooner that our military forces will be able to go home. They understood that.

Q: Let's talk a bit about your Nordic-Polish brigade. How did that work?

FINNEY: That worked very well. I would salute that contingent for their ability to integrate the different elements that made up that brigade. It was impressive. There were Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Finns, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, and Polish. Of course we went up there at least once a month for briefings. You could not help but be impressed the way they had integrated their brigade and the way they seemed to work together well. The brigade was commanded mostly by a Norwegian who we thought were good strong soldiers. They could be relied upon to do the tough work. They were NATO, and so they knew the procedures and the planning and the communications. They were serious about peace keeping. Many of them had much more peacekeeping experience than we as Americans did. So we learned some things from them. The Norwegians and the Swedes have been doing this for 40 years in the cold war. They gave us some good lessons learned. So we were very favorably impressed by them.

Q: Well this was early days but how well, I mean you look at the Poles and the Baltic countries, basically were Soviet trained troops. This was not long since they had been part of the Warsaw Pact. Just in their training and all, and all of a sudden they are in a brigade with NATO troops. How did this work?

FINNEY: It worked reasonably well. The Poles were eager to become part of the NATO team. They are hardy folk. And we immediately pursued the training arrangement with them. We would take a platoon of Poles, and we would assign them to a U.S. outpost or base, and then we sent a platoon of ours to work with them. We did that with the Norwegians and the Nordics as well. So we were constantly looking for opportunities to share our expertise and to learn from them. This is one thing the military is really good at, to watch how they do this, leadership exchanges, NCO exchanges, small unit exchanges. Then the Poles and the Nordics would have sporting events, and we would participate in their sporting events. We would invite them to come over and participate in our sporting events. Now this is not to say we didn't have difference of views. Sometime they disagreed with the instructions that they got from my commander, and sometimes you were disappointed in the fact they didn't seem to be producing the results we were looking for. So, these are all problems that you work through. I was someone who had spent a lot of time in Southeast Asia, where all our security interactions and relationship are bilateral, based on our five security treaties with Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Philippines, and Australia. Having come out of that bi-lateral security framework to work in the NATO arena I was impressed by the way, given the everyday problems and differences that we all pulled together. There was always national caveats. Even among the Polish-Nordic brigades there were some things they couldn't do that we would do and we had to be sensitive to that. But this professional bond among soldiers and particularly among the NATO countries was strong enough to overcome the divergences which are a part of life and are always there and you have to deal with.

Q: Did you sense any tension between the two loving brothers? I am speaking of the Russians and the Poles next to each other. Did this cause any problems?

FINNEY: No, but there were real tensions there. They were quite separate in the sense they were separated by probably about 40 or 50 miles. The Russians were on the west bank of the river in Ugljevik in the Serbian country. The Nordic-Polish brigade was in Doboy in a Serb dominated town but in an area that was largely Bosniac. There were 40-50 miles and several mountain foothills between them. So they never brushed up against each other. Now when we had our commander's conferences of course, they were there but they were polite. So fortunately we were spared that friction. The Russians up in Ugljevik would have these demonstrations to celebrate victory in Europe, to celebrate Red Army Day, and we would go up there. They would invite the commanders from other multi national units to come, and I remember the Finn colonel who came with us this one time. We watched the Russian airborne brigade special platoon go through their routine, and he under his breath described them as a bunch of Nazis. So while he was superficially polite to the Russians, there was real deep feeling there. But while I was there, there was no incident between the different groups. The Turks were in Zenica, which had a lot of Muslim fundamentalists. Because of the arms embargo that was imposed on Bosnia because of the war, they couldn't get weapons from us, so they got weapons wherever they could. Iran and the Mideast sent a lot of weapons along with fundamentalist Jihadists in there. So their base of operations was in Zenica. The Turks were there. Of course the Turks had been in Bosnia for almost 400 years, from the 1500's to the mid 1800's, 19th century. The Turks felt very much at home in the southern part of Bosnia, and they were very tight with the Bosniac leadership, the governors. I mean they were looked upon as brothers. It was difficult to get the Turks to put the screws on the Bosniac leadership there, when they weren't living up to the accords, and they weren't permitting a tiny minority of Serbs to go back as they were certainly entitled to do. The Bosniac governor and his mayors were refusing to cough up these Jihadist fundamentalists who were really bad guys and who were just as opposed to the implementation of the Dayton Accords as the Serb hard liners on the banks of the Drina.

Q: How did you find, was your command, getting good intelligence from the Serb and Bosniac side? Did we have the equivalent of agents in place or informants or something? How did it fit?

FINNEY: The intelligence picture was a very mixed one. We had our special forces safe houses sprinkled around. When I was there I think we had nine or ten of them sprinkled around our AO. These were eight teams of ten or twelve folks. They were living in their own houses out in these towns and villages, and they were going around collecting information as they were trained to do. DOD had established a humint (human intelligence) collection program. So they had civilian and military detailed to them, collectors, mostly linked to force protection. So they were out there outside the wire doing their thing. We had a very strong CIA contingent based in Sarajevo. Within that big station, they had a contingent that was going after Serb, Croatian, and Bosniac war criminals, and they had another contingent who was tracking the Jihadist fundamentalists. We also had our CIA intelligence officer gathering information about the general situation and the prospects for the next election and so forth.

We had a lot of technical intelligence collection capability in our J-2 in Tuzla. We had a combined intelligence coordinating unit which included the OSD humint, special forces guys, the CIA guys, the NSA guys -- the National Security Agency guys. So they were a four or five person special unit there within our J-2. We had CIA reps there too. After the Gulf War the CIA set up a directorate specifically for military support because it was felt that they hadn't been as successful in getting information to our military during to the Gulf War. So they have a military support directorate. So these guys were there, and of course our G-2, the intelligence section of our own division, also was running agents and collecting. So the place was rife with people trying to understand what was going on. It still remained murky. But we had a lot of intel coming in. A lot of it was junk. There were occasional nuggets out there that were useful. We had an outstanding group of Bosniac Americans, Serb background, Croatian, and Bosniac Muslim who were Americans, who had lived in the United States and had come back to help support us. They were very good, and they could help us as well. But it was a struggle to understand all the undercurrents that were going on among these three groups.

Q: Welcome to the Balkans.

FINNEY: Yes. The Balkans is not an open book. In March of 2000, after I had been there six or seven months, they brought in a national guard division from Texas. This was the first to assume the leadership of the U.S. multi national division in North. This was the first time a National Guard division was given that assignment, not only to command the division but also to command active duty troops. In this case it was a 3rd Armored Cavalry regiment. From that time forward, from March, 2000, until we moved out of there and completed the mission in 2004, the National Guard had the lead in terms of U.S. presence. So it is a little interesting part about that.

The mission was completed in November, 2004, when we turned it over to EUFOR, the European force. In those four years the National Guard was given the lead in this peace enforcement operation in northeast Bosnia. During those four years except on two occasions. One the 3rd Infantry Division came in for a tour, and I went back as a POLAD in the summer of 2001. Then the 25th Division out of Hawaii came in for a six month tour. But aside from those two units, all of the leadership of the multi-national division came from the National Guard. Then that was carried over to Kosovo when the National Guard I think since 2001 or 2002 has led the brigade in the eastern part of Kosovo based at Camp Bondsteel and Camp Monteith in terms of maintaining the U.S. military presence in KFOR, Kosovo Force.

Did you notice a difference in style, or effectiveness or what have you between the National Guard and the regular army?

FINNEY: There was a definite difference in style that I noticed during my exposure to the 49th Armored Division from Texas as opposed to the 10th Mountain division, active duty, and the 3rd Infantry Division, active duty. Both the active duty and the reserves were effective in their different ways. It is like having a couple of hitters in your lineup. Some of your hitters help you in some ways, other hitters help you in other ways. You

can say the same thing about pitchers. The active duty I found to be very crisp in their staff functions, in their preparation and analysis of the situation, and presenting courses of action to their commander, very aggressive in terms of force protection, very responsive to the direction they got from SACEUR in NATO. A highly professional organization. In contrast, and these are just generalities I am making: The National Guard staffing process, decision process, leadership process is not as crisp or as super efficient as the active army. It is a different style. It is a bit more deliberative. It is a bit more meditative. They are less in a hurry, and they are less ready to take off their gloves and go bare knuckles as opposed to thinking through the process in more deliberative fashion. The situation on the ground was constantly evolving, and, therefore, you had to have changes in the type of leadership and the style of peace enforcement. So I found in some ways they were both effective, different styles. I think the end result was essentially the same, a plus in terms of carrying out the implementation of the military annex of the Dayton Accords. The National Guard had people in their leadership ranks and in their NCO ranks who did bring some unique skills. I remember our deputy commander operated one of the largest hospitals in Texas. Our head engineer with the National Guard ran the water treatment plant in Houston. Many of the people in our provost marshal office were policemen from Dallas or Houston. Some of them detectives and so forth. We even had people with ranching experience who could find it very easy to go out and talk about agriculture with the locals, because much of the agriculture in Bosnia at that time there was still horse and buggy. So I thought one plus that the guard brought were these additional skills which made them, I think, more effective in dealing with some of the local problems.

Q: Well also with the active duty military being able to respond very quickly, and in civil affairs, quick response is usually not the answer.

FINNEY: Right, it is a combination. The most important thing is doing the proper analysis and getting it right the first time if you can. The active duty, since they are prepared to go overseas and fight our wars, by nature are focused on combat. They get disappointed in a sense if they don't get a little combat experience. They are trained for that. For the National Guard my experience was it is an either-or thing. Ok, if there is combat, we will do combat. OK if it is civil affairs, that is perfectly fine with us. We are prepared to do it.

Q: How did you find in this whole period you were dealing in Bosnia, how did you find you were used?

FINNEY: Well I was very fortunate. I felt I was used very constructively. My commander for the 10th Mountain Division was Jim Campbell. General Campbell absolutely got it in terms of balancing the importance of strength when you needed to enforce, but also the importance of knowing his local situation. One of the things he asked me to do was set up dinners with local leaders. In 1999 a decent meal was hard to come by for a lot of the locals. We went around to all the different key areas of our AOR and we hosted local leaders. We brought them in. Sometimes they weren't talking to each other; sometimes they weren't talking to us. We brought them in together; we had a big

meal, and we got the dialogue going. He was very keen to maintain the steady series of calls on the governors, on the mayors, on the Upstina chairman, the heads of the provincial counsels. So we had a regular series of meetings with those folks. Also he insisted that I sit in on all their planning. I mean their operational planning, their deliberative planning, so that I could look at these plans from a pol-mil perspective and give him a perspective. So I felt very well used for him. The 49th division commander came in. General Halverson, a two star out of the Texas guard, also a very fine gentleman. This was the first assignment for the 49th division in Europe since WWII. I had been there six or seven months by the time they arrived in February-March of 2000. General Halverson was very eager to get the benefit of whatever Pol-Mil experience I had learned and was able to share with him. So I was able to successfully transfer from General Campbell to General Halverson, and continued in the same inclusive role. First of all within the command group and then good relationships with his senior commanders and the opportunity to help guide General Halverson in his contacts with all local officials, community leaders, religious leaders, the key media personalities in the region and so forth. So I was very fortunate. My first commander had been to Somalia and knew how important it was to understand the situation. My second commander was brand new to Europe, brand new to an overseas experience, and anxious to succeed because he was the first National Guard fellow in there. So he was anxious to draw on all available expertise. It worked out well.

