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WILLIAM HAMMINK

*Interviewed by: John Pielemeier
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INTERVIEW

Q: This is John Pielemeier on February 26 of 2018. I'm starting the first interview with Bill Hammink. Bill has had a 36-year career with AID (USAID—United States Agency for International Development): and has been a multi-post Mission Director. And I think you'll find this is going to be a very interesting interview.

Bill, I'm going to start by asking you where you grew up and how you moved into international work.

HAMMINK: Thanks, John. It's very good to be here. My name is William Hammink. People have been calling me “Bill” as a nickname since I was very young. So, Bill is fine.

I grew up in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I come from a family of six kids. My father was a baker, very modest and humble. He owned a few bakeries that he opened after returning from military service during WWII. He worked very hard in life, as did we. I started work at 10 years old, delivering papers. I started working in the bakery at 12, washing pots and pans and gradually moved up eventually to decorating cakes.

So, my first career was as a baker for 10 years. I worked myself through high school and through college, both private schools, working in my dad's bakery.

Q: What was the college?

HAMMINK: I first went two years to a small liberal arts college in Grand Rapids, Michigan, called Calvin College. And then I decided that, at that point—

Well, let me back up. I am the fifth of six kids, and out of my five brothers and sisters, all of them had at one point either traveled overseas or worked overseas. And so, after being at Calvin College, which was small and a little bit stifling, I decided I wanted to travel. My older sister and her husband were living at the time in Amman, Jordan, working for a non-profit—an American NGO (non-governmental organization), supporting Palestinian refugees. They moved to Jordan back in '72.

In 1975, I took a year off college and traveled. First I went to Jordan and supported my sister and brother-in-law in their NGO work. Then after spending a few months there, I realized I needed to get going and see the world. So, with a backpack and by myself, I basically went overland through Syria, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Nepal.

Q: My goodness.

HAMMINK: Then I came back a little quicker than I'd gone. And then coming back, instead of going straight to Europe, I went from Amman down to Egypt and Sudan and spent a month traveling around there, including on paddlewheel boats up the Nile on top of trains, being tied on so I wouldn't fall off at night. The top of trucks—

Q: You tied yourself onto a train?

HAMMINK: Yes, because it was at night and we tried to sleep a little bit. And you didn't want to fall off while sleeping.

Q: And there was no other danger other than falling off the train?

HAMMINK: Luckily it didn't crash. So, that was 1975 to 1976. During that trip, I spent a month in Afghanistan traveling all over the country. Back then, it was very safe. The Afghans are incredibly friendly and open. It was during winter, and so it was quite cold. I slept on the floor of coffee houses. I traveled in the back of trucks through the Hindu Kush. That was a fun adventure. Then I spent a month traveling around in India and then a month in Nepal, including several treks into the Himalayas including to the foot of Mount Everest.

That got me interested in developing countries—

Q: I'll say.

HAMMINK: Plus I worked with my sister and brother-in-law. We traveled to Lebanon during the fighting there. And so, I got a taste of NGO work supporting people who need some support—in this case Palestinian and Lebanese refugees. And that gave me a real taste of living and working overseas, especially in the Middle East.

When I went back to Minnesota after my trip to some 25 countries, I then attended the University of Minnesota. I did a major in psychology but a minor in Middle Eastern studies. I studied Arabic for several years.

Q: This was undergraduate?

HAMMINK: Yes, this was undergraduate. Once I completed my undergraduate degree in 1978, I went straight into graduate school. Because I had traveled for almost a year, I was

ready to get a master's degree and not go into the Peace Corps or anything. I had done kind of my Peace Corps experience.

So, I went into a master's program at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. It's now called the Humphrey School (of Public Affairs). And I studied public affairs with a focus on international economics and international development. At the time, of course, the Humphrey Institute was very focused on public policy in the United States. So, there were only a few of us who were interested in the international arena. I took courses over at the ag (agriculture) school, which was quite well-known for international agricultural economics. And that was of course a science school.

There's a Dr. Robert Kudrle who was there at the time, who was interested in international policy work and very supportive of my focus on international development policy. Interesting: he's still there, and I got in touch with him since I retired.

I completed my masters in 1980, got married to a wonderful woman I had met at the university, and we moved to Washington to look for international work.

Q: How good was your Arabic at this point?

HAMMINK: It was not very good. I had mainly focused on reading and writing in modern standard Arabic. So unfortunately, my speaking ability was not good.

Q: And you didn't travel more during your Minnesota years?

HAMMINK: Well, I did travel and I travelled back to Jordan. When I was in grad (graduate) school, and of course as these things go, an internship was required. To try to find a summer internship in the Middle East, I sent out letters to at least 45 different companies and organizations based in the Middle East, because I wanted to work there. I heard back from just one company, and that was, at the time, a company called Alia, which was the Royal Jordanian Airlines. Yeah, so that was quite interesting. They not only offered me an internship—it was unpaid—but they offered me a ticket, which for them was painless, because they had flights directly from New York (City) to Amman every day at the time.

I spent about two months in Amman back in the summer of 1979. Amman was still quite small as a city back then. Amman radiates out from the center of town and in one certain direction is goes by circle; such as first circle, second circle, etc. When I was there the third circle was the last circle and beyond was mainly fields. Today, it goes up to eighth or ninth circle.

At the time, I did travel around a bit within Jordan and the neighboring countries. I didn't pick up much Arabic at the time. But, I was living with a Jordanian family which was a great experience. My boss at the Royal Jordanian Airlines was Jordanian as was all the

staff. When I returned to Minneapolis for my final year in graduate school, I was ready to look for international work.

Q: Did I hear you say you got married?

HAMMINK: Yes, in 1980, when I got my degree, and my wife also finished up her degree at the same time. She received two bachelor degrees, one in business and the other in international relations and we took a few classes together on international economics. We got married in August 1980 and immediately moved to Washington to look for international work. My wife is from France.

Q: But studying at the University of Minnesota?

HAMMINK: Yes, studying at the University of Minnesota. Her family moved to Minneapolis in the mid-'70s. Anyway, we got married, and we both wanted to work for an international organization. We moved to Washington and started applying for jobs. I had several interviews. I passed the State Department (Foreign Service Officer) written exam, but for various reasons, was never asked to come for the oral exam. It's a long story, which brought about a few lawsuits.

But I also interviewed with USAID. All of this is kind of interesting and relevant for our new colleagues in USAID. I like to compare my experience with this past year during this transition to the current administration. What happened was that around November of 1980, I received a letter—an offer letter—from USAID to join them as an IDI (International Development Intern) Foreign Service Officer (FSO). And I immediately accepted, of course. I was supposed to start in January 1981.

Well, after the elections in November 1980, President-elect Ronald Reagan decided to put in place a hiring freeze for the entire U.S. federal workforce. It sounds familiar!

Q: Yes, it does!

HAMMINK: And so basically, within a few weeks I received another letter from USAID rescinding the offer, and basically saying, "Stand by, because we're not sure how long this hiring freeze will last. But we've got your file."

I was of course discouraged and disappointed. My wife and I decided, since I had never been to France, and I did not speak French when we got married, that it would be a good time to go meet her family. We spent almost four months in France, traveling around, meeting her family and staying with her aunts and uncles.

But around May 1, we're out in the middle of the Pyrénées, in a place called Pau with my wife's uncle, we get a phone call from my wife's mother, whom I'd listed as a reference. And she said, "We just got a call from USAID." This was May 1. "They said, if you're interested in the job, you have to be in Washington and start work by Monday, May 5." (laughs)

Q: (laughs)

HAMMINK: So we immediately changed our tickets, hopped on a plane, and got to Washington on time. And I could then join USAID.

Q: So you joined an IDI class?

HAMMINK: Yes.

Q: Starting May 5.

HAMMINK: Yes. May 5. In any case, I had less than a week to turn around and get to Washington from Europe if I wanted the job, which obviously, I appreciated. I was excited.

Q: Now in those days, did they tell you where you were going to be stationed when you were hired?

HAMMINK: No, not at all. I was in a class of about 42 other IDIs, of whom there was only one left beside me when I retired. That was May of '81 when I joined USAID. And I had a great IDI mentor at the time.

Q: Who was that?

HAMMINK: I can't remember her name exactly. Her first name was Shirley. I'll think of it.

Q: Shirley?

HAMMINK: I think that's it. Anyway, then, after a few months of training in USAID, USAID decided to send me to French language training to get my language requirement out of the way. I had studied four years of German in high school and a few years of Arabic in college. And they sent me to French!

I appreciated it, because not only did I learn French to work in West Africa and Madagascar early in my career, but it allowed me to speak to my in-laws who didn't speak English.

Anyway, it was about that time that USAID assigned me to Swaziland. That was my first post. I went out as the assistant Program Officer.

Q: Did you know anything about Swaziland?

HAMMINK: I did not. I had to look it up to see where it was. But my wife and I were very excited about it. As you know, it's a small land-locked country three-quarters

surrounded by South Africa and one-quarter by Mozambique. Swaziland was a former British colony that became independent in the 60s along with Botswana and Lesotho. Swaziland maintained its independence from South Africa over the years as well.

It was a small (USAID) mission and headed up at the time by Bob Huesmann, a very experienced Mission Director. The Deputy Director was Jimmy Philpott, also very experienced. And my boss, who was Program Officer— I was the Assistant Program Officer— was Carol Steele.

Q: Oh, my goodness.

HAMMINK: Do you know her?

Q: Yes.

HAMMINK: OK, good. Her husband, John Steele, was the Executive Officer for both the USAID mission and the small Embassy. Anyway, we were there for four and a half years. Our two children were born in Swaziland. It was a great work-life balance.

Q: They gave you rotations.

HAMMINK: Exactly. I had useful rotations in different offices in the mission. The Program Office had no PDO (Project Development Officer), because it was a small mission. We did all the project designs. We carried out the analyses and wrote the project identification documents (PIDs) and project papers (PPs). It was a great way to gain experience.

You know, these days, new officers come in and sometimes within a few years move right into an Office Director job, or some other management job. I realized that I was very fortunate that I had four years there to learn the “nuts and bolts” of USAID from the bottom. And I learned a lot. It was fun work, because the program there was quite diverse. The budget was quite large at the time for a small country. Probably because Swaziland was strategically placed between South Africa and Mozambique, an important position at the time.

We had programs in agriculture, health and education, of course, and broadly in rural development. I led several designs related to agriculture development working with large U.S. universities. And that was very useful, because we jumped in it to look at some of these areas of change and the change theories from the time, including integrated rural development, that were pushed in the late ‘70s and the ‘80s.

Q: What was going on in the region at that time with South Africa?

HAMMINK: Yeah, so South Africa of course— It was during apartheid. It was difficult and challenging to us in Swaziland, because Swaziland was such a small country. And you had Mozambique on one side, where there was a civil war going on. We had no

choice if we wanted to get out than to go to South Africa. But there were some moral issues of course. Apartheid and separate bathrooms and separate beaches, and all the horrible conditions that came with apartheid.

You had to define, you know, your moral compass. It was quite easy to know what we believed in but it was very difficult to witness apartheid in person. At the time, we would drive through towns where we would see billboards during an election. Of course, only whites could vote. And the billboards would say, “Vote for me. Funding for black education decreased by this amount during my time as an elected official”. Or, “Vote for me because I blocked education for blacks.” That’s the kind of thing that we faced.

We did at the time, though see an opening in South Africa, whereby USAID started to provide some grants—small grants—to local non-governmental organizations—NGOs. The grants program was limited at the time because of Government of South Africa concerns.

It was so tense though. In Swaziland, we would always talk about South Africa. But all the expatriates we knew in Swaziland believed that we would never see the end of apartheid without a civil war.

Q: Right.

HAMMINK: Once, my wife and I were at dinner at an AID officer’s house, and a fist fight broke out between some UN (United Nations) folks, because they were arguing over what was going to happen to apartheid in South Africa. I mean, it was that tense, that emotional, for a while.

You can imagine later in the ‘80s, when we saw what was happening with (former South African President Nelson R.) Mandela being freed and (former South African President F.W.) de Klerk opening up the country for elections where all citizens could vote. We were thrilled. I mean, it just wasn’t expected to see a peaceful transition to majority rule.

Q: When you mentioned this nascent program in South Africa, was the Swaziland mission involved with that?

HAMMINK: It was, because if I remember right, our Deputy Mission Director at the time, Jimmy (O.) Philpott, was asked to oversee some of these small grants. The Mission Director in Swaziland, Bob Huesmann, also was asked to oversee a new program that USAID was just starting up in Mozambique.

Q: Oh!

HAMMINK: Yeah. And that was like around ’84, ’85. And I went on TDY to Maputo several times to help them write their program documents for Washington. Our relations, including USAID development assistance, were opening on both sides of Swaziland at the time.

The other kind of fascinating cultural and historical element while we were there is that, when we got there, King (Ingwenyama) Sobhuza II was king. He was in his 80s, I believe. He had been king longer than any reigning monarch in history, other than Queen Victoria (United Kingdom). He had something like 50 wives, hundreds of children. And that was the culture back then. He passed away after we had been in the country about two years.

So that was a fascinating time to be there, history in the making, seeing everything under their culture, which they preserved very diligently. The whole funeral, the whole funeral pyre and all the ceremonies related to the king's death, were fascinating to be part of. The Swazis buried the king's body at night in a secret location, because they were scared that somebody would break in and steal some of the king's body parts. They strongly believed in what they call *muti*, which is a belief that body parts give them supernatural powers. Body parts coming from the king are stronger than anything else.

It took the traditional leaders quite a while, but they chose an 18-year-old as the new King, one of the youngest sons of the previous King, who was studying in Britain, hoping that would bring some not only continuity as a son but change to the monarchy, you know? And unfortunately, he came in, and he took up all the old ways. Didn't change anything, even in terms of the role of the monarch allowing for more of a role for the citizens, much less a democratic government.

Q: Do you remember his name?

HAMMINK: I don't.

Q: Was it "III" or something?

HAMMINK: Yes, his name is Mswati III.

Q: Did he take as many wives as his father?

HAMMINK: He did. So, within a few years, he had many wives. Many people in Swaziland were very disappointed. The cultural norms and practices starting at the top were shown to be a huge problem about a decade later, when Swaziland sadly had the highest rate of HIV/AIDS (human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) of any country in the world—about a third of the population.

In any case, Swaziland was an excellent first post. Culturally, it was fascinating and welcoming. For a family, there were many things to do and we had lots of support and help. I also learned a lot at work. I was lucky; a great first post, but small.

Q: Any particular projects that you were proud of?

HAMMINK: Well yeah, I worked closely with the Pennsylvania State University—or Penn State --on an integrated rural development program. I supported that large project with a very experienced USAID agriculture development officer. So, that was a lot of fun in trying to follow through on showing results. You know, you try to put theory into practice. But you are also working closely with those experts who come in with a lot of knowledge themselves. We tried hard to help the experts apply international best practice within the Swazi context. Because the culture there is very different than what you would find in Pennsylvania, of course.

As I mentioned, we stayed there four and a half years, and our two children were born there. For the first several years of their lives, they considered themselves Swazi, and they learned the local language, which is siSwati.

When it was time to bid for the next assignment, we bid on different French posts, because we wanted our kids to be in a French-speaking country. And we were assigned to Senegal to Dakar. We arrived in Dakar in the summer of 1986.

My boss at the time picked up me and my family at the airport. We dropped the family off at the house that we were going to be moving into and I was immediately taken to the office. It was intense. At the time, I went along and didn't realize that was a bit too intense. My wife reminds me of that. But my boss at the time was really “gung-ho” and focused on the work.

Q: This is a direct transfer?

HAMMINK: Correct. Well, no. We took home leave.

Q: So you came back to the States.

HAMMINK: Right, for a month of home leave. Anyway, the Mission Director there was well-known. She was one of the first women mission directors in USAID, I understand. Her name was Sarah Jane Littlefield. She was tough, smart, and fair. And I got along well with her.

I was the Assistant Project Development Officer. They had a separate full Project Development Office as well as a Program Office, because it was a large mission. I moved over to do almost exclusively backstop 94 work. And again, I was very fortunate. I had great supervisors. I had a good team to work with.

Senegal at the time had a large budget, being an important country in West Africa that was quite diverse. And we had not only the traditional USAID sectors covered—health, education, agriculture—but we had Food for Peace. We also had a pretty large OFDA (USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance) program there during much of the time, especially working on grasshopper infestations.

I led the design for a major water management program down in the Casamance in the southern part of the country. That was a great experience, especially bringing in technical experts and helping to think through how best to achieve the results we were trying to achieve, using evidence and facts and data. We worked closely with the Senegalese government in a whole partnership, including national and regional government officials.

I also saw the effects of management decisions that were not based on evidence and research. For example, our Mission Director decided to bring in buffalos—water buffalos—from South Asia and install them in the north of Senegal along the Senegal River because there were rice paddies there. She wanted to give it a try and got the government to agree. But it didn't work, and those poor water buffalo died off in a matter of years. But it was a lesson learned for me to ensure that I pushed for analyses—before these kinds of decisions were made to spend that kind of money—to look at research, analysis, data, evidence, and the like.

Q: Let me back up a little bit, because I was going to ask you in Senegal if you got to know many Senegalese. And I didn't get to ask you if you got to know many Swazis.

HAMMINK: Yes, thank you. In Swaziland, we got to know Swazis very well. They were open and hospitable people, and I was invited often to houses of Swazi friends and colleagues. Nobody was a close friend, but we had very good colleagues and acquaintances, both in the Swazi NGO community and especially in the government.

In Senegal, it was the same, although the Senegalese have a certain long history of course with the French from colonization. But they very much welcomed the Americans. And at the time, we had a super ambassador. His name, if I remember right, was Lannon Walker. I don't know if you worked with him.

And we had a good relationship with the Senegalese private and public sectors at all levels. So even at my level at the time in Senegal, I had a good relationship with Senegalese who worked in the government and the NGO sector.

But the best part of working there was working with Senegalese FSNs (Foreign Service National employees) who worked in the mission and the embassy. We developed outstanding ties. They were focused, professional, highly educated, and very articulate. And it was just a pleasure to work with them, because they could bring a lot of the development thinking that we would come up with as aid professionals but they also understood it within the Senegalese context—political, economic, cultural. And so, that was a lot of fun.

And then also, the supervisory PDO, the guy I worked under for three years, Terry Myers, came from the private sector where he had worked for a while. He was put in charge of a new area for USAID at the time—the mission's private sector development portfolio. He developed a mission private sector development strategy with us and we put together some new programs, including a small business credit program. This small

business credit program at first wasn't going well. We brought in a new Chief of Party and that made all the difference. The project became a major success.

In fact, one story is that Terry was traveling in West Africa recently. This is 30 years later. And he saw a sign on a building with the same name of that organization that we started back in 1988.

Q: My goodness.

HAMMINK: And he went in and asked them. And they said, "Yeah, this is a branch," of this Senegalese organization. And so now, they're all over West Africa. It was not only sustainable but also scalable, and turned out to be a success.

Anyway, we stayed in Senegal for four years. And then, because our kids were around five to seven at the time, we thought it's important for them to live in the States for a while, and to go to school in the States. I applied for jobs in Washington, and I was assigned to the Africa Bureau Office of Project Development, or "PD" at the time. And I was the Assistant—I think, what's it called now—The Assistant Division—or Deputy Division Chief in the Central and Coastal West Africa division of PD.

And at the time, Carol Peasley was the Office Director. So, I had the wonderful opportunity to work with Carol then. But there were big changes going on in Africa at the time, and elections were happening in many countries, some more free and fair than others. At the time, in USAID and in the State Department there was a lot of interest in how America and the U.S. government could support not only elections, but broadly good governance, democratic governance, political process reform, independent media, judiciary, and the like.

And so, I was asked by the AA (Assistant Administrator) to work with a team to put together a new division in the Office of Sustainable Development on elections and governance. So, with several other people, we established the first Africa bureau democracy and governance division. It was the first USAID group to focus on support for democracy and better governance in Africa, with a small budget.

Q: What year was that?

HAMMINK: That was in 1991. And not surprisingly, there was a large amount of pushback. Most people in the Africa Bureau, both in Washington and in the field, thought that USAID shouldn't touch anything political. We do development.

We do economic development. You know, economic and social development. But we worked on making the case that economic and social development depends on good governance and citizen voice and choice. We brought in well-known academics. We developed white papers and policy papers on why the political economy is so important. And the importance of the elections, and why we need to support that. We put together some Africa-wide programs with the likes of NDI (National Democratic Institute), IRI

(International Republican Institute), and IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems) that missions could buy into.

So, that was an exciting period, because I led the division and was responsible for starting brand new programs in this area. I was working with some terrific folks such as Jennifer Windsor and Anne Williams. We made some mistakes in the early days. We once had a meeting with several State Department Africa Bureau colleagues. We discussed what needed to be done and how we could work together. You know, I look back now, and realize that we should have been more open to working collaboratively and even jointly on programs. Mistakenly, we just said, “Oh, we can do this. We’re not going to give you any of our money.” And I think, looking back, we should have said, “Hey, how can we work together to achieve common objectives here?” Luckily, that came later.

We established the importance of these DG programs (democracy and governance programming) from an academic point of view and we also showed the conceptual linkages to the rest of our development programs including the need to support elections. Everybody understood that elections do not a democracy make. So, we tried to make the case that USAID also needed to get involved, where we had a chance to make a difference, in all areas of democratic governance, including financial accountability, independence of the judiciary and media, and a strong advocacy civil society representing the interests of citizens and not just those NGOs doing social programs.

This type of DG work for USAID was around in Latin America before that. But I think in Africa, it wasn’t until the 1990s that development people started to see the need for USAID to support civil society that advocated for citizens’ rights and improved transparency. Those who are there trying to hold governments accountable for what they promise.

As I mentioned, that was an exciting time but also a lot of work. And then after about a year in Washington—or a year and a half—George Carner, with whom I had worked in Senegal where he was Deputy Mission Director, was at the time the Mission Director in Madagascar. And he— I was kind of ready to get back overseas—

Q: Pretty quickly!

HAMMINK: —as was my wife. So, he recruited me to bid to come out and head up a new combined program and project development office that they had set up in Madagascar. My family and I went out to Antananarivo in the summer of 1992.

Q: So your kids at this point were in primary school.

HAMMINK: Correct.

Q: They’d gone to the primary school here?

HAMMINK: Yup. They’d gone for two years in our neighborhood of Cabin John.

Q: And they were ready to go, or you had to bribe them, or what? (laughs)

HAMMINK: No, they were ready to go. They loved living overseas.

You know, before we came back here, in Senegal they considered themselves African. They knew nothing about black and white. And it wasn't until they were in school here in the Cabin John/Bethesda area that the kids started talking about differences due to the color of their skin.

Q: They were ready to go back overseas.

HAMMINK: They were ready, yeah. They were very excited.

Madagascar had for 20 years or so been led by a guy named President (Didier) Ratsiraka. You're very familiar with Madagascar. And it was a disaster.

Q: Absolutely.

HAMMINK: He had brought in a brigade from North Korea. He had tried to emulate the North Korean industrialization model in a country like Madagascar, where most of the Malagasy are farmers growing rice in various areas that are mainly cultivated along the hillsides with rainwater.

In any case, we all went to Madagascar and it was fascinating. About 70-80 percent of the flora and fauna are endemic to Madagascar. There are rainforests that you would not see in other countries. Their natural wonders, like what's called the Tsingy, are only found in one or two places in the world. It's like spiked rocks.

Q: Spiked rocks, yes. It's in the north.

HAMMINK: Yes, in the north. In USAID/Madagascar, I was the office director for the program and project development office. When George Carner left to go to Nicaragua, I was acting Deputy for a while. But it was fascinating, because we had to develop a new strategy around how to support the environment, but how to support also the populations that lived around these parks. Because they were never going to stay out of the parks. We had to figure out a livelihoods strategy to help them benefit from the parks, including tourism.

