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

SCOTT KILNER

Interviewed by: Robin Matthewman
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INTERVIEW

1952-1982: MY PATH INTO THE FOREIGN SERVICE

Q: Good afternoon. This is May 16, 2023. I am Robin Matthewman, and we are having our first interview with Scott Kilner today. Let's start as we always do. Can you say where and when you were born?

KILNER: Sure, I was born January 27, 1952, at Stanford University Hospital in Palo Alto (the town where my wife and I now reside again in retirement).

Q: OK, can you tell us a little bit about your family background and any interesting genealogy on either side.

KILNER: Well I don't know how interesting it is, but I can give you a little context. My father grew up in the Midwest in a suburb of Chicago. My mother grew up here in the San Francisco Bay Area. They both ended up at Stanford University together in 1946. They met during their freshman year and fell in love. They stayed together and were married in June of 1950. My dad stayed on at the university for two more years at the Stanford Business School. So he finished that in the summer of 1952, and I was born about six months before he graduated. He then went on to have a series of jobs in the Bay Area at the beginning of his career. Then, after a few years he started a small business of his own in the advertising field here in Palo Alto.

My mother was a housewife. The major event that changed her life was a severe case of adult polio in 1956. She was just 28, and I was four years old. It happened only a few months before the Salk vaccine came out. My mother was on crutches for the rest of her life. With that said, I was fortunate to have two truly wonderful parents. I have one brother, and we had a very stable, loving upbringing. We lived in the East Bay when I was small, but then our family moved back to Palo Alto, where I started fourth grade. My parents always loved the San Francisco Peninsula very much. So, I essentially grew up here in Palo Alto, went to public schools for elementary, middle school, and high school. Palo Alto at that time in the 1960s was an economically much more diverse place than it is now. Racially maybe not so diverse, but economically it was very much middle and

upper middle class. Very different from what it has become with the emergence of Silicon Valley. It was a very good place to grow up.

Q: Did you travel?

KILNER: My parents had done almost no international travel before I went to college. My mother had been outside of the United States once on a college trip to Europe in 1949. My dad had never been outside of the United States, so there was really nothing in my immediate family background oriented towards international affairs. So how is it that I drifted in that direction? As I look back on it, I think there were a few "signposts" along the way. One became a bit of a joke in our family: When I was a very little, the wallpaper in my bedroom was essentially a giant map of the world. My parents later joked that when I was four or five years old I would stare at that map and envision a grand future for myself.

More seriously, what really planted the first seeds of my interest in international affairs were a few travel opportunities with my grandparents. My maternal grandparents lived in the East Bay, in the town of Piedmont in the Oakland hills. My grandfather, Frederick Ackerman, was a successful businessman. He had a career with the Greyhound Bus Corporation. In fact, he ended up as CEO and Chairman of that corporation. Greyhound was a national bus company that became ever more of a conglomerate in the 1950s and 1960s. After my grandfather retired in the 1960s, he and my grandmother started to take what for that era were ambitious trips. And they took me and my brother along with them a few times. This actually started pretty early.

When I was in elementary school my grandparents took me twice to the East Coast — the usual stops, New York, Washington, Philadelphia, Niagara Falls. Later on in high school they took me on two international trips. In 1967, after I had just finished ninth grade, they took me to South America for a three-week, capital-hopping trip, flying from one city to another all around South America. Then, a couple of years later in 1969 when I was a junior in high school, they took both me and my brother on a two-week trip to Japan and Hong Kong. Both of these trips outside of the United States made a big impression on me. I found the experience fascinating in every way: to see billboards in foreign languages, to hear unfamiliar sounds around me. In short, everything that goes with being surrounded by a foreign culture. I might also add that, domestically, in 1968 I joined an "American Heritage Tour" organized by our school district. A busload of about 30 high school kids travelled all around the United States for five weeks. This was another experience that made me realize how much I enjoyed going to new places and seeing new things.

Q: Did you have any special interests when you were in high school?

KILNER: Yes, of course. In high school I was a good student. About midway through I really gravitated towards government and political science. My junior year I had an American history teacher who was my favorite teacher in high school. My other interest

was journalism. I was on the school newspaper, and in my senior year I became the Editor-in-Chief of the Palo Alto High School newspaper.

Q: Did you break any scandalous news?

KILNER: Well, I graduated from high school in 1970. This was very much still the Vietnam War era. My high school was located literally across the street from Stanford University, which was a hotbed of protest activities. Some of that spilled over to Palo Alto High School. The main protests surrounded the 1970 U.S. bombing of Cambodia. There were street demonstrations around Palo Alto and Stanford, and protests at shopping centers. Just a few years ago I learned that the FBI was giving serious attention to things going on at Palo Alto High School at that time. FBI agents appeared to have some sources in the school administration who were telling them who was doing what within the student body. This information came out through a Freedom of Information Act request by a high school friend of mine who had become a college professor on the east coast. My friend, the professor, and his students were doing research on radical student activities in the 1960s. In the documents on Palo Alto High they obtained through the FOIA request, I did not figure prominently, but I did have a sort of bit part. I'll come back to this when we discuss my application to join the Foreign Service about ten years later.

Q: We always hear a lot about Berkley at that time but I hadn't really thought about Stanford.

KILNER: Stanford was not quite as extreme as Berkley, but it was definitely there.

Q: Just to back up, a little bit earlier in 1968, Robert Kennedy was killed in California.