Q: How did you find, I was looking at these two times that you were there, Was the situation getting together, how was it going?

FINNEY: In some areas it was starting to knit together. In other areas we weren't making much progress at all. I'll talk quickly about what was starting to come together. Most importantly was the refugee return. I got there in the summer of 1999. That summer I think out of 800,000 displaced people in the country, not counting the people who had left the country, I think they had only returned up to that time somewhere between 35,000 and 50,000. So we just scraped. But then we really started to develop momentum. We were much more firm in our insistence to all sides that we were going to implement this accord and we were going to start their refugee return. So the NGOs got active; the UN got active. The international police got more effective, and of course we certainly were pushing as hard as we could. General Wesley Clark was in SACEUR at the time, and you know we had been in Bosnia for almost 3 ½ years by then, almost four years. So the emphasis on results was really coming through. The refugee return really picked up, and that involved an extraordinary amount of work. Number two, the freedom of movement. Freedom of movement was always an issue. The people who wanted to prevent refugee return would put up road blocks or they would snipe at refugees with their rifles when the refugees were coming into an area. So we really put our foot down. That was a big improvement there.

Q: How did you put your foot down?

FINNEY: Well, we put our foot down by putting together very heavily equipped armed patrols, and then going into these towns and telling the mayor, telling the provincial

chairman, telling the governor if this kind of incident happened again, that they were going to lose their jobs, and that we were going to start maintaining troops in their particular area on a permanent basis. And in several areas we had to do that. We had to create what we called forward operating bases or FOBs. We started putting companies out in these contested areas. So deploying the troops and you know sometimes with Bradleys armored personnel carrier, a fighting vehicle.

Very aggressive in our engagement with the local officials. Remogin, the first summer I was there we removed about 40 people, 40 officials. The next summer I think it was about 15 or 20. Then by setting up these forward operating bases in the contested areas. Those were all things that I think were starting to come; that was freedom of movement. We are talking about the refugees.

There was another area which I think we made definite progress. There was another area too that I should mention, and that was elections. We all know that elections are necessary for democracy, but certainly not sufficient. They are one element in the package. We had a series of elections both provincial and national during those times. We got reasonably good turnouts I think in the high 60 low 70 percentile rate of eligible voters. We were able to turn over some provincial and even national bodies, assemblies, parliaments and get new fresh leadership in. It was still a slog, but I think going through that election process was a definite plus. We did make some breakthroughs in getting women and younger people more involved in the process and getting some new fresh blood. But I have to say it was still not enough, and much of the political debate was still along nationalist and sectarian lines. They couldn't escape fully from the dialogue of the past. That was linked to another area where I thought we made the least progress absolutely, and that was the economic revival. Because the economy was still prostrate, and because unemployment was still extremely high, we couldn't get the economic development going. When you can get economic development going you can change the terms of the political debate. So we couldn't get the national railroad going. We couldn't get one economic space declared. We had very slow going on the privatization process.

Q: Where you were, did your territory abut onto Croatia?

FINNEY: Yes it certainly did, the whole Sava River.

Q: How did that play in what you were up to?

FINNEY: The Sava River was our boundary line in the north, and we went west on the Sava River towards Croatia. The towns immediately west of Brcko, Croatian dominated towns actually developed a little bit of a boomlet because Croatia was getting its economy back in order faster than their Bosnian neighbors to the south. I think they have a strong entrepreneurial instinct is a polite way to put it. Others would say there is a lot of smuggling. It seemed that life on the Croatian side, on the northern side of the Sava was distinctively, notably more active and prosperous in recovering than on the Bosnian side. This produced a lot of smuggling. The most famous example is what was called the "Arizona" market outside of Brcko that was dominated according to all informed

observers by the Croatian mafia. There were all kinds of goods and products form refrigerators to fans to stoves to ovens, you name it. TVs, cars were rolling across the Sava River and not being paid duties on and showing up in the Arizona market. There people from Sarajevo and everybody else could come up to northeast Bosnia and buy these products. It was outrageous, but it was a form of economies that are recovering.

Q: Did we just sort of sit back and watch or…

FINNEY: Oh we had a big dog there. The constant wringing of hands about this. Because the whole Arizona Market area, in addition to the goods that were smuggled in there, consumer goods, unfortunately there was heavy trafficking in human beings, women for prostitution and young kids for all that terrible kind of, just outrageous.

Q: Were they local women and kids or was this just part of the major thing that was coming out of the Ukraine and Russia?

FINNEY: Belarus. We talked about the Russian brigade over in Ugljevik. They set up brothels in the Arizona market so that the Russians would come over from Ugljevik through Brcko and down to the Arizona market to patronize these brothels. Many of the women in the brothels were from the Ukraine, Belarus, and other eastern European countries where things weren't going well. Yes there were some local girls, but we went over this at great length and mostly this was imported traffic. So the high commissioner, the senior international civilian representative in Sarajevo, was highly alarmed at the smuggling, at the prostitution, at the sex slaves and pedophilia, that this was an open sore. This had to be fixed. But he got involved in a big debate with our wonderful esteemed ambassador, Bill Farrand, who was our American administrator of Brcko, and within whose territory this Arizona market was. They got into a big disagreement on how to resolve this problem. The people in Sarajevo wanted to line up 50 bull dozers side by side and simply bulldoze the Arizona market into oblivion. That was their basic approach. Ambassador Farrand's approach was quite different. He said, "Let's legitimize it. There is all this activity going on there. Of course we have got to get at the crime. We have got to stop the people smuggling, the arms smuggling and the prostitution. But let's find a way to legitimize the contraband and the smuggling and the sale of these consumer goods and tax it so that we can develop an economic base for Brcko." These were two dramatically opposing views of how to handle the situation. It put a great stress on the relationship between the high commissioner and Ambassador Farrand. From the military perspective, we were most concerned about the arms smuggling, and the potential for harboring criminals and others who were hiding from us, war criminals and so forth. So there was an enormous amount of attention and effort and concern and meetings held on this. At the end of the day, Ambassador Farrand's approach, I think, won out. We started doing very effective police raids, international police with local police. Reduced the prostitution etc. to a minimum, and then the Brcko council passed some laws. They broke up part of the Croatian mafia which reportedly was running the place. They built some new buildings, and they gradually legitimized that process. But it was a long struggle. Croatians figured very importantly in it. There was some incredible devastation from Brcko west along the Sava River, through about 50 Catholic parishes. Most Croatians

were Roman Catholic, and so Croatian NGOs were coming in there with their parish priests who had fled to Croatia and were coming back reviving these towns. But as they came back into these towns, the hard line nationalist Croatian party, was coming in and trying to get their roots into these revived communities. The Croatian hard line nationalist party was very strong in the southwestern part of Bosnia, but they didn't have deep strength along the Sava River in the north. But they were making an effort to do so when we were there.

Q: Was there, I mean did you have lines into Croatia as far as to cooperate with our ambassador or did we have other observers or anybody there to moderate the Croatian hard liners?

FINNEY: Yes we did. Our ambassadors would come over several times to Bosnia. We would have a meeting up in Brcko and talk about these issues. We dedicated a bridge or two that the Army Corps of Engineers with international financing oversaw to build from the Bosnian side over to the Croatian side to promote movement of people and economic revival. So those were occasions where we could bring the Bosnian and Croatian officials together to try to deal with the crime factor, to try to work out sensible economic arrangements so both sides could have sensible freedom of movement. We also were very concerned about the hard line Croatian element, and there was a lot of dialogue between our embassy in Sarajevo and in the Croatian capital of Zagreb. But the election results frankly showed that the hard line Croatians still exerted strong influence in the south and west part of our sector where they had a couple of toe holds. Now we removed some Croatian politicians, some mayors and were influential in removing a Croatian governor, but it was a hard slog. Up in the north we did a little bit better. There were some moderate Croatians elected, and they sort of kept the hard line Croatians at bay. But it was a mixed picture. The bottom line is we were unable to cut into the hard line Croatian stronghold in the south and western part of our sector.

Q: What about Serbia at this point when you got there. It must have been sort of turning inward because of the devastation that the bombing did. I mean Belgrade was, you know a lot of the stuff had to be done, in a way was it almost removed from being much of a player or not?

FINNEY: They were turning inward. They were bitterly resentful because of the bombing, because of the civilian casualties they took, because of the fact that Kosovo was now being run by an international military and civilian force. But there were still elements in Serbia that were very much trying to help support and influence the Bosnian Serbs on the west side of the Drina. In the Serbian parliament, they were passing resolutions supportive of the Bosnian Serb position on a number of things. Serbian businessmen in Belgrade and elsewhere continued to channel funds to Mladic and Karadzic and other war criminals who were hiding and being supported by a network of people. You have got to have money to do that, and that money came from wealthy Serbian businessmen as far as we could determine. The Serb-Bosnian leadership at the town and village level, where we were in northeast Bosnia on the west side of the Drina, was constantly going to Belgrade, taking weekend trips, sharing their experiences with

the folks in Belgrade and coming back with renewed determination to hang tough and not to give up these towns on the west bank of the Drina to the returning Bosniac Muslims. And, most poisonous of all, they were telling the Serb refugees who were occupying Bosnian apartments and houses in these towns along the Drina, never to go back to central Bosnia where they came from because they would be mistreated. We were after war criminals and every once in awhile we would manage. And while I was there, the Serbian parliament was still paying troops and for training, and paying the salaries and making money available so they could get training inside Serbia. It was outrageous.

Q: Well then should we move on do you think?

FINNEY: Well I will put in a plug for the POLAD function. I think it worked well. I think it was valuable. Once in awhile we did encounter an advisor from the British foreign office. They were always very good, very astute. But the compensating factor was I found the British military commanders much more politically astute than our commanders. One of the big reasons was that they had this Northern Ireland experience.

Q: The Northern Ireland thing, they got it through there.

FINNEY: They knew how to approach this local populations and work with them.

Q: How about with the French? Did you get any feel for that?

FINNEY: I did not get any feel for that. I knew the French POLAD down in Sarajevo. He was POLAD to the deputy SFOR commander who was a Frenchman. And of course, people who have served in NATO will know that it is quite a minuet when you have a senior French officer in your headquarters. We are all committed to working together, but as a matter of fact, this is very difficult. My impression was the American POLAD, the UK POLAD and the NATO Dutch POLAD worked together very tightly, did the necessary courtesies to include and to help keep the French POLAD informed, but he was not on the inside, because unfortunately my perception was they did not trust the French commander and the French. A huge issue was the feeling in the headquarters when I went down there that the French were not being sufficiently aggressive in going after Karadzic.