Q: So were you involved with the famous "keep 'em and save 'em" projects?

HAMMINK: Yeah, although I wasn't directly managing those programs, I was definitely involved in the "SAVEM and KEPEM" projects. And then we were trying to design the "TRADEM" project.

Q: (chuckles) "TRADEM," right.

HAMMINK: The project was designed to support trade in sustainable and natural products coming out of the national parks.

Q: And were you working with the Ratsiraka government, or were you working with the private sector? How were you running your programs?

HAMMINK: No, by the time I got there, there had been an uprising against Ratsiraka, and the country had held elections. There was a new president elected by the name of (Albert) Zafy. He was not well-liked. But his government was very interested to work with USAID and get support from USAID. And so, our relationships with the government were very good.

I can tell you that I learned a lot from George Carner that was very useful later in my career when I became mission director: he and his leadership style there, how he approached governments, how he organized relationships and even dinners. He was always very strategic, so that we could build on our own interests on the development side, but also fully support the interests of the Malagasy government.

Q: Can you give some examples of that?

HAMMINK: Sure. I mean, for example, he kept track of who he would invite to dinners, what would be the key topics and what agreements or sharing of information he wanted to get out of the dinner engagements. When he would get to meet with ministers, while it helped that he spoke fluent French, he was always very strategic in that he would prepare well beforehand, not only what points he wanted to cover, but what he'd like to achieve and get out of the meeting. That was great training for me.

Later, when I became Deputy Director and Mission Director in different countries, it was very useful to put into practice what I had learned from George Carner's leadership style in Madagascar.

Q: "What do I want to get out of this meeting?"

HAMMINK: Exactly. "What are the policy issues that I want to talk about?" And not only with the government but with other donors. And then the relationship with the Ambassador was a top priority as well. It was also very useful to see how George worked with the Ambassador. This was something I used throughout my senior management career.

We had a very good relationship with colleagues in the embassy, even though we had a separate building from the embassy. But we would go to the embassy a lot.

We had a broad range of programs, as you know, focused on the environment. But also, a nascent program focused on support for democracy and governance, or at least democratic institutions, like a new parliament, a new independent judiciary, a new

independent media and advocacy civil society. And then agriculture was such an important part of the economy there, so that was important too.

Q: And a big health program.

HAMMINK: Yes, correct.

Q: And also, family planning.

HAMMINK: You know, it's sad. Not only was Madagascar an extremely poor country, they had just had decades of bad policies. But health-wise, they were also towards the bottom in the globe on health indicators. Under-five mortality and maternal mortality were very high. So, there was a lot to do.

And then, food security was very problematic, because their staple was rice. And when there was any problem with rainfall, then the harvest would be affected. Madagascar had many overlapping development issues.

Q: As I recall—just to add—over the years, the USAID health and family planning program in Madagascar was one of the most successful in the world in terms of proven indicators for child and infant mortality, and in reducing the fertility rates, in part because the base was so low. There were no other donor programs around to support these activities.

HAMMINK: I think also, on the health side, the experts developed clear indicators of progress and indicators of success. The health indicators were much clearer than we were ever able to produce on the DG side, because that's much harder to measure, much harder to track. So, I think that helped, and then when we could show real progress on the health indicators, and that increased funding for health and family planning.

Q: Well, as I also recall, I think the new president, Zafy, was impeached, was he not? For something silly?

HAMMINK: Yes, he was impeached. Believe it or not, the people of Madagascar elected Ratsiraka. He was still a very corrupt politician. But at least he didn't push the North Korean model. He, you know, was open for different approaches on the economic growth side.

Q: And the North Koreans were there the whole time you were there?

HAMMINK: No, they had left before I arrived.

Q: And wasn't the AID mission in the old North Korean barracks?

HAMMINK: That I don't know. By the time I got there—

Q: At one point it was.

HAMMINK: Is that right? Yeah, USAID was in a new building when I arrived.

But there are stories, you know? We traveled a lot. Again, it was a great work-life balance. Although you had to be willing to be in some very, very primitive situations. Some of the roads there were terrible. Cars would disappear down the holes. And then during the rainy season many roads were totally impassible and many cars slid off the banks.

And so, that was kind of “Development 101”, in terms of the level of problems there. But again, I think in some areas, we made some important progress. Unfortunately, the political issues that arose when I left in 1996 pushed the country backwards once again. Corruption was always a major issue and remained so with the political issues curtailing any meaningful change.

Q: Right, right.

HAMMINK: Anyway, after Madagascar, I was recruited to bid on a job in USAID Russia, which I was excited about. It was as Director of the Office of Democracy and Governance.

Q: All right!

HAMMINK: This was the first time I was involved in a technical office.

Q: So you were sitting in Madagascar, you were still a Program Officer or Project Design Officer?

HAMMINK: I was both. I was in management too, because I was head of the office. A Program and Project Development Office.

HAMMINK: The Russia assignment was another example of trying something new. Of course, I'd worked, as I mentioned, on helping get DG programs going for the Africa Bureau. Thus, I had some technical knowledge that I had picked up and learned from that period. But it was a lot of learning when I got to Russia, because at the time, Russia had one of the largest DG programs in the world. It was about \$30 million a year.

Q: Now what year would that have been?

HAMMINK: My family and I moved to Moscow in 1996 and stayed for three years until 1999. Again, fascinating period of history. Truly, history in the making with the end of the cold war and the opening of what was a very closed society.

Q: How long had USAID been in Russia?

HAMMINK: USAID came back to Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union, I believe in 1991 or 1992. And in the early '90s, we had a billion-dollar assistance program. Some were loan guarantees. But USAID had also set up very large enterprise funds. USAID also had the regular development programs related to health, private sector development and support for democracy and governance. Our relationship at the time was such that the U.S. Government even set up a Peace Corps program.

Yeah, there was a close partnership for several years. And then Peace Corps backed out. As you know, USAID got kicked out in mid-2000s.

But when I was there—or when I got there anyway—there were excellent relations between Russians organizations and USAID. The people of Russia were interested in learning from America and developing good partnerships. And the government was also open. This was when (former Russian President Boris Nikolayevich) Yeltsin was President (of the Russian Federation).

Then later—I think it was 1998—when the U.S. bombed Yugoslavia, that changed a lot in terms of Russian official and non-official views of the American presence in Russia. You know, once the bombing in former Yugoslavia started, then even driving around became tricky and a few times people would throw sticks at our car.

Q: Really?

HAMMINK: Yes.

But it was fascinating to see the Soviet-style approach to everything. Like, even selling groceries morphed into a more Western approach with cash registers and the like. And you know, even service in restaurants moved to one of serving the clients instead of the feeling that the clients are lucky to even be there.

But it was also fascinating because Moscow is a major European city with incredible history and culture. And if you walked around almost any corner in Moscow, you'd see a beautiful 200-year-old church or building or park, something that is both beautiful and has a long history.

Q: Were you given some Russian training?

HAMMINK: Yes, I was given Russian language training, because very few people spoke English and the script is Cyrillic of course.

Q: How many months did you have?

HAMMINK: You know, we didn't even get a month of language training. My language training was very basic but was better than nothing. When we arrived in Moscow, the mission set aside half a day, every day, over a month period for me to study Russian.

That just didn't work very well. I could not speak or understand very well, but I could get around and read the signs. And so, my Russian was very basic.

But we had some exciting and successful USAID democracy and governance programs. We supported world renowned human rights NGOs, like the Sakharov Center. I met Sakharov's widow (Yelena Georgievna Bonner), who was there. An incredible woman, brave.

Q: Explain that a little more. What was the Sakharov Center?

HAMMINK: The Sakharov Center was a non-profit organization based in Moscow supporting human rights, human rights activism, outreach and legal protections. It was named after Andrei Sakharov, one of the most famous human rights activists under the Soviet Union. USAID provided a lot of support for an independent judiciary, including training judges. We provided a lot of support for civil society in different parts of the country, along with small grants. We provided a lot of support for independent media through a U.S. group called Internews that did a great job.

We provided a lot of support for parliamentary and presidential elections during my time in Russia. In fact, I arrived there in— I think it was summer of 1996 -- just a week before the first Russian federation presidential election when Boris Yeltsin was elected as Russian president for the first time.

And so, the USAID DG program was broad and multi-faceted. By the time I left in 1999—this is an interesting story—thanks to the Russian people themselves, there were an estimated 50,000 community and civil society organizations across the Russian Federation, whereas in 1990 there were none. There were over 120 different independent media organizations—print and broadcasting. There was a movement toward jury trials, toward the independence of the judiciary.

And probably within a decade or so after President Putin took over, they were all gone, I'm told. So, you know, all of the democratic gains and democratic institutions were rolled back.

Q: When you were building that program, you were working with people in the government or only people outside?

HAMMINK: Both. For example, people in the judiciary were very interested to learn more about how the U.S. judiciary carried out its role as an independent third branch of government. They thought it through and they decided how they wanted to use what they learned within the Russian context.

The university-to-university linkages, which we also supported, as well as scholarships, was run out of my office. There was huge interest in institutional linkages and individual scholarships to study in the U.S. Because the Soviet Union had been such a closed society for so many decades, Russian citizens from across the country, even rural farmers

under our farmer to farmer program, wanted to learn about the U.S. This was especially true on the academic side, through university to university linkages, and as I mentioned for the Russian judiciary broadly speaking as well. We were excited by the fact that we could support Russian and American organizations and institutions of all kinds to build relationships and share knowledge.

That was exciting and again part of history in the making.

Q: Did you find opposition as well that was directed—before they started beating their sticks on your car? I mean, in terms of the programs themselves?

HAMMINK: We had good support from almost all levels of the government, the non-governmental and the private sectors during my first few years in Russia. The last year or 18 months we saw increased scrutiny from the tax police and others, especially related to the Russian advocacy NGOs that we supported. I suspect that the financial crisis in 1998 also made people a bit more skeptical about the U.S. and the west in general. Also, in some places like in Siberia and in the far east, Russian organizations were not used to working with USAID and some of our accounting rules were hard to follow.

Q: So you had a lot of exchanges as well?

HAMMINK: Yes, a lot of exchanges: business to business, university to university, institutions and the like. I even accompanied a Russian Supreme Court Justice on a visit to the U.S. Supreme Court here in Washington, including a visit to the office of one of the U.S. Supreme Court justices. The Supreme Court justice's offices are quite impressive. But the discussions were even more impressive at the time.

Q: Tell us a little more about who you worked with in the mission there.

HAMMINK: Sure. The Mission Director at the time was Janet Ballantyne. And of course, Janet is very well known in USAID and, sadly, she passed away recently after an incredible career in helping people around the world. It was a real privilege to work with Janet for three years.

The Deputy (Mission Director) was Roger Simmons at first and then Mark Ward. I enjoyed working with them as well. We also had a great senior staff of other office directors, like Gene George. You know, a lot of these folks later went on to become Mission Directors. And Steve Giddings, whom I know from the USAID Alumni Association.

We had a great team and a very supportive ambassador, Ambassador Tom Pickering, one of the most experienced ambassadors in the world at the time. I remember that once I accompanied the head of one of our political party support organizations to a meeting with Ambassador Pickering. And with no notes whatsoever, he spoke for an hour about the political situation. He was incredibly articulate and thoughtful, the most impressive

I've ever heard in anybody or any ambassador. Ambassador Pickering was very impressive. That was helpful to see, wow, we had some great diplomats there.

Q: Did you travel around the whole region?

HAMMINK: I did. I didn't travel as much as others, but I got out to Siberia a few times and went up north. And I went out to St. Petersburg a couple of times. We were also allowed, at the time, to travel personally. So, my family and I would often travel to St. Petersburg on the overnight train. It was wonderful. We stayed with Russian families while we were there.

Q: How did you do that?

HAMMINK: Well, this was before the Internet, of course, and Airbnb (Airbnb, Inc.). We found out about Russian families who would rent out a spare room just through word-of-mouth from people in the embassy and implementing partners and NGOs. Also, just around Moscow there's so much to see. We would often drive to Suzdal, a city with fabulous old orthodox churches that were hundreds of years old. I don't know if you've ever been there.

So unfortunately, some years later the Russian government kicked out USAID.

Q: You were there when they—

HAMMINK: No, other USAID colleagues had to face that situation.

Q: But when you left, there was no hint that that was coming?

HAMMINK: Not at the time, but soon thereafter. Soon thereafter, after I left and Putin was elected president, the Russian government pressured and closed independent media outlets and were hassling Russian civil society partners. And there was some discussion on the U.S. side, "Why are we spending all this money for development in Russia? They can take care of themselves."

So then, the Mission Director at the time had to say, OK, where did it make sense to focus. I believe USAID then focused on development areas such as HIV/AIDS, where the U.S. has something to share and the need was clear in Russia. USAID was looking for areas of mutual interest.

But in 1999, I was assigned as the Deputy Mission Director in West Bank-Gaza. So, my family and I moved to Tel Aviv from Moscow, and—

Q: Let me ask you one more question before we leave Russia. I'm sorry.

Q: The political-economic reform program, the Jeffrey Sachs privatization program the U.S. government and, I think, USAID pushed quite strongly. How was that fairing when

you were there? How did people see the privatization program—the attempt to privatize Russian state assets and companies.

HAMMINK: At the time, my colleagues and my counterparts in Russian NGOs who were watchdog NGOs and/or human rights organizations were very concerned, because it seemed like that whole approach was “giving away the store” to a few people who are now—many of them are oligarchs. It was felt that the process was not transparent and it wasn’t democratic. It wasn’t equitable.

You know, I still remember when I was there, the Russian government basically decided to privatize the housing stock in Moscow. Maybe other cities too; I’m not sure. And it happened overnight. They basically gave title to the apartments to those who were living in them. And overnight almost, there was a real estate market established, and real estate agencies started selling properties back and forth.

They were starting from where the government owned everything, and they wanted to move quickly. So, some of the lack of transparency was inevitable. Some of it was not. At least with our Russian democracy-governance counterparts, they were very concerned.

And I was there, of course, when this whole issue came up with HIID, which was Harvard (University Center for) Institute for International Development that Jeff Sachs ran. And some people went to jail, I believe, and had to pay significant fines. So (sighing) there was that going on. But you know, I haven’t read a lot of the history books about that period. And I think it’d be interesting if I did read what people thought about these privatization schemes and the society opening.

It was a challenging period, that’s for sure. But also, an exciting period.

Q: Although you were able to travel around, did you get to the point where you were followed, or that your phones were tapped? Did that sort of thing happen?

HAMMINK: Ha, that’s a great question! Just after we arrived, we were in an apartment in an area called Sary Arbat. And then we moved to, after that, another place further out of town. But within a month after we arrived, our phone would ring at 2 a.m., and I’d go answer it, and they would hang up. You would see signs that people were in our apartment, like the chairs had these covers, and you could see they were turned around. And nobody had been in the apartment. So, they left signs, and they also made it known they were listening on the phone. Because sometimes, when we were talking on the phone, you could hear somebody else would be talking. (chuckles)

And so everyone knew that they were listening and watching. But my approach was that there was nothing I was trying to hide. Nothing in my work was any secret, including everything we did on the DG side. We wanted to be totally open. You know, our FSNs too, we didn’t know where they came from. But it all worked out. You just had to not take that too seriously.

Q: And the bigger programs were the National Republican Institute? And the National Democratic Institute?

HAMMINK: Yeah, there was support for the independent media. There was support for civil society. Support for independent judiciary from several organizations. And then I mentioned, the support for the electoral process and the political process—political party support. That was open to everybody, including the Communist Party, because we had to be fair and open and provide that kind of training for everybody.

Q: And who were USAID's partners in this?

HAMMINK: NDI, IRI, IFES on that side. Internews, I mentioned, on the support for media side. The civil society side, I remember Save the Children and other U.S. NGOs. Major human rights organizations. I don't remember the names now. There was a group called IREX that managed all our operational or institutional partnership program. International Research and Exchanges - IREX. We had some major partners, most of whom are still around, of course. But not in Russia.

Q: Right, not in Russia. Did you ever meet Yeltsin or Putin?

HAMMINK: No, not at my level.

Q: So after how many years did you say, three and a half?

HAMMINK: Three years. We were three years in Moscow and it went by fast.

Q: This kids were in school there?

HAMMINK: Yes, they went to junior high and high school there. They loved it, because there was a lot to do. It was safe. They could walk on the street, go out at night. At the end, we had an apartment that we were the first non-Russians to move into after it had been refurbished, following the fall of the Soviet Union. And it had been two apartments; they took down a wall. It was in an old, beautiful building: high ceilings, art deco, two blocks from the Kremlin, a block from the main conservatory in Moscow in all Russia. It's called the Grand Hall. And so, we went to world-class concerts—just walk over—almost every night. Pay a few dollars. Sit in the top. Listen to music awhile, while the kids were doing homework. Come back.

Anyway, I always kind of jokingly said to people that our tour in Moscow was a real hardship tour, because every night, it was very hard to decide between world-class ballet, world-class music, world-class opera.

But what was fun to see was how, in these concert halls and opera halls including even the Bolshoi (Theatre), you would see so many kids. The Russians always brought their kids to these, and they would be quiet. They would listen. But it was a real family thing,

and that was very important for the Russians to introduce their children to culture, especially music.

And then in the winter, because it got so cold, every place you would go— You know, concert hall, opera house, government building—there would be a special place for boots. And you would not only give your coat but also your boots. Because of the slush outside, it would be so bad, you'd need large boots. So, you would hand them in; they'd hold them for you. And everybody brought shoes with them to wear indoors where they were going. You couldn't wear your shoes outside, because it was such a mess.

Q: Did your kids learn Russian?

HAMMINK: They did.

Q: Play hockey?

HAMMINK: Yes. Our son played hockey and enjoyed it.

Q: Play chess?

HAMMINK: No, not chess. But, he played a lot of hockey. That was fun to go skating.

Of course, it was winter about eight months of the year. And during the depth of the winter it would be light about three hours a day. Part of living in the Foreign Service.

Q: That was your first non-African post, right?

HAMMINK: Correct, yes.

Q: And then another change by region to the Middle East.

HAMMINK: Yes, and then I bid to go to West Bank-Gaza as the Deputy Mission Director. I was ready to get into senior management. And the Mission Director also was just coming in. So, both of us were coming in fresh.

Q: And that was who?

HAMMINK: That was Larry Garber. He was a political appointee. I was the career guy who was supposed to know how USAID worked. And anyway, it was great working with Larry. The first year was exciting. We had a broad—again a broad range of program money because of the Wye River Accords and other Oslo Peace Accords, there was agreed upon support for the Palestinian Authority as well as the Palestinian people.

We supported some big infrastructure programs where we constructed the entire sewer system in Gaza City to huge water systems in the West Bank. Everything we did had to be approved by the Israeli military. They reviewed everything, and that was just the

reality. We had two or more different organizations, or governments, that we had to work with.

So, we supported very large infrastructure. We also supported targeted community development programs trying to win hearts and minds, including support for Fatah and the Palestinian Authority. We funded a lot of training, education, healthcare of course, and agriculture. Infrastructure, I mentioned, including roads in certain areas. We managed a large and broad program.

You know, it was particularly challenging, because in the mission we had a diverse group of FSNs from all sorts of different backgrounds. And maybe before they had been enemies, and at USAID they were working together towards peace. We had, for example, Israeli Jews, Israeli Arabs, Palestinian Arabs—Jews and Arabs. You know, we had a whole broad range of folks from Gaza and the West Bank on our staff.

And then unfortunately for us, but especially for the region, in September-October of 2000, the second Intifada broke out. The (Israeli) Prime Minister at the time, (Ariel) Sharon went into Temple Mount. And that brought out demonstrations by the Palestinians. This was in Jerusalem.

And then unfortunately, fighting broke out and expanded. Fighting between the Palestinians and the Israeli security forces. Palestinian suicide bombers infiltrated into Israel proper. It got to the point where suicide bombs would be going off right next to our office in Tel Aviv.

Q: Really?

HAMMINK: Yes, sadly. For a while there, we were not allowed to go to restaurants, to go to shopping centers. For a while we were not even allowed to go to Jerusalem, where we had an office.

Q: But your families were not evacuated?

HAMMINK: No, our families remained, but we laid low. Our kids were in the Israel American School at the time, which of course was well protected. But it was a difficult time. I could not even tell my neighbors what I did at work if they asked, because they would get so upset. They would get so upset to think that we were trying to support the Palestinians in any way.

And so, we really focused on, how can we support those who wanted to get back to a peace process, those who wanted a peaceful coexistence? We shifted our budget towards trying to support communities, so that it was community-driven, so that they would see support from not only the U.S. but in this case the Palestinian Authority and not for Hamas.

Our program shifted as the second intifada dragged on. We had to continually refine our strategy, because there was a lot of things we couldn't do anymore—because of access, because of continued fighting. So, those were very difficult days.

And many of our Palestinian partners and colleagues could not travel, and for a while we could not travel into the West Bank and Gaza. Many of our friends on both sides were basically becoming much more radical. It was harder to talk about peaceful coexistence and what kind of programs could support peace, and how the U.S. could support that. Those were challenging times for a lot of people, including on the development side for our development assistance program.

We lived in Tel Aviv. And you know, once the suicide bombing stopped or dwindled down—because Israeli security forces changed some of their tactics, then we could get out and, at least to be able to travel around Israel a little bit, which helped on the quality of life side. But the work side remained pretty challenging.

Q: It does sound challenging. Dealing with the Jewish population, you couldn't tell them what you did?

HAMMINK: Well, some. I mean, some of my neighbors told me they just didn't understand. They viewed all Palestinians as their enemies, because Palestinians were killing babies. But Israeli troops were also killing Palestinians. It was a very difficult time for everyone. I think that we found ways in which our development dollars were well spent for continuing activities that needed to be continued, such as continuing to get water to Palestinian communities or very basic primary health care and primary education. Continuing that work was supporting the people who wanted peaceful coexistence.

And so, that was good. And when we could and when opportunities presented themselves, we also supported peace conferences or other mechanisms in which there could be improved dialogue between the two sides.

So, part of our program during this time was target of opportunity and part of it was staying the course and trying to keep the Palestinian Authority alive but in a way that didn't support the hardliners and did support those Palestinians who wanted peaceful coexistence.

Q: Did you feel you were having any success?

HAMMINK: Well, on the one hand, yes. But on the other hand, no, because the fighting continued, animosity continued, and the prospects for peaceful resolution for a two-state solution dissipated. And that was 14 years ago.

But on the other hand, you know, we were able to support those people who wanted to continue to work towards peaceful coexistence and the peace process. We could support

basic human needs in a very difficult situation, where security dictated the plan. We also supported targeted community development, as I mentioned.

Q: In terms of your travel around, did you have security issues traveling in the region? Did you have to pass through all the checkpoints and so forth?

HAMMINK: Yes, I'll give you an example. The night before the Intifada started, the night before Sharon went into the Temple Mount, with my family, we drove our car—our personal car—all the way to Ramallah in the west bank from Tel Aviv. We had dinner. We walked around the streets with no problems. We got in our car and drove back through the checkpoints, no problem, all the way to Tel Aviv. And the next day, everything was closed because of the fighting that started just the next day.

There was a period when we were very hopeful, and the security services were talking to each other—some real openness. And unfortunately, what surprised me frankly, was how quickly that all fell apart, and the cooperation that had existed at many levels just fell apart quickly.

So, after that, because of the dangers, we could only travel to the West Bank in armored vehicles with armed security guards—American security guards with long guns. And so, that changed a lot, because then our trips into the West Bank to meet with counterparts, government officials and private-sector officials, became very circumscribed. Because there were only so many fully-armored vehicles at the American consulate in Jerusalem. And the Consul General understandably got first pick. And if he needed to see someone, we were kind of down the line. And so, it was difficult to have meetings and see counterparts.