KILNER: That was in Los Angeles. But such events were very much in the air during my high school years. I was admitted to Stanford, and when I started there in the fall of 1970 Vietnam War protests were still very much part of the scene.

Q: Was there much active discussion of politics, the war and things like that in your family?

KILNER: Not really. My parents were very apolitical, very Republican. They basically voted the straight Republican ticket every time. My dad grew up in a midwestern moderate Republican environment, as it existed back then. Those Republicans were much different from what the Republican Party is today. On my mother's side, my grandfather — the successful businessman — also strongly favored the Republican agenda. But we didn't talk about politics much. When I became more politically engaged during high school, and would occasionally raise subjects like the Vietnam War and race relations at home, my dad would just roll his eyes and change the subject to sports or something like that.

Q: Were you involved in any sports or debate club or things like that?

KILNER: I was on the high school tennis team. A moderately decent player. I liked sports generally, but tennis was the one I went the furthest in. In terms of extra-curricular activities, it was the newspaper.

Q: That must have been a lot of work and exciting. Did you start studying Spanish or German?

KILNER: I had some Spanish in junior high school and high school, but to be candid the instruction was very poor. As soon as I had the minimum required by most colleges, I dropped it. I found Spanish class easy, but it didn't seem very serious to me. That changed when it got to Stanford.

Q: OK well I am ready for Stanford. What did you decide to study?

KILNER: I applied to a handful of schools. I was pretty sure that if I could get into Stanford I would go there. Growing up so close to Stanford, it had a rather dominating presence. And for most kids, if you got in, you went there. We had a number of students in my high school class who were accepted, and I was one of them. I really didn't really know what I wanted to study. But I did know that Stanford had, for that era, a very robust overseas campus program. It had started in the 1960s, and by 1970 was quite developed. The overseas program was also very Eurocentric, especially compared with today. Studying abroad sounded great to me, so right away my freshman year I started asking around to find out about the different options. The campus I soon zeroed in on was in Vienna, Austria, for a couple of reasons. First, it was the one campus located right in the middle of a famous city. Second, I liked the idea of studying German — which in my own mind seemed a "serious" foreign language. So right away I signed up for the Vienna program and enrolled in German, so that I could get in one full year before I went overseas.

Q: You went for your sophomore year.

KILNER: That's right. Somewhat differently from many colleges, the Stanford overseas program focused on sophomore year — although you could do it junior or even senior year. Looking back from my perspective today, it is clear to me that this year in Vienna was a real turning point for me. I was 19, and turned 20, during the program. I think that if one has a powerful experience at that age, it can stay with you for a very long time — perhaps always. That is what happened to me. In every way, from the first day to the last, it was a fantastic experience. I loved living in Vienna. I loved the students I was with. I loved my teachers.

There were always two professors from the Stanford home campus at any given time in Vienna. A few Austrian professors from the University of Vienna also were brought in to teach classes. One political science professor from the California campus had a particularly great impact upon me. His name was Kurt Steiner. He was a Viennese Jew, trained as a lawyer, who fled the country in 1938 and came to the United States, where he joined the U.S. Army. At the end of World War Two, Steiner became a member of the

legal team at the Tokyo trials. After that he came to Stanford, where he became a professor of political science. Some years later, as Austria's postwar history evolved in a positive direction, Professor Steiner took a strong interest in Stanford's Vienna program. I liked him, and found his personal story of reconciliation with his homeland to be very moving. So I asked him to become my faculty advisor in the Political Science Department after I returned to the home campus.

The Stanford program in Vienna also had a family program, which worked splendidly for me. I was connected with a very welcoming, middle-class Austrian family. Every week I would go over to their modest apartment for dinner, as well as for occasional weekend excursions with the family. They always spoke German with me, so that helped me improve my language skills a lot. In my free time, like most students I did a good deal of traveling around Europe. And every term the Stanford program had two organized field trips to a major European city. It so happened that in the fall of 1972 we went as a group to Berlin, while in the winter term we travelled to Istanbul. As it turned out, after I joined the Foreign Service a decade later my first two assignments were Istanbul and Berlin. How about that?!

Stanford follows a "quarter system" with three "quarters" making up an academic year. The Vienna program lasted two quarters, but I was having such a good time I didn't want to go back to California when it was over. So I decided to take the spring quarter off and continue traveling around Europe to see places I had not gotten to yet. I did that almost entirely on my own for about three months, relying mainly on a Eurail Pass to get around by train. At the end of the spring, I returned to California and enrolled in the summer quarter at the home campus to get back on schedule. I decided to major in political science, with a minor in journalism — essentially continuing the same interests that I had in high school. Nothing particularly noteworthy happened during my junior and senior years at Stanford. So I graduated with a B.A. in political science and journalism in June of 1974.

Q: Did you do a lot of European history as part of your studies?

KILNER: Not really. It seemed that every class I took started around 1870 and worked forward to the present. The classes I chose were basically contemporary history on different parts of the world: one on China, another on Latin America, a few on Europe. I shied away from classes oriented toward theory and model-building.

Q: And you continued your German studies?

KILNER: Yes, when I got back from Vienna I realized I liked studying German. I had been making decent progress in it, so I continued studying and gradually got better.

Q: Were there any professors that made a big impact on you at Stanford or in Vienna?