Q: As we speak today there are reports coming out that Mladic is perhaps in custody in Belgrade, but I don't know.

FINNEY: It is the Scarlet Pimpernel phenomenon. But Mladic's ability to stay out there is a reflection of the fact that these old paramilitary forces, the old minister of interior and the special forces elements of the Serbian army financed by Belgrade businessmen and I am sure abetted by the Serbian Orthodox Church is a testimony to the residual elements in that country which are still able to harbor and protect a General Mladic after 10 years. I think his apprehension is extremely important in terms of the course of justice and establishing rule of law and bringing people to justice who deserve to be brought to justice. I think this is very important in the Balkans because much of the spirit of resentment and revenge that lies at the base of this sectarian fighting results from the fact

that there was not justice in the past. In peace keeping and peace enforcement, the military section or the military element is so important and hard to do, but it is never sufficient. The military is necessary, but it is never sufficient for success. The necessary for success is a political and economic side, but that is the hardest to do. That takes the most time.

So one of the key tensions I saw on our American military side is, hey, we are doing our job. We are getting it done. Why can't the State Department and the international community get the politics and the economics right? We have stopped the fighting. We have separated the forces. We have set up the weapons storage facilities. We are insuring freedom of movement. We protected the elections. We have allowed a secure environment for the refugees to begin to go back. But why aren't these firms being privatized? Why do these nationalist politicians continue to be returned? So we all have to be prepared for this tension between the fact that as difficult as the military side is, it is much more difficult to restore a society on the political and economic front. That takes a lot of time, and that is going to produce a lot of tension.

One of the other areas where we made a lot of progress was the cantonment of weapons. We made a lot of progress cantoning all the heavy weapons and then harvesting a lot of weapons from the local community. We removed all that weaponry, and it was a constant effort, from the bad guys. Also from my perspective was the importance of NATO being successful in this SFOR mission in Bosnia and Kosovo. This was the first NATO out of area operation since the end of the cold war. I, myself, am a great fan of NATO. I recognize all its problems and difficulties, but I felt for the future of NATO, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact in 1989-1990, it was very important for the future of that alliance, that it do well in the Balkans. From my experience on the ground, despite all the imperfections and problems, on balance I think a fair judgment would be that it was right to go in and make that intervention. At the end of the day it has made a positive difference in Europe. I think Europe is a better place for this, and I think this has helped prepare NATO for going really out of area. Now we find them sending troops to Afghanistan and supporting a training mission in Iraq.

Q: Well one final thing I would like to ask about. While you were there, what were you working on or was it a part of your area of jurisdiction, I am talking about the whole presence there, of helping the war crimes people go in and look at grave sites and that sort of thing.

FINNEY: One of our basic security responsibilities was to provide security for the folks coming from The Hague who were doing the excavations and gathering evidence for the war crimes. We did dozens of missions like this. Many of the atrocities were done by the Serbs on the west bank of the Drina in the Srebrenica and Zvornik area. There were thousands of graves, mass graves, individual graves. We provided security for those. We went to a lot of the exhumation sites. And we got briefed every six months from the legal people and the archaeologists who were employed by The Hague describing in gruesome detail what they were doing. Then we would go out to the site itself and we would see remains of these people stacked up by the hundreds. We did a lot of that.

Q: Was there resentment and apprehensions of all of a sudden they come in and start digging up graves around the farms of people who live there all the time. Was there opposition? How did you deal with this?

FINNEY: Yes, there was opposition, particularly among the Serb land owners. The Bosnian Serb political authorities wanted to hide this. They didn't want the court to come in and be digging this information up. The local landowners were quite unhappy with this, and occasionally people would take pot shots, and then we would set up a full time camp and keep our soldiers out in the field as long as it took to establish order so that these excavations could go forward. One time in the course of a major excavation south of Zvornik, the lawyers came down from The Hague and had a big briefing for us and told us that they had recovered some small arms rounds. They wanted to know whether these small arms rounds came from any of the weapons that were in the Bosnian Serb brigade which was about 10 miles away. We went to that Bosnian Serb brigade. They had over 4,000 AK-47s. We took, over a period of two or three weeks, all 4,000 plus AK-47s. Fired them on the firing range, and did the ballistic analysis to support what these lawyers told us. That was just one example. Security was the big issue, assuring them that they would be secure. Then the other big issue was the interviews associated with these sites. Quite often they wanted to conduct interviews, but the people whom they wanted to talk to were afraid to come forward. So we facilitated a lot of that. We provided security details for these people so they would come forward and be available for interviews. Then we would help protect them afterwards. So we were deeply involved in this. While I was there, since Srebrenica was in our AO we had staff rides in which we organized opportunities for all the personnel assigned to this particular rotation to go down to Srebrenica, learn about what happened, and then to visit a grave site afterwards. So this was a major focus for us because we thought it was part of the effort to bring about justice. Now let me also hasten to add there were Bosniac atrocities against the Serbs in a couple of places west of Brcko. A number of Croatian concentration camps were set up that brutalized the Serbs. We went through the whole process up there as well.

Q: To refresh, you were there doing this twice from when to when? Then was did you do?

FINNEY: I was there two tours. My first tour was July, 1999, through August, 2000. Then I went back the following summer from July, 2001, to September, 2001. I returned back to Washington the September 9 or 10 the weekend before the fateful September 11, Twin Towers. I was back in my old job as head of the political advisor office in the Bureau of Political Military Affairs (PM/POLAD). September 11 happened, and I was immediately called by the PM front office to head up the political military task force in the Department for planning the political-military response to 9-11. I served in that capacity through the end of November.

I was asked to direct the Political Military Bureau task force in the State Department Operations Center beginning on September 12. Our PM Assistant Secretary was Lincoln Bloomfield; our Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary was Greg Suchan. They called me and asked me if I would take on this task. I said I would be happy to do. I took my deputy

in the political advisor's office, Tom Macklin. Tom and I went up there and set up this task force. We started on September 12, and we worked through this. We just put aside our political advisor duties, and we worked through this until the end of November – three months straight. We operated 24(hours)/7(days). This was an interagency task force. The base of it was State Department officers and DOD exchange officers seconded to State. That was the initial framework. We then reached out. I tried to put our military officers from our task force in the National Military Command Center (NMCC), so that we could have instantaneous liaison with the Pentagon. We couldn't get permission from the Pentagon to do this. We then went to the Air Force and got permission to put one of our State Department our military liaison officer who was assigned to State, in the Air Force 24/7 operations center. The reason the Air Force did this was the Air force was providing all the logistic support for the flow of our forces into Afghanistan and into the Persian Gulf. They had to have overflight. They had to have access. They had to have bed down authority, refueling authority. So they were very interested in getting State Department cooperation through our country teams to get this.

Q: This may be pushing this too much, but the fact that the Pentagon didn't do this, was this part of what has generally been conceded to be the Secretary of Defense, Don Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz, the people who were running the Pentagon, sort of freezing out State Department. They were focused on, well Iraq in a way that the State Department was not that committed to. Did you have that feeling?

FINNEY: I didn't have that feeling so much in the run up to Afghanistan. That feeling did emerge when we went back and had another experience in the run up to Iraq. That was two years later in March of 2003. I will be talking about that in greater detail. But back in September 2001, I guess my analysis would be there was a lot of narrow minded bureaucratic folks way below the level of Sec Def and Dep Sec Def Wolfowitz, and Undersecretary for Policy Douglas Feith. Even with Afghanistan, I think we ran into some bureaucracy, lower level bureaucracy at the one or two star level. But we couldn't break through it, and we weren't getting any help from the Undersecretary for Policy. But the issue here was the Air force very quickly picked up on this. We were able to put a State Department officer in their op center, and we had an Air Force representative in our task force at State 24/7.

As a result of that, in December the Air Force came to us and said, "This is so important to us for our planes to be able to overfly these countries, have access to the bases, get the bed down authority for gas and refueling. This is so important to us that we have decided we want a political advisor assigned to TRANSCOM at Scott Air Force Base in Belleville, Illinois." I made the recommendation to the head of the political military bureau that it was in our interest to do this as part of interagency coordination in dealing with this new global war on terrorism. But our problem was PM bureau didn't have the money or the authority. What do you call it. There is an expression for having the position and having the funds for the position. PM didn't have it, and Mother State, through the Director General, wasn't going to give us the money. The Air Force went to the office of the Secretary of Defense and said, "We have got to have this money to pay State for this State Department position." OSD came though. So this started in December,

and by May in 2002 we established a State Department POLAD position at TRANSCOM, U.S. Transportation Command, Scott Air Force Base, Bellville Illinois, paid for by DOD. So that was an example of where it got to higher levels of DOD and they did come through.

We also went out to the Center for Naval Analysis, and we got some of their experts on naval affairs and brought them into our task force. And we reached out to two or three other agencies to bring them into our task force. We were doing two key things: One of them was that General Tommy Franks, who was in charge of CENTCOM and was in charge of the military component of Operation Enduring Freedom Afghanistan, would send up what was called a request for forces, RFF to the joint staff. He would say I need these kinds of combat forces, engineers, medics, logisticians, special forces etc. The joint staff would then take that request for forces and turn it into what is called an OPORD (operations order) and then it became an execution order, an EXORD. They would put together an execution order notifying various units among our military that you are going to Afghanistan. They would then send that EXORD over to State Department for us to chop (i.e., clear). That was a pivotal role that our task force played and we took that EXORD and we had to translate it into English. I mean it sounds a little bit ludicrous, but it is actually a fact. The way DOD puts together its EXORDs, I mean it is like reading an algorithm, a list of algorithms. So we knew what they were saying with all their acronyms and what these forces are, and what these forces meant. So we would then take this and we would go to our Assistant Sec for PM bureau, the Undersecretary for Political Affairs and then to the Deputy Secretary, Mr. Armitage or Secretary Powell. We would get the State Department chop on this execute order. The next step, believe it or not, in the 21st century, we had to fax it to the NSC and the director for defense affairs in NSC gave the final chop. The NSC would chop it and then the forces would go. This, in the early days, in September or October, was very intense because America was waiting for action. What were we going to do, this shock of 3,000 people being killed. The emphasis on getting the forces out there was extraordinary and getting this inter agency coordination was critical. So our efforts to provide State Department approval to these execution orders, explaining what these orders meant, was absolutely critical.