And then later, because Gaza was so dangerous, we weren't allowed to go there at all.

Q: Really?

HAMMINK: Yes. The last trip into Gaza— Well, my last trip into Gaza was just before I left post in summer 2003. I had some good meetings. We still had some programs going on in Gaza. This was still back when the Palestinian Authority was in charge. I met with our staff in Gaza and then came back to Tel Aviv. My trip there was thankfully uneventful.

But then some weeks after I left, another team of embassy colleagues was going in, again with a lead car and a tail car. And the terrorists had planted a bomb on the side of the road and blew up the front car and killed-- I can't remember—one or two security guys. And after that, there was no travel. So, this happened just weeks after we'd been there. That could've been us.

And so, those are the kinds of risks that we take in the foreign service. We knew that there was some danger going into the areas. But we needed to go there to carry out U.S. foreign policy interests, and continue these programs.

Q: Were we providing budget support to the Palestinian Authority for covering basic operating costs?

HAMMINK: Some. At one point, part of the program was to support the Palestinian Authority directly. Obviously, (the U.S.) Congress was very much involved as well as the (U.S.) Secretary of State. There were certain circumstances where we did that. Those were obviously political decisions. But, working with the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the World Bank—but especially the IMF—and the Palestinian Minister of Finance, who at the time was very good, we could have as much impact as possible with these budget support programs.

But budget support is always a bit tricky, because money is fungible at the end of the day. You want to see some policy reforms. You want to see some changes—

Q: Did you have conditionality on project support?

HAMMINK: Some of it we did. Some of it we didn't, depending on how political or urgent the money became.

Q: Right.

HAMMINK: So, that's a good question. Though you know, that kind of program was very political. At the same time, though, we worked hard to also achieve key development goals, as much as we could, at the same time.

But we also understood that there were political concerns with the Palestinian Authority and Yasser Arafat. So, we had a lot of reach back to policy makers in Washington to make sure that there was support for our programs.

Q: So Larry would do that, or you would do that?

HAMMINK: Well, both, depending. Mainly, Larry. But I would as an acting mission director at times.

So that was a very difficult time. But I learned a lot about flexibility and keeping your eyes on the bigger picture, even when everything is blowing up around you. We had to continually update our strategy. We were doing scenario planning all the time.

And then what happened was the First Gulf War broke out in 2003. In March-April of 2003, the mission was evacuated. Well, most of the mission. I think a few people stayed throughout. I was evacuated along with most officers and all families.

Q: And that was because the fear of—

HAMMINK: That was of course the war against (former President of Iraq) Saddam Hussein to take back Kuwait which he had taken.

Q: It wasn't that close to you, was it?

HAMMINK: Well, there was the palpable fear that he had missiles with chemical weapons and possibly other weapons of mass destruction.

Q: I see.

HAMMINK: He had already sent some of his missiles into Israel but they had conventional warheads.

Q: I know that he had with Iran in the previous war, but I didn't know about Israel.

HAMMINK: Yep. I mean, he had sent some missiles, not with gas though. So, that was the fear. We even received training in putting on suits and masks, and the whole thing.

Q: So evacuated to where?

HAMMINK: To Washington. So, for about a month and a half, I ran the mission, or at least those mission staff who had been evacuated, out of Washington. We had offices in a swing space on Highway 66. But we got great support from the folks in Washington. You know, it wasn't just our mission that was evacuated at the time. A lot of USAID missions were evacuated.

Q: Oh, I didn't realize that.

HAMMINK: Yes, in many countries the State department was worried about anti-American demonstrations and personal security.

So, then in 2003, after I'd been in West Bank-Gaza for four years, I had bid and was assigned to Ethiopia as USAID Mission Director. And so, here I was going back to Africa on the one hand, but also going back to another kind of challenging, very poor country with somewhat of a totalitarian government, and with incredible development challenges across the board.

Q: Who was running the country at the time?

HAMMINK: The Prime Minister was Meles Zenawi. And so, Meles had been Prime Minister since the TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front) and other revolutionary groups had come in and taken the capital Addis Ababa in 1991. Meles and other revolutionaries overthrew the Marxist-Communist regime of Mengistu.

Meles and other revolutionaries had fought for years in a civil war, and they were finally able to take the capital and the country from the communists in 1991. Interestingly, when

I worked in the Africa Bureau in 1991, I joined a senior-level team to go to Ethiopia to help set up a new USAID program.

Q: Oh!

HAMMINK: I went out there with people like Marge Bonner and other very senior people in USAID. I was the DG person on the team. And we met with Meles, who was prime minister at the time. We also met with the Revolutionary Council. Then we went to Eritrea and met with the leader there, Isaias Afwerki, who a year after taking over was still wearing his military fatigues.

Meles passed away some years ago, whereas Isaias is still in power. This guy is still there and still in charge.

In any case, so going to Ethiopia, going back to Ethiopia, was a great opportunity and a great challenge to make a difference. We had a wonderful Ambassador. Her name was—or is—Aurelia (E.) Brazeal. She was a three-time ambassador, one of the first Black American woman ambassadors.

And we had huge challenges, as I mentioned before. During my three years as Mission Director, we had four disasters. Three were weather related—natural, and one was a man-made disaster. The man-made disaster happened because the government was moving tens of thousands of Ethiopians from highland areas with very poor agriculture potential to the western part of Ethiopia, where the soils and rainfall are better but there was no infrastructure or support services whatsoever. And the Ethiopian government sent these Ethiopians, mainly poor farmers with few coping mechanisms or assets, to areas where they had little to no support.

They were of course highly vulnerable. They had very few coping mechanisms that they took with them. And so, that turned out to be a disaster. The Government of Ethiopia at one point had taken some of the food aid that we gave to the country for humanitarian assistance and sent it to these resettled areas without discussing it with us. USAID and other donors had been against this resettlement program from the beginning.

And so, with the support of the Ambassador, I sent the Deputy Prime Minister a letter saying, you must pay us for this or give it back. The response was at a meeting with Ambassadors and senior donor heads where he “stabbed me in the back” in public, saying that friends would not do what USAID did. Our Chargé d’Affaires was there at the time. And so, we had to work that through. We had to be very diligent and consistent, while relying on evidence and data as much as possible in our discussions with senior Ethiopian leaders.

Q: Do you remember with what words he stabbed you in the back?

HAMMINK: Yeah, he said, “Well, we thought you Americans were our friends, and Mr. Hammink forgot that and insists on this food back that was to save lives,” and things like that. He took the situation out of context.

But on the other hand— That was just one situation. We also had an excellent relationship, I mean not directly, but with the Ambassador and with Prime Minister Meles. When I arrived in Ethiopia in summer 2003, the country was in the midst of a major drought. And there were some 13 million Ethiopians that were at risk of starvation.

If you remember the ’84 drought and famine, about half of that number, or about 6 million Ethiopians, were at risk of starvation. And because in 1984 the (Ethiopian) government refused to acknowledge that there was this drought and famine, over a million Ethiopians, they found, died because of the famine. Most did not die from starvation, but from a myriad of diseases that kill people faster than starvation in a famine situation.

Whereas in 2003, the government to their credit, basically called the donors together and said, “We have a problem. We need help immediately. There’s this major drought going on, and here’s what we’re doing about it. But we need food immediately.” And the difference was honesty and transparency. So, the U.S. government through USAID’s Office of Food for Peace—but the mission helped make this happen—basically brought in a million tons of food. Sorry, no. It was 500,000 tons of food. And the Europeans brought in about the same amount, the European countries. And the government helped on the logistics to get it to where the people were. And the big difference compared to 1984 was clear, in 2003 very few people died because of the major drought.

The major drought in 2003 affecting double the number of people that were affected in the famine of 1984, but because we could get food aid in, the government helped on logistics to get it to people where they lived, people didn’t have to move to camps. That’s where most of the dying took place in 1984, because they had no coping mechanisms and diseases spread like fire. So, we got food into their communities where they lived, so they wouldn’t have to relocate. And we helped them to get through that period, when there was no harvest, and there was no food. And so, we basically, with that response, saved millions of lives.

And at the same time, with government leadership, the World Bank, USAID (which took a leadership role), the EU (European Union) and other donors designed and put in place what we called a productive safety net program. This was back in 2004. This was a multi-\$100 million safety net program for millions of Ethiopians on the edge of starvation to basically try to change this dynamic whereby every drought would lead to a famine, that every drought would basically “push people off the cliff” when they’re already so close to that “cliff” because they’re so poor and have so few assets.

The productive safety net program gave the most vulnerable Ethiopians some assets, either food or cash, every month during the year, for work, so that they could then build their assets over the years with the idea that they would graduate from the program and

be both less vulnerable when the next shock hit and that they had a chance to continue to grow their assets and meet their own needs. And then eventually, that program would be able to shift to support other people who also needed this help. It was a needs-based program.

And even now, it's still going on. Many evaluations and reviews have been undertaken over the past 14 years. The Ethiopian productive safety net program is still viewed as a success story. And it's one of the reasons that, in this latest drought that took place in Ethiopia in 2017, the impact was not as bad as it would have been without that safety net program.

It wasn't a total success, though, because people under the program are still dependent on food aid and the initial plans to shift from using food as an asset to using solely cash under the program did not work. But at least it really "moved the needle" for millions of Ethiopians, you know, away from that "cliff" to help them build resilience and coping mechanisms, as well as building assets.

You know, what happened prior to 2003 was that there would be successive droughts, and people would lose their livestock, their goats or any other means of livelihoods. And because these droughts were successive, these most vulnerable mainly rural people never ever could replace the lost livestock or other household assets. They were always working on just staying alive. So, this safety net program helped change that dynamic for a lot of people.

Besides the hundreds of tons of food aid that saved a lot of lives, we helped the Ethiopians design and USAID helped to fund a significant, productive safety net program.

We also worked very closely with the Ministry of Health to set up a country-wide community-based primary health care program using an example from Kerala in India that was quite successful. This was a rare example I believe in development where the host country came up with the approach, using best practice from another developing country and implemented it themselves with planned and organized support from the donor community.

And now, it's kind of fun looking back at what happened since in Ethiopia. Improvements in health indicators has also been a big success story. Ethiopia has succeeded in bringing down the maternal mortality and under-five (years of age) mortality rates as well as other major health indicators showing improved health status, especially of mothers and children. The government made the right choices in this case. We gave the right kind of assistance.

Q: The Minister of Health, I think, became the head of the Africa region for WHO (World Health Organization).

HAMMINK: No, the Minister of Health at the time, whom I got to know quite well—his name is (Tedros Adhanom) Ghebreyesus—became the Minister of Foreign Affairs. And now, he was just voted in as the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO). So he's the worldwide executive for everything in WHO. He's a very impressive guy.

We made some progress, but not as much as we would've like to see on the education side.

On the agriculture side, we introduced some new approaches regarding livestock. There was more livestock in Ethiopia than people. It was clear they needed improved animal husbandry: We brought in and linked up Texas A&M (University) and other American livestock universities to support Ethiopian universities and industries, to give them technical support, including new breeding programs. We especially supported livestock farmers around the idea of resilience. For example, in 2004-2005, we designed an innovative Pastoralists Livelihoods Initiative (PLI) which established systems and parameters for pastoralists in the poorest reaches of Ethiopia to be able to sell or save their cattle when droughts arrived, instead of just losing all their cattle which is what had always happened in the past.

We also developed a strategy and programs to link humanitarian assistance and development assistance. They're normally separate funds. And what you do on the humanitarian side makes an impact on resilience, coping and setting the stage for longer-term development while increasing people's ability to withstand the next drought or other shock.

I'll give you one example. In the highlands, OFDA came in also in 2003. They had a large humanitarian assistance program along with our food aid. OFDA put in water systems—emergency water systems --but that would last for several years. And when another drought hit in 2005, those areas with the water systems did not need emergency food aid because with that water, people figured out adequate coping mechanisms.

Q: Is it wells, or what was it?

HAMMINK: Yes, the water systems included in some cases wells. And then on the hillside, they would put up a big tower and put pipes down and standing standpipes for people to get water. Those were the kind of systems, self-contained.

The other part of the solution was disaster preparedness. We put a lot of effort in that because Ethiopia had continuing disasters. In Ethiopia, we called it a chronic emergency. Droughts were the main problem, but they had others such as floods.

So, some of those programs were successful. Some were less successful, but there was a lot of learning going on.

Q: Sounds like some very successful programs.

HAMMINK: I was there from 2003 to 2006. And we developed a new strategy, which was probably the agency's first resiliency strategy. They didn't call it that back then, but it was linking, in a very strategic, comprehensive way, our humanitarian and our development assistance programs. Disaster preparedness with some development programs—along with types of interventions that focus on resilience and coping.

Again, these programs, and the learning from these programs, from the early 2000s in Ethiopia set the stage for the current analyses and thinking on resiliency strategies and programming. The woman who is now the Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Food Security worked in our food security office when I was there: Beth Dunford.

Q: Oh, yes.

HAMMINK: And she did an outstanding job. A lot of the people—Susan (J.) Thompson, I think—who helped put together this productive safety net program were smart, “A-team” people who are now leaders, you know, in the whole resilience area. So, I think we all learned a lot from those early days in Ethiopia.

Q: Ethiopia has been an AID target country for probably 50 years, right?

HAMMINK: Yep. They made great strides on education, on health care, some of these indicators we look at. Unfortunately, on the governance side and on the democracy side, they've fallen back. I was there in 2005 when they had parliamentary elections that happen every five years under the new constitution.

And at the time, I think Meles just didn't realize the groundswell of support for the opposition and for a new government to try different approaches to rule the country and to have less autocratic and more democratic systems in place. Basically, it was fascinating to be there at that time, because the opposition party got out over a million people in the streets of Addis (Ababa) a few weeks before the election. Just a very calm and peaceful demonstration to call people out to vote in the election. And I think that was a wake-up call for the government, which was oppressive and did everything they could to stay in power.

And so, the election day came around and the voting turnout was huge, and everybody thought, and the election day parallel vote counts showed, that the opposition had done very well. But the voting counts were postponed. And then the election officials announced a huge victory for the government and then everybody thought that the government cheated and changed the votes.

There were demonstrations in the street, and the government clamped down, hard. Many, many people lost their lives. I remember going from the USAID office to the embassy, they'd closed the streets. There were blockades. There were bodies along the side of the street. We were in danger. Again, people were told to stay home; don't go out.

And that was 2005. We had a Chargé d’Affaires who was outstanding: Vicky Huddleston.

Q: I know Vicky.

HAMMINK: You know Vicky, yeah? And she did everything she could, along with others in the embassy, to calm things down, to get the government to release all of the political prisoners that they had taken, the opposition, and to try to negotiate a way out. It never worked. The government clamped down. It was a difficult period.

And so, since then, the government has consolidated its power. I think now, the party had 90 or 99 percent in the last elections. So unfortunately, there’s little citizen voice and choice. The government party is called the EPDRF. And when Meles and company came into power in 1991, EPDRF had representatives from different ethnic groups. However, some things are ethnic based.

One is: their regions are established by ethnic group. So, you have the Amhara region, the Harari region, the Oromia region, the Tigray region and others. And then in the south, you had so many ethnic groups. They set up what’s called the SNNPR—Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region. And in the east, you have the Afar and a few other ethnic groups, mainly Somali. So, it was set up in the constitution also.

But anyway, the political situation was also challenging. If you read the political analyses from the time, it’s a fascinating story, and it’s not over yet. You may have seen that the Prime Minister—his name was (Hailemariam) Desalegn—just resigned a few weeks ago. And he had been in power since Meles died. I think four, five years ago.

But when I was in Ethiopia as Mission Director, Desalegn was the Governor of the SNNPR, he came from there. And I had terrific talks with him about development issues. We had large programs in SNNPR. Very thoughtful guy. He stated the party’s line, but he was willing to think, use evidence and data, to maybe think about different policies that made more sense.

For example, just after I got to Ethiopia, we developed a new country development strategy. We shared a summary of it with the Deputy Prime Minister. And the Ambassador and I went over and met with him. He looks through it, and he says, “You know on page 12, we don’t agree with family planning, because we need more people. We have all this empty land.”

And I said, very carefully, “Well, you know. Evidence around the world shows that with a high population growth rate, it’s very hard for countries, whether poor or rich, but especially poor countries, to build enough schools and clinics, have the money to build schools and health care clinics.” And he didn’t get it.

Whereas the guy from SNNPR who was the Prime Minister, he immediately got it. You know why? Because in his region, the families were so large, they had to basically split

up the land for the sons to a point where he could see within a few years as Governor, it was no longer viable. And farmers, instead of growing enough for their families, had such small plots of land that there was no way to support a family from farming.

People moved to the cities. You had urban migration. So, he said, “We’ve got to do something about family size, family planning, and you know, for development reasons.” He then supported family planning programs in his region.

Q: How big was your program financially? What was the budget?

HAMMINK: Because of the food aid, we managed over a billion dollars a year.

Q: A billion dollars?

HAMMINK: Now, over half of that—two-thirds—was food aid, to be fair. But we still had a \$300-\$400 million a year development program.

Q: Huge.

HAMMINK: It was a huge program.

Q: And what kind of staff did you have?

HAMMINK: We had a great mission. We had terrific FSNs and American staff.

You know, at the time, I was told that about 80-some percent of all the academic literature on famines came from Ethiopia.

So anyway, to answer your question, I think we had about 200 people, probably about 30 Americans.

Q: Direct hire?

HAMMINK: Yes.

Q: These days, that’s a very large mission.

HAMMINK: Yeah, yeah. We had one of the largest Missions in Africa.

Q: And it was all project assistance? There wasn’t any sort of food aid? No commodity assistance?

HAMMINK: Yes, yeah. There were some— What do they call it, where they sold the food outright - Monetization.

Q: Monetization.

HAMMINK: Now that ended soon thereafter. The government, to its credit, had a very good system that they put together with the World Food Program (WFP), (World) Bank and the EU, with a food reserve. And they tracked it well, and there were warehouses around the country. Because of all the droughts and food aid, that food reserve was needed.

Q: And the food aid program, was that managed with WHO or with WFP (United Nations World Food Programme) or—

HAMMINK: Yeah, for the most part. We worked through several large American NGOs there. But mostly, the emergency food aid came in through WFP.

Q: A good program.

HAMMINK: They had— It's fascinating. They had a very large presence.

Q: Was there good donor coordination?

HAMMINK: There was very active donor coordination, yeah. USAID played a big role. I headed up the donor group often. But interestingly, the donor group was co-led by the UN and the World Bank, and that was appropriate. But there was a strong push for bilateral donor involvement in the leadership of the donors group.

There was a strong push to make sure that the donor group didn't do anything that the government would be upset about or concerned about. There was this very close coordination and collaboration, sharing of information. And we had a joint ministerial-level donor head group that met regularly. And even the ambassadors of the major donor countries got together privately on a regular basis. So, further coordination was key, especially during these emergencies when we would have hundreds of millions of dollars in food aid. There would be logistical problems that we would need the Prime Minister's involvement and close coordination made that possible.

Q: Was your program affected by the fighting in Somalia?

HAMMINK: At the time, no. This is an interesting story. I could go on and on. But at the time, Somalia had broken up by 2003, and there was fighting that was brought into the Somali region of Ethiopia by some of these insurgents.

At the time, the U.S. military was sending troops to their base in Djibouti. It was called Camp Lemonnier. And it was called the CJTF-HOA, the Combined Joint Task Force for the Horn of Africa. And they very much wanted to be in these countries in the region, including Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. Eritrea of course wasn't going to accept U.S. troops. Neither was Sudan.

And so, the U.S. military arranged a deal with Prime Minister Meles and our Ambassador of course to be able to have some troops in the Somali region to be able to support development programs there. They would come in, and they would do programs we called “hearts and minds” programs. They would build schools. They would repair schools. They would help repair clinics, waterways, irrigation canals. I saw this again in Afghanistan.

And I can say that, frankly, it didn’t work. Because they would build these schools and clinics, or repair them, with no consideration of what comes next because the U.S. military figured it was up to the local communities. They would go into a village and say to the village chief, “What do you need?”

And the village chief would say, “I need a school.” So, they would build a school. They would never talk to the Ministry of Education representatives. There would be no teacher. There would be no text books. There would be no furniture, chairs.

And so, after this was going on for a while, the Ambassador said to the Commanding Officer in CJTF-HOA-- it was always a flag officer -- that they couldn’t do any projects without having USAID clear off on it.

Q: Oh, really?

HAMMINK: So the CJTF-HOA commanding officer was very smart. Whenever he would come to Addis, he would invite me along with the Ambassador on his plane to go visit these places in the Somali region. And we would get force protection from the military. He also understood that he needed our help to basically introduce them to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, to help to systematize their approach to make sure that they were sustainable as much as possible in that kind of very poor resource situation.

So, we had someone on our staff who used to be in the military who basically spent almost full time as a liaison with this CJTF-HOA team in Ethiopia. They had some people in Addis, and they had people out in the capital of the Somali region. And the USAID guy would travel and view their programs. He would get our agriculture, health and education officers involved. And it helped.

But frankly, a team came out from DOD in Washington (U.S. Department of Defense) to evaluate their program in the Somali region. And in all honesty without trying to put anybody under the bus, I said to the DOD evaluation team, “In my mind, it makes no sense to spend all that money to do that stuff. You could give us the money, and we know how to do it in such a way that it’s going to be less expensive, it’s going to be linked to local needs and with local organizations to make sure it’s as sustainable as possible.”

And I admitted, USAID also had failures such as boreholes that were installed all over the country that weren’t maintained. Sure, things need to be maintained and fixed when they are broken down. But schools and clinics and the like, for the investment to be

worthwhile we needed to ensure teachers, nurses, and on-going support from the government. I suspect that was around the time the Ambassador basically told the CJTF-HOA commanding officer that he couldn't do any development projects without USAID review of an agreement with their project proposals. CJTF-HOA didn't like that, because it slowed them down a little bit. But I think they understood that was necessary.

But that put pressure on us, because then we had to show that our involvement could help the sustainability of their programs. The USAID liaison with CJTF-HOA had an important job and the entire mission supported his work.

Q: Do you remember the guy's name that was the liaison)?

HAMMINK: Yeah, Mike McCord. I think he's now the Deputy Mission Director in Afghanistan. Yes, and he's going out to be Mission Director somewhere. I can't remember where. He's done well.

But that just shows that you had DOD working in the development sphere. This was even before AFRICOM (United States Africa Command), trying to come into these countries and to do development projects. These were in the DOD civil affairs days.

Q: We used to call it Civic Action, too.

HAMMINK: Civic Action, yeah. I have huge respect for them and what they're trying to do in trying to build the support for local government, local leaders in the communities. Again, it's the insurgents who are also fighting for hearts and minds. But there are different ways to support communities directly in conflict areas.

Q: Right. Sounds like you came up with a good way, very successful.

HAMMINK: It worked for a while. At least it helped as long as CJTF-HOA had the money, they were going to keep trying to do community development. And it was incumbent upon us to try to make things work.

Q: Is that still going on?

HAMMINK: I don't know.

Q: And nothing in Eritrea, of course.

HAMMINK: No, we didn't work at all in Eritrea. Eritrea for a while had its own USAID mission there.

Q: I know. I went there.

HAMMINK: Oh, did you? OK. Who was there?

Q: I led a team—a U.S. government team—to develop a strategy shortly after we moved in. I shouldn't talk about that. But anyway, I have a little bit of familiarity.

HAMMINK: OK, yeah. So, you know, when I went to Ethiopia as mission director, my wife was working in Eritrea at the time on a short-term consultancy. This is off-the-record now. But like your wife, she went back to Hopkins (Johns Hopkins University) and got a master's degree in public health. Before that she was a school teacher for 25 years. At the time, she was in Eritrea to do a health survey. And I thought, "Oh, we could easily see each other. I could fly up there and see her." But there were no direct flights.