KILNER: The main one, as I said, was Kurt Steiner, who became my faculty advisor. Another Stanford professor I met in Vienna was George Rentz. He was a Middle East specialist, a historian by training, as I recall, who had worked for the ARAMCO

corporation in the Middle East for several years. He taught a class on the Balkans in Vienna. I liked him so I took a couple of courses from him on the Middle East when I was back in California. Europe remained my primary interest, but I found the Middle East interesting as well.

Q: You didn't start studying Turkish at Stanford?

KILNER: No, I started that only after I joined the Foreign Service. However, I gravitated toward Turkish because I had been to Istanbul twice by that time — once with the Stanford program and once with my wife, Jan. I guess I haven't said anything about her yet.

Q: This might be a good time.

KILNER: I agree. Jan also went to Palo Alto High School. In fact we were in the same schools from junior high school onward, so I had known who she was since the seventh grade. I never paid attention to her until senior year in high school, when then we noticed each other and started dating. I guess the best way to say it is that pretty quickly we fell head over heels in love with each other. By the end of the year, we were together all the time, and over the summer before starting college, too. Jan was a very smart young woman. In fact she was the only person in our high school who was accepted to Stanford and turned it down. I wasn't too happy about that at the time, but it may have been the best thing for our long-term relationship. She wanted to go to Pomona College in southern California — one of the Claremont group of colleges. It's probably the best small liberal arts school on the west coast. So Jan went there, but her parents were here in Palo Alto. So we kept seeing one another quite regularly and remained committed. We spent each summer together in Palo Alto. Then in June, 1974, just a few weeks after graduation, we got married. And we've now been married for 49 years. It looks like it might work out.

Q: Did you want to be a journalist when you graduated?

KILNER: That's a good question. I did toy seriously with the idea at one point. One year at Stanford I worked for a local newspaper in Cupertino (where Apple is now headquartered). Apple wasn't around then, but there was a small local newspaper. I covered school board meetings, city council meetings, local transportation projects — things like that. It was OK, but to be honest I found covering those issues rather boring. I enjoyed writing, but concluded that the "dues" one had to pay for a career in journalism were probably too high for me. So it was a useful experience in that it made me decide I didn't want to become a professional journalist. (Laughs.)

Q: So, you decided to go to grad school.

KILNER: Yes, but not immediately. Jan knew how much I had enjoyed the overseas experience. I would talk about it a lot. She saw that I had gotten the travel bug, and she was also sort of interested. Jan had not done a year abroad in college, and in fact had not even been outside of the country before we were married. But we worked out a plan for

how we would work for a year to save some money and then go spend it the following year traveling around Europe. After we married we found a little apartment in San Francisco for $250 a month — a small flat, a Victorian house. Jan had studied biochemistry at Pomona, and she was able to land a pretty decent job working in Menlo Park (near Palo Alto) at the Stanford Research Institute, now SRI International, doing laboratory work. I had a "nothingburger" job in San Francisco.

Well, if you really want to know, I was a telephone bill collector for a little publishing company. They published major league baseball programs and "buyers guides" for U.S. military bases. Both publications were loaded with advertisements, and many advertisers didn't pay their bills on time — or even at all. Most days I rode my bicycle from our apartment (not too far from Fisherman's Wharf), through the tony financial district, then past the winos south of Market Street to my nothingburger job as bill collector. It was an illuminating experience in that it taught me there were jobs out there that really were not very good. The experience also taught me that people will outright lie to you. There were some colorful characters in that company and it wasn't terrible. But anyone who knows me will tell you that a bill collector is the last thing I'm cut out for temperamentally. I soon realized that I had better pull up my socks and try to do something more serious professionally.

So, we did that for a year and saved some money. Then we followed through on our plan, and in September 1975 we took off for Europe. By that time, I had also decided I wanted to go to graduate school in international studies after we finished our travels. So, on the way to Europe, we stopped on the East Coast. I had interviews at The Johns Hopkins SAIS in Washington DC, at Tufts Fletcher School outside of Boston, and at Columbia University. All offered two-year masters degrees. I obtained all the application forms, and then we got on a plane — Icelandic Airlines, which was the cheapest way to fly at that time. Jan and I then spent the next ten months travelling continuously around Europe, East and West, from Ireland to Istanbul and everyplace in between. We each had little rucksacks and carried canvas suitcases around. (Laughs.) It took a few weeks, but we found a rhythm that we were able to sustain. We used Vienna, where I still had some friends, as a kind of "base of operations." We carved up the continent, so to speak, figuring out how much time we wanted to spend in each country. We were actually quite systematic in our planning.

Scott and wife, Jan, traveling for ten months in Europe, 1975-76

Q: You described the bag, but did you have Rick Steves' Europe Through the Back Door with you as well?

KILNER: The "cheap traveler's Bible" at that time was Arthur Frommer's book. When it first came out, it was called "Europe on $5 a Day." By the time we got there it was up to "Europe on $10 a Day." It's hard to believe now, but you really could cover food and lodging for that little in southern Europe — Spain, Greece, Italy. Scandinavia, Germany, and Holland were more expensive.

Q: It sounds like fun.

KILNER: It was an adventure, and after we hit our stride we really enjoyed it very much! Over the years I have always been very glad that we did it — that we had the courage to follow through on our "dream" before becoming tied down and entangled with everything that life brings along. We saw a lot, we experienced a lot, it felt like a real adventure. And to jump ahead slightly, even though we were just tourists for that year, I do think those travels gave me a helpful perspective for a Foreign Service career centered on European affairs. Anyway, while we were still traveling in Europe I sent in my grad school applications. In the spring I learned that I had been accepted at Columbia and SAIS, and put on the waiting list at Fletcher. But I had made up my mind that if I got into SAIS I would go there.