Another dimension of this was coordinating with the country teams. This meant a lot of the nations in the Persian Gulf. It meant a lot of nations in Europe that we were overflying. It meant most of the nations in central Asia that we were actually launching forces from. You get permission from one country for search and rescue. You get permission from another country to send out land fuel and send for C-130's. You get another kind of permission from another country to actually launch combat operations from their soil. Working with the country teams with the Gulf, in Central Asia and Europe, it was a round-the-clock effort to coordinate this. What happens in an intense situation like this is that the staffs at CENTCOM go directly to the DATT (Defense Attaché) in a country team. Let say a classic example was Uzbekistan. They would go directly to the country team and say, "You are going to get a request coming through State channels to your ambassador for permission to launch combat operations for AC-130 gunships out of Uzbekistan. This request is coming, but in the meantime we need this permission tomorrow morning." So the DATT would go to his contacts in the ministry of

defense. They, who had experience in working with our special forces in exercises, were quite sympathetic, and would say, "Sure, you got it." But sometimes that minister of defense was not in sync with the political leadership. And the political leadership was not about to give this permission until they had thought through the implications and particularly had thought through what are we, what am I as president of Uzbekistan, going to get for this? So on a couple of occasions, we had to turn around C-17s and C-130s that were in the air on the way to land in Uzbekistan because we didn't have permission. So coordination here is critical in getting this done.

Coalition management was another thing. Keeping track for our friends in OSD and in NSC and in CENTCOM, what allies are coming to play in the game, and what position they are going to play, and what permission they are going to give us. This is enormous. This is in the context of principal meetings twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon, and then a follow-up meeting to get the latest taskers for the principals, and then how to execute. This is preparation in September and early October. Then we get into October and we start doing strikes. So our task force was deeply involved in the coalition management piece. When we start doing strikes in places where you have got international agencies, whether it is the Red Cross, CARE, the Red Crescent, and you are putting in bombs, the UN agencies, they have got identification tarps on top of their buildings. Some of their buildings still get hit. The UN wants to know when we are going in with the strike, what buildings we are hitting. It is unbelievable. So you are trying to sort all that out.

Working out the rules of engagement is an unbelievable difficult and delicate task. So even though technically we are supposed to be operating at the strategic level, approving execute orders, coming over from DOD for State chop and then going to NSC, we actually find ourselves on a day-to-day basis working with ambassadors, DCMs, political counselors out in the field and with the majors, Lt. colonels on the staff of CENTCOM and the component commanders because nobody has time to wait for principals to check every block. So that is how it was for September through the end of November, absolutely around the clock. In addition to helping assure the flow of forces, to clearing the execute orders, to working coalition management, it was this force flow from the Air Force which was an extraordinary effort. No other country in the world can start from a dead stop and quickly deploy forces 12,500 miles away in combat, supported, rescued, medical, food, logistics. It is a phenomenal thing, but it is a huge effort. Out of this, we developed a lot of lessons learned about better coordination, first of all between ourselves and OSD and NSC and between ourselves and combatant commanders. It reminds me of the classical tale of Sisyphus rolling his rock up the hill, you are finally getting it right and five or ten years later and you have got to relearn it. We went through this in my experience in the Grenada operation back in the 1980s. These were the same tired old lessons learned over and over again. It drives you nuts. Out of Operation Enduring Freedom Afghanistan and the operation in Iraq came a lot of lessons learned. But one of the new proposals is to develop what is called a National Security Officer. These would be officers from the State Department, from the OSD civilian side, maybe some from Treasury, FBI, who would have as a career specialty as a national security specialist. That means they would do interagency service on the NSC, at OSD, over at State so you have

a core of officers who could plug in to these kinds of operations and we wouldn't have to worry about where am I going to find somebody to pull that.

[Ed: Ambassador James F. Dobbins, Jr. was not ambassador to Afghanistan. Chosen by Secretary of State Powell, Dobbins played a key role, however, at the Bonn Conference, which began on December 5, 2001 to gain consensus from the Afghan anti-Taliban factions to agree on a leader, Hamid Karzai, who took the Presidential oath on December 22, 2001. As Finney mentioned earlier in this interview, Dobbins played an important role in the 1990s Balkans imbroglio]

For example, Ambassador Jim Dobbins who was our presidential envoy going out to Afghanistan. He did a phenomenal job. He came by our task force, and we briefed him up before he went out there in I think December of 2001 to reopen our embassy. He came away from that experience and said, "When we set up our military command in Kabul, we need a POLAD. We need a POLAD for that commander." Since we went back to our regular duties as head of the POLAD office in early December, I ran with that. I went to our own front office in the PM bureau and at State, and I was dumfounded that we got very little response from the senior levels of our building. It was only because Ambassador Dobbins himself called Tommy Franks and got Tommy Franks to endorse Ambassador Dobbins' recommendation that we could then take this to our leadership in PM and take it to the director general of the Foreign Service to get the funding. It all comes down to FTE (full time equivalent – government-ese for congressional authorized staffing level of one person/year), that is the expression I was looking for. Get the funding to set up a full time equivalent for a POLAD to our military commander in Afghanistan. This should be second nature. By that time we had five or six years in the Balkans, and we had POLAD out there. We shouldn't put our military in these situations without proper Pol-Mil policy support. So I thought Ambassador Dobbins did a great favor for us. As you know he has opened the door to discussion with Iran. I think he has done one of the best single studies [RAND] on how to do stability operations. He was also a key player during the Balkans, and he fully appreciates the challenges of interagency coordination.

I came out of that experience, as heading up the PM task force in the State operations center for three months, more convinced than ever on the need to integrate our State Department officers at lower levels with DOD in preparation for these crises. When our troops deploy to the field, it is too late to have our officers gain an appreciation of DOD at the War College when they are FSO-2s (Lt. Colonel equivalent) or FSO-1 (Colonel equivalent). They have got to be exposed to the military and this inter-agency process, the process of becoming purple. They have got to be exposed as officers at the FSO 5,4, and 3 level. That means going to the joint forces staff college down in Norfolk to take a two month course. Because of the international security environment that we are in now, because we have got to learn to apply all the elements of our national power, we have got to redouble our efforts to integrate State and DOD and FBI and Treasury and all the relevant instruments of our economic power. This experience with Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan really drove that point home to me. It came at the end of the Clinton administration when Bush was coming in as our new president. Frank Carlucci

did a study of the State Department. We had the Hart-Rudman Commission. They all talked about taking the lessons of Goldwater-Nichols where it decreed that the military must be joint. Taking that lesson and applying it to the inter agency. As somebody who has spent a big part of my career and post-career working in this political and military field, I think that is one of the central lessons. That we need to know that the State Department as a culture has got to place more emphasis on integrating our efforts with DOD. This whole process of transforming military victory into strategic success. This is the most difficult feat of statesmanship, and it involves lots of skills.

One of the skills is what I would call a national security officer skill. I hope that as a result of Afghanistan and Iraq and the stability operations we are doing, that this will eventually come to the fore. I think that nobody in the State Department should get over the threshold and join the senior foreign service without an inter-agency tour. That should be a requirement. From this experience with the task force, the PM bureau took our task force, hired some contractors with military experience, hired some retired State Department officers, and turned the task force in a 24/7 operation to serve Deputy Secretary Armitage, and Colin Powell. Here we are, five years later, that 24/7 capability, known as the Political Military Action Team, exists in the PM bureau reporting to the 7th floor. I think that was a very positive development. Along the line we set up a POLAD position at transportation command. We set up a POLAD position in Afghanistan and that morphed into two POLAD positions.

I went to Afghanistan to be the POLAD for our military component at Bagram Airfield from September, 2003 to February 2004, may be end of January, 2004. When our military command at Bagram moved the commander down to Kabul, which was an excellent move so he would be co-located in the embassy with the ambassador, we created a POLAD position for the commander in Kabul and maintained a POLAD position at Bagram Airfield 40 miles northwest of Kabul with the operational force.

As the inter agency was grappling with the lessons of Afghanistan, Rumsfeld, in December of 2001, as the Taliban were being defeated in Afghanistan, tasked the combatant commanders, all his geographical commanders, and some of his functional combatant commanders. Let me explain. There are four geographical combatant commanders, Pacific Command (PACOM), Central Command (CENTCOM), European Command (EUCOM) and Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). Then he has five other functional commanders. So Rumsfeld tasked seven of the combatant commanders to come up with a campaign plan for conducting the war on terrorism: the four geographical commanders plus the Special Operations Command (SOCOM), Transportation Command (TRANSCOM), and Strategic Command (STRATCOM). Come up with a campaign plan for conducting the global war on terrorism by applying all instruments of our national power. He tasked JCS to come up with a concept for this. As a result JCS came up with what was called a Joint Inter-Agency Coordination group, or JIAC. These were to be established at these seven commands to help the military commander prepare a plan that had input from the relevant elements of our interagency. Thus when his plan came up to OSD and the Joint Staff, it would have already incorporated the various contributions that the different agencies could bring to the fight. Rather than setting up a

plan that was purely military, that would be kicked back to him and say re-do this. Tell me what CIA, State, FBI, Treasury, USAID and everybody else is going to do. So these joint interagency groups, JIAC, were set up at seven commands. DOD came to us and asked us for a state officer either at the FSO- 02 or 01 level to serve on these joint interagency groups to help develop military planning that incorporates all the elements of national power. We went to our PM leadership and to the director general and they said, "Sorry, we simply don't have the positions." We went back to DOD and said, "We don't have the FTEs. We can't pay for this." DOD came back and said, "This is so important to us, like in the example of Transportation Command, we will pay for it." So again DOD stepped forward and paid for seven State Department positions and we sent our officers out to these seven commands to help them with their planning. It has been a mixed bag I have to admit. In some commands like CENTCOM it has worked very well. In other commands, like TRANSCOM, they haven't been so fully engaged. It touches on the important issue between State and DOD and coming to grips with stability operations, where there is peace keeping or conflict or whatever. That is the role of planning. DOD lives, eats, sleeps planning. Planning is not an important element in State Department culture. For us a plan is something that is going to be done next weekend. DOD does intensive planning. They plan for this week. They plan for next month. They plan for six months. Since they have a five year budget, they plan five years down the road. So it is very important that State Department develop the capability to contribute in a meaningful way to the DOD planning process, so we get this right at the beginning of the process and not at the end.

As for Operation Iraqi Freedom, trying to look at it objectively, all the good work that the State side was doing in planning for Iraq simply didn't compute with DOD planning. I am not talking about at the political level; I am talking about at the professional level. It really didn't compute. It was like dropping five books of the Encyclopedia Britannica on how to run Iraq on the planner's desk, when he needs a 20 page outline. So again I come back to this need for more familiarity and more national security coordination, more exposure to DOD at an earlier level. This doesn't mean State Department is going to become like DOD. What it means is like the Goldwater-Nichols situation, setting up joint military operations is a long process. The Goldwater Nichols passed in 1986. That is 20 years ago. They still are working on it. You have got to start the process. So we took over staffing these state Department JIAC positions in the POLAD office. We were running 18 POLAD positions worldwide, and we were running seven JIAC positions in these commands. We were recruiting State Department officers and getting them in sync for these commands and working with the Director General. Most of the time they couldn't pay for these positions and we had to get DOD to step forward. They always did. It involved a lot of work, but after the Afghan experience I thought this made great sense.