Q: No flights. (chuckles)

HAMMINK: You had to go to—I think you had to go to Saudi Arabia—

Q: Oh my.

HAMMINK: —to get back to Addis. In any case, Ethiopia was a huge challenge but fascinating because we had so many emergencies. We had so many high-level visits. Five or six AAs (USAID Assistant Administrators) visited in my first year in Ethiopia: one for a week and a half. And we had the Administrator come twice. We had senior state officials—Assistant Secretaries and Deputy Assistant Secretaries. I got out to every region of Ethiopia, because we brought high-level visitors. The countryside was beautiful. Ethiopia is a fascinating country.

To answer one of your other questions, we got to know Ethiopians very well. We invited the Deputy Prime Minister, who also served as Minister of Agriculture at the same time, on an official visit to the U.S. Besides a Washington visit, he also visited agricultural universities and agricultural companies in Louisiana and Texas. We came back and started some exciting programs that he fully supported.

But that was one example where we worked very well. I was very lucky in that at the time we had good ministers who were generally very good to work with and were interested in data, evidence, and research in terms of program focus.

Q: Sounds like a very successful time and excellent leadership you provided.

HAMMINK: Well, very challenging because of the continuing droughts and other kinds of disasters.

Q: So shall we go through one more?

HAMMINK: Sure! OK, yeah. I'm not getting tired.

In 2006, I had to come back to Washington for family reasons. And so, I bid on and was assigned to be the Director of the Office of Food for Peace, which seemed to make a lot

of sense after serving as Mission Director in a country like Ethiopia where food aid was an important part of our humanitarian and development programs.

Q: Right!

HAMMINK: Which after Sudan had the most food aid of any country in the world. And so, that was a very exciting time. I had an outstanding staff in FFP and we had a great program. The Food for Peace program had just celebrated its 60th year. At the time, we were in talks with staffers on the Hill (U.S. Congress, also known as Capitol Hill), the State Department, key policy people within USAID and the NGO community, which was very active and vocal on food aid, as you can imagine. There was a lot of money involved. Our budget my first year as head of FFP was around \$2 billion. And of course, private industries were vocal on food aid as well, because they sold food to us, especially U.S. agribusinesses.

The Farm Bill was coming up for re-authorization. And so, we developed policy positions that we got approval from State Department and White House for changing some of the rules around having to basically only use our dollars to buy U.S. food, and then ship it thousands of miles on U.S. bottoms, which is super expensive. So, by the time the food got to the country where it was needed, whether it was Ethiopia, Sudan, or Nepal, a good part of the cost of the food came from the cost of the shipping. And moving it from Kansas or wherever. And so—

Q: Especially on American bottoms.

HAMMINK: Well, that was one we've been fighting for a long time. I would say that we had two kind of policy victories. One is that we developed more facts and evidence on costs and opened the shipping debate a little bit wider. We knew we wouldn't win that fight completely. Instead, in fact, I think there's no winning that one outright. But the second one, where we thought we could get some leeway, was the authority to start a pilot program to use some of the PL-480 Title II (U.S. Public Law for food assistance) monies to buy food locally, to be able to then show that it could work. We could support local markets in the region, but also get emergency humanitarian food quickly to where it was needed at less cost to the (U.S.) taxpayer.

Of course, we had to keep the proposed pilot modest because of all the opposition. Interestingly, my impression at the time was that most farmer groups did not oppose this proposal in general because for most commodities our purchases constituted such a small part of their overall exports. It was the middle men and shippers who mainly opposed using Title II funds to buy emergency food locally.

At the time, because of my years of field experience, including in Ethiopia, I represented USAID to testify in front of the agriculture committees working on the farm bill along with a senior political appointee from USDA (United States Department of Agriculture). We testified in front of three different committees: the Senate Agriculture Committee, the House Agriculture Committee, and then interestingly the House Foreign Affairs

Committee. The House Foreign Affairs Committee has jurisdiction over some parts of food aid.

Q: Surprising.

HAMMINK: Testifying in front of Congress is interesting and very challenging. You're on the record. You're the expert. You are expected to be able to answer the questions that are asked, on the spot.

Q: "I'll get back to you, Senator."

HAMMINK: Exactly. I had to say that on one occasion. The House member had looked at my resume and was asking me political questions about West Bank-Gaza, when he saw that I had worked there for four years. And I knew that I needed to give the answer some thought so I said, "We'll get back to you on that." But anyway, we didn't get very far in terms of specific changes we were pushing for to get into the Farm Bill. We got a tiny, little opening, a crack. But I think that tiny opening was important because it led to what is now an authority to use a good percentage of Title II for locally provided food aid.

Q: And is it in Ethiopia that it's being carried out?

HAMMINK: It's all over the world.

Q: The pilot being carried out?

HAMMINK: Ah, well it's no longer a pilot. We did carry out that pilot program, showed some real success and impact in terms of the objectives, which was lower cost for the American taxpayer and quicker supply of emergency food aid for those suffering.

Q: So, just explain very quickly how that works. What happens to the American food?

HAMMINK: The U.S. food aid program started in 1952 or so. They just celebrated 60 years. The funds for Title II are appropriated to USAID. USAID has an agreement with USDA. Their agents go out and buy the required commodities in the U.S.

So, there's the upstream side and the downstream side. On the upstream side, USDA buys the food commodities based on needs identified and analyzed by USAID. First, USAID determines what the needs are. So, when there's an emergency in Mozambique or Liberia or a food emergency in Malawi, like there was eight or 10 years ago, then we determine, OK, here's how much we will need to meet the demand. We also look at what other donors are doing, what the host government is doing for its own people, and what the overall global humanitarian food aid demands are. And then USAID Food for Peace has its budget, right?

Q: Right.

HAMMINK: So we determine, here's how much we will contribute towards Malawi. And here are the food items that are required, whether it's sorghum, whether it's wheat, or maize, or whether it's a mix of food commodities.

Q: CSB (corn-soy blend)

HAMMINK: Yeah. And then that is reviewed and analyzed in Washington and the requests put together by commodity. We tell USDA, "OK, buy this much wheat, and that's going to Mozambique as quickly as possible." And so, they do that. But then, much of the emergency food aid goes through WFP (U.N. World Food Program). And then WFP arranges the shipping. Some of the food aid does not go through WFP but through large U.S. NGOs, and then USAID arranges the shipping. So, it depends. You know, some of it is through large—it's all competed—large U.S. NGOs that also receive and distribute food aid in many countries around the world.

Q: But for the program where you're using PL-480 money to buy food locally, you basically don't buy any American food. You avoid that whole process.

HAMMINK: The idea here is that we can help local markets if it's done correctly. And we can buy food locally where delivery of the food would be much cheaper than bringing the food from Kansas or anywhere in the U.S. And since it's in the region, we normally can get it quicker if it's available. And so, that's the idea.

And again, my understanding of the current situation that we were arguing back in 2006 and 2007, this isn't for the whole food aid program. We still need food— Because you can't buy enough when it's needed. To meet the global humanitarian food aid needs, we absolutely needed to buy food commodities in America. But we argued to give us the authority to use a percentage of these funds to buy locally where it makes sense. And here are the criteria. Here are the conditions. And we'll report back to you.

At the same time, we started to move away from monetization of food aid back in 2005, 2006, and 2007. And we got the international NGOs which had been doing food aid monetization for decades to agree to other approaches.

Q: Right.

HAMMINK: You know, it was a source of funding for them. That was additional to any other source of funds. But the problem was that monetization was an extremely inefficient way to come up with that money, because you're basically paying—the U.S. taxpayer is paying for shipping all that food from the U.S. to the ports in Tanzania or Mozambique or Kenya and then selling it for local currency on the local market.

Q: Right.

HAMMINK: And then if it's sold there on the local market in local currency—

Q: To bakers.

HAMMINK: The food aid was normally monetized through local brokers or wholesalers.

Q: Using your baker friends who're using the wheat.

HAMMINK: And so you get 50 cents on the dollar to spend on development programs given that shipping and all the administrative costs were over 50%. If you just have the money instead of the food, you could do development programs, you know, much more efficiently.

Q: Right, right. Well, one of the advantages of that, however, is—bringing back some of the aid history—is that it becomes local currency, and you have much more flexibility using local currency than you do in appropriated dollars.

HAMMINK: Yes! That's true. That's why missions at one point also liked monetization.

Q: Right. All right, it sounds that decision you're talking about has been discussed for I'd say decades probably. And you made it run! You got the pilot running!

HAMMINK: Well, I believe, in that Farm Bill in 2007, for the first time, the Congress gave us some authority to do a pilot program. There was a little crack in 100% U.S. bought food. I think the original pilot was approved because it was so small – I think around \$5 million or \$10 million -- compared to a billion-dollar food aid budget.

Q: It's a start.

HAMMINK: Yep, it was a start. And you had to show proof of concept, basically. And that's what we did. Not "we". I mean, the Food for Peace team.

Q: Who did you work with in the Food for Peace office?

HAMMINK: Well, the Deputy Director in the Food for Peace office at the time was a guy named Jonathan Dworken. He was terrific. He was outstanding. He's still in the Africa Bureau, I believe. He's Director of the Office of East African Affairs. And he headed up the Sudan office for many years as well. He's Civil Service; he's terrific. And then, Matt (Matthew) Nims was head of one of our divisions. He's now the head of Food for Peace. He moved on. He's also terrific. FFP had several people who were just outstanding analysts, researchers, scientists, as well as numbers people.

Q: But I don't think there are many, if any, Foreign Service Officers who are Food for Peace officers.

HAMMINK: That's a good point. Food for Peace had very few career Foreign Service Officers. That's right. But when I was there, we tried to bring more in. I was Director of

FFP just over a year. What was just as important as the Foreign Service staff in the Food for Peace office was the team in the field, mainly PSCs (personal service contractors).

And so, we were looking how to improve that dynamic, to continue using PSCs where it made sense, but also where it made sense to recruit FSOs for FFP field positions. And around that time, the Assistant Administrator for DCHA (USAID Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance), under which you found the Office of Food for Peace, worked with others in the Agency and introduced a new personnel backstop called backstop 76, which you may be familiar with. Which is kind of a grab bag of backstops but includes Food for Peace and disaster assistance people as well as conflict and DG people. So, that was what USAID came up with for having a foreign service backstop for Food for Peace officers.

Q: You were only there for a year—a little over a year?

HAMMINK: I started in the summer and left in, probably, October the next year. So, it was 16 months.

Q: And why did you leave?

HAMMINK: Well, USAID offered me a step up, basically. I was offered a job as Senior DAA (Deputy Assistant Administrator) in the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade, or EGAT. And that bureau was huge, because they were responsible for a whole broad range of agency initiatives, as you can see from the title: economic growth, agriculture, trade, but also environment and climate change, education and engineering. It was a large bureau with somewhat disparate parts covering many different technical areas.

What it didn't include was health and DG, which were in separate bureaus. But EGAT seemed to include everything else.

Q: But it didn't include agriculture.

HAMMINK: It did.

Q: But it eventually didn't.

HAMMINK: After I left, agriculture and food security pulled out and became its own bureau, the Bureau for Food Security.

Q: But when you were there, it was still there?

HAMMINK: It was still EGAT. So, yeah. When I was there, as I mentioned, Jackie (Jacqueline E.) Schafer was the AA—

Q: Give me the year if you can.

HAMMINK: Sure. I was there from around October of 2007 through January of 2009. So, about a year and a half or so.

And an interesting story: It was April of 2008, the last year of the (former U.S. President George W.) Bush administration. The Administrator at the time, whose name was Henrietta (H.) Fore—she was fantastic; I enjoyed working with her—had brought together all of the senior staff for an off-site retreat. As a senior DAA, I was invited. All the DAAs and AAs were there and, you know, many office directors and the like.

And basically, it was basically a senior-staff retreat—a one-day retreat. And we were chatting. And she asked to see me and Greg (Gregory) Gottlieb. I don't know if you know Greg.

Q: I know of him.

HAMMINK: Anyway, he's had a long career as well. He recently retired last summer, and he's now at Tufts (University). But Greg, at the time, was the Senior DAA in the DCHA Bureau. And she asked us to meet, along with her Deputy Administrator, and said that she wanted our help. At that point in time, around the world, there were riots breaking out. Prices of food items were shooting through the roof. The government in Haiti had fallen because of food riots. Some countries like Kazakhstan had decided to stop exporting wheat, because they were just so worried they weren't going to have enough for themselves.

There was a major food security problem around the world. So, she called us in and said, "I want you to head up a new working group on food security within USAID. And we will set up an initiative that you will co-chair with State, and set up an interagency working group to put together a Presidential Initiative on this global food security issue." This was to be immediate, because there was all this upheaval going on in the world. Prices going through the roof and international food commodity markets breaking down.

We said, "Sure."

So, Greg and I got a team together from EGAT, from DCHA, and from the Africa bureau, and started meeting. And, with Henrietta's help, we established an interagency task force on food security and food issues, along with State and USDA as well as other USG agencies and departments, working very closely at the Assistant Secretary level.

And within a month, we put together a proposal for a presidential food security initiative that had gone through all the various interagency meetings. The proposal had made its way through the various NSC-led policy meetings including the deputies meeting. I accompanied Administrator Fore to the Principal's meeting, where you had (former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza) Condi Rice, and many other Cabinet Secretaries and the head of OMB, along with Administrator Fore. With strong support from Secretary Rice, we got the initiative approved.

So within six weeks we had gone from idea to approval. And the President, through OMB (U.S. Office of Management and Budget) announced it as part of his response to the global food crisis. You know, part of it, we included in the resource package monies that were already there, like Food for Peace and other OFDA money. But we got OMB approval to add new money, I think it was around \$400 million in new funds that the President—President Bush in this case—approved.

And we got the programs going quickly in key countries. That at least turned things around and got some footing. This was announced by the President some time towards the end of May.

Since we had high level support, we also could move quickly to programs and implementation in the field by July.

Q: Wow.

HAMMINK: So, maybe it was because it was their last year that the administration wanted to show some action. But that was an exciting time.

Q: Well, it was also a time where the— It was in the big press. It was a key issue. It was a political “hot potato” all around the world then. And AID had absolutely no agriculture capacity anymore. It had been ruined by the Bumpers amendment in the years previously. And it’s good to hear the story of how this got started. This is a great story!

HAMMINK: So that’s how it got started. And then frankly, we set up a very active— I mean, we got all the USAID people with agriculture expertise involved who were still around. There weren’t many. And we included technical people from State Department and USDA. But within USAID, we met every morning, and we looked at what we could do from the Washington point of view, from both the geographic bureaus and other bureaus, to you know, put in place programs that could have short-term impact, but that would also set the stage for medium- to long-term impact.

And frankly, I think — I could be wrong here, but what I think—and I’m pretty sure—that this was the genesis of a number of things. This was the genesis of what became known as the Feed the Future Initiative. When (former U.S. President Barack H.) Obama won, and came in in January 2009, and Secretary Clinton came in, agriculture and food security were top priorities for her. Because the issues were still out there on food around the world. Food and agriculture.

And so, this was the genesis of what then turned into Feed the Future. It also was an awakening for USAID leadership, including Henrietta Fore while she was still in USAID and Jim (James R.) Kunder, who was Acting Deputy for part of that time. And so, when they made the case with Congress to get funding for more staff, the whole— What’s that called?

Q: DLI program.

HAMMINK: You've got it: DLI.

Q: Development Leadership Initiative.

HAMMINK: Thank you. The DLI program, a good number of the new foreign service officers that USAID hired then were agriculture development officers. They realized that we had given up our technical capacity and needed to get it back. We had mistakenly given up on the agriculture development leadership role. And so, we tried to move quickly on hiring as many new agriculture officers as we could. The PLI started that, and then within EGAT, the agriculture office was taking the lead in terms of interviewing and hiring new agriculture FSOs to join the ranks.

And so, I think that the initiative that Henrietta Fore started that I had the opportunity to lead, along with Greg Gottlieb, what was the start of this huge Feed the Future initiative and USAID's new BFS (Bureau for Food Security).

Q: That's a whole comeback of the agriculture sector, and it was in response to a worldwide crisis. You guys made it happen.

HAMMINK: Yep. At about the time when the new administration came in, this was about December-January, 2008-9, the Mission Director in Sudan had decided he wanted to leave. So, I told Jim Kunder that I was very interested to get back overseas and to take up that challenge.

It was in the middle of what they call the Comprehensive Peace Agreement period, that had been signed in 2005 for five years.

Q: This is John Pielemeier on March the 7th, 2018. We're going to continue the second part of our interview with Bill Hammink. And we are moving towards Bill's next assignment. He had been working on issues related to Food for Peace and the start of the food security program for USAID. And Bill, why don't you tell us about your next steps?

HAMMINK: Sure. Good afternoon. I think it was about May or June of 2008, while I was in the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade, as you said, mainly working on food security, the Africa Bureau asked if I could join a high-level team to go out to Khartoum to basically carry out an assessment of the health of the mission.

If you remember, on New Year's Eve of 2007, one of our USAID American employees along with a Sudanese driver were murdered, killed by terrorists. And that was extremely difficult on the mission.

So, I joined this high-level team that went out to Khartoum to talk to the staff, to talk to the team, to come up with recommendations on how to help that mission get through that trauma. A lot of people had curtailed and all of those who stayed were grieving,

understandably. And of course, with the security uncertain and incredible workload continuing, there was little time for grieving. It was just after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between Sudan and the SPLA (South Sudan People's Liberation Army) in southern Sudan. So, there was a lot of work for the mission at the time.

The senior-level team visited both Khartoum and Juba and the visit lasted a few weeks.

Q: Who was on your team?

HAMMINK: I'm trying to remember.

Q: Were you the team leader?

HAMMINK: No, I was not. A senior person from the Africa Bureau as well as the USAID front office were on the team.

Anyway, it was clear that the Mission Director at the time was wanting to move on the next year, in 2009. And sooner rather than later. And so, basically when we got back to Washington by the fall of that year, I was ready to go back overseas again. There was of course an election in November of 2008. And (former U.S. President) Barack Obama was elected.

So, that fall, I talked to the Administrator and Acting Deputy Administrator, Jim Kunder, and threw in my hat for the Sudan Mission Director job. It's interesting. In the meeting with Jim Kunder, I did say that I thought it would be easier for the Agency to find a new SDAA for EGAT than to find an experienced former Mission Director with food aid and regional experience who wants to go to Sudan.

Sorry, I forgot to mention, by December, the political Assistant Administrator of EGAT had moved on. So, at that point in December, I was Acting AA for EGAT. And I could've stayed in that job, but I was also very interested to go overseas again and make a difference in the challenges in Sudan with the peace agreement, after the election, *et cetera*.

Q: Would you be going to Khartoum or to Juba?

HAMMINK: At the time Sudan was still one country, and the Mission Director job was for all of Sudan and covered the entire country, meaning both Khartoum and Juba. But I was assigned to Khartoum which was still the capital of the country. Anyway, I left EGAT in February of 2009, and I got to Khartoum a few weeks later. As I mentioned, it was still one country, although what they called one country-two systems. There was a separate government in the south called GOSS or Government of South Sudan based in Juba, even though it was one country. Under the CPA, GOSS basically could set up as a regional government with its own security forces, but could not have any separate foreign

policy or monetary policy or anything of their own, which was still under the purview of the government of Sudan based in Khartoum.

So, it was tricky and difficult. But the idea was then, half way through the fifth year of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, there would be a referendum that the south and the southerners would vote on whether they wanted to stay as one country within all of Sudan or whether they wanted the south to pull out and become its own country.

And so, I'll get to that part, which I think everybody knows what happened on that.

I got to Khartoum late February of 2009. One country. So, we had officially one mission, but really, it was two missions, because we had a team in Khartoum assigned to Khartoum, and we had a team in Juba assigned to Juba, each with their own budget and authorities as well as sanctions to maneuver around. And they rarely mixed, because going back and forth was sometimes tricky and risky.

I was based in Khartoum, but literally, I spent half of my time in Juba, because I was still responsible for a very large development program there and a large staff. It was a different appropriation, a different budget, different rules applied in the south and in the north. So, it was very much like running two missions, but it was still officially one mission.

Anyway, just before I arrived in Khartoum—while I was on my way in fact—the Government of Sudan expelled 13 NGOs—13 international NGOs and all their expatriate staff, as well as three or four larger Sudanese NGOs, out of Darfur. With one fell swoop, just before I arrived, the government of Sudan had abolished about 60 percent of the emergency assistance capacity in Darfur. So, I faced an immediate emergency the moment I landed in Khartoum.

We were the largest donor by far, providing food aid and other assistance for Darfur. It took a lot of effort and a lot of time to work through this new emergency. And the presidential envoy at the time, who was a former general, Scott Gration, flew out to Khartoum and started negotiations with the Sudanese government to get the INGOs back into Darfur. If I remember right, three or four of those 13 were U.S. NGOs. And so, we were negotiating to allow them to go back, one way or another. With the U.N., other donors and the INGOs and Sudanese NGOs still allowed to work in Darfur, the immediate issue was to fill the immediate gaps so that life-saving humanitarian assistance could continue. The international community and Sudanese humanitarian NGO community came together and many organizations and people picked up the work where the expelled NGOs had been working. Because of the immediate response, people's lives were not in danger and emergency assistance continued, while we supported the negotiations with the President's special envoy, General Gration.

Q: How much assistance was cut off? All of what we were providing to Darfur?

HAMMINK: We didn't cut any assistance. What was cut off was the—those NGOs that had teams in the field to distribute and manage that assistance. So, when they had to leave, we had to hustle to find other people to take their place. So, it was not so much the assistance from us. It was the implementing partners on the ground who were kicked out—

Q: Right. Were you able to find others?

HAMMINK: It took a while. It took a while in the negotiations to allow some of the American NGOs back. But for example, SAVE-U.S. (Social Awareness & Voluntary Education) could only work under the flag of, if I remember, SAVE-Sweden or SAVE-Norway. And so, it was very tricky. But in the meantime, we were able to continue the vital kind of life-saving humanitarian foreign assistance.

I spent half my time, as I mentioned, in Juba, and half my time in Khartoum. I would take and fly on this local airline that the British and the other Europeans would not allow their teams to fly on. They were, like, 50-year-old planes, you know, 727s and 737s and the like. And it was always crowded. There were very few expats. I'd be taking those flights crammed on an old plane at least once a week.

Q: Who were the pilots?

HAMMINK: They were mainly from Eastern Europe and speaking, of course, Russian. And I was of course a little nervous, because planes have fallen out of the sky before in Sudan. But luckily while I was there, there wasn't a plane crash.

I had a Deputy Mission Director based in Khartoum that ran the day-to-day work in the north and a Deputy Mission Director based in Juba that managed operations in the south.

Q: Who were those people?

HAMMINK: In Khartoum, it was Brooke Isham who was the Deputy Mission Director. She was fantastic. After Sudan, I met Brooke again when she was the Deputy Mission Director in Afghanistan. Now she's the USAID Mission Director in Iraq.

Q: Really?

HAMMINK: Yes. And it was tough for her, because she was there that night of the assassination. And she was "Acting" mission director. So, that was a very difficult time for her, but she helped me a lot to understand the seriousness and severity of the security measures that then were put in place and how important it was for us to follow them.

In Juba, the Deputy Mission Director was a guy named Peter Malnak, who you may know. After Juba, he became the Mission Director in Rwanda and then Nepal. So, he is a senior guy in the agency, and did a fantastic job in Juba. Both were terrific, because of course, I was in the other place half the time. And they ran things while I was not there.

But in Juba, we were working with the Government of South Sudan that was totally nascent. You can imagine in South Sudan a situation where you've had decades of civil war, extreme animosity, tribal groups against each other, a very, very high illiteracy rate.