Q: SAIS had an Italy program, I believe. Did you go there?

KILNER: That is an interesting point. I selected SAIS because I thought it made sense to study international affairs in the nation's capital. As you say, the European studies department at SAIS offered the option of studying one year in Bologna and one year in Washington, or alternatively, two years in Washington. Bologna seemed an attractive

option, but I decided that since we had just spent a full year in Europe, but had never lived on the East Coast, I would do the full two years in Washington. In an odd way, Washington seemed to me like more of an adventure than going right back to Europe again.

SAIS was a really great experience! It also worked out well for Jan, as she landed a good job in a lab at the George Washington University's medical school. We made some wonderful friends at SAIS, young married couples like us who were just starting their careers. Academically, I focused on European studies and economics, with a little bit of American foreign policy. I liked what I was studying and felt motivated.

SAIS connected with my subsequent Foreign Service career in a couple of interesting ways. For example, the head of the European studies program, David Calleo, married Avis Bohlen. Avis was the daughter of the legendary diplomat Chip Bohlen, and she became one of the European Bureau's luminaries in her own right. I ended up working for Avis in Paris. Another darker connection was with one Kendall Myers, who taught British politics at SAIS while finishing his Ph.D. After getting his doctorate, Myers went to work for the State Department, both at the Foreign Service Institute and in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, or INR. Some years down the road he and his wife were arrested for spying for the Cuban government. As far as I know he is still behind bars. You can google him.

Q: I vaguely knew him. I remember the arrest news was quite shocking.

KILNER: This is not related to SAIS, but I also had some contact with one other person, a Foreign Service Officer, who was arrested for espionage — in this case, passing information to the Soviets. That was Felix Block, who was one of my predecessors as DCM at Embassy Vienna. (I'm jumping ahead here.) For about a year, Felix and I worked in the European Bureau at the same time, just before he was arrested. I'm not sure they ever made the charges against him stick.

Q: Let me just pause here and get some dates for the transcribers later. So, you graduated high school in 1970 right?

KILNER: High school 1970.

Q: And then Stanford University you graduated in …

KILNER: 1974.

Q: OK with a bachelor's in political science and communications. And then at Johns Hopkins SAIS you got a masters in 1978.

KILNER: Right. There was a two-year gap between Stanford and Johns Hopkins.

Q: Was there a name for the SAIS degree?

KILNER: It was a Master's in international studies — an interdisciplinary program.

Q: So at that point you and Jan go back to California, where you started working for a bank in 1978. What bank was it.?

KILNER: Crocker National Bank. Crocker was one of the old, mid-sized San Francisco banks. It had a relatively illustrious regional history, but eventually was eclipsed by larger U.S. banks. It ended up being bought out by Wells Fargo. In 1978 I took a job there in the "credit department," where I learned to analyze the financial statements of the bank's larger corporate borrowers. It was good training, and I learned a lot about how accounting and financial analysis worked. I learned to write clear, concise reports in a business environment, which I found interesting. I did that for two years and then was hired by another part of the bank to be a lending officer, focusing on middle market firms in the San Francisco Bay Area. That got me out of the "back office" and seemed to be a good next step. My aim was to eventually move to the international side of the bank. Meanwhile we were living across the bay in Berkeley. We bought our first house on the north side of the U.C. campus. Jan had entered a Ph.D. program in nutritional sciences at the university and liked it. So we were quite content with how things were working out.

Q: So then how was it that you got into the Foreign Service? What made you turn in that direction?

The process by which I joined the Foreign Service is a bit long and complicated, but I think it's a story worth telling. Is that OK?

Q: Of course.

As I said, things were going well for us, living in Berkeley and working in San Francisco. Nevertheless, the idea of joining the Foreign Service — which had entered my head at SAIS — was still something I thought about. To explain, I need to back up to our time in Washington.

So my first year at SAIS I was very much trying to figure out what the professional options were for a career that would take me overseas. Of course, it didn't take long to see that the State Department and the Foreign Service was one obvious path. In those years, SAIS was anything but a direct pipeline into the State Department. If there were about 50 people in my class, I believe that only three of us eventually ended up in the Foreign Service. Nevertheless, the State Department was something many students talked about, and many of us took the entrance examination to see how it would go. I was one of them. My first year at SAIS, without having prepared in any way, I signed up and waltzed into the Foreign Service written exam and fell flat on my face. I did not pass. It was a long, challenging test. Nevertheless, when the exam rolled around the next year, I decided to try again. At least that time I knew what I was getting into. I started reading The Economist magazine regularly and paying attention to current events more systematically. So, when I took the written exam a second time I passed it. This meant I could proceed to the second stage of the process.

This all took place in late 1977 and early 1978. At that time, the second stage of the exam process still consisted of only a one-hour interview with two or three experienced Foreign Service Officers. They basically asked the applicant a series of questions on a wide range of subjects. After about an hour, the interview ended and the applicant was asked to wait outside while the examiners discussed what they had just heard. After about 20 minutes, one of the examiners came out and informed the applicant whether he or she was "out" or "in." That was it! Period! Regrettably the day that I had my interview I had a low-grade fever of about 101. I just wasn't feeling well, but I thought I had to just power through it. At the end of the interview I knew I hadn't done that well. One of the interviewers came out and said sorry, but added that I was welcome to try again the following year. I was a little disappointed, but not terribly surprised.