Now flash forward. We have, I think militarily, a significant success in Afghanistan. Ambassador Dobbins re-opens our embassy. We assign ambassadors out there. USAID starts coming to the fore. We start this training program for the Afghan army and very importantly for the Afghan police, again a very long and laborious process. We start committing re-construction funds. We involve the UN; we involve NATO; we involve the international community. So all this is moving forward. But by the spring and early

summer of 2002 it is clear that the Bush administration and the Pentagon are looking very closely at the potential for intervention in Iraq. Bob Woodward's book, Plan of Attack (2004), which is based on extensive interviews with the President and others, says that the President asked General Franks in December, late November or early December of 2001 to put together a military option for intervention in Iraq. Again according to Mr. Bob Woodward in his book, from December of 2001 until the summer of 2002, I think this military option is in the planning stage. Franks, Rumsfeld, Vice President Cheney, and people immediately around them, this plan went through six or seven iterations. By the late summer of 2002 this had morphed into what was called the hybrid plan. Each time that Franks set up a plan, Rumsfeld, Chaney, and the president and their staffs sent it back, Re-work it. So by the end of August what was known as the hybrid plan was on the table. At the end of August, because of my previous association, I was still director of the POLAD office in PM at the time. However, because of my previous association with war planning up at the Naval War college when I was the POLAD to the Chief of Naval Operations, I was asked to come out to Northrop Grumman at the end of August, the first couple of days of September to spend three or four days with a number of people, including some people from National Defense University, to go over this hybrid plan. And this hybrid plan had a number of unique features. One of them was that there was very little buildup involved in this plan. Unlike Desert Storm of 1991.

There was this huge build up in Desert Storm, six or seven months. The hybrid plan that had been developed by CENTCOM and processed through DOD and NSC was a much different approach. Very short time for build up, number one. Number two, very light U.S. force. I mean I think in Desert Storm there were several hundred thousand. But in this operation, the plan that we saw at the end of August or early September was basically three divisions. That is forty to sixty thousand including support troops. Number three, this plan involved what was called a rolling start, so that rather than assembling all the forces in the region, the idea was you kick off with I think two army divisions and one marine division. The forces to support and help them would come rolling in afterwards. Then it was also based on the fact that fourth, the analysis was that the Iraqi army and security forces had been badly depleted since Desert Storm and would not put up a significant fight. So they were expected to collapse rather quickly. Then fifth, there were a number of options being looked at for other important issues. First, the Iraqis torching the oil fields, which was a feature in Desert Storm. There was a lot of planning for that. Second, refugees, even though they thought it would be a short fight, they thought a lot of refugees could be generated. There was a plan to build a series of 48 refugee camps along the borders with Iran and Syria, and there were a couple of other things they were looking at. Most of the plan was focused on the operational aspects of it. There was not a lot focused on the post-conflict phase aside from this refugee help, and then getting in and beginning reconstruction.

There was the principle discussed in this plan that as soon as the fighting stopped, the reconstruction would begin immediately. The idea was that there would be no gap. OK, so we looked at this plan and I went back after this two or three day war game, and I briefed my leadership in the PM bureau what was underway. Again this was the first week of September in 2002. No one in State Department at that point, according to the

leadership in PM, had been clued into the hybrid plan which I saw. So that started a process with the head of the PM Bureau, Linc Bloomfield, going to the Deputy Secretary of State, Rich Armitage, to start to get State more involved in this planning element. So this process of getting State more involved gradually developed to the point that by December 2002 I think there were 12 to 15 people in the State Department building at that point who were actually up to date on the military operational planning.

Now, apart from that, however, there had been an ongoing process. You have to go back to 1998 when President Clinton announced that regime change in Iraq was U.S. policy. He drew on the $100 million that the Congress had appropriated a year or two before to support the formation of a potential Iraqi government in exile and to support elements within Iraq that wanted to produce democratic change. So as a result of that process, in 1998, with the $100 million from the Congress, with the declaration by President Clinton that this is now our national policy, and with some follow-on funds, the Near East Bureau in the State Department began meeting with Iraqi exiles. Number one was to try and bring together the different political groups and narrow them down into an effective grouping. Number two was to start plugging into people and getting from the Iraqis what they would like to see if U.S. national policy was actually executed and there was a regime change. So that began a process back in 1998. You then come forward to 2001 December when, according to Bob Woodward, the President asks General Franks and CENTCOM to develop a military plan. Then by September 2002, you have a military plan and you are moving to thinking about what happens after the military.

Over here, the State Department for the past two or three years has been developing this other huge amount of information. Now from where I was sitting in the Political Military Bureau watching all this work, there was a huge gap between these two efforts. That gap was never closed. I don't know. I guess there were a lot of important political reasons. Secretary Powell and Secretary Armitage, I think, were skeptical of these efforts of a military intervention. I guess they put forth their particular views, and in the deliberations at the top of the government they did not carry the day. Vice President Cheney and Secretary Rumsfeld carried the day. So the merging of the mostly military planning done in DOD and the long term planning that had been going on by State for a year and a half or two years never came together in an effective way. People who were directly involved will know much more about that than I do. But by December of 2002, the DOD had brought in a retired three star, Jay Garner, and asked him to pull together other retired generals and some civilians to come together and do in essence phase four planning for this post-conflict.

One of the reasons they turned to General Garner is in the follow on to Desert Storm you may remember we effectively assumed responsibility for the welfare of the Kurds in Northern Iraq. There was a huge displacement of over a million Kurds, and our military went in there, with support from our embassy in Turkey, and set up refugee areas for them in Turkey and along the border inside of Iraq. We brought in helicopters and tremendous amounts of food and so forth to get them through the winter. Jay Garner headed up that effort. So DOD turned to him. His deputy was a retired three star, General Adams, whom I had worked for when he was out in the Pacific and I was a POLAD in

CINCPAC. But most of all when he was in SFOR in Sarajevo, and I had a number of associations with him there. So it was Garner and his deputy general Adams. They pulled together a group in late December, early January, of mostly retired military officers and then some civilians to plan this phase four which would narrow the gap between the end of combat and getting the reconstruction and the humanitarian effort underway in a prompt manner. In January, 2003, they had two meetings over at the National Defense University in which they tried to game exactly what their approach would be. Then they were deployed over there in early March. We assigned a number of State Department officers to General Garner's group. There we ran into some real difficulties with DOD. I don't know the reasons why, but Secretary Rumsfeld, NSC advisor Condoleezza Rice, and Vice President Cheney had come away from the Balkan experience with the view that a major problem in the Balkans was that the civilian side didn't keep up with the military side. I made the point before that from the military perspective we were getting a lot of things done, but on the political and economic side things were going so slow. Rumsfeld, Cheney, and Rice came away with the impression that one of the problems was that the authority was split. You had the SFOR commander in Bosnia and you had the high commissioner who was an international civilian civil servant. So they wanted to combine this under one command in a MacArthur-like arrangement for Japan or General Lucius Clay arrangement in Germany after WWII. And so they did this by going to retired generals in whom they had confidence, and then some civilians who they felt understood what the administration was doing. So December, January, February, that planning effort was underway.

We were asked to supply State Department officers to that group. We did. However, there were some State Department officers in PM we didn't nominate, but other elements in the department did, the Near East Bureau nominated a number, who were rejected by DOD. One of the reasons was a key guy, and I will get his name in a minute, who had headed up this study program and engagement with the Iraqi exiles for two years, put together lots of useful information. He was upset that his information hadn't been factored in to the operational military planning and the Jay Garner effort. So out of frustration he was critical of what DOD was doing. He said, "We have been doing it for two years; they have been doing it for a couple of months. Why don't they pay more attention to us." So I guess he was outspoken. As a result I guess Rumsfeld felt that he wasn't reliable and didn't want him over there. That was their position. But again it reflected to me an important cultural thing which I just offer for your consideration: When you are planning for a war, particularly like Iraq. Not Afghanistan which the majority of the American people understood immediately and which had full support. But when you are planning for an intervention in Iraq, which like the Balkans has no altogether clear purpose to the American public, it is controversial. So from DOD's perspective, if you bring a lot of State Department people in to your planning, and they don't share your conviction that this intervention is important. It is obviously a tremendously sensitive issue politically. From DOD's perspective, they are worried that these State Department people aren't trustworthy. This is a very stereotypical, unhelpful, and negative perspective, and it lies at the heart of why interagency cooperation is difficult. But the military is trained to do military planning for whatever the commander in chief wants them to do. They are used to keeping secrets. The folk legend and the

stereotypical view over at DOD is when you are planning hugely politically sensitivities like this, you can trust the military staff to keep the secrets. You can't necessarily trust the State Department guys or gals who are brought in. And again this lies at the bottom of the reasons why it is so hard to have better interagency communications, coordination. We have got a lot of work to do to make it better. In the interagency discussions at the very top of our government, based on what I was told and based on what I read, Rumsfeld prevailed in the arguments before the President in asserting DOD control over the planning for stability and reconstruction. The President agreed to give the lead to DOD, OSD particularly, with Undersecretary for Policy, Douglas Feith, give them the lead for planning this rather than giving the lead to State and USAID. This was a very bitter pill for Secretary Powell and Deputy Secretary Armitage and Undersecretary for Political Affairs, Marc Grossman, to swallow. Now they were all good team players and they saluted. Powell and Armitage and Grossman said, "That is your call Mr. President, and we will support this playbook, this plan to the best of our ability." But below them at the bureau level in the Department and the office directors was huge disappointment and bitterness that DOD was taking the lead in planning this and we aren't.

Q: I think this is a good place to stop. We will pick this up next time. We are talking about some planning going into Iraq. By the way, one question that I would like you to address next time. Going back a bit. When they declared this is a war against terrorism. It always seemed to me that just by knowing how terrorism operates, except when you have something like flushing out the people of Al Qaeda out of Afghanistan, this is not a military thing. This is an intelligence thing, it is a police thing, it is a CIA type and it is an international thing.

FINNEY: Correct.

Q: And military force is very marginal to this. I mean to get a cell out of Hanover you are not going to send an American division in. Anyway would you agree?

FINNEY: Great question.

Q: I mean was this a concern that was raised at the time?

FINNEY: Absolutely.

Q: OK Today is 17 May 2006, we're returning to our conversation with John Finney.

FINNEY: You were raising the question about the planning for the invasion of Iraq which kicked of on March 19, 2003. But the planning started in the winter of 2001. You were talking about how adequate was the planning for that event, and particularly you raised the issue did they contemplate that an insurgency would develop and what is the proper way to respond to that kind of challenge.

Q: You were doing what?

FINNEY: At this time I was the coordinator for State Department political advisors working in the Political Military Bureau. I had been doing that job since I returned from my first tour to Bosnia in the summer of or early fall of 2000. So they asked me to become the coordinator for the State Department political advisor function which supplies about 18 to 20 political advisors to our senior military commanders. We also ran the State Department's exchange program where we sent 50 FSO's over to the DOD and the war colleges and they sent colonels and lt. colonels, also about 50, over to the State Department. So I was doing that function.

Q: Did you see at the time we had one war which was imminent with Iraq, one war which was going on in Afghanistan, which by any definition required troops on the ground. Did you feel there was an attempt to make this into a military problem rather than a police-intelligence problem?