You had a large percentage of the population that had left the country as refugees and were now coming back with this peace agreement in place. And those who had stayed were unhappy with those coming back. Most of the returning refugees had some schooling in the refugee camps. Those who had stayed were basically mainly illiterate and resented these South Sudanese who were coming back and most of them getting jobs and the like. So—

Q: Coming back from overseas?

HAMMINK: Correct. Well, at least from neighboring countries where you had the refugee camps, like Kenya. I'm sure you've heard of the Lost Boys of South Sudan, many of whom came here to the U.S. Some of them returned to South Sudan as well, which is great. Very moving stories of course.

But it was a difficult time. You had a totally nascent government. Before you had zero infrastructure, because the North had not spent much money at all on sewer systems, water systems, and roads. You know, in South Sudan, an area the size of France, there was not one tarmac road outside of the capital, Juba.

You were starting from scratch on almost everything, including the Government of South Sudan that would continue as the government of a new country—depending on the referendum, if the people of southern Sudan voted to continue as part of Sudan, the South would still have some autonomy, and you would still have a separate government in South Sudan. So, we were establishing for the first-time institutions to carry out key functions of government.

And a lot of these government institutions had no procedures, no process, no buildings. Nothing. So, everything was starting from scratch. And I remember we funded a group to come in and do a study on very basic key functions of government. It was a seminal study on what are those key and basic functions of government. Thinking, OK, this is a brand-new government. What are those areas that a brand-new government in a new country would have to carry out, at a minimum? And then we focused on those key basic functions in our support to a dozen or so ministries.

Q: An incredible time!

HAMMINK: Yes. So, the CPA was signed in 2006. Sudan, including in the north and the south, had national elections in summer 2010. USAID had a large program of support for this election, which was necessary for the north to agree to support an independence referendum in the south. And then in January of 2011, the referendum for independence was scheduled. And we helped pull it off to have the referendum where people from

South Sudan got to vote whether the south should stay with Sudan or become independent. This was an historical vote and historical moment, the outcome after decades of civil war and five years of a peace agreement. Even those south Sudanese who lived in Khartoum were allowed and encouraged to vote in the referendum. Many had fled to Khartoum during the civil war.

Q: Do you remember what the question was, how it was posed?

HAMMINK: Sure, it was something like, Do you want to secede? And “yes” or “no”. Because there were so many southern Sudanese who were totally illiterate, they had a symbol of, I think, an open hand and a closed hand. Something like that. I still have the ballot at home.

And so, USAID was very much part of the support for pulling off a referendum that was on time and that was deemed to be fair by international observers.

Q: What had USAID done to do that?

HAMMINK: Well, we brought in partners: NDI, IRI, IFES. I spent a lot of time in coordinating with the government authority set up to run the referendum, the other donors, our implementing partners and USG leaders. It was complicated, because under the CPA, there was an electoral body that was chaired by a northerner. And the deputy chair was a southerner. And members were a mix. And then, they had to agree on the process and players and they had to agree on the “rules of the game.” It took a lot of up-front time, bringing in electoral experts, referendum experts who had worked on these types of activities before.

I still remember that we were behind the curve, and we were in Juba on a porch of the U.S. Consul General on the compound there. And the Presidential Special Envoy, General Gration, was very unhappy and very upset that things were going so slow. And if you look at the timeline of number of days to do everything that needed to be done, such as to print the ballots and get them out, we were falling behind. And he was threatening to basically take USAID out of it, because he didn’t think we were doing a good job. And the Deputy Mission Director at the time, whose name is Susan Fine— Maybe you know Susan?

Q: Yes.

HAMMINK: She’s now the head of PPL (USAID Bureau of Policy, Planning and Learning). She and I had a four-hour meeting with General Gration. The Chargé d’Affaires at the time, who was a former ambassador, didn’t say a word. He was basically letting us figure it out. And we walked through everything. We drilled down on all the issues. We kept our calm. We kept our cool.

And that was a useful kind of example of how important it is for leaders in USAID to, one, keep your calm and keep your cool. Use facts. Speak as much as possible based on

evidence. And then, drill down and pull issues apart and agree on the main sub-issues that you could then agree on the specific steps to move things forward. So, after four hours, using this approach, we could calm down the Special Envoy and agree on next steps to move the process forward. It was a very, very tough meeting.

And then, General Graton and I went to Khartoum and we met with the head of the electoral and referendum commission. We knew exactly what we wanted to see. We wrote some letters with clear descriptions of needed actions from the electoral commission. And within a few days, we got where we needed to be. So, it was kind of a call to action.

Q: Was he under presidential pressure to maybe cut AID off at that point, or was that just his own—

HAMMINK: It was his own assessment to cut USAID out of the process. And yes, he was under a lot of pressure from the White House, where there were many people who strongly wanted this thing to succeed, including the National Security Advisor, Susan Rice. And so, I totally understand. I mean, we were all under a lot of pressure in fact, because things could've gone off the rails very easily with all that history, political issues, and security was still an issue.

So anyway, the referendum took place. And the vote was 90-plus percent to secede. And then Independence Day was scheduled. It was in the CPA that if the vote for independence was positive, then Independence Day would take place before the end of the five years of the CPA, which was July of 2011. From one day to the next there would be a new country; the youngest country in the world. So, we used those six months to work through bureaucracy back here in Washington to basically set up a new USAID Mission for South Sudan. The State Department set up a new (U.S.) embassy for South Sudan the moment the country became independent. And for us in USAID to set up, we'd need a USAID mission too, a totally separate mission from the one in Khartoum.

So, that's what we did. We got everything laid out. We even had a new Mission Director approved by the SMG panel and named. So, I was fortunate enough to stay as the last Mission Director for the entire country—

Q: (laughs)

HAMMINK: —and was replaced by two mission directors, one for Sudan and one for South Sudan. And the guy who was chosen to—of course, it was a competitive process -- to be the first Mission Director for South Sudan was a guy named Kevin Mullally. He was serving as mission director in Senegal at the time.

We put all that in place. I was there on Independence Day, which I think was around—if I remember right—July 10 or so. And the next day, I flew back to Khartoum. I packed out, and I was out of the country by the 15th.

Q: Did you have your hat in the ring for one of those positions?

HAMMINK: No. I had been there two and a half years, and it's normally a one-year tour, because this is a very hardship post. So, I was exhausted and ready to move on.

Q: My goodness. I'm sure you went out very pleased with what you had led your missions to do.

HAMMINK: Absolutely. I had a great team. Of course, Susan Fine is great. And the Deputy in Khartoum at the time for the last year and a half of my time there was a guy named Doug Arbuckle, who then went on to be Mission Director in Malawi. And now he's back here in Washington.

So, I had a great team in both places, and they understood. We designed a new strategy for the south, thinking that whether the south became independent or not, it would need education, health, agriculture, an economy and jobs, infrastructure and a government with clear rules of the game, especially accountability and transparency. We also developed a separate new transition strategy for the north of Sudan.

So, my first year in Sudan was to do everything to make the two USAID teams—one in Khartoum and one in Juba—feel like one mission. And because people couldn't go back and forth very easily, we had our mission retreats in Addis (Ababa) or in Nairobi, because these were places people could fly to from both Khartoum and Juba. And especially for our FSNs, because it was hard for them to go to the other capital.

And then, my last year there I was preparing for two separate missions, with all the planning, staffing and approvals that entails.

Q: One more question.

HAMMINK: Yes.

Q: Just in terms of distances, what was the distance between Juba and Khartoum?

HAMMINK: It was a two-hour flight. So, that would be maybe 800 to 1,000 miles.

Q: But no way it could be driven?

HAMMINK: You could drive it, but it would take a week. There were no roads. Well, there were no decent roads once you got to the border of what became South Sudan.

Q: Oh, really?

HAMMINK: Yes. So, while I was there, and this had started well before I arrived, we were very close to finishing up a road funded by USAID from Juba down to the Ugandan

border to a town called Nimule. And that was the first tarmac road in all South Sudan outside of Juba. You know, I heard recently, it's doing well.

But I can tell you, looking over the last few years, what's happened in South Sudan, it just totally breaks my heart. With all the good will and all the hard work and the excitement at independence. There were a million people at that Independence Day. It was so exciting. That the government there, including the President—who's still the president, Salva Kiir (Mayardit) -- had so much good will from his people and from the international community, and could have moved things forward. And because of a huge lack of leadership, both him and the Vice President Riek Machar, who came from different tribal groups, never did get along, never provided the kind of leadership that any country needs, much less a brand-new country.

And so, it's just heart breaking. I sat with other people who were also engaged on South Sudan and in senior positions back before 2011 in USAID and in the State Department and talked about what we could have done differently. And you know, my opinion on that, like others I talked to, was that we should have been tougher on accounting for funds and putting in place stricter systems to account for the oil money coming into southern leaders' bank accounts. But many people told me there was little we could have done differently. That it's just poor leadership, that they weren't ready to become a country. Maybe the UN should have maintained protectorate status.

Q: Protectorate?

HAMMINK: Protectorate, exactly. Sovereignty for a while. It's hard to tell. I mean, you know, hindsight is always like that.

At the time, it was very exciting to be there for the Independence Day and for seeing this new country launch.

Q: Meanwhile, Darfur was still around.

HAMMINK: Right.

Q: What was going on during your stay there with Darfur? Was there any progress in dealing with those issues?

HAMMINK: Yes, that's a great question. A lot of my time and effort in Sudan was also spent on supporting the Darfur Peace Process and trying to move some of our assistance, where it was possible, away from just solely humanitarian to assistance that could support development-type objectives and helping to build some local capacity. We wanted to help the millions of IDPs move into situations where they could be part of communities.

Q: IDPs are?

HAMMINK: Internally Displaced People. And the difference between an IDP and a refugee: IDPs are displaced people who stay within their country, whereas refugees are displaced people who flee to another country. And they're known as refugees.

In Darfur, as you know, all the IDPs had been displaced because of fighting and because of civil war. It was just tragic to see.

We were trying to work through the IDP issues with the lead taken by the UN. General Gration was also involved on the political side and I was involved on the development side in terms of what we could do to support that process. They were talking about building new communities: you know, schools and clinics and other infrastructure, for the IDPs to return to. You know, I think it was understood that those IDPs in IDP camps in Darfur could not all go back to where they came from, because some of their villages had been burned, of course, in the civil war. And much of the land they had fled from had subsequently been settled by others.

Q: So the land was gone.

HAMMINK: The land was gone. So, they needed to figure out new ways for resettlement. It was very complicated.

There are certain international norms and rules regarding returning the IDPs that had to be followed. You could not force IDPs to move against their will. You had to make sure that they had the means to live, including jobs, social services and the like. The Sudanese government claimed that IDPs did not want to move out of camps because they were getting so many benefits from the international community as IDPs, a huge disincentive to move. I went to several conferences on the peace process: for example, one in Bahrain and one in Cairo. I was the USAID rep (representative) at those. There was some forward movement but not enough.

As you know, even now, here we are in 2018, there are still very large IDP camps in Darfur. What's happening and has happened in other places in the world where you had large IDP or refugee camps, like the Palestinians who lived around Amman or other cities in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, those refugee camps have basically become part of the city that they started next to. And so, they're no longer viewed as a refugee camp anymore. Although people who lived there had certain special privileges.

In any case, that was around Darfur. That's what was happening.

In the northern part of the country, at USAID we also supported a peace process in an area that's called The Three Areas, which are three provinces in Sudan just north of South Sudan where a lot of the fighting in the civil war also took place. But in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, it was agreed that these three regions would be part of the North. They would not be part of the South, even though a good percentage of their populations were tribal groups that were from the South.

And the agreement was that people in those three provinces would be able to go through a process of broad discussions—community-level discussion. And then they would be able to decide whether they wanted to liaise with North or with the South. So, we helped with that whole process as well.

Q: How is that presently?

HAMMINK: That, I don't know what's going on, unfortunately, because of the politics and fighting also broke out again in those areas. It was very hard for us to get into those areas even six, seven years ago to support peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Q: Were you dealing at all with the President of Sudan personally?

HAMMINK: The President of Sudan was of course indicted by The Hague (International Criminal Court)—he was an international war criminal.

Q: Was that while you were there, or was that later?

HAMMINK: It was just before we arrived. So, there was a prohibition against U.S. diplomats meeting with him. We weren't allowed to talk to him. We didn't have an ambassador to Sudan because of the sanctions against Sudan. There were layers of sanctions but most came from Sudan's support at one point in the 90s for Osama bin Laden and global terrorism. There were some serious sanctions from the '90s that were still in place. The issues around president Bashir came from his role in the atrocities carried out in Darfur. We were not allowed to talk to him. And we were very careful, whenever we had media follow us with the Senior Presidential Advisor, we were always looking around.

Q: (laughs)

HAMMINK: And it happened once to a visiting (U.S.) congressman. He was in a meeting there, and Bashir—President Bashir—kind of joined him as he was walking to his car. President Bashir had his photographers with him. So, it was an unfortunate setup.

But I was very fortunate, because I had an excellent counterpart, I remember, at the Ministry of International Cooperation, who had studied in the U.S. He still understood the importance of a good relationship and the role of development.

You know what? The Sudanese understandably were working with the donors to try to move beyond mainly humanitarian assistance. Some 95 percent of all the assistance, especially from the U.S., was humanitarian assistance. And they wanted to move that to recovery and rehabilitation type of assistance. I totally understood. We worked with (the U.S.) Congress and tried to figure out where and how we could do that.

Q: Were they getting assistance from Chinese and other donors?

HAMMINK: They were not getting typical assistance like we understand it. We tried to meet with the Chinese, but they would not meet with us from the development side. They didn't consider themselves donors.

Q: Right.

HAMMINK: They had huge investments in the oil industry in the North and parts of the South as well. So, it complicated the whole dynamic. Besides decades of civil war, there was oil and money from oil. And so, it all had to be negotiated, because most of the oil—60 or 70 percent—was found in the South. Whereas, it had to go through a pipeline that went up through the North up to Port Sudan.

Q: That was the only way out?

HAMMINK: At that time, it was the only way out.

Q: And now, is there—

HAMMINK: I think it's still the only way out, although the South has been trying to get money to build a pipeline through Kenya so that they wouldn't be dependent on the North. I think that those plans have now been on hold for the last three years because of the fighting in the south.

Q: One more question. I'm not sure if this is during your time, but there are a few stories about large land holdings being sold off to private entities to increase exports from Sudan for foreign exchange. And the question is what was happening to small holders during this process, was that happening during your period?

HAMMINK: It happened a bit while I was in Ethiopia, interestingly. In Sudan, yes there was a lot of talk of that. Sudan had a huge irrigation system not far from Khartoum. I think it was one of the largest irrigation systems in the world. It was all irrigated from the Nile River. And I remember there were discussions and deals about parts of that area that were being given to foreigners to come in and grow commodities for export. But you're right, this was also just after the big food security scare, and the Sudanese were worried that some of the Gulf States would come in these big areas, grow grain, and ship it back to the Gulf, and then the Sudanese wouldn't benefit. Those were concerns as well.

An interesting story: USAID provided support to a conservation group because there was a conservation park in the south that worked with communities. But USAID funded an assessment of the state of the animals and found a huge number—over a million — I think there were wildebeest and other animals found in that area. And I remember flying in there on their little plane, and we could see this huge runway and these large buildings surrounded by manicured land. And so, we asked around, "What is that?" And it was some Gulf State that had paid a lot of money to the Government of South Sudan and set this up for hunting forays.

They'd come in there for hunting when we were working with the government on conservation. And so, there was a discussion at the political level but little changed because of the money. So, even in South Sudan, some of that happened. I don't know what the state of this game park is today.

Q: Which conservation group was it? Do you remember?

HAMMINK: I think it was— I can't remember exactly.

Q: Anyway, yeah. It sounds like a lot of—I can see the hunting. Some of the Southern African countries have the same issues. They do allow the hunting in South Africa and Botswana, but it's controlled and limited.

HAMMINK: That's right, yeah. We were trying to work with local counterparts and carry out development programs in the south, despite serious security issues and a totally inexperienced government.

But again, when I got there, we were providing well over a billion dollars in assistance, between the North and the South. It's another billion-plus assistance program that I managed.

Q: Was your wife able to go with you to Khartoum?

HAMMINK: Spouses were allowed along with adult children or dependents. But it didn't work at all, because of security and logistics. We had to drive around in fully-armored vehicles with USG drivers. Because of the assassination of the USAID officer, you had to drive around in fully armored vehicles. And so, even if my wife found a job, there weren't enough fully armored vehicles for all the mission needs and embassy needs, much less for spouses to go to work, because we were one motor pool. We were not allowed to take taxis nor any other kind of public transport.

She had some good job offers with INGOs, because there were a whole lot of needs there. But it could never work, because she couldn't even be picked up by an NGO vehicle, even if it was armored, because it wasn't an embassy armored car. And the RSO (Regional Security Officer) wouldn't change the rules. So then, she moved to Addis and was working out of Addis. I would fly there every now and then to see her.

She could visit me. I mean, there was no prohibition. She just couldn't work there because there was no way to consistently get to the work place. There were some spouses who did live there, but very few. And they might have worked at the embassy, or the spouses would just stay at home.

Q: Oh, my.

HAMMINK: Anyway, so after about two years, I was looking at what to do next. This was 2011 and I was planning to retire. I would have been in USAID 31 years at that time.

Q: What was your rank at this point?

HAMMINK: So at that point, I was a Minister-Counselor.

Q: Two-star general, as we like to say.

HAMMINK: That's right. And then basically, people in Washington said, "No, we want you to stay in USAID, help out. And would you be interested to go to India?"

I talked to my wife of course, and we've always wanted to live in India. Not only to travel around, but to live there and understand the different cultures. I had to go through a competitive process like everyone else. But then I was assigned to that position and went from Khartoum right after independence and that kind of high-profile, political and high stress assignment right to New Delhi.

Q: A direct transfer?

HAMMINK: Well, I took home leave before heading out to New Delhi.

Q: You took home leave.

HAMMINK: During the summer of 2011 we went to Delhi. And we found there a fabulous mission, fabulous country, and a long history for USAID in India. But you know, after coming from Sudan, where so many decisions were life-saving decisions, especially the food aid issues, India was a different pace. You know, Sudan and South Sudan were places where you were continually problem solving, and that you had to deal with tough issues all the time. What I called "history in the making" in Sudan and South Sudan, including the emergence of a brand-new country in the world. Going to India, where we have had a program for 60 years or so, and the Indian government is very used to the USAID program, was quite a change for me.

Interestingly though, my first meeting as Mission Director with my counterpart in the Indian government, the Ministry of Finance, he says to me, "You know, I just want you to know that we don't need you here." A \$2.5 trillion economy. And our program at the time was larger than I expected: \$100 million a year or a little less than that and in several different sectors.

Anyway, he says, "We don't need you here. We don't care if you leave tomorrow. And you guys— It doesn't matter."

Q: "Welcome!"

HAMMINK: Yes, that was my welcome. I thought, OK, let's see what makes USAID different. What's our reason to be here? Luckily, soon thereafter, I met with the Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Science and Technology, a well-known senior scientist. And I

asked him what does he think about USAID? And luckily for me, he was very honest and in a good way, not a bad way.

He basically said, “You know, USAID here is living on your laurels. 50-60 years, something’s going well. You are coasting. You’re not going outside of your comfort zone, and you’re talking to the same people that you know.”

So I said, “Well, we have to re-think this.” And at the time, luckily, the Assistant Administrator for the Asia Bureau that covered, of course, South and Central Asia, was Nisha (Desai) Biswal, who later went from being AA at USAID to become Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia.

Anyway, she and Raj Shah (former USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah) had this vision for India of moving beyond a regular recipient-type of aid relationship to much more of a partnership relationship. Because by 2011, as I mentioned, India had a \$2.5 trillion economy, huge private sector, many foundations—Indian foundations, several billionaires and even social giving and social investing as part of the culture and part of the image.

And so, Nisha told me, “You need to go out there and revamp the approach of over half a decade and in almost every sector and move towards equal partnerships and away from recipient-donor type relationships.”

So, I had that in mind when I met with these guys. And we were also very fortunate at the time. We hired a PSC, an Indian-American from Texas, who had lived in Mumbai for a while. He knew all the very wealthy Indians and those who were involved with social giving and social entrepreneurship. And so, we hired him as a PSC to be our innovation policy person. We developed a new approach.

Q: Do you remember his name?

HAMMINK: Yes. Nehal Sanghavi We were lucky to have him on board, because he knew all these people. And then I had an incredibly supportive and thoughtful and smart Deputy Mission Director at the time,

Her name is Liz (Elizabeth) Warfield. After she left India, and after I left, she came back to Washington. And now she’s our Mission Director in Mexico. So, Liz was there along with Nehal Sanghavi and other believers in changing our approach and strategy.

And so, with their help and others in the mission, within three months, we had got out and knocked on doors. We met with about 50 people who were social entrepreneurs, billionaires, foundation heads, companies like Mahindra & Mahindra and other of the largest Indian companies: drug companies, agriculture companies. And to our great surprise, guess what. They were very interested to work with USAID!

We came with a reputation. And so, the deputy minister and top scientist was right. We had been sitting on our laurels of previous decades' successes, like the green revolution.

Q: Health programs?

HAMMINK: And health programs, correct.

Q: Social programs?

HAMMINK: Yes, you could go on and on.

In any case, we reached out. And then, based on that, we worked hard to organize partnerships and alliances. Already, there were quite a few Indian non-profit organizations, schools of technology and business. Of course, you've heard of the technology schools. There were also world-famous business schools. The organizations and philanthropists and social investors were only too happy to partner together, to build alliances around key themes that we want to focus on for India.

One theme was off-grid clean energy. Another was small-scale agriculture. And then of course, primary health care, including maternal-child survival. Those were the key ones. Oh, and then education, especially primary education but using technology to move forward.

So basically, where we came out and what was exciting was that it was seeing India as a hub for innovation, especially development innovation for what you'd call the poorest of the poor. And these were very low-cost, innovative approaches towards solving development problems.

We saw India as an innovation hub but also as a source of a lot of these development innovations. With, for example, the largest chamber of commerce in India, called FICCI, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, we established a new partnership, a new alliance called the Millennium Alliance. We put in some money; they put in some money; the (Indian) government put in some money. We found other partners and set up this fund where we supported Indian innovators, through a competition. Thousands of Indian innovators with great ideas for innovative approaches in key development sectors sent proposals to the fund. They had tested the model but only with a few people and wanted to test it with what they call "phase two" of these innovative approaches and investments. Phase 3 then was going to scale for those innovators and entrepreneurs who could show proof of concept and a demand for the innovation.

We set up this off-grid clean energy alliance with many Indian organizations working in this space. We funded an assessment to find out how many both non-profit and for-profit organizations there were in India that focused on off-grid clean energy. And we thought there might be 10 or 20. There were, like, 130.

I mean, just the breadth and scale. And these organizations were basically top-of-the-line in terms of testing new approaches and new technologies. They were all using the latest technology and smart phones, especially, but using technology in an innovative way to bring the off-grid, clean energy price point to a place which poor Indian villagers could afford.

They came up with a technology whereby they could put this tracker into a house and hook it to some solar panels. There was some electricity coming in, but then, through this box, the people in that household could decide how many kilowatts of power they wanted to buy. It was like the cell phone companies who sell minutes. Poor villagers didn't have enough money to pay a monthly bill, but they could buy minutes on their phones when and as they needed the minutes, and that's what they could afford. Same thing with power.

Q: Oh, my goodness.

HAMMINK: It was brilliant! And it worked in a lot of places.

In any case, we had these examples of different, innovative, very latest technology that was low-cost, that had a price that local people could afford. The price point worked, whether it was clean water, whether it was a few kilowatts of electricity to power their cell phone or their refrigerator or lights—especially lights-- or it was something else. The price point worked in that the entrepreneurs could look at how to scale.