So, when the Foreign Service didn't work out, Jan and I decided that we would move back to the Bay Area, where I would look for a job with one of the San Francisco banks. As I described earlier, I landed a position at Crocker Bank, and we settled into a new home in Berkeley. We liked Berkeley, and things were going pretty well for both of us — for Jan at the university and for me at the bank. Nevertheless, the idea of a career as a U.S. diplomat continued to rattle around in my head. So I decided to give the entrance exam one more shot. I took the exam at the Federal Building in San Francisco. By this time, the written exam was pretty easy, and I passed it without difficulty. When it came to the second stage, I learned that the process had changed from the one-hour interview to a much longer and varied assessment process. It lasted several hours and included different exercises, such as a mock negotiating session, and in-basket test, as well as a traditional interview. I must say I thought that this new process was much fairer than just one brief interview. Anyway this all took place in 1979.

I left the all-day assessment thinking I had done pretty well, so I was cautiously optimistic. A few months later, however, a letter arrived at our home in Berkeley. It was the "thin envelope" if you will. It said, "We regret to inform you that you did not pass the very competitive exam but you are welcome to try again." So, I became quite deflated at this point, and I thought to myself that the Foreign Service was just not destined to be. So Jan and I decided we should just get on with our lives and move forward on another track. I continued my work at the bank and things were going ok, and she was doing fine at the university. But then one morning, about six months later in the fall of 1979, the phone rang as I was heading off to work. (It was a wall-phone; there were no cell phones, of course.) So I picked it up and I could tell from a kind of hissing sound that it was a long distance call. The woman on the other end said she was calling from the Board of Examiners at the State Department. She said, "You remember, Mr. Kilner, that you took the exam last winter." "Yes, of course," I replied. She continued, "Well, we have just been clearing out our files for the current cycle of applications, getting ready for the next year and we came across your file. When we looked at it we realized that there had been a mistake. There was an arithmetic error in adding up your point total. We had told you that you hadn't passed, but in fact your cumulative scores were well above the cut-off line. Sorry about that. We should have sent you a positive letter rather than a negative one. But if you are still interested, we can restart the process, including the security

clearance procedures." I was VERY surprised by this. It all seemed quite unreal. So I hesitated for a minute and then said something like, "Yeah OK, you can send me the forms and I'll look them over." Then she said, "Gee Mr. Kilner you don't sound very enthusiastic." I thought to myself, "You jerk! You screw around with my application, mess around with my life, and then wonder why I am not jumping up and down for joy!!" But I bit my tongue (not for the last time) and reconfirmed that I might be interested.

So they sent me a long set of forms, mostly pertaining to background and security investigations. I filled them out carefully and returned them to Washington. Some time later I received a request to appear again down at the Federal Building in San Francisco for my security interview. Special Agent Bosco was the guy's name. He was a very serious, strait-laced diplomatic security agent. He asked the usual questions, and I answered them all carefully and fully. I was impressed with how detailed it was, but I thought that everything was fine. But then, about two or three weeks later, I received another call from his office again. They wanted me to come back again for a second interview because "Washington" wanted more detail in some areas. So I returned to the Federal Building for another conversation with Agent Bosco. He explained that the first thing Washington asked for was more information on what I had been doing in Eastern Europe, given that Jan and I had been traveling there for no apparent purpose. They wanted to know exactly where I had been, where I had stayed, etc. etc. Fortunately I had kept a kind of travel diary from our year traveling in Europe. So in fact I had a day-by-day record of where we had been the whole time. I was able to give them a very detailed account of what we had been doing.

Q: Which Eastern European countries were you in?

KILNER: We had traveled to East Berlin, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and then down into Turkey. The only one we skipped was Poland.

So that was one vector. And after I provided that information to them they had no more questions about Eastern Europe. But there was another issue about which Agent Bosco questioned me very aggressively. To my considerable surprise, he wanted to know what I was doing in high school in connection with any radical student activities. As I mentioned earlier, I was the editor of our official high school newspaper. But there was also an underground newspaper, literally called the "Radical Rag," and Bosco wanted to know if I was aware of it. I said that of course I was. He asked if I had worked for it, and I said no. Then he asked if I knew people who worked on the Radical Rag, and I replied that of course I did. It was not a huge high school and I did not have my head in the sand! Then Bosco asked about anti-Vietnam War demonstrations and whether I had participated in them. I said there were demonstrations and that I had joined a couple.
Then he asked if I had ever been arrested. I said no, I never had been arrested. They were peaceful demonstrations. Then Special Agent Bosco stared at me and said, "What would you say if I told you that we have been told you were arrested?" This really caught me by surprise, so I paused to think whether I might be forgetting something. Bosco then glared at me and said, "Mr. Kilner, I don't want any mental gymnastics! Just answer the question." So I said, "Well if someone has told you I had been arrested, they were

mistaken because it didn't happen." That ended the exchange. Later on, when I was in the Foreign Service, of course I came to know many Diplomatic Security Officers and respected their work. Several became good friends. A few times, I asked them about this interview experience I've just described. My diplomatic security colleagues said that sounded quite unusual, and indeed borderline unprofessional. And I always wondered why they had delved so deeply into my high school years. But then, about five years ago, from an old high school classmate of mine I found out about a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, which had revealed that in fact the FBI had been monitoring our high school in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They seemed to have a source or two in the school administration who told them which students were doing what. My friend sent me a copy of the FOIA information, and I saw that I was mentioned in the FBI file. I was described as sympathetic to some of the radical student activities, but not a hard-core activist. So I'm sure that FBI file had a lot to do with my security clearance interview. It's a strange story, isn't it?