FINNEY: On September 12 and 13, right after the attack on the Pentagon, our Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Political Military Bureau, Greg Suchan, called me in and asked me in my capacity as the coordinator for the State Department political advisor program, to put that aside and head up a political military unit in the operations center to coordinate whatever political military response would be coming out of this attack on the Pentagon and the World Towers up in New York. So as of 14 September, I headed up this political military unit in the Department's operations center focusing on our response.

We were deeply involved in the preparations and planning for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. So I did that from September through just past Thanksgiving into early December. Then I left the operations center, went back to running the State Department political advisor program -- also located in the Pol Mil Bureau. During that three months in the Operations Center heading this pol mil unit, I became very familiar with the planning and execution of our intervention in Afghanistan but also became drawn in on the margins of the planning for Iraq. About Afghanistan, based on the information I picked up in the Operations Center and from what I read in Bob Woodward's book, when the President and Secretary Rumsfeld asked CENTCOM for a military intervention in Afghanistan, there was no such plan. According to Woodward, the president turned to George Tenet and the CIA because they had had sources inside Afghanistan since 1996. They had a lot of contacts particularly with the Northern Alliance. So the plan that President Bush okayed with the concurrence of Secretary Rumsfeld, for Afghanistan involved using our CIA contacts including with the now-President Karzai. We would use our CIA contacts working with the Northern Alliance supplemented by small detachments of soldiers from special forces to carry out our intervention in Afghanistan. That turned out to be a very successful plan. So in the winter of 2001, sometime after Thanksgiving, around Christmas, the President asked Secretary Rumsfeld to consider a plan for a potential military intervention into Iraq. If Bob Woodward is correct, that began a dialogue involving General Franks as our combatant commander in CENTCOM and Rumsfeld and the President from December, 2001, through the summer of 2002, in preparing a plan for military intervention in Iraq. And again according to Mr. Woodward, the initial plan that General Franks brought to Rumsfeld was a plan that was based on General Zinni, his predecessor's planning for

intervention in Iraq which called for a very sizable force of several hundred thousand U.S. soldiers. After initial review with Secretary Rumsfeld, according to Woodward, this plan started to be scaled back. Franks reportedly met with Secretary Rumsfeld over a dozen times, and he met with the president over half a dozen times from December, 2001, to the summer of 2002, refining this plan. A key feature of the plan was that the forces to be committed kept getting smaller and smaller. In the first week of September, 2002, because of my contacts involvement in planning and execution of Operation Enduring Freedom for Afghanistan, I was invited out to a Lockheed Martin facility in suburban Virginia to look at what was called in September, 2002, the hybrid plan. This was a combination of what Franks had brought up to Rumsfeld and the president, and their adjustments to that plan. We met with a colonel from CENTCOM, and he laid out the plan as it was then. The plan then called for a very light U.S. intervention force of about 50 or 60 thousand, and then follow-on forces to help secure the victory. We looked at the key features of the plan in terms of phase 4 which dealt with how to deal with refugees, how to deal with potential efforts by Saddam to ignite the oil fields. There was no real discussion of a potential insurgency. Having been familiar with Desert Storm, it was astounding to me to see how small the U.S. force was, how limited the aerial bombardment before our U.S. forces kicked off, and the method of re-enforcement was to feed our forces in as the situation developed. So it was dramatically different from Desert Storm where we spent nine months building up this massive force for the desert.

Q: Well, was it implicit while you were doing this, that there would be something happening in Iraq which would allow our forces to work with them, some sort of insurgency or something?

FINNEY: We saw how small the numbers of the U.S. forces were, essentially one army division, a marine division, one working the Tigris, one working the Euphrates river corridors, and then some supporting forces. And then there was a provision for the Fourth Division to come in through Turkey from the north. So two divisions coming up from Kuwait in the south, along the Tigris-Euphrates River valleys, and the Fourth Division coming in from Turkey. That was the essential plan. Then to feed forces in on that as they hopefully moved forward. But the first problem was that Turkey said no, we are not going to let the Fourth Division come in. So we had to send the Fourth Division all the way around to Kuwait.

Q: So while you were doing this planning, you were a political-military person.

FINNEY: Yes.

Q: What were you getting from our folks in Turkey? Were they saying this is problematic or it is not going to fly or what were you getting?

FINNEY: We were getting conflicting reports because there had been a political change in Turkey. A new political party had come in. It had been associated with conservative Muslim elements in the country. The Turkish general staff was working very intensively with General Jones and EUCOM, had very close contacts with them. They were sort of

encouraging, that they would let the Fourth Division come through. A tremendous amount of planning went into this. We put in some advance forces to pave the way to get them through Turkey to the border. So the Turkish general staff was pretty supportive. But working with this new political party was hard because we didn't have good contacts with them, and amongst themselves were having a lot of debate. So we would send General Jones, and we sent Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and our ambassador would be reporting. So there was a lot of conflicting information. But increasingly it looked like this might not work. The actual vote in the Turkish parliament was a day of great confusion. The party itself, the Dom Urtogon, I can't remember the gentleman in charge, the prime minister. He, himself, did not know how the party was going to vote, so it was very difficult to figure out. [Ed: On March 1, 2003 the media reported: Turkey's parliament failed to pass a proposal to allow more than 60,000 U.S. troops to operate from Turkish bases and ports in the event of a war with Iraq. The parliament adjourned after an initial vote showed 264 lawmakers favoring the measure -- three fewer than needed for passage -- 250 opposing and 19 abstaining. After the proposal failed to gain a majority vote, Turkish Prime Minister Abdullah Gul declared it had been "rejected."]

During this week in September, 2002, when we were looking at the plan in great detail, I confess that we did not focus enough on the potential for an insurgency. When we asked why is the U.S. force so small, the representatives from CENTCOM told us that the Iraqi military had continued to degrade seriously since Desert Storm. And of course we had been bombing Iraq continually under these UN restricted zones for 10 years. So they said the Iraqi force had degraded significantly. I remember there were 17 Iraqi divisions and I think two or three were considered as likely to put up meaningful resistance. Number two, they felt relatively confident that the Iraqi people would be welcoming to our forces. Number three, there was no discussion of a potential insurgency backlash coming from the Baath party, the Saddam hardliners, or from the Sunnis.

Q: When you are talking about an insurgency? Would you explain what you are talking about, because normally when you hear insurgency, you would think this would be a group that would support our troops?

FINNEY: No. this would be a reaction from the Baath party hardliners that had been ruling Iraq since the late 1960's. It would be a reaction from the Sunni political structure. This was faced with the prospect for the first time in 400-600 years of not running Baghdad and not running Iraq. The Shiites were now in the majority, and the potential influx of foreign jihadi fighters who would join this effort to undermine the U.S. intervention and U.S. occupation. Those are the three main elements.

Q: Did you feel that there was strong, how do I put this, ideological positive coming sort of say from the Sunni and the Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz group or not. I am not trying to put words in your mouth, but I feel that…

FINNEY: Well it was hard to determine. I mean I was working here in the trenches with Colonels and Lt. Colonels. We spent a week at Lockheed Martin with the plan, these representatives. We had people from National Defense University and some retired

military. So that was the environment. We are getting a first look at this. This was before. It was only two weeks later that President Bush went before the United Nations in mid-September, at the request of Secretary of State Colin Powell, to make that pitch, that we face a serious challenge from Iraq. That the international community has to address it. So at the level where I was working, we were very much focused on operational and tactical details. We did not address these larger issues of where Rumsfeld and Secretary Wolfowitz and others were coming from. We felt that it was likely that we could find ourselves intervening in Iraq, but it was by no means certain. It was clear to us that the President hadn't made a decision. This was part of typical Pentagon planning for a contingency that appeared might happen, but at the same time it appeared to us, we knew the President was going to go to the UN in the middle of the month and lay down these approaches. We knew there was a lot of diplomatic work that had to be done. So that is the context in which we were working, a small group of people that were invited in to look at this. I will say there was no one else from the Department of State there. I was there as someone who had a lot of political-military contact. So I came back from this planning session and reported, of course, to our Assistant Secretary in the Political Military Bureau, Lincoln Bloomfield. We discussed this plan, the status of the plan, its status and parameters. It was only later, in November and December, that key State Department people like my boss, Mr. Bloomfield, the Assistant Secretary of the Political Military Bureau, got permission through Deputy Secretary of State Armitage's office to sit in on the planning at their level. There were only about 10 people in the State Department I am told, who by December, 2002, January, 2003, actually had appropriate knowledge of the planning process for a military intervention.

Q: Well, going back to the time you were looking at this at Lockheed Martin, did you have the feeling that nobody was talking about the reaction of the Arab street. All of us who have served in the Foreign Service, have learned to beware of Iraq, because it is the one place where mobs really do come out into the street and rip people apart. Did you have a feeling, was there anybody, attachés or the equivalent who had Arab experience looking at the plans and saying yeah but what about the Arabs?

FINNEY: I can only assume that at Central Command Headquarters in Florida there were people with Arab experience who were familiar with Iraq, and who had good area knowledge. I am not an Arab expert. I have visited the region, but I have never served there. I was there strictly from a political-military functional point of view. When we looked at the plan in the first week of September, 2002, 99% of the focus was on the military operational details. The only reference to the people of Iraq that emerged in this discussion was what would be their reaction to our intervention? What were we going to do when the Iraqi military forces collapsed? But there was no significant in depth discussion of the cultural, political, psychological makeup of Iraq. This kind of discussion emerged in December of 2002 and January of 2003 when the Pentagon finally began to put together the CPA, Coalition Provisional Authority, which would move in on the heels of our military force and be responsible for stability and reconstruction.

[Ed: From April 2002 to March 2003] We were looking at military planning in the Near East Bureau under a man named Tom Warrick was heading up what was called The

Future of Iraq project. Earlier, in 1996 or 1998, I think 1996, the U.S. Congress appropriated $100 million to support democratic groups either inside or outside of Iraq. In 1998 President Clinton announced that official U.S. government policy was regime change in Iraq. So in response to that, an office emerged in NEA which was responsible for overseeing the disbursement of the $100 million from Congress to Iraqi exile groups which were mostly in Europe and particularly in London. So by the end of the decade, as the Clinton administration left, having declared regime change in Iraq was official U.S. policy, and President. Bush came in. Meanwhile, NEA was holding annual or semi annual meetings with these dissident groups in Iraq and giving them funds to recruit people, to pay for media, to train them in building democracy and everything. So by the fall of 2002, Mr. Warrick and this office, on the basis of a couple of years of work, had put together a very significant in-depth analysis of Iraq and what would be necessary to re build the ministries and to put together a democratic government in Iraq. I am told the fruit of all these labors was volumes. [Ed: The report was entitled The Future of Iraq project. It was put together by 17 different groups, each looking at a specific segment of Iraqi society and economy.] This work unfortunately was deemed by the people over at DOD as not to be relevant to the operational necessities in Iraq. Mr. Warrick and the Near East bureau had done all this work, great analysis of the Arabs, and much of the volumes were written by Arab exiles contracted by NEA. So you talk about insights now, the society work, it was all there. But because of, unfortunately, the politics that emerged as our government grappled with the potential for intervention in Iraq, and DOD had one point of view, and Secretary Powell had a somewhat different perspective, the fruits of the labors of NEA were not tapped, and were not brought into the planning for the Coalition Provisional Authority. So that was a huge setback in terms of being able to go in there with relevant knowledge.