Now, the other thing about our program in India—and this was pushed before I arrived—seeing India as an innovation hub and an innovation source, we asked ourselves how can we share these kinds of proven low-cost innovative approaches towards development problems—low-cost, bottom of the pyramid—with other countries? And so, we designed and developed trilateral programs and agreements between, for example, India, the U.S., and different countries in Africa. Or India, the U.S., and Afghanistan.

At the same time, we supported trilateral training programs whereby Africans involved in agriculture development in their countries under USAID programs would come to India and receive training at, for example, world-renowned Indian training institutions. Agricultural experts would come from, for example, Malawi or Liberia or Kenya for training in top agriculture institutes in India. The (Indian) government helped organize it. And it was a great trilateral program.

We put in place many different and new approaches.

I stayed in India then from 2011 through 2013. After I had been in India just six months or so—maybe a year, the Assistant Administrator from the Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs (OAPA) was calling me about going to either Afghanistan or Pakistan, because they needed new experienced mission directors every year because of the one-year tours in those countries.

Q: Before we leave that, let's talk a little bit more about India, which is a unique place to work. You mentioned \$100 million a year?

HAMMINK: Yes.

Q: What did that consist of?

HAMMINK: So, a lot of it was for health. The health budget levels and specific earmarks were set in Washington of course. In India, a lot of the health budget was for TB (tuberculosis). India had some of the highest numbers of TB cases in the world. With CDC, we received HIV/AIDS funding as well. Since the '90s, the Indian government had done a terrific job of fighting HIV/AIDS, and luckily the disease never took off in India, even with a population of over a billion people.

Q: So this was government to government?

HAMMINK: Yeah, almost all the health programs supported government programs and initiatives, right. We moved some of the health programs to work directly with Indian businesses that wanted to expand their business that, at the same time, would have a major health impact. For example, we worked with companies making hand soap to expand their market to the poorest villages, so that more mothers and children had access to hand soap, which then decreased incidences of diarrhea. And of course, we supported family planning, which is very important in India. And then of course, child and maternal health.

We hosted in India a second global child survival meeting following the first meeting in Washington. Dozens of countries were there. We helped the Indian government then, working with Indian states, to put together evidence—the data they needed to focus their health interventions on those health interventions that had the most impact on health indicators.

So, we did support a lot of government programs. We basically made the case, and I think we showed by data, that we could have real impact with our government assistance programs. You'd think in a population of 1.2 billion and a \$2.5 trillion economy, our assistance is a drop in the bucket. But what we did was we leveraged the multi-billion-dollar government social programs.

By that time, business was going well, as you know, India had their own "Silicon Valley". With tax dollars, the Indian government targeted very important social programs, whether for primary education, or whether subsidies for the poorest of the poor, or whether it's child and maternal health. So, we would leverage, through highly targeted TA (technical assistance), these multi-billion dollar programs. Targeted TA helped the Indian government improve these programs. So, I think we made the case that, for \$10 million, \$20 million a year, we were impacting billions of dollars in programs that Indians were carrying out.

We also had some exciting environment programs.

Q: Landscape programs and that kind of thing?

HAMMINK: No, no. Not so much landscape but more energy-saving programs. India was the farthest ahead because of some USAID assistance—this was before I got there—in terms of buildings and houses that were the greenest. In other words, these buildings used the least energy. So, they made a lot of progress. With over a billion people and a growing economy, unless you focus on energy efficiency, you're going to be using a lot of energy as you're building more.

And then, solar panels. Off-grid, as I mentioned. Improving the grid but also improving the efficiency of the systems. Moving to smart grids. And then, supporting deals around clean energy with U.S. companies and the like.

We basically saw ourselves as, one: focus on innovation; two: focus on leveraging these multi-billion dollar programs to become more efficient and effective; three: building alliances so that Indians themselves could continue to expand and go to scale on these proven very small-scale types of approaches to develop growth. And then fourth: sharing Indian proven low-cost innovative approaches to development problems with other countries. That one is still to be proven. It's hard to know the counter-factual.

Q: Right.

HAMMINK: —and what might've happened if you hadn't done some of these trilateral programs or sharing new Indian innovations globally.

Q: Yeah. Did you have presidential visits while you were there? Or vice-presidential visits?

HAMMINK: I had two Administrator visits.

Q: All right.

HAMMINK: But no presidential visits while I was there. He had come just before I arrived.

Q: Now that was Raj?

HAMMINK: Well, Raj came out twice.

Q: Yeah, and was he—I mean, his family history is South Asian, so I assume he had his family there?

HAMMINK: Yes.

Q: Did he have a particular interest in influencing your program?

HAMMINK: Well, you know, as I mentioned, he and Nisha Biswal had a huge influence on the program at a strategic level when I was working with our team in India but the team in New Delhi made it happen. And then getting the whole political support back in Washington through Nisha and Raj to put that in place. The whole approach towards development innovation, leveraging Indian investment, supporting trilateral programs, and encouraging alliances and partnership, which was so important.

Q: Did you have a chance to travel much around India?

HAMMINK: I did, but not as much as I would have liked. I traveled to many places in India, since our programs were across the country. It was the first USAID country, during a career spanning 33 or 34 years at the time, where I went to project closings for projects that had been going on for over 20 years. I mean, they were in the fourth or fifth phase.

Q: Well, give me an example of that.

HAMMINK: Well, there was a family planning project in Uttar Pradesh that had been going on for 22 years. Then there was an HIV project in the south that had been going on for almost 20 years. But I'd just not seen that before. Because in countries where I had worked before, we hadn't been there that long and we did not continue projects for 20 plus years.

But you know, in fact, when we carried out evaluations and studies, you could make the case empirically that that's probably why we were a success. Because we had stayed the course, built some capacity, shown the importance of these programs, we had more chance of sustainability. And it was built into local communities and local government.

Q: And your staff included many Indian FSNs?

HAMMINK: Yes. Terrific FSNs, highly educated. It was a challenge, as you can imagine, to shift the thinking of the mission, especially the FSNs who had been with the mission for a while, away from the traditional model that USAID had, a recipient-donor relationship, where we have contracts and cooperative agreements that we control, and basically shift to a partnership, where we say, "We agree with your approach. We like the way you're doing things. We're going to invest our money in here; we need to see these things. But you run it" or, "You run this alliance. We're going to be watching. We're going to be right here to help. But it's your show." FSNs and many USAID FSOs who had managed and directed projects for so long found this difficult to swallow.

Q: Did you have to develop new ways of obligating funds and mixing funds with other organizations?

HAMMINK: Well, we had to be careful of course. We had a terrific lawyer on our staff. Her name was Pat Ramsey. I don't know if you know Pat. She was in D.C. for decades.

She's fantastic. She and our contracts officer at the time, Buzz Enroth, found in the regs (regulations) for this exciting new Millennium Alliance an approach called a collaborative agreement instead of the traditional cooperative agreement. And I'm trying to remember now the difference. But it's a significant difference. I think it's something related to what they call PAUD—purpose accomplished upon disbursement—whereby we could put money into this account that was run by, in this case, FICCI, but with close support from USAID.

We obviously put in place strict accounting rules whereby, for example, we disbursed funds in tranches to make sure they were used right. But it was a collaborative agreement where it was a collaboration. It wasn't us dictating. And it was a little risky, but Pat and Buzz were terrific and got all the approvals. So yes, we did have to come up with some different approaches than what USAID normally takes.

Q: Very interesting. Any social relationships with Indians that you got to know well? You weren't there that long.

HAMMINK: No, we were there two years, maybe a little less than two years. We got to know many, many Indians well. You know, it was rare that I had meetings with ministers, because that was just for the Ambassador. But I did meet two layers down: the Deputy Minister level, and had great discussions and relationships.

Q: Permanent Secretaries?

HAMMINK: Yeah, like a Permanent Secretary. They called them something else. But I had excellent relations with many of them.

Many of my government counterparts bought into our approach. They thought it was great, and partly because we showed some successes early on, and they saw this working. As I mentioned before, what was exciting was that we had great relations with a whole broad range of non-government Indian leaders, whether NGO heads or think tank heads or heads of top-notch technology institutes. Or whether they're heads of foundations—Indian foundations, or senior people in these businesses. We even had on-going relationships and development partnerships with Indian billionaires.

Raj Shah came out on a trip once, and thanks to Nehal and others in the mission and our relationships that we had built up, Raj landed in Mumbai, and within a day, he had met with five out of, like, the 12 billionaires in India, talking about these alliances around development sectors and their interest to formalize what they would bring to the table, what we could do together to change people's lives. It wasn't just about money.

Q: You were with him in those conversations?

HAMMINK: Oh, yes, definitely.

That was the exciting part, being able to reach out. We had good relations with many key counterparts and partners, and a great house to entertain. We were in a house that six or seven previous Mission Directors had also lived in. It was a very nice house. I'm told it was built in the '70s using PL-480-generated local currency funds. These houses were of course, at one point, given over to the embassy housing pool. But when we lived there, they were worth, I was told, \$35 million each. They were on the most exclusive street in New Delhi. But it's just because the U.S. had had these houses for decades, going way back.

Q: You could do a lot of entertaining.

HAMMINK: Yes, so that's the point. My wife and I could invite over people at all levels. We once had a Nobel prize winner over for dinner as well as authors, MIT professors and farmers.

The most exciting story has to do with development innovation and persistence. Dr. Shah had met a top "New York Times" columnist named Tom Friedman at Davos (World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland). Mr. Friedman told Dr. Shah he was coming to India. So, Raj Shah contacted me and said, "Hey, this guy's coming. Can you talk to him about what you guys are doing out there?"

So, we got in touch with his contact and organized a briefing for him. He came to my house. And we had organized a great program. He met with five representatives of different organizations that, through our programs and alliances, had started out and had some very exciting and successful innovative approaches to development problems—innovation either in technology or systems or approaches. I mentioned water. I mentioned electricity. And they had data!

There's another organization I haven't mentioned called "Digital Green" that was doing some incredibly exciting, innovative work with farmers. And using a small projector that's this size, about six inches by four inches by two inches, called a pico projector. They would go out and take movies of some of the farmers in the area who were trying new approaches, whether it was in plowing or new seeds, and the like. They would work through local NGOs that were introducing these new approaches. Digital Green would train the local NGOs to take videos of the farmer change agents with a simple video camera or even a cell phone and make sure it was in the local language.

Then, working with that local NGO, Digital Green would show the videos on a little pico projector in people's huts or homes for groups of farmers in that area, whether it be women or men or both, depending on what was culturally appropriate in that area. And those farmers would basically say, "Hey, I know that person. They're in the next village over. And he's speaking my language. If he can do that, I can do that."

And interestingly, they tracked everything. They had data for everything. And what they found is that they could show, through the data, that through their behavior change approach, introducing these new agricultural practices, that their approach was something

like ten times cheaper and eight times more likely that the farmers watching the video are going to change their agricultural practices than the traditional agriculture extension system through government extension means.

Q: Amazing.

HAMMINK: And so now, amazingly, we funded them to test the approach in Afghanistan. They've now established successful programs in Africa—several countries in Africa—including Ethiopia.

Anyway, so we had five of these all-Indian, mainly young MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) type, smart, sitting around in my living room. And each of them explained to Tom Friedman what they're doing and how many of the poorest people impacted and at what price point. He wrote an editorial the next week in the New York Times that I still have a copy of. That was pretty exciting, because people said, "Hey!" You know, his editorial and other subsequent stories caught the attention of people.

Q: That sounds really well done.

All right, you decided you wanted to move on, or somebody— Well, you were being contacted—

HAMMINK: The Assistant Administrator for Afghanistan and Pakistan was in touch. At first, I said, "No, I'm in India. We've always wanted to be here." And then, I was thinking, "Well, I could probably have more impact in a place like Afghanistan that needed a lot more basic development."

And a lot of what I mentioned, we had already got going in India. So, after the third time asking, and after talking to my wife again, I said, "OK."

And they said, do you want to go to Afghanistan or Pakistan?"

And I said, "I prefer to go to Afghanistan." I had visited Afghanistan back in 1975. I took a year off from college and travelled to all these countries in South Asia and at that time I spent a month in Afghanistan traveling everywhere in the country. I enjoyed it. Of course, it's totally different now, because when I was there as Mission Director I couldn't go anywhere without a large security escort.

So, they offered me the mission director position in Afghanistan. I had to interview for that position with Raj.

At around that time, I was promoted to Career Minister.

Q: Three Star (General)!

HAMMINK: Yes.

Q: Top of the heap. That's very unusual for USAID. That's very unusual.

HAMMINK: There are a few Career Ministers. Anyway—

Q: What year was this now that you were moving?

HAMMINK: I was recruited in 2012 and I moved to Kabul in 2013. I left India in May, and I got to Kabul around July. I had to do all the security training. You know, you must do a lot of training before going out to Afghanistan. And I mean, everybody, whether you're Mission Director or whether you're a secretary, you had to do the same kind of training, which is good.

I got to Kabul in July, and at the time, in 2013, we had a \$1.8 billion budget for that year.

Q: Oh, my goodness.

HAMMINK: The next year, it went down. But we had around a \$5 billion pipeline. We had hundreds of activities. We had over 400 USAID direct hire officers, both FSOs (Foreign Service Officers) and FSLs (Foreign Service Limited appointees), all over the country. I was told that our staff was in some 80 different places—I mean, bases. So, USAID staff lived in places called FOBs—foreign operating bases or PRTs—provincial reconstruction teams or then there were the regional bases such as in Kandahar and Mazar-i-Sharif. A senior civilian representative from State and a senior development representative usually from USAID were in each PRT and regional base. So, we had hundreds of staff, and only about half of them were in Kabul.

USAID was in this temporary building that had been put together in 2004 to last a few years, and we were still there in 2013. There were sandbags on the windows. They were whole shipping containers just thrown together.

We had a huge staff, huge budget, lots of oversight, very political programs and lots of interest.

Q: "Huge" meaning the biggest in the world for AID?

HAMMINK: Yes, it was at the time and think still is the largest mission in terms of money, perhaps also in terms of staff. Nothing compared to Afghanistan since Vietnam.

Q: Right.

HAMMINK: I had three deputies—Deputy Mission Directors -- and a dozen-plus Office Directors. There were some positions that I inherited when I arrived that I never had in my three previous Mission Director jobs. For example, I had a Chief of Staff who was a full Colonel seconded from the military—a full Colonel. And I had a Senior Advisor.

Anyway, I had many people in the USAID front office, but they were all needed because there was so much going on at the time.

In 2013, I think our biggest challenge had to do with the pull-out plans of the military. By that time, the military was already significantly drawing down troops and assets after the major surge approved several years earlier by President Obama. I think it had got up to about 120,000 troops. And they had to bring it down to some 10,000 troops before 2015, I believe.

There was a huge number of troops leaving. They were closing bases right and left. They were closing PRTs, all of them were closed by 2015. So, you know, you had this huge surge in '09 and '10, and then just as fast, you had a de-surge, both on the military side and on the civilian side.

So, USAID had surged up to over 400 American USAID employees, as I said, maybe 450, depending on what you counted. And by the time I left two plus years later in September 2015, we were down to 100. We had gone from 400-plus down to 100 U.S. direct hires. And, as I mentioned, USAID staff had been in some 70-80 bases around the country. As the military pulled out, the civilians also pulled out, because we couldn't obviously have anybody out there if there were no military assets to protect them or take them around.

When I got to Kabul, I had three-star and two-star flag officers offering to take us around, because we could use military assets and the U.S. military supported our development mission. After my first year there, because the military was in full scale-down mode, they basically told me, "We just don't have the assets to bring you guys around anymore" So, it was very difficult to go visit projects and to get out to see things and meet with Afghans outside of Kabul, whether it was to talk to them or whether it was to see roads or schools or clinics, and the like.

So, those were some of the challenges. Because our staff members were declining, we had to do more and more remote and multi-sourced monitoring. By early 2015, we were not only down to, as I said, around 100 U.S. direct hire staff, but they were all in Kabul.

We were forced to pull back our staff, including FSN staff, even out of Mazar-i-Sharif and Herat. And so, we put in place a very robust, multi-tiered monitoring system, where we tried to get monitoring information daily from different sources. And then we would triangulate the information so that we were comfortable with the data in terms of how our programs were doing, both on the implementation side and in terms of achieving results that we were tracking. And it's still the situation today that in 2018, all our staff is in Kabul. But they put in place a robust, multi-tiered monitoring system that is continually revised and improved.

Q: And how? Describe that multi-tiered process.

HAMMINK: Sure. So, the tiers— I mean it's changed a little bit. They continued to improve it since I left. But when I was there through September 2015, for example, tier one was where we could get out, mainly in Kabul, and see things ourselves, or around bases where we could get out, where there were still bases. We could fly in, go visit a few places and then fly back to Kabul. So, that was the U.S. government tier. Also, we used some of the pictures that different planes were taking of schools and other infrastructure where we could get that information.

Tier two was where our partners—all our partners through contracts, grants, cooperative agreements had a monitoring and evaluation system that had to be part of the contract. So, we would get information back from them as well in terms of trainings that took place, in terms of visits by their own extension people or in terms of how clinics are doing, for example the number of visits by mothers. Just a whole broad range of different data points.

But we didn't just want to go with that, because we didn't know if we could trust it, because we didn't have any actual USAID employee eyes on all those activities or results like we do in other countries. So, the third tier, for example, was basically trying to get information from the (Afghan) government. Some provinces were better than others in terms of what was happening, what they reported on, and the quality of the reporting. We'd heard through IDLG— That's the independent organization of the government that was responsible for local governments. We would get the reporting back from that. We also received reporting from the UN and other donors as well. And often, we would get back information on programs that we funded.

The fourth tier was where we reached out to the beneficiaries themselves. And one of the offices came up with a novel idea. Because you had good Internet connections, at least in the towns, the smartphones could basically real-time take pictures of trainings as they were going on, like seminars. And folks in our DG office in Kabul would be watching that to verify, just listening to the conversation and taking notes. That was one example. But also, we did surveys. We did calls to different beneficiaries whom we knew. We would call up local officials that we knew to say, "Did this take place? What do you think? What happened?" So, those were all additional data points.

And then fifth was probably the most expensive but also extremely important. That was independent monitors, where we would hire a firm to send out their own trained monitors to our project sites, whether it was a construction site or training or clinics or anything else. This type of monitoring wasn't formal evaluations. It was monitoring USAID-funded activities and monitoring sites. We used GPS (Global Positioning System) pictures and other latest technologies to ensure they visited those places that they claimed to have visited. And then for each site visited, they had to write a report with date-stamped pictures.

So then, our project officers could triangulate these data points, including from implementing partners, independent monitors, and beneficiaries. If it's going on in Kabul, also from our own observation. And so, that's an example of course of the multi-tiered

system. We probably knew more of what was going on than we do in other countries, where we might send out a project officer to a town outside the capital once every few months.

Q: Did your program provide program or budget assistance to the Afghans?

HAMMINK: This is in a paper that I wrote when I came back to Washington after my time in Kabul that USIP (United States Institute of Peace) published, so I'd be glad to share it with you.

Q: Yeah.

HAMMINK: But to answer your question, I think it was 2010, at a conference—a political conference on Afghanistan, the U.S. government at the time—and this was supported by President Obama—basically made a commitment to provide 50 percent of our entire development budget for what they call “on budget” programs. President (former President of Afghanistan Hamid) Karzai asked all donors if they could move towards 50 percent on budget.

And for the Government of Afghanistan, “on budget” meant either what we call in USAID government-to-government programs or multi-donor trust funds that also used government systems. There were two multi-donor trust funds that had been set up. One called the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, or ARTF, that was managed by the World Bank. Another multi-donor trust fund was just for infrastructure, and it's managed by ADB (Asian Development Bank).

Q: The Asian Development Bank.

HAMMINK: Correct: the Asian Development Bank. And USAID, since 2004 or so, provided funds to the ARTF. And the government considered that on budget, because the World Bank then used those trust fund funds to support programs that went through government systems.

It was extremely difficult to consider moving to 50 percent on budget with the government that still had very nascent systems. Again, like South Sudan, much of the government was nil, non-existent before the U.S. came back in 2001. And so, it was starting from scratch with a lot of these government institutions, procedures, and staff, and the like. The government systems weren't even close to international standards, especially related to accountability and audit.

And so, our government-to-government programs were very tightly managed. We basically provided funds directly to their treasury if government ministries carried out a certain number of steps towards agreed-upon development objectives. They weren't so much policy steps as they were program implementation steps. We had agreed-upon milestones, like for example, purchasing text books through the Ministry of Education. We had benchmarks. And when they met those, we could pay them. So, we could either

pay against milestones or benchmarks or we could pay in terms of reimbursement of expenses that the government pays up front for agreed-upon development activities.

The on-budget was tracked closely, and it was very staff-intensive, as you can imagine. Best donor practices in countries includes as much as possible to go through government systems with the idea then it would lead to quicker self-reliance. For us, it made it much harder in USAID at the time. But we did it, because it was a U.S. government political commitment, if you will.

I think now, there may be fewer government-to-government programs, but there are other programs. When I was there, we launched what was called at the time the New Development Partnership, which was a new approach, basically where, because President Ghanī (Mohammad Ashraf Ghanī Ahmadzai) had been elected in 2014 along with Dr. Abdullah Abdullah as the CEO, chief executive officer (Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan)—like vice president. But they were true reformers. They supported major reforms. And so, they laid out a reform program, and it was a reform program that the U.S. government could very much get behind. Almost all the government's reforms represented the right actions to take to move the economy, social indicators, justice indicators, democracy, gender.

The Afghan government presented these reforms in big donor conferences in London, first, and then Brussels. And so, the U.S. said, "Wait a second. We think these are the right reforms. We want to help you. We want to incentivize those reforms and help you get these through," whether they're (the Afghan) Parliament or their own bureaucracy.

So, we sat down with them and came up with 40 of those types of reforms and changes. And we basically said, "We'll give you \$20 million for each of these you carry out." And some of them were tough. I mean, some of them involved new taxes or new systems to, for example, have customs taxes paid through banks instead of cash. These were important changes but not easy, because there were going to be losers in many of these kinds of changes.

We called this the New Development Partnership. It was basically up to an \$800 million incentive program. And if they didn't carry out these reforms and changes, they didn't get the money. And they lost out of a lot of money, but they also gained a lot of money. And they used it as leverage with their Parliament and others to try and make sure these reforms were put in place.

I believe the mission is now negotiating—and the embassy of course, with the Ambassador— with the (Afghan) government on a new reform program. The New Development Partnership was viewed as a successful approach and the EU (European Union) basically negotiated its own similar program as did other donors. The ARTF had its own reform program. The IMF had its own reform program. So, we made sure that they were coordinated, so that the government didn't have to pursue dozens of different reform programs. But they were all linked to the government's own reform program and agenda.

You and I have been working in development for a long time. In the '90s, we saw structural adjustment whereby the World Bank or USAID would come up with a long list of policy changes that we wanted to see, and we'd give them money if they carried out all of the long list of policy reforms. These were dictated from our end. These were from our experts. The difference here is that the reforms we were putting \$20 million in for each one, these were their reforms. The (Afghan) government wanted these. So, it wasn't us telling them what to do. It was us saying, "We agree with these. We're going to incentivize. And these are so important that we'll give you \$20 million for each one you actually carry out."

Q: Interesting. You mentioned earlier you weren't able to travel very much at all.

HAMMINK: Well, interestingly, as I mentioned, I arrived in Kabul in July of 2013. And at the time the U.S. military was in the throes of a major drawdown, in men and materials and bases. But also, the country was undergoing major transition, at the time, moving towards 2014. 2014 was a threshold year in the sense of major security reforms, security changes, whereby the U.S. military and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) were saying to the Afghan security forces, "You're now responsible. We're only here to train and assist the mission. You have to do the fighting." So, that was a major shift.