Q: I remember in the 1970s, older generations would look at normal protests as threatening, and it almost became funny. In the 1970s, James Watt was the interior secretary and he tried to prevent the Beach Boys from playing on July 4th. So, it is so odd that an old man would find the Beach Boys to be radical. I know it ended up affecting you, but that was my reaction to this overreaction to a demonstration in high school.

KILNER: I still find it rather mind boggling. So that second interview came and went, and I knew I was just going to have to wait a while for the process to run its course. Over the following weeks and months I heard from a couple of friends that someone had come knocking on their door to ask questions about me. My friends were surprised and found it a strange experience, but they all apparently said nice things about me. It was probably early January of 1981 when I received notification that I had cleared the process and was being placed on the economic roster for new hires. They indicated that I was pretty well placed on the roster and that I stood a good chance of getting a call before too long. In fact, I hadn't been on the roster for more than a month or two when I received an offer to come back to Washington to start A-100 class in April of 1981.

Q: What did Jan say?

KILNER: We had talked a lot about this, of course, and agreed that if the Foreign Service came through, that's what we would do. Jan had completed the work for her Masters degree, but had not gone too much further toward the Ph.D. In 1980, while we were still in a wait-and-see mode, Jan had the opportunity to do some nutrition field work in Papua New Guinea with her faculty advisor. They were really out in the bush. After that work was completed, I flew there to join her so that we could see some of that country together. We had thought that if I got into the Foreign Service we would be sent to a series of hell holes. In fact, on that part we miscalculated. I didn't get sent to many hell holes in my career.

I know it has taken some time to go through all this, but it is a story that in one form or another that I have recounted to many people — especially to young aspiring Foreign Service Officers. There are three lessons that I have drawn from this experience. One is

that it gave me an early insight into how big bureaucracies can function or malfunction. Things can go wrong because "stuff happens." A second, more serious lesson was that if you really want to do something, keep beating your head against the wall even if the process is slow and frustrating. It may take a while, but keep at it if it's really what you really want. The third lesson, based on my own experience, is that there is zero correlation between how hard it is to get into the State Department and how things will work once you get in. It was tough for me to get in, but once I was inside the tent things just started to go swimmingly from the very beginning. So don't assume that the ease or difficulty of the entrance process is a good indicator of how you will do in the Foreign Service. The last thing I might add is that I have been teased more than a few times by friends to whom I have recounted this story. They inevitably "question my judgment," asking why in the world I would want to join an organization that functioned in this way. But it was meant jokingly.

Q: It is true you have to have patience to overcome the odd parts of the bureaucracy. Do you want to discuss your orientation program?

Scott and Jan leaving Berkeley for Washingnton, DC

KILNER: Sure. So in April 1981 I was asked to report for entry level training in Washington. I remained there until February 1982.

Q: Where did you all live in that period?

KILNER: We actually lived in the same apartment house where we had lived when I was at SAIS. This was The Delano in northwest DC — 2745 29th Street, NW. It was in the Woodley Park area, right behind the former Sheraton Hotel on Connecticut Avenue. We

had stumbled upon this apartment house before I started graduate school, and we liked the area a lot. It was very convenient. A metro stop had opened up in 1976 and there was a bus line that went right down Connecticut Avenue to the State Department. Somehow, we had found out that one of our neighbors from that earlier period was interested in subletting her apartment. So we stayed there for ten months while in Washington for training.

Scott's entering Foreign Service class in April 1981

In my entering Foreign Service class ("A-100") there were about 40 of us. I recall that this orientation class lasted about two months. This was followed by language training — in my case six months of Turkish — and finally two weeks of consular training before I went overseas. In my A-100 class there were people of widely varying backgrounds. I was probably very close to the median: 29 years old, with a master's degree, and three years' work experience. There were a few people who came straight out of undergraduate study but not many. There were some older people too. It was really a fun group, and we were all enthusiastic. There was a lot of socializing among classmates. Many classmates lived at a rental apartment complex called "Oakwood" in northern Virginia.

In terms of social activities, we had a tennis tournament at one point. I think I mentioned I had been a tennis player in high school, and I ended up winning our A-100 class tournament. My trophy was dubbed the "Alpha Cup" — which was a crotch-protector like a baseball catcher wears. We also had a Halloween party where everybody dressed up in what they imagined to be a folkloric costume from the country to which they were assigned for their first post. I had been assigned to Turkey, so I dressed up as the terrible Turk with a fez, a big black mustache, baggy pants and so on.

On the formal side of training, we all had to take a language aptitude test or MLAT. One section of that test was an exercise to see how many incomprehensible words you could memorize within a very short time period. I was amused to find out later that these words were actually Kurdish, with which I had some contact during my years in Turkey. There was a lecture on etiquette during our training class, which included how to use a fish knife. Even back in 1981 this seemed very old-fashioned to all of us. Like something out of the 1950s. That lecture was the subject of a lot of joking afterwards. I also recall when the veil was lifted a bit on the relationship between the State Department and the intelligence side of the government. This was an eye-opener to most of us. In fact you could have heard a pin drop in the class when they explained some of the details on how that worked.