This was further compounded because early in January of 2003 the NSC issued a directive on behalf of the president stating that the Department of Defense would be responsible and be the lead agency in directing stability and reconstruction in Iraq. Secretary Powell opposed that strongly, but in the highest councils of our government his arguments did not prevail. So DOD had the lead. They were focused on immediate operational stability and reconstruction objectives, and looked upon Mr. Warrick and the NEA effort over the past 18 months to two years as very much an academic exercise, and not so relevant to the operational needs of our commanders to set up a government. It was unfortunate. So the DOD set up the Coalition Provisional Authority by calling on a retired army Lt. General, Jay Garner, who had headed up the relief effort with the Kurds in the mountains of Northern Iraq in the wake of Desert Storm. They called upon him to head up the CPA. He immediately hired half a dozen retired U.S. army generals who had had experience in logistics to join his team. Then they came to the State Department and asked us to supply area experts to join his team.

Q: Going back to Lockheed Martin. Was the CIA represented? My question is this. The CIA had a lot of contacts in Afghanistan. It had been their playground basically for a decade or so. They were having a wonderful little war there.

FINNEY: In terms of supporting the Mujahadeen against the Soviets with Pakistan, yes.

Q: I finished reading a book called Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq [by New York Times correspondent Michael Gordon and retired Marine general Bernard Trainor]. It talks about the CIA. It doesn't get into it in much detail, but apparently you had CIA operatives promising they had contacts in country when they had none. But in the beginning when you were at these planning sessions, was the CIA there? What sort of contribution were they making if they were?

FINNEY: No they were not. I think we might have had a retired CIA officer or two in our pol-mil group at Lockheed Martin, but I do not recall any active duty CIA officers. The CIA in Iraq, my understanding is this. From the mid-1990s onward, no-fly restrictions had effectively prevented Saddam and his military forces from entering northern Iraq. So the CIA had a very strong presence on Turkey's border with Iraq with the Kurds. So the CIA were very tight with the Kurds and so from 1996, 1997 onward were regularly going into northern Iraq and working with the Peshmerga, the Kurdish militia, and doing a lot of work and trying to recruit people to go into the Sunni areas south of there and into Baghdad proper. And again my understanding based on what I have read and what I was told was that that was not successful in getting beyond the Kurds into the Sunni heartlands. Or I don't know how successful they were with Basra and the Shiites in the south. But there is no question they had been operating with the Kurds in Northern Iraq since 1996-1997. At one point they had an aborted coup in which Saddam actually did intervene and throttled a Kurdish attempt to mount a coup. So they had that experience, but it was limited.

So it was unfortunate therefore that when I went over to the Pentagon several times to meet with Jay Garner at least two conferences in which they brought in experts from throughout the government. They brought in Mr. Warrick from the State Department, some CIA people and DEA people, the experts from the National Defense University. They held two conferences over there soliciting input in January and February, 2003, all the substance that people could bring. So there was a tremendously intense atmosphere, and people were trying to shove information at General Garner to alert him to what he was getting into in terms of trying to do stability and reconstruction in Iraq. When you went into General Garner's headquarters over at the Pentagon it reminded me of an election campaign headquarters. It was phones constantly ringing. People were dashing about who had never worked before together with each other. So it was sort of a controlled pandemonium type of operation. And we eventually assigned a half a dozen retired U.S. ambassadors to General Garner's staff as he prepared to go over there, and some active senior Foreign Service officers. Mr. Warrick was part of that process at one point, but then he got shut out. I think the people at the Pentagon felt that Mr. Warrick believed he was the real expert on Iraq since he had spent the last two years doing his Iraq project, and that he didn't feel that this Pentagon effort was going in the right direction and made much sense. So there was a breakdown there. We were told that Mr. Rumsfeld and others didn't want him on General Garner's team.

Just to review why the NSC, through the President, made DOD the lead for stability and reconstruction. I am told it goes back to the Balkan experience where Mr. Rumsfeld and other neo-conservatives who were out of power at the time did not think that our military intervention into Bosnia and Kosovo reflected U.S. vital interests, number one. Number two, they felt that our military was misused in stability and reconstruction activities in the Balkans, because the civilian side didn't keep up. During the Balkan intervention, there was a lot of undercurrent unhappiness on the DOD side because the military felt it was doing its job in the Balkans, separating the forces, cantoning the weapons, providing freedom of movement. But the U.S. civilian and UN side which had to do with organizing a nation and elections and so forth seemed to be moving so slow. The end result was that the neo-conservatives I am told, took as their lesson from the Balkans: next time we have an intervention, we are not going to let the presence of our military be hostage to waiting on civilians to get the job done on their side. So they wanted to move towards a MacArthur model in Japan, where the military controlled the military, but also ran the civilian side. That is where they were leaning, so that, I think, greatly influenced the president and the vice president. That is why DOD got the lead.

In retrospect, I think it was a fundamental mistake. In retrospect they should have had the State Department leading the stability and reconstruction, drawing on the work that NEA had done over the couple of previous years, and putting together operational Foreign Service officers with retired military. You could join with them, but with State in the lead. This comes back to a fundamental point that I observed. Politics can get in the way of good operational planning. The ideal time for the State Department to be involved in the planning for a potential military operation in Iraq was when the planning began in December of 2001 and through the winter, spring, and fall of 2002. When General Franks was coming up to meet with Rumsfeld in Washington and going down to Texas to meet with the president at his Crawford Ranch. It was at that period that the State Department should have been a full partner. I know that when the military is doing planning for a potential military intervention, it is such a politically sensitive issue and so top secret that it is difficult for our national security structure to find a way to get relevant civilians in on this plan. There is this urban myth that the civilians can't be trusted to be part of a secret military plan. They will leak it to the press. The military is considered to be more trustworthy because they do this for a living. They are always doing contingency plans; pick the country. They have got them on the shelf, and they are ready to go in to the top 15 countries that we may have disagreements with around the world. They are ready to go in, but that is a hugely politically sensitive issue. And you have in the military education system this tremendous emphasis on developing planners who do this for most of their military career. So on the civilian side, whether it is State or USAID or Treasury or FBI, all these agencies that would participate in a stability reconstruction thing, they haven't had this planning training. They haven't had this experience, and they are not considered trustworthy. The military winds up doing 99 percent of the planning and the civilian folks are brought in at the very end. And it is very difficult at that point to change the plan. The way it is set up right now in the national security apparatus, DOD has all the resources to do this planning. The planning means sending people all over to gather information and so forth. These resources don't exist, and this tradition, this culture, this experience, this talent doesn't exist on the civilian side. And so we wind up with this

unfortunate tragic situation in my view, where Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz misread the lessons of the Balkans, insisted that DOD have the lead, when DOD didn't have the expertise to do the stability and reconstruction. It has been a tragedy.

Q:, John, what was your sense of the feeling at State at the time. While I was out of the government at the time, my colleagues coming over the FSI, almost to a person, they were not completely opposed to an invasion of Iraq, but damn close to it, saying that Iraq was not the problem. Al Qaeda was the problem. Iraq could be dealt with symptomatically, weapons of mass destruction were problematic. Even if they were there, they weren't a threat to the United States. There was no discernable contact with the terrorists, with al Qaeda and all that. Iraq is a mess, and if you go in there, you are in the middle of a mess. I mean I was getting this from the people who essentially knew what they were talking about. How about you? I mean you are sort of planning and all, but you must have been getting this.

FINNEY: No question about it. I mean the debate was widespread. It was pretty intense, and there were a lot of people who were Middle East experts, who knew this area. I listened to the Middle East experts over at NEA and the National Defense University and others. They were constantly pointing out the potential pitfalls and land mines that we faced in this effort. So I paid attention to what these people said. I respected their expertise. I tried to consult as widely as I could as I tried to make up my own mind.

At the end of the day I concluded that it was OK to support the President in this effort, and I will tell you why. Number one: it was an audacious undertaking. No question about this. Going into the heart of the Arab world. Number two: military intervention like this is fraught with uncertainty and peril. You don't know how it is going to come out. Number three: while at the time I was reading what was being reported about the WMD, weapons of mass destruction, I was reading what was being reported about the contacts, not the operational collaboration, but the contacts that al Qaeda had with Saddam Hussein. So I was persuaded at that time, that you could make a strong case for military intervention in Iraq by the United States, despite the obvious perils involved. I was most affected by a book that was written by a very respected political military analyst who is now at the Brookings Institute, Kenneth Pollack. He wrote a book called Iraq the Gathering Storm. He concluded in his last chapter that he had gone through all the different options of how to address the problem of Iraq and Saddam Hussein, and he couldn't find any better one than proceeding with the military intervention. The key thing to remember was that we had been trying to contain Saddam Hussein since Desert Storm for ten years. And we were not being successful. We had sliced off northern Iraq; we had sliced off southern Iraq. There were no fly zones. We had been bombing on a regular basis since 1996 in the north and the south. The Congress had appropriated $100 million to promote democracy there. President Clinton had said that regime change was U.S. policy in Iraq. The French and the Chinese and the Russians on the United Nations Security Council were constantly diluting and watering down our efforts to continue this ten year containment policy. In this book by this very respected analyst, he made the point that after Desert Storm there was a discussion in NSC about going to Baghdad and removing Saddam, and that was discarded. But throughout the 1990s in the NSC, and he

served on the NSC as a CIA political military analyst, the discussion of whether to intervene in Iraq was constantly brought up. But it was always put aside because the feeling was that if we went into Iraq, it would suck up all the energy of our government, and we would be unable to proceed during the 1990s with other important foreign policy initiatives. So when President Clinton left and the Bush administration came in, those analysts on the NSC who had constantly been pressing for action against Iraq raised the issue again in the winter after President Bush took office in January of 2001. So they raised it again in the spring and summer of 2001, saying that containment wasn't working; let's intervene. It got to President Bush. There was a big debate among the principals. The outcome in early 2001, was to give in to Secretary Powell and instead of a plan for a military intervention, come up with what was called smart sanctions.