The other transition was political. There were new presidential elections in 2014 under the (Afghan) constitution, the President could only stay two terms. President Karzai had already been there two terms, so it was a brand-new game. There were many presidential candidates.

So, political transition, security transition, and then economic transition with the billions of dollars that NATO and others spent, especially in these PRTs. Our funding went from \$1.8 billion when I got there—I think that was the 2012 appropriation. It went to \$850 million the next year. And then it's been steady around that. So, significant changes to the economy too with all the troops leaving and all the money that had been spent in rural areas with PRTs leaving.

Those three major transitions required planning and analysis to figure out how the development community could best support Afghanistan through those transitions. The donors and the government were looking at this in terms of a whole decade of transformation, from 2015 to 2025.

Q: Is that their term or our term?

HAMMINK: I don't know. I suspect it's ours. It sounds a bit like ours. But the World Bank had carried out a significant amount of analytical work on difference scenarios—economic growth and the like—from 2014 depending on what happens.

Also, we did good work on the impact of the drawdown and these changes I mentioned on the economy. Frankly, what we saw in '14 and '15 is that I believe the World Bank

completely underestimated the impact, and it was much harsher than we all thought it would be, especially on the rural poor and overall GDP (gross domestic product).

Q: You also, as I recall, had auditors on your tail all the time, and there was an office in Kabul?

HAMMINK: Yes, in fact oversight: very important and very expensive, not surprisingly, for our multi-billion-dollar programs. There were four audit organizations. You had the State Department auditors. Well, actually five. DOD (U.S. Department of Defense), GAO (U.S. Government Accounting Office) had an office there. USAID auditors and investigators. And then you had a Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction called SIGAR. And SIGAR was very active. They looked at all reconstruction, not only USAID, but would audit what DOD was doing related to reconstruction, as well as State.

At one point, we did an assessment of how much time the USAID team spent just responding to the auditors, especially SIGAR. A significant number of work days from my staff were used in responding to requests from auditors and responding to audit findings and/or recommendations. Now, that's just how it is, and we did what we needed to do. And a lot of times, that was useful, because it helped us, as it should. I mean, the *raison d'être* of the auditors should be so that we improve our programs and so that we improve the impact of our taxpayer-funded programs and account for every dollar spent. So yes, there was a lot of oversight from auditors.

And then of course, when I got to Kabul, there were five ambassadors. You had the regular ambassador. You had a deputy ambassador. And you had what they called “coordinators” for different types of assistance—the judiciary, other kind of development. So, there was a lot of oversight from these ambassadors as well from the State Department.

Q: And you reported directly to one of the ambassadors?

HAMMINK: Yes. I would say I was very fortunate, because I worked with terrific ambassadors providing this oversight of USAID. And this is no surprise, because it's all in the record. The guy who was USAID Mission Director before me, Ken Yamashita—

Q: I've interviewed him.

HAMMINK: Yeah, you've interviewed him? Good.

He was Mission Director for two years. The person who had been the assistance coordinator, which is at an ambassador level in the front office, from 2012-2013 was also from USAID—Bambi (Hilda M.) Arellano. In 2013 she was leaving. They asked Ken to take on that job. So, he became the assistance coordinator in the front office—the coordinator for all assistance, including INL (U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs) and USAID, all the various DOJ (U.S. Department of Justice) groups that were managing some assistance. He coordinated

all that. I met with him often, but he did not try to control everything we did. He knew everything we were doing in any case. But he let us run with it. I just made sure he was aware of everything we were doing. Because of the “no surprise rule.”

I was very fortunate because, for most of my time there, I also had an outstanding ambassador, whose name was Mike (P. Michael) McKinley. He went on to be ambassador to Brazil. I’m not sure if he’s still there, but he was a great guy, and we got along very well, along with the other ambassadors. So, that was helpful.

Q: Is he political (a political appointee) or career (a career diplomat)?

HAMMINK: No, he was career. He was Ambassador in, if I’m correct, Bolivia and Colombia. And then, he came as Deputy Ambassador to Kabul, and he moved up to be Ambassador. When I got there, the Ambassador was James (B.) Cunningham, who was also very professional. We had a lot of oversight, but we had good relations. As you know, communication is key.

So, I stayed there two years and three months. And five days. No, I’m just kidding.

Q: (laughs)

HAMMINK: So, 27 months.

Q: Which is a long time for that post.

HAMMINK: Yes, which is a long time. Normally, Kabul is a one-year tour. I extended the second, and then stayed a few more months for different reasons. My successor is still there after two-and-a-half years. His name is Herbie (Herbert) Smith.

Q: I think I know him.

HAMMINK: He was USAID Mission Director in Yemen before they closed the mission because of the civil war. A very good guy, excellent.

So anyway, at the time everybody said it’s not a good idea to retire out of Afghanistan, mainly because, you know, in Afghanistan, you’re working seven days a week, 10 or 12 or more hours a day. Sometimes, you had the seventh day off. The Ambassador was good. He insisted that people not work on Fridays. We had Fridays off, which is the day the (Afghan) government had off. But every other day of the week, we were expected to work. You know, because of the work flow, you worked 12-14-hour days. So, people would say don’t retire out of Afghanistan, because it’s difficult to go from 120 miles an hour to zero.

And then I talked to folks in Washington and was offered a position as the SDAA in the Africa bureau. To USAID’s credit, based on my request, they allowed me to spend a few months at USIP when I came back. I had a month or so of home leave, then I spent—

Q: The decompression period.

HAMMINK: Correct. I spent November and December of 2015 at USIP. And it was a terrific opportunity. It was the first time in my career, which had been boom-boom-boom-boom for 35 years non-stop, that I took some time to reflect, to think, to read, and to write. And this is this paper I just mentioned that was just published, because when I retired—

Q: What's the name of the paper?

HAMMINK: It's called "USAID in Afghanistan: Challenges and Success". And it's on the USIP website. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/12/usaaid-afghanistan-challenges-and-successes>

Q: Can we link that up to your oral history?

HAMMINK: Yeah, sure. I'll pull the information.

And I was asked by the "Foreign Service Journal" to take that paper -- it's about 10,000 words—and to put it in an article of 2,500 words.

Q: Good, good! So, we can all find it when it's there.

HAMMINK: Hopefully. The article is with the FSJ editorial board now. We'll see what they say.

Q: Well, it probably says what I was going to ask you next: How would you sum up what you learned about USAID in a circumstance like Afghanistan. You were also in Sudan in difficult circumstances. What works best, and what doesn't work well?

HAMMINK: Well, there are many lessons learned. And you'll see in my paper that I have some recommendations. One is, as much as possible, keep to development principles. In Afghanistan, we were pushed as an agency to do things we normally wouldn't do, to go well beyond our comfort zone. I had mentioned that phrase about India. But in Afghanistan, it's even more so, you know, where multi-billion dollar budgets were thrown at us to carry out development and stabilization programs in a war zone. We were told to show development results, as well as to do stabilization with U.S. troops during some of those years. And to show results in a conflict war zone: very difficult charges, right?

And you know, I gave some examples and analyzed what some of the major challenges were. One was this 50 percent on budget political requirement. The other was the major surge. Another was trying to build the capacity of government employees in the Afghan government, when everything was based on patronage.

Q: Oh.

HAMMINK: Early on, we had no support from the (Afghan) government to find and bring in qualified Afghans for these positions. So then, it went to where it was donors—and USAID was just as guilty as others—that supported Afghan technical advisors through projects—time-bound projects-- to do government line functions so that they got done. This was of course a very expensive approach. And instead of building the capacity of civil servants we brought in and paid top-dollar to consultants to carry out key government functions. Because the (Afghan) government systems wouldn't allow the hiring of qualified Afghan civil servants.

Q: Did we end up paying them more than they would've been paid in the Afghan government?

HAMMINK: Oh, yes, much more. I mean, it was nuts. This was before I got there, but at one point, because so many billions of dollars were being thrown at Afghanistan, the salaries of some of the top Afghan consultants were \$10,000, \$15,000 a month.

Q: Oh!

HAMMINK: Yes, that's crazy. Whereas now, the salaries have come down, but still not to a sustainable level. There's a plan—and you'll see it in my paper—to move beyond that. You'll see one of the recommendations is to, as much as possible, stick to good development principles related to due diligence. USAID needs to be allowed to carry out our due diligence and up-front analytical work.

One of the most important recommendations, I think, is, whether you're sitting across from a four-star general or a presidential envoy, USAID needs to be clear about expectations and risks, what we can achieve and what the risks and costs are. This happened to me and happened to other USAID leaders over the years. And it's hard, because people like the person who worked as the (U.S.) Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Mr. (Richard C. A.) Holbrooke, had a mind of his own and told USAID what to do without discussion or analyses. So, whether four-star or whether a presidential or special envoy, or an ambassador, be clear about expectations and risks.

There were times when U.S. political or military leaders would tell you what you were expected to do. On stabilization, we had to move quickly to carry out quick response and quick impact types of stabilization programs, and move money from development programs. However, as part of the U.S. government supporting U.S. national security interests, we would normally salute and do our best.

Q: Sure.

HAMMINK: So you know, all those considerations. The other thing in my paper, you'll see is I talk a lot about stabilization. There's been some good analytical work done by different researchers on the impact of the stabilization programs in Afghanistan. Most of

the large USAID stabilization programs happened in 2009, '10, '11 during the major military surge. Most of our stabilization programs were under the counter insurgency, or COIN, approach, related to clear, hold and build, and following the troops, which was extremely dangerous. Because with clear-hold-build: The U.S. military might clear. But they would only hold this if they're there. Then when they left, the bad guys would come back and kill our development workers. That's why we lost a lot of Afghan development workers.

Flexibility is another recommendation. I think that, you know, USAID has its quiver of different approaches, mainly contracts and grants.

Q: Right, right.

HAMMINK: But in places where we work that are conflict zones, typical contracts and grants don't work. And this is why OTI does so well. Because they have an approach that requires flexibility and to be able to move quickly in these kinds of quick-changing situations. Not only on the ground, but in terms of our own security and political objectives, strategic objectives for the U.S. government.

Q: Well, that's a good summary. I'll look forward to reading that article in the "Foreign Service Journal" and looking at the one at the Institute of Peace and see if we can link to those two.

Q: This is John Pielemeier beginning a third session with Bill Hammink on his oral history. We were interrupted by equipment failure last time we talked. And so, we're meeting again. I know Bill still has a lot of interesting things to pass on.

So, Bill, you were coming back from Afghanistan.

HAMMINK: Yes.

Q: After three years, was it?

HAMMINK: I was there for 27 months, two years and three months. I departed Afghanistan on September 30, 2015.

Q: And I wanted to ask you—and if I did already, we'll just repeat for the moment—what were your thoughts as you left Afghanistan after 27 months about the program, about whether the program was on the right track? How successful it was?

HAMMINK: Yeah, you know, Afghanistan continues to be, as you see in the news with the terrorist attacks in Kabul and elsewhere, a war zone. And so, doing development in a war zone is extremely difficult.

In summer of 2014, a new (Afghan) president was elected, and you might have heard about that president, Ashraf Ghani. At the time, they negotiated with the person who also ran against Ghani in the presidential elections, whose name is Abdullah Abdullah. He became Chief Executive Officer, or CEO, in a government of national unity. Still is.

So, at that time, we were excited, because by the end of 2014, the Ghani-Abdullah government had come together at a major donor conference in London with a new self-reliance strategy with a long list of policy reforms. This paper provided an excellent summary of the development policies that they were going to be focused on for policy reforms. President Ghani used to work for the World Bank. He's—

Q: He used to live in this neighborhood.

HAMMINK: Did he? OK, yes. He used to be in Washington.

Q: I think his ex-wife still does.

HAMMINK: I see.

So, we were quite encouraged, and we put together a transition strategy at the time, because there were many changes going on in Afghanistan. By the time I left in September of 2015, I was both highly encouraged, because there had been a bit of forward movement on some of these key policy reforms. They had continued to update the reform agenda. We had put together, I think I mentioned last time, a new development partnership, which was an incentive program, using on budget funds incentivizing the government to carry out development policy reforms that they wanted to do anyway and felt were important.

So, on the one hand, I was encouraged. But on the other hand, I was also discouraged, because they hadn't made as much progress as we wanted to see. At that time, there had been no progress on any electoral reforms that had been promised, moving towards what was supposed to be parliamentary elections in 2016. They hadn't made a lot of progress on areas related to transparency and anti-corruption. Although they did put in place, by that time, —with support from U.S. auditors—robust reforms to their procurement process, where you often find corruption.

Anyway, so I was both encouraged and discouraged realizing that there still needed to be a lot of work done. It was a country that still had huge problems, besides of course, the security issues that were continuing. The Taliban at that time had taken over more of the countryside than anybody expected. I can only see that continuing in September 2015.

Herbie Smith came in as the new Mission Director. He is terrific, had a great reputation. We did have a strategy in place, a strong focus on maintaining the gains that had occurred in primary education and primary healthcare in the countryside. The strategy also had a strong focus on economic growth, which had not taken off and not done well since the 2014 elections.

Also, a major program was in place with a strong focus on supporting women's empowerment. That was a new, very large program called Promote, that we worked hard to get going. And since I left, they worked hard at the mission to make the Promote program a success.

We had a good program in place, but major problems that continued and are continuing today, especially on the security side. When I left, I kind of thought to myself, because it was so difficult to get in there for Americans, that I probably wouldn't come back, at least officially. I could maybe go back unofficially.

So anyway, I left and interestingly later came back as Assistant to the Administrator for Afghanistan and Pakistan. And I had a special opportunity. USAID approved my request to spend two months at the U.S. Institute of Peace, USIP, where I had some time to read and reflect, and I wrote a paper that's published.

Q: Where is it published?

HAMMINK: It's published by USIP, and it's on their website. It's called "USAID in Afghanistan: Challenges and Successes".

And then, at the time, as I mentioned before, I had decided not to retire from USAID, because everybody said, "After that kind of an experience when you're working 24-7—well, seven days a week, 15 hours a day, you don't want to go from 120 miles an hour to zero."

Q: Right.

HAMMINK: So, I bid on and was assigned as the Senior DAA (Deputy Assistant Administrator) in the Africa Bureau. I had spent some 19 years in Africa. I was quite familiar with all the mission directors.

The Senior DAA who was in the Africa Bureau at the time was assigned to be the Mission Director in Guatemala. His name is Tom (Thomas) Delaney.

Q: Right.

HAMMINK: He is now since retired as well.

Q: Right, I know Tom.

HAMMINK: So, Tom was the SDAA in the Africa Bureau. He'd been there a few years. He wasn't scheduled to move on until May of that year. So, I came in in January 2016, and I supported the Africa Bureau in different ways. There was a new AA who had just started in December of 2015—Linda Etim. I supported her and supported Tom and the rest of the team on specific assignments.

But by the summer of 2016, the guy who served as the Assistant to the Administrator for OAPA—the Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs— Larry (Donald “Larry”) Sampler -- was ready to move on. And so, the sixth floor in USAID asked me if I’d be interested—

Q: This is the Administrator’s office.

HAMMINK: Correct, sorry. The Administrator’s office asked me whether I’d be interested in taking over that assignment, which would mean moving from the Africa Bureau but taking a step up, basically, to be at the AA level.

Q: OAPA is Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs?

HAMMINK: Correct. And because it was an office, and the position was not a Senate-confirmed AA position, the position was called the Assistant to the Administrator for OAPA. I had all the authorities, delegations of authority and the like, as any other AA.

So, I didn’t have to think about it too long.

Q: (laughs)

HAMMINK: Because what an opportunity. I was still very interested in what was going on in Afghanistan and Pakistan and in the region—certainly in India as well. I left the Africa Bureau in August 2016.

Q: How many months had you been in there?

HAMMINK: I was there only about eight months. I worked on different specific assignments, especially helping different offices in the Africa bureau. There’s an Office of Sustainable Development, which included almost all their technical teams. And so, helping them in their reorganization and thinking through their roles, especially support to missions, was fun.

Anyway, I started in OAPA and was sworn in in October. Larry Sampler became the senior advisor to me and to USAID, just to have some overlap. Larry and I went to the UNGA meetings in New York.

Q: UN General Assembly.

HAMMINK: Correct: UN General Assembly meetings, which are always in September. Gayle (E.) Smith was the Administrator at the time. President Ghani was there, so we met with him as well as with Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. We participated in many meetings on Afghanistan as well as Pakistan. That was a great experience.

We then travelled to both Kabul and Islamabad to allow me to get up to speed on all the various policy issues affecting USAID, especially in Pakistan.

When we came back to Washington, Larry moved on to his new job in Colorado, and I took over OAPA.

Q: Where did he move to?

HAMMINK: He became President and CEO of an NGO. It's a foundation that a wealthy American had put together to support programs that are related to peace and development. Yes, so he's working in places, I think, like Somalia and the like.

OAPA had a terrific staff. We were focusing on supporting the missions in Afghanistan and Pakistan as they were looking at the upcoming (U.S.) elections, possible transition, as well as some significant personnel shifts.

Then when the U.S. elections came about, and (U.S.) President (Donald J.) Trump won the election, we were engaged in both Washington and supporting the missions to prepare for the transition to a new president, new administration, and many unknowns of course. I was focused on supporting the missions and supporting staff within OAPA during this transition time, given the uncertainties out there. We have both gone through transitions before, especially with a totally new party and new administration.

After January 20, basically being in that AA chair, which is more or less equivalent to Assistant Secretary of State, I was fully engaged in a broader Afghanistan and Pakistan policy review by the NSC. The State Department had a senior advisor for Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs as well—a special representative. SRAP is what it's called: Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. And so, I worked very closely with that person. And at that time, there was an acting (SRAP) in there who had been deputy and moved up when the SRAP had moved on.

I also worked very closely with the National Security Council staff. At that time, General H. R. (Herbert Raymond) McMaster was the new National Security Advisor. He had served in Afghanistan. He took a keen interest in not only Afghanistan, because we still had troops there, but in the whole region.

And between Secretary of Defense (James “Jim” Norman) Mattis, who also as you know is a former general—four-star general -- and General McMaster who was in the White House, they basically led a strategic review of our experience and relationship in Afghanistan, and then more broadly within the region. Because you couldn't look at how things are going in Afghanistan without looking at Pakistan, Central Asia, India, Iran and the influence of the (Persian) Gulf, and China of course.

At USAID, then, I was very much involved in regular, almost weekly, meetings at the National Security Council to participate in the strategic review. We were tasked with not only reviewing past policies but also coming up with thinking on a new U.S. strategy for

the region. And since USAID has such large programs in both Afghanistan and Pakistan and has been there for many years—since 2001 in Afghanistan and 2003, I think, in Pakistan—we had a lot of experience. We had a lot of expertise. And we had a voice at the table, because of that.

So, I was there often at my level, and the OAPA DAAs also went to these other meetings, with technical officers who had experience in Afghanistan and Pakistan. That strategic review process went on for months.

In April, General McMaster wanted to go out to the field, to both Afghanistan and Pakistan, to test some of the thinking and some of the analyses that had been going around in the strategy meetings back in Washington, and to talk to the leadership in those two countries, the Prime Minister and the Chief of General Staff in Pakistan of course as well as President Ghani and CEO Abdullah, and many others, in Afghanistan.

General McMaster wanted to take this trip not just by himself. He wanted it to be an interagency trip. So, he invited assistant secretary-level representatives from different agencies. Thus, I was invited to represent USAID and flew to Kabul with him and others on his plane, which was an interesting experience. The SRAP—the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan from the State Department-- also joined, along with a very senior civilian equivalent from DOD. And then of course the intelligence agencies were also represented. I was told that this was the first time that the National Security Advisor had invited a USAID representative on a trip overseas. I don't know if that is correct but it sounds good.

Q: What was interesting about the plane ride, the plane?

HAMMINK: Well, one is that he had his own plane, and it was a comfortable plane outfitted for the most senior White House officials. We stopped at a military air field in Europe for refueling and then just flew straight in to Kabul. We didn't have to worry about airports. It was quite nice and convenient.

I think that the best part of traveling with the National Security Advisor on a long trip like that is that we had many hours with him on the plane and had real facetime for good discussions about what he was going to see and what was going on from our various perspectives, what some of the options were on the table from a policy perspective. I suspect that it is rare to have that kind of time to have in-depth discussions with the National Security Advisor on development issues affecting overall U.S. strategy.

He's a very analytical person and a very sharp guy if you've seen some of his writing.

In Kabul, as part of his team I was invited to all the meetings as well with President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah. I just went on the Afghanistan part of his trip, because the Pakistan part of his trip did not touch USAID that much. It was on some other issues.

And that was April. We all came back to Washington and continued to work on a broad new administration strategic review of how previous strategies have been going, where things were going, what some of the options were. And then policy options were prepared for deputies' meetings and principals meetings, meaning deputy secretaries and then secretaries and heads of agencies to review and discuss strategic options. Then the agreed-upon strategic options were presented to the (U.S.) President. This process took place over several months.

And you probably then saw either the speech or the news in August 2017: President Trump announced a new, what he called regional strategy for the region, including of course Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also including our relationship with India, China, and the countries in Central Asia. The President announced a few key significant policy changes compared to the previous administration. The number one being that he basically decided that he didn't want to have a time table, that they would make decisions based on conditions and not just based on an arbitrary time table. And so, they were not going to announce when the troops were going to come back, and topics like that, up front. They would lay out some parameters, some indicators that they wanted to see, that worked towards both the security side but also on the political side and the development and economic side.

All this time, as the AtA in OAPA (Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs), my focus was also to support the missions. I became AtA in September of 2016. The rest of that year and then throughout 2017, helping both missions to understand the Washington perspective and how the latest strategic review discussions may impact them. We worked hard to represent their point of view at the table at the NSC (U.S. National Security Council), so that what came out in terms of a broader U.S. government strategy had the USAID interests embedded in it so that we weren't struggling to figure out USAID's role. We had inculcated or incorporated the thinking on our development programs and its role within the broader strategy.

Q: What were some of the policy changes?

HAMMINK: Well, one, for us—for USAID anyway— I'm now retired, so I can't say "us". For USAID in Pakistan, for example, we shifted our programs to make it crystal clear that USAID was supporting U.S. interests in our areas of development intervention that at the same time were of interest to Pakistan, instead of the other way around. And that was important. And for example, in supporting FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), in the northwestern part of Pakistan that borders Afghanistan.

Q: Right: the northwest provinces.

HAMMINK: That's right. So, in FATA, it was in our interest to support reforms that the government wanted to do anyway. But it was in our security interests as well as development interests to make sure that area was not lawless, have it become part of the rest of the country administratively, economically, and socially, and the like.

The other was supporting programs that worked to counter violent extremism, especially with youth. And so, that objective was clearly in U.S. interests from a security point of view, as well as in Pakistan's interest.

In Afghanistan, we continued, as I mentioned before, the focus on maintaining the gains for education and health, but also a strong focus on supporting President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah on programs that fought corruption: rule of law—I mentioned procurement—and other areas where they were working on anti-corruption measures, as well as much more focus on economic growth.

We were realistic in terms of what could be done, given the security issues. And then putting in place a much more robust multi-tiered monitoring system so that, with everybody watching, USAID still had a good idea of what was going on with all our programs.

Q: It sounds like quite a challenge. And this passed without major discussion at the NSC? Everybody—

HAMMINK: Oh, no. The discussion went on for months, as these things always do.

Q: Oh! All right!

HAMMINK: It was brought to the President, and he had his point of view. And then more discussions. But you know, a lot of the discussions revolved around the security side, of course: the role of the military and the size of our troop levels and how long to be there. But on the development side, I think one of the major issues—and this is public knowledge—had to do with assistance support in Taliban-controlled areas.

The Taliban controlled quite a large area, even in areas where we had some rural agriculture projects, for example. And so, we had to think through, OK, what is the best way to approach that so that we're absolutely not doing anything that would look like it might support the Taliban in those areas. But we still wanted to support the (Afghan) government in areas that the government controlled. So, that was part of the discussion. How to do that.