Of course, the big day that everyone really cared about was when we all found out where we would be going for our first assignments. We had all been provided with a list of job openings — the same number of job openings as there were people in our class - about 40. We were asked to rank our top six or eight choices. Each person could also provide a short justification for why s/he was particularly qualified for a particular opening. We had a week to puzzle over this list. It was actually a more varied range of posts than I had expected. There were many so-called "visa mills" — Manilla, Mexico City, etc. And there were several small African posts, as well as obscure Caribbean islands and Central American countries, but also a few European posts. Stockholm was on the list, as was Bucharest. There might even have been one German consulate. But the Post that really caught my eye was Istanbul, Turkey. I had been to Istanbul twice, once with the Stanford program and once later with Jan. I thought it was a really interesting city. I believe that many people in our class were scared away from this position because it meant studying Turkish for six months before going there. But I had tested out of German and so was off language probation. Because of that, the assignments division may have been willing to put me into Turkish language training. So I put Istanbul on the top of my list. A couple of weeks later they handed out this list of assignments to our class. We all waited with bated breath. When I saw that I had gotten Istanbul I was thrilled! Jan was also very happy. So we finished the A-100 class and I went into the Turkish language training.

Q: Were there any notable classmates that did well or advanced with you during your years in the foreign service?

KILNER: Within our class there was a wide range of long-term outcomes. I would say there were no real superstars. But we did have a few who became ambassadors. Margaret Scobey was a classmate of mine. We found ourselves in the same Senior Seminar class years later. Her last posting was Ambassador to Egypt. Alex Arvizu became an Asia hand, but was given an ambassadorship to Albania at the end of his career. Peter Bodde was another classmate, a management officer who took a series of very tough assignments and did very well. I believe he was Ambassador to Nepal. On the other hand, our class also had some who lasted about five years and then dropped out.

Q: And then did you celebrate your flag day when you got your assignments?

Turkish language training in old FSI building in Rosslyn, VA

KILNER: To be honest I don't remember just what we did, but almost everyone was happy. It was the start of a great adventure! We were all comparing notes and talking about how great the country we were going to would be. We were excited and enthusiastic! So, I went into Turkish language training. This was before the Schultz campus on Arlington Boulevard — the Foreign Affairs Training Center — had opened. So, we were still in a high-rise in Rosslyn. The Turkish language program was not huge, but neither was it tiny. There were two classes of four or five people each. The Turkish instructors were delightful. They really communicated enthusiasm for their country and their culture. We had area studies integrated into the language studies. It was actually Aegean area studies, including Greece, Turkey, & Cyprus. Area studies was quite well-run, with interesting lectures. It was fun to hear about Greece as well as Turkey.

I really threw myself into Turkish language studies as hard as I could. I was motivated and just spent every waking moment studying. You may recall that the full Turkish course was 44 weeks but untenured junior officers (as they were called then) could only get 24 weeks of language training. That was to get you up to a S-2/R-2 level. By the end I felt my speaking was going pretty well. Reading Turkish was tougher for me than the speaking part. When the final exam arrived, I was pretty sure I would do OK. I ended up coming out with a speaking score of 2+ and a reading score of 3. That's the reading level expected at the end of 44 weeks. Well, I was surprised by this, but my language classmates were even more surprised. They knew what my reading skills were like, and they asked me "how the hell did you do that?!" I laughed and said I just got lucky. Anyway, I went out with some confidence on the language front. It was a good experience.

Finally, the last segment of training was two weeks of Consular training — just the basics on visa work and a little bit on American citizen services. It was fine. Candidly, the only thing I still remember clearly is a role playing session of a Consular visit to an imprisoned American citizen. The person who played the role of the prisoner was encouraged to ham it up. We were all pretty relaxed at this point, so we kind of let her rip when it came to playing the role of a demented prisoner. I think I ended up throwing my socks at the Consular Officer who was visiting me.

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1982-1983: ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Q: Good afternoon it is May 18, 2023. Scott, I believe we left off in the year 1982.

KILNER: Right. February of 1982.

Q: You headed off to your first post in the foreign service. So you want to take it from here?

KILNER: I'd be happy to. But before diving into some of the details in that assignment I would like to step back a bit and place it in the arc of my career. Today — 41 years after I arrived in Istanbul for my first assignment — when I think back on my career, I'd say there were three big issues that I had a meaningful association with. One was working in East Germany just before the surge toward German reunification. Another was my year in Afghanistan. And the third was my association with Turkey for more than 30 years. Little did I realize that when I put Istanbul at the top of my first bid list, in A-100 class, that it would be the first of four assignments in that country, plus one TDY after the first Iraq war. Overall, Jan and I spent nearly ten years in Turkey, which is a lot by Foreign Service standards! It worked out very well and there were several reasons why we kept going back when the opportunity arose.

First, we found Turkey to be a simply fascinating county in many ways. Historically, it's the heir to the Ottoman empire — one of the world's great, long-enduring empires. Archaeologically it has extensive Greek and Roman ruins, as well as Byzantine architecture. Geographically it has stunningly beautiful Aegean and Mediterranean coastlines, along with the Black Sea coast. The more rugged interior is also beautiful in a different way. And the legendary Bosporus Straits run right through the middle of Istanbul. Second, in terms of foreign policy Turkey is always important to the United States because of its strategic location. And finally, I have to say that, as a broad cultural characterization, Turks simply are very nice people, very hospitable. They can be difficult to deal with at a bureaucratic and governmental level, but one-on-one or in small groups they are generally lovely.