So from January 2001 through August 2001, Secretary Powell came up with what was called a smart sanction policy, which we hoped to get through the Security Council in the UN to try to breathe new life into the containment effort. That is where we were in August of 2001. Then we hit September. When September hit, this issue that had been discussed intermittently through the 1990s about military intervention, that had been deflected and given to Powell to find a better solution for containment through smart sanctions, all of a sudden in the wake of the September 11attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, and after we got through Afghanistan, this issue came up again. But the mind of our president, after 9/11 was different than his mind in January, 2001, when he asked the State Department and Powell to come up with a better sanctions policy. So the mind of the president had changed totally. Exactly what Saddam had become in the mind of our president we can only speculate. Saddam moved from being a containable nuisance to a clear and present danger. Now other people in and outside the government, including many people who are experts in the mid-East and Iraq inside the State Department, didn't share the president's conclusion. But I was persuaded by two things. Number one: it seemed to me that the containment policy was bankrupt. We were not going to get the support from the UN Security Council to rein in Saddam. Number two: of course, the information about the WMD seemed to me reasonably persuasive. But number three was this whole thing about transforming the strategic landscape in the mid East. Now I know this is a very macro, hand-waving type of idea, but the fact of the matter is that the mid-East was stuck. With the Camp David Peace Accord, we got Jordan and Egypt to sign up to Israel's existence, and Egypt had been a moderating influence. Iraq had taken the lead in the Arab world as the main opposition to any compromises and progress toward Israel. So I was struck both by the audacity and by the potential of removing the major rejectionist power in the mid east against a solution about Israel, and against progress in the mid east, namely Iraq. Maybe I was blinded and bedazzled by that. But it seemed to me in the wake of September 11, and the struggle we were going to be facing with Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic terrorist groups, that an effort to re-shape the strategic landscape in the mid-East was appealing. I had no expertise in the mid-East. When I talked to the mid-East experts, they would tell me this was folly. When you talked about exporting democracy to the mid-East, they said that the U.S. was hypocritical. After the Camp David Accords, we would up supporting the regimes in Egypt and Jordan which were effectively a dictatorship and a monarchy and others. Saudi Arabia being a prime example. The U.S. was not about to give up on these cozy

relationships with these countries to start promoting democracy. So that was one of the themes from the mid-East folks whose opinions and knowledge are respected very much. So at the end of the day, I was persuaded that a military intervention in Iraq was worthwhile. Of course from my perspective as a pol mil officer, I wanted to make sure that this intervention was as successful as possible. Unfortunately, of course, our intelligence was wrong on WMD. Our intelligence was wrong in not allowing or not predicting the potential of a very serious insurgency. Our intelligence was wrong in not describing the difficulty in full detail of this undertaking and how long it would take. In spite of all that, I still think this could work out. It may not. This may be another Vietnam, but it may not. I still think it is too early to tell.

Q: I was a supporter of it initially. I thought that there would be an anti-Saddam uprising and it would be relatively simple. Of course it didn't turn out that way. What about from your pol mil perspective, were you getting input from our NATO allies? Was that coming to you; I mean what were you getting?

FINNEY: We were getting input first from the UK who had had long experience in Iraq. They were there since the creation, since they created it in the wake of WWI. Of course we got some from the Germans. Very little from the French. But first and foremost it was coming from the Brits who had had much experience in Iraq and were cautioning us. They were not opposing, but they were cautioning. Based on their experience, but it was a cautionary note; it was a yellow light not a red light.

Q: We went in in March, 2003.

FINNEY: 2003, March 17th I believe. We reconstituted the pol mil unit in the operations center and again I went back up there, participated in that. It was a much larger group this time, participated in that for weeks at a time. We were again serving to validate the operational orders, the execute orders that DOD would send over to State Department for approval. We would process these, translate these, get them up to Deputy Secretary of State Armitage, up to Secretary of State Powell for approval and get them sent back to the NSC. We watched with great interest how General Jay Garner and his Coalition Provisional Authority were doing, because we had a number of State Department officers who we helped recruit to send with him forward. It became apparent almost immediately that while General Garner was a very fine officer, hard working, a fine American, he was in over his head in terms of the political dynamics of Iraq. Also, he didn't have proper basic logistical support in terms of trailers for them to sleep in, phones, computers, vehicles. These all were things, based on my previous experience in Vietnam, Balkans, Afghanistan, that you have to have if you are going to be out amongst the people dealing with the sheiks and the tribes and trying to help set up local governance and then governance at the national level. You have to have basic tools, and he didn't have that, and his people floundered badly. They couldn't move. They couldn't communicate. They couldn't go out and do their job. That was extremely worrisome.

Also what became immediately apparent was that the Mujahadeen elements and the Baath Party resistance elements surfaced north of Najaf and Karbala and on the way up to

Baghdad in Nasiriyah. Our forces encountered these suicide bombers and attackers, the Mujahadeen. They fought very vigorously against us. That signaled to us that even though the Iraqi regular army divisions were collapsing one by one, that there was now suddenly another force on the battlefield which had plenty of money, had lots of suicide bombers and these explosive devices. They were really a factor. So people were surprised by that. Then I think the White House did the right decision by appointing Jerry Bremer to replace General Garner. Ambassador Bremer had the political acumen and skills to deal effectively with the national government and to get stability and reconstruction cadre out to the field to deal with the provincial city and district governments. So getting him out there, I think, was a very good move, but he was late to the game. He had no mid-East experience, and this comes back to the planning. I would respectfully suggest, the time to tap Ambassador Jerry Bremer was back in the winter of 2002, excuse me, in late 2001, 2002, when serious planning began for a potential military intervention in Iraq. That is when Ambassador Bremer should have been brought in on the planning. Out of that, you would have had a much more comprehensive and accurate plan for stability and reconstruction. But unfortunately Ambassador Bremer was thrust out there after the intervention was already underway. And as talented and dedicated and able as he is, with no mid east experience and without the proper support and cadre, he faced an impossible task. So a fundamental point to take away here is that our national security apparatus has to be refashioned in a way that you will have interagency coordination at the take off, and not just bring people in for the landing.

Q: Were you involved all along at the planning level? Was there a point where you were looking at this thing and saying, boy this isn't going the way we thought it is. You know Vietnam here I come again. I mean and some of your people around you.

FINNEY: Yes. By late 2002, by December 2002 and January 2003, particularly when the White house tapped DOD to be the lead for reconstruction, it was clear to us that the stability and reconstruction effort was off target, and was not going to be able to do an effective job. They were late to the game, under resourced, and hadn't tapped into the expertise that was needed to make this work. So now when you are working at this level, and I am working at the deputy assistant secretary and assistant secretary level of the political military bureau, and you are sharing these concerns with our immediate superiors and they say, "Yes this is worrisome. I will bring it up with Mr. Armitage." You assume that Deputy Secretary of State Armitage and after all our Secretary of State Colin Powell, former national security advisor, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, they must be aware of this. They must know what is going on. We are communicating our concerns at the bureau level. They have their briefing, Mr. Armitage, every morning. Then Powell two or three times a week. And Secretary Powell is going to the Principals' meeting, committee meetings. What better representative could the State Department have than a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff? It didn't happen.

Q: Did you get the feeling at any point that State is used to dealing with foreign governments and societies but all of a sudden the Pentagon is running things, and did you get a feeling that boy they are not doing a very good job of it. I mean did you feel it was us and them or was there questions on the State contingent people?

FINNEY: My experience was as a political advisor in various capacities to our military. I was working in the seam between State and DOD, between diplomacy and the military, between policy and force. I am supposed to be a bridge builder. I am supposed to be there bringing people together. So I was out there recruiting as many knowledgeable State Department officers as I could find to support General Garner and his stability and reconstruction mission to enable him to be successful. I would go over to the Pentagon to visit with General Garner to see how he was doing, come back, report concerns to my superiors in the Political Military Bureau, so they could brief Armitage, and supposedly they were going to brief Powell. So I was in the bridge building, team building, consensus building alliance developing interagency team building mode. That is what I was trying to do at my level. That was very difficult because of the institutional tension between State and DOD, particularly after Powell's pitch to the President and Vice President Cheney that State should have the lead, not DOD, in stability and reconstruction. When he lost that argument in January of 2003, you had the sense that State was saying, "OK, DOD, the President has decided you got it. You got it!" That is two or three levels above me.

At my level, that is really unfortunate, but we are in the interest of making this successful, making this work. So I am still working at the office director, DAS Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense level, in making sure that our good friend General Garner and his team are fully supported and have access to the right information. I was trying to get the political advisors assigned to the leading general. Trying to make it work; trying to make it go. But there was the impression that after Powell's presentation was not supported by the President, and DOD had the lead, that State said, "Ok you got it. Good luck." Now a lot of really good people pitched in and put all those concerns aside, as they do as good Foreign Service professionals, to try to make it work. But the people in NEA were exhausted. Everybody was working intensely over the weekends and they were constantly playing catch up with General Garner to find out what he was doing and how his team was being assembled. They were so thin. This was another dramatic demonstration where the joint staff and CENTCOM could send out dozens of colonels and lt. colonels and scores of majors at these problems to work these preparation issues. NEA was one deep. They didn't even have enough people to go to all the meetings that were going on, much less have time to come up with alternative staff solutions. And they were further dispirited and discouraged by the fact that the office in NEA which had developed all this information over two and a half years had been pushed aside. So it was a combination of exhaustion, lack of sufficient people and the dispiritedness that affected State's ability to work through this. Now in spite of all this, you have to say terrific Foreign Service officers like our undersecretary of state for political affairs, Marc Grossman were doing Herculean labors. Everybody was trying to put this aside. We support the President. This is our policy. We are going to try to make this work as successfully as we can. We did this. But at the very top levels of our department I think there was acute disappointment that we were not being used as effectively as we could be.

Q: The way I see this is I think we will close it off at this point. However, let's hold in abeyance, there must come a time when you are going to retire, really retire.

FINNEY: Not certain when that will be I have retired, but have the great good fortune of being the political advisor to the chief of the National Guard, General Blount. I will be in that capacity as long as he is chief of the National Guard. Bills have been introduced in the Senate and the House to make my boss a four star, to extend him for another two or four years. And I will be going to Afghanistan this summer and going to Iraq in the fall. And of course we still have substantial guard forces deployed in both of those places, and we follow it very closely.

Q: Well why don't we leave it this way. Why don't we give it some months or a year or so in abeyance and then I will let you give a call.

FINNEY: I will give you a call. We are going out to Afghanistan in August or September to take a look at the guard presence there. The Guard is training the Afghan army. That is our mission. We are not only training them in their basic training, but we embed guard units with them after they have left basic training and are out in the field. So I can come back and give you a fresh view in the early fall or mid fall on how our training efforts in Afghanistan are doing. We are doing very similar efforts with the Iraqi police in Iraq. Also we have a National Guard brigade in eastern Kosovo at Camp Bondsteel. With these final talks in Kosovo, we will maintain our guard brigade presence there until these talks conclude. Right now we have a brigade from the Texas 36th Division in eastern Kosovo. They will be replaced by a brigade from the Virginia National Guard, 29th Division in December of this year. So our involvement in the Balkans continues. So that is always worth watching to see how that proceeds. Thank you for the opportunity.

End of interview

[Ed: Mr. Finney and another POLAD veteran Ambassador Al La Porta have written an extensive treatise on the POLAD function, see their essay "Integrating National Security Strategy at the Operational Level: The Role of State Department Political Advisors" which is chapter 7 in the volume Affairs of State: The Interagency and National Security (December 2008) edited by Gabriel Marcella, which can be accessed at: http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=896