All throughout this discussion of how best to work or not in Taliban-controlled or disputed areas, we continued to have close discussion with Hill staff, so that they were aware of our thinking on some of these issues and we were aware of their thinking.

Q: Any particular Hill staffers who were most involved with the Afghan impacts?

HAMMINK: Well, (former Senior Professional Staff Member for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee) Damian Murphy and—I'm trying to think of some of the other names. But there were many. Even when I was out there as mission director, we had quite a few visits by Hill staffers. There were probably six or so that were key, both on the appropriations committees, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and the House (U.S.

House of Representatives) Foreign Affairs Committee who were covering Afghanistan and Pakistan closely.

We had a good relationship with them. And we continued to work through audit issues that came up. We continued to work through other issues with them on a regular basis. Most importantly, USAID was always totally honest and upfront when things went wrong or issues came up, and they trusted us because we would say right up front when we made a mistake, and then also how we were going to learn from it and work to make sure it never happens again. You know, the key is communication. To be very honest and be very up-front, it's much better, if something goes wrong, to just to put it out there and explain what happened, and what we need to do to make sure that doesn't happen again.

So then, I decided—

Q: Just on staffing and on numbers, was the program size going up? Was the program size going down?

HAMMINK: In 2013, for example, when I got to Kabul, our budget was \$1.8 billion a year. The next year, it dropped to \$850 million, which is still a huge budget in any country. No matter what, USAID struggles to be able to spend that much money. USAID—and this is my own opinion—has a hard time trying to figure out how to get the best development results when there are billions of dollars to spend.

And so, in any case—I think it's all public again—the budget has tapered to \$600 (million) and some—\$650 (million) per year, which is still huge. It remains a very large program and one of the largest in the world. In Pakistan, the budget has leveled off as well. I think it's about \$200 million a year this past fiscal year. So, budget-wise, you know, they still have substantial funds to be able to support the broader U.S. government strategy and to be able to support broader development objectives in Afghanistan.

We'd always joke with our State Department and DOD colleagues that, for us, it's a marathon and not a sprint. Whereas, some of the DOD and State timelines are often a year or two years. And for us it's five years, ten years or more.

I think one of the— And you'll see in my paper. One of the interesting challenges that USAID had—and this continues, although it's much less—was the disconnect between supporting ever-changing, short-term political and security U.S. government objectives, like stabilization, following the troops, and at the same time to support very important long-term development objectives that are absolutely necessary for economic growth, for good governance for a government that works, or systems and procedures, and the like, that you need in any country.

So, that was often a challenge, because sometimes—a lot of times -- we were asked or told to do things that were way outside of our comfort zone and/or that we may not have done if we had carried out the required due-diligence and analyses.

Q: Such as?

HAMMINK: Well, such as, for example, some of the short, very short-term kind of quick impact, quick response, quick to be implemented programs.

Q: Was it OTI (Office of Transition Initiatives), or was it regular mission?

HAMMINK: Well, both. OTI was there as well, but we were asked to go into areas that soldiers had just cleared. A clear, hold and build type of approach. And in fact, when the U.S. soldiers left, there were very few or no Afghan soldiers to hold. So then, the Taliban would come back. And sadly, we saw the death of many development workers in those days, hundreds, because these areas were not cleared for long and the development workers represented an alternative to the Taliban so they were killed.,

But the programs that we were urged to do, for example, giving away seeds and fertilizer, thinking that that could have a great kind of impact on both farmers' incomes and outputs. And what they found is that there's perverse incentives with outcomes that were counter to what we wanted to see. Surveys showed that our seeds and fertilizer quick-impact programs in some cases supported the Taliban. Because farmers would eat the grain, or they would sell it to the Taliban, and/or the Taliban would benefit from the increased harvests.

It's a challenge no matter what, whether short term or long term, or the kind of stabilization, community-led types of programs.

Q: You mentioned mining. Is that an area where there is potential for remaining generations to—

HAMMINK: Yes, the U.S. Geological Service did this estimate—I think it was five, six years ago—that there's over a trillion dollars' worth of minerals out there across Afghanistan, some gas, but mainly minerals. So, there's huge potential.

But the (Afghan) government, for whatever reason, has not moved forward very quickly on either trying to clean up—because there's so many illegal mines out there—clean up what's there, nor trying to give out legitimate mining licenses. And so, that's a work in progress. But corruption is imbedded there related to almost every aspect of the mining sector. It's a tough one because, in areas controlled by the insurgency and insurgents, it's hard to have any kind of legitimate mining operation. To go in there and mine, you don't have the troops you need to secure the mining sites. And so, it must be part of local negotiations.

And a lot of these minerals, and especially gem stones, are smuggled into Pakistan illegally. They're mined and smuggled over the border. A lot of the economy in Afghanistan, unfortunately, is illicit, because you have so much that is grown and mined outside of the lawful and formal economy, that's not only the drugs but also things like gem stones. Even carpets are smuggled over the border. They're made in Afghanistan

and smuggled to Pakistan, where they're cleaned and sold internationally as Pakistani carpets.

Q: Interesting.

HAMMINK: But a fascinating country. A lot of the people are wonderful, friendly, and open.

Q: As you left the program, basically— What we're hearing in the press now is that the process will continue. There's no sense of pulling out or any sort of deadline and that we continue to support the governments in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

HAMMINK: Right, correct.

Q: Although there's been more and more of a threat against Pakistan recently.

HAMMINK: Right, Pakistan is a different situation, because I think— And President Trump has been clear about this, both in tweets as well as in speeches. There's severe unhappiness about the support that Pakistan continues to provide to the Taliban and the Haqqani network. So, on Pakistan, you are correct that the U.S. is working to change the behavior of Pakistan to stop supporting Afghan terrorists and insurgents.

On the Afghanistan side, you're correct. I think there's commitment if the Afghan government continues to do the right things on key policy reforms and continues to support the training and expansion of the security forces in Afghanistan, that they take on full responsibility for their own security.

Q: Were other donors doing much in either country?

HAMMINK: Absolutely, in both countries, but especially Afghanistan. For other donors as well, Afghanistan was their largest development program in the world. In Tokyo, there was a major donors' meeting in 2012 I believe. At Tokyo, the donors committed, if I'm correct here, about \$4 billion a year for four years for development. It's huge. The U.S. commitment was about two billion a year, if I remember correctly. And that doesn't include any of the U.S. security costs. That's just economic and social development support.

Q: Who were those other major donors?

HAMMINK: Well, the EU, the British, Germany, Italy. A lot of the bilateral donor assistance came from those countries which still had troops in the country dating from wanting to support the U.S. after 9/11 (the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States) and continued that support. Japan also had a very large assistance program.

Q: The Australians as well?

HAMMINK: Yes, the Australians as well. The French had a program there. It wasn't very big, but it was important. When the donors got around the table for donor coordination meetings, it was a lot of people, because of course, you had every single UN agency there as well as the bilateral donors, and many NGOs.

Q: How did you deal with staff, especially on their continuing security issues. There were, every once in a while, a restaurant or hotel either or in both countries would be bombed. Did you have people coming to you and saying, "I want to leave"? Did you have people coming to you and saying that, "How do we avoid it," and, "How do I live and do my job in these circumstances?" Were there a lot of things coming on your desk dealing with security issues?

HAMMINK: Absolutely: morale and security issues were front and center. Well, security was number one, and related to that was the morale of our staff. Security was a huge issue. That was one the Ambassador took very seriously every single day. The RSO played a big role in our lives of course.

And in Afghanistan, because the U.S. military had such a big presence, they also played a major role until they scaled back in 2014, because they had the assets. And we had hundreds of USAID staff—American staff—living and working out of U.S. military bases across the country, as well as other NATO allied bases in different provinces.

When I got to Kabul, in summer of 2013, because I was Mission Director, I had a full-time armed American security official shadow while on the compound and a 12-person armed security detail when I had to leave the compound. And for official meetings and events, in 2013 I was still able to go to certain restaurants and hotels. Not all; some were off limits. And that was 2013.

However, in early 2014, there were several devastating attacks. And one of them was on a Lebanese *taverna*, where some 26 foreigners were just shot—killed, murdered in their seats. And after that we were no longer allowed to go to any restaurants. And then the attacks continued, even against several USAID-funded partner U.S. NGOs.

Q: Right.

HAMMINK: Remember that? We had to clamp down. We were not allowed to go to restaurants. We were not allowed to go to hotels. And after that, it became very difficult for our staff even to go to government ministries that were in town or where you had to go through areas that were deemed to be unsafe.

We had to come up with different ways to carry out our work, to maintain relationships—face-to-face discussions. So, we would invite ministers and other senior counterparts to come to the embassy compound. We would host them for dinners. There were a few houses where we could have meetings with Afghan counterparts that were right on the side of the embassy compound, outside the main wall, but that were secure enough. It was easier for partners and counterparts to meet in those houses because they did not

need to go through the normal embassy checkpoints and body searches. So, we found work arounds. Our partners, including ministers, still wanted to meet with us and would come to the embassy to do so, luckily. But that was a significant challenge, because increasingly, all the official Americans were more and more restricted to the embassy compound.

And as you can imagine, for USAID people that's difficult, because we're expected to go out and "kick the tires," talk to the farmers, the teachers and students, and the nurses in clinics, and the like. Thus, for USAID those kinds of restrictions not only make it hard to do our jobs but it is inconsistent with how we do our business.

So, the second thing I would say is that we were quite forceful in making sure the USAID folks who came in for one year or two years understood that it was imperative they follow all the security protocols and rules. Whenever there was a duck-and-cover and a siren went off, they would have to hit the ground. Whenever there was a test, like where the siren would go off, and they'd tell you (that) you had to put on your PPE, or Personal Protective Equipment-- a bullet-proof vest and helmet -- and hit the ground, get under your desk.

We had zero tolerance for actions that put anyone in more danger, like somebody who got drunk, because, whether it's three in the morning or three in the afternoon, if you can't take care of yourself and there's an attack on the embassy compound, you're putting yourself in danger and you are putting others in danger as well because they may have to risk their lives to help you. Whenever that would happen, the Ambassador would send people home.

We made sure that AID folks were very cognizant of the importance of the security protocols and security rules, because it was a dangerous place.

Q: At one point within this past year or maybe 18 months, I know there was some discussion about changing policies to encourage—well, strongly encourage—two-year tours in Afghanistan instead of one-year tours. Has that happened, and would that make a difference from your point of view?

HAMMINK: So, that's a tough one. There's been a lot of discussion on that, whether Pakistan, Afghanistan, South Sudan, other hardship posts. There are an increasing number of one-year tour countries. And almost all of these places, I believe, where you have a one-year tour, you have no families allowed. So, that is linked of course.

In Afghanistan, when people would come to post, we would strongly encourage them to consider extending for a second year. There was talk about making a two-year tour official, and I think that discussion continues. But an official two-year tour policy would allow people who bid on the hardship post to know right up front that they have a two-year tour.

I would argue, based on my experience—and I think USAID HR (human resources) would say the same—that a two-year tour policy for Afghanistan and other super hardship posts would probably not be beneficial to the agency writ-large, because then we would only get people who would be willing to bid who didn't have families and/or were at the end of their career. And so, we would get many, many fewer bidders. The pool then for potential bidders shrinks significantly. I think there's still 80 to 90 direct hire positions in Afghanistan, so it's still one of the largest missions in the world. Pakistan is third. So, the one-year tour was examined in detail, and I believe the leaders in Washington realized that it's better to try to have USAID officers sign up for two years by talking to them informally and having it be a choice instead of requiring that up front.

Q: And what kind of people were you getting?

HAMMINK: We were getting all kinds of people. And so, the good news is, we were getting some great staff in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Because one, you know, people had to bid on a CPC—

Q: CPC: critical priority country.

HAMMINK: Priority country, yes. And we had quite a few of what we'd call first- and second-tour officers who wanted to get the CPC post under their belt. And they also appreciated the benefit of coming to a country like Afghanistan and Pakistan or CPCs, because then they'd get priority bidding for their next post. And that would send them to some place good for their family or a place they have always wanted to work in.

We would also get senior people whose kids were grown up and wanted an adventure and continue to support development in challenging U.S. foreign policy priority countries.

And so, it was as real magnet. We got terrific staff for the most part.

Q: It must be hard, though, for just one year to learn the trade, learn the country.

HAMMINK: Correct.

Q: You learn your job and then take two or three R&Rs (rest and relaxation) during that period.

HAMMINK: This is it. Absolutely. People would be gone a lot.

The military, interestingly, would have five- or six-month tours for the most part. Some of the senior people, like the generals, would stay longer. But during those six months, they wouldn't be able to take any leave. And so, when seeing the USAID folks come and go all the time, it bothered them. A lot of people have said that this was not a 16-year war. This was 16 one-year wars.

Q: (chuckles) Oh, gosh.

HAMMINK: And the same for USAID, because we had so many Mission Directors come and go, with one-year tours. During or because of the significant civilian surge that started in late 2009, USAID didn't have enough people on their rosters to meet what the Administration wanted to see in terms of USAID development experts out there. So, USAID had to hire what were called temporary Foreign Service Officers—or Foreign Service Limited officers, for up to a five-year assignment. But they're treated as FSOs.

Q: But only for one country?

HAMMINK: Correct, although then later, they could move to other countries through a special bidding process if FSOs didn't bid on certain positions. In any case, a lot of our staff, especially outside of Kabul, were FSLs and hired from all over. They just hired to meet the levels of American staff that the White House and State Department had wanted from USAID.

This was a huge problem for USAID because most of the FSLs were new to development, and had never worked with USAID or overseas before. Because of the urgency to get them to the field, we didn't have enough time to train them. When the FSLs arrived in Kabul, they were then almost immediately sent to one of the PRTs or FOBs.

And so, the kind of oversight, the kind of support, the kind of monitoring that they could have done for the project officers in charge of projects, who were mainly contracting officer representatives and mainly in Kabul, it just didn't happen because of lack of training and lack of experience. Unfortunately, a lot of it was *ad hoc*. If we had had more time, USAID could have done a much better job with using the FSL staff in the field much more productively. At one point, USAID was taken out of the loop, because State Department put in an office that controlled where people went.

Q: When was that? What period would that have been?

HAMMINK: It must have been around 2010, 2011.

Anyway, lots of challenges. You'll see in the paper I wrote, I talked about half a dozen kind of major challenges in the Afghan context and how USAID dealt with them.

Q: We may, if you want— We'll see if we can annex that to your report.

HAMMINK: Good.

Q: And you got your, what did you say, three months or three months at the USIP to give you— That was before you came back to OAPA, but—

HAMMINK: Yes, I spent about two months at USIP.

Q: People come out and have been there as long as you had been, it's— People also say, "Don't put anybody in language training right away," because it's too intense, and you've got to give people time to decompress. And were you able to do that?

HAMMINK: Yeah, yeah. No, absolutely. It was a terrific opportunity. I had the opportunity to talk to a lot of experts; to read a lot that I wish I had read and known before going out to Afghanistan. It would have been so helpful about context, about history, about political economy. Because there was a lot written, even great analyses of the surge, by the time I went out there that I never saw until I came back and had time at USIP.

I recommended to USAID leadership that mission directors who were going out to our large, complex, political posts can spend a month—or if not, at least two weeks—anything that they would be able to do—at a think tank that specialized in their country of assignment so that they could spend time with experts and have time to read the literature out there. That's so important, I realized while at USIP and too late for me, for mission directors in these big, complex and difficult places to have that knowledge and hopefully improved understanding, up front. My recommendation was not taken up. It was deemed to be too difficult, because too often, USAID mission directors, when they're assigned, only have a few weeks. They want to take leave, go through USG internal orientation meetings, and are not going to sit at some think tank.

Q: Right. Well, they'll just have to read oral histories, I guess. (laughs)

HAMMINK: That's one way, sure.

Just to finish here. I decided that I was going to retire back in 2016. I retired as of September 30, 2017. And my last day in OAPA was the end of July. So, I was there just short of a year.

Q: And during that period, at least during the Trump administration, most of that period you had an Acting Administrator at the agency.

HAMMINK: That's right. Wade Warren was the Acting Administrator. Wade was invited to the PCs (principal committees) and deputies' meetings that I mentioned to discuss the U.S. strategy review for Afghanistan and the region. I accompanied Wade to many of these top-level meetings with deputy secretaries and cabinet-level secretaries.

Most of that year—or almost a year; 10 months or so that I was in OAPA, I focused on the transition and the strategic review and new strategy for the U.S. government and how USAID fits within that. Of course, it was an extremely interesting time, because USAID had a seat at the NSC policy table, and it was well-respected.

Q: I didn't ask you, when you were in Afghanistan, did the AID Administrator take much interest in the program, or did he sort of leave it to the people in OAPA and in the field to do what was necessary?

HAMMINK: When I was in Afghanistan, the Administrator did not take much interest in what was going on—this was Dr. Raj Shah—for different reasons. He came to visit only during my last year there for a launch of our major gender program called PROMOTE, the largest women’s empowerment program in the world. Larry Sampler, who was the OAPA Assistant to the Administrator at the time, was very supportive of our program.

We could work. Maybe it was for the best that the Administrator stayed unengaged. Maybe he thought that Larry and I could manage it.

Luckily, we had an excellent relationship with President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah and the new government that came in after the 2014 elections.

So, I think for Dr. Shah, he said, OK these guys know what they’re doing. And unless there’s a problem, he would focus on other things.

Q: And as retirement approached, you started thinking about retirement or is this moving on to another kind of work situation? What were your thoughts?

HAMMINK: Well you know, coming from OAPA, where again, even back here in Washington it was non-stop, because in the mission, you know, people worked out there on Saturdays and Sundays. So, we got calls and e-mails throughout the week and our weekends. So, when I retired, I knew that I did not want to work full-time for a while or at least take some time off.

But I continued to—

Q: How old were you when you retired, may I ask?

HAMMINK: Sure: 62.

Q: Oh, you’re a young man!

HAMMINK: Well, I’m not—

Q: (laughs)

HAMMINK: But I am keeping involved. I have a very good relationship with the current Afghan ambassador to the U.S. I worked with him when he was in the (Afghan) president’s office in Kabul—closely with him. And I’m supporting different organizations that are working in Afghanistan.

Q: So, a lot of your focus continues to be Afghanistan.

HAMMINK: Correct. That’s right. Mainly on a pro-bono basis. So, it’s good.

Q: Any offers from USIP or anybody like that who want to build on what you've done there?

HAMMINK: Well, I continue to go to their events on Afghanistan and Pakistan. No, I wasn't looking hard for that kind of position. But, I am now, because I'm ready to jump back in and work tough issues.

Q: Would you like to go back overseas, or would you like to stay here?

HAMMINK: Well, we'll see. You know, we have many friends and colleagues in our situation. There is never one way to do things. We have a young grandson who's five months old.

Q: Oh, boy!

HAMMINK: He was born just one week after I retired. (laughs)

Q: Good timing.

HAMMINK: So, that sure changed plans for our retirement that kept us around here.

Q: And he's in Washington?

HAMMINK: Yes, they live in Takoma Park (Maryland).

Q: Well, what did you tell me—35 years?

HAMMINK: 36 years.

Q: 36 years?

HAMMINK: Yes, I joined in 1981 as an IDI, which is International Development Intern.

Q: When people come up to you now, and I'm sure they do when they realize what you've done and where you've been, and they are, you know, doing a master's program at Georgetown (University) or somewhere else and thinking about career choices, over these 35 years a lot of things have changed in the world in terms of the development issues and certainly the security circumstances surrounding those issues, do you recommend to these people who think about that career in AID?

HAMMINK: Absolutely, absolutely. Although, I think the young people nowadays—I don't know what it's called: Generation X, or whatever. But I saw this a lot when I was Mission Director in different countries with the first- and second-tour officers, I think that they are less interested in what my generation took for granted, a multi-decade career, and they're ready to move around jobs, while they're learning, while they're interested, while they're excited, they'll stay, and then they look for other things.

So, it's a challenge for USAID, which depends on a model of years of on-the-job training for USAID officers and moving up through the ranks that depends on people who want to stay in for some decades. And so, one thing that I enjoy is—and I enjoyed this in Kabul, because we had over 35 first- and second-tour officers—is mentoring the next generation of officers. I recently had a chance to speak to a class on international development at Georgetown. Yeah, I don't know if you know Tony Barclay.

Q: Of course.

HAMMINK: He had invited me over to speak about development partnerships. A few of the students kept in touch and asked for advice.

I think that's important, you know, for folks like us to continue to support the next generation of development leaders.

Q: Good. Anything you wish you would've done differently in this career? Anything you would like to— Say, "Gee, I really missed a chance to go in a certain direction, and I didn't." Or we talked about the positive things. Anything you might've done differently?

HAMMINK: When I'm asked or when I talk to young officers at USAID, I strongly encourage them not to worry so much about promotion, not to worry so much about position grade. That will come. I say you should basically bid on countries that you've always wanted to visit or explore, to get to know, to understand, to travel, and want to learn more. Because when you live in a country, it's so exciting, because you're learning a whole new culture, new history, new people. And don't bid on a country just because you think that job is one that will get you a promotion for the next one. And you know, live a little bit more in the moment, and do a good job—do a great job, and the promotions will follow.

And whether the promotions come fast or slow, when you do a good job the word gets around, it's a small agency still. And the good jobs and interesting jobs will follow. So, you know, I strongly encourage: Don't try to game the system. Work hard and don't be afraid to ask for help. They must be as good as they can be. But don't worry about promotions, gaming the system. Do a good job, have fun, put family first.

And the other thing is to be flexible and have an open mind. When I was in Madagascar, I bid on the USAID representative to the EU job in Brussels. Well, I was one of two. At the end, I was not chosen because the other candidate had a medical condition and Brussels of course has great medical facilities. And then out of the blue I got a call, "Are you interested in coming to Moscow to head up the democracy governance office?"

So, there are almost always many great opportunities in USAID, not just one. If you don't get the assignment you want, keep looking, there are many more great jobs out there. USAID is, you know, a small agency. But it's got how many missions around the world. And so, you need to be flexible, and you need to jump in, give it a try.

Q: Let me ask you one more question, because you mentioned mentorship, which is something that the AID alumni association has been involved with. And I think we have retirees working with—mentoring 40 or 50 people overseas who've looked for and asked for a mentor.

HAMMINK: Is that right? I didn't know that.

Q: How do you handle mentorship? How do you do it?

HAMMINK: Well, at one point under Raj Shah's USAID forward initiative, mentorship was required in all missions. As useful as mentoring can be, it never caught on when it was required. I think that it works better when the employee is interested to put in the time and energy for that kind of relationship, and it is voluntary.

And the second is, to be a good mentor, you must understand where the employee is coming from and have requisite time to delve into what people's interests are, where their career interests are, where they see their family situation, where they see themselves going. And then help them think through different options.

I always said, it's not just one path. There are many paths to fulfillment and enjoyment and a great career. I never served in Latin America, and when I was at the SMG level—

Q: Senior Management Group.

HAMMINK: Yes, Senior Management Group. I interviewed in the Latin American and Caribbean bureau, and the DAA in the Latin America Bureau told me point-blank, "We don't accept anyone who doesn't speak Spanish. And we're not going to send you to Spanish (instruction), because you've got to be able to speak it right off at that level." That's not a regret, because I just instead went to other great posts. We had a great time.

What makes a huge difference, frankly, is to always work to keep family first. Take that time off to be at the special family event. Move posts if needed to support your kids or spouse or parents. I learned long ago that no one is irreplaceable, others can do as well as we can, maybe better, and life moves on. In development and living overseas with USAID, we do the best we can, we make a difference in millions of people's lives, and we take on the next exciting challenge. I wouldn't trade in one day from the great career in USAID.

Thank you very much!

Q: Well, thank you!

End of interview