Q: Ankara is the capital, but Istanbul is the big city, right?

KILNER: That's right. Istanbul is the capital of the country in every way except for the seat of government. You could make a rough analogy with New York and Washington, but it is even more skewed. Let me now try to describe where Turkey was at the time we landed there. In the late 1970s Turkey had passed through a very dark period, both economically and politically for a combination of reasons. The late 1970s, into 1980, was a time of civil strife and near economic collapse. This turmoil opened the door to the third and most far-reaching military coup that Turkey has had since the republic was formed. There was a first coup in 1960, another in 1971, and then the third one in 1980. The Turkish military–who saw themselves as the guardians of the republic–believed things were getting out of control. So, in September of 1980 they staged a coup and quickly took control of the whole country.

We arrived roughly 17 months after that coup, but martial law was still in effect everywhere. This meant there was a nighttime curfew in most places including Istanbul. There were Jandarma — a sort of paramilitary national police force — on the street throughout the country. They were very visible in Istanbul. The economy was still almost completely closed to the outside world. Turkey had been following a failing autarkic model, in which imports were severely restricted. You could feel the depressed economic atmosphere, and you could literally smell it in the air with all the cheap, soft coal being burned everywhere. In the shops there were essentially no imports — although the Turks were pretty good at producing domestically what they needed on a basic level. The lighting was dim everywhere. To me, Istanbul's airport provides a vivid frame of reference. In 1982 the international airport in Istanbul was basically just a small one-room building, dimly lit with neon lights. Anyone arriving in Istanbul today would find that hard to believe. There are now three major airports in the city. The newest one, which just opened out near the Black Sea, is one of the biggest in the world. Istanbul rivals Dubai and Doha as a global hub for airline travel.

The road going from the airport to the center city in 1982 was just two lanes along the Sea of Marmara coastline — you couldn't even call it a highway. Today there is a big freeway. Television at that time consisted of two state-run black and white channels, which broadcasted "stimulating" shows on things like sunflower seed production. Telephone service was just dismal. The economy overall had a gloomy "East Bloc" feel to it. Nevertheless, for all of this "doom-and-gloom," the city of Istanbul maintained a mysteriously magical quality. Most of us at the Consulate clearly felt this, one way or another. Part of it had to do with having one of the world's most strategic and important waterways at our doorstep. The Bosporus cuts right through the center of the city, connecting the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. Every day smoke-belching ferries crossed back and forth, transporting Turks between the European and Asian sides of the city. And every day there were Soviet warships going up and down the straits. There were still many decaying but very beautiful Ottoman buildings, including the great mosques overlooking the Golden Horn. So it was a mysterious but not frightening environment, decaying yet still beautiful.

A word about our living situation. After a short time in a transit apartment, Jan and I were assigned to a modest, brand new apartment located on a hillside up the Bosporus. From our little balcony we had a splendid view down the straits towards the Golden Horn and that iconic skyline with all the mosques on the horizon. The little neighborhood of Ortaköy, a former fishing village, was just below us at the foot of the hill, where we could do our shopping. Jan, who is a biochemist by training, was able to land a teaching job at the main English-language university, a very prestigious Turkish university — the University of the Bosporus (Boğaziçi Üniversitesi) — so she had something very rewarding to do. Her work pulled us into a wonderful circle of Turkish friends not connected to my work at the Consulate.

My job in Istanbul, like most new Foreign Service Officers, was as a visa officer in the consular section. It was a small operation, only three of us in the section — so not at all a "visa mill." There was a mid-level section chief, Rex Himes. He was a good boss. Then there were two first-tour junior officers — myself and the other J.O., Ed Kata. Ed and I arrived in Istanbul within a couple of weeks of each other. The Consulate General at that time was located in a beautiful building called the Palazzo Corpi. It had been built by an Italian shipping magnate as his personal residence at the end of the 19th century — a lovely Italianate building that the U.S. government had acquired at the beginning of the 20th century. For a period it served as the U.S. Embassy to the Ottoman Empire and then to the new Turkish Republic. After the capital shifted to Ankara, the U.S. Embassy moved there too, and the Palazzo Corpi became the U.S. Consulate General.

The "Palazzo Corpi," once the U.S. Embassy to the Ottoman Empire and then to the new Turkish Republic. It became a Consulate General after the Turkish capital moved to Ankara

When I arrived in Istanbul, the Consular Section was located on the ground floor of this beautiful building; the Consul General, the Political Section, and the Economic Officer were upstairs. It was a very cool setting in which to work. Every morning I would walk up a few marble stairs into this beautiful Italianate building for work. My office was just inside the front entrance. However, the Consul General and the others upstairs were not wild about this layout because they had to escort their VIP visitors through the

hurly-burly of the visa applicants' waiting room — often including a lot of Iranians, which I'll get to in a minute. By today's standards, the security measures were incredibly lax. The visa applicants did have to go through a gate and very light screening. But then they waited in a room directly across from my office, with no real separation or barrier. The visa counter at which interviews were conducted was simply a wooden counter with no protective glass or anything. I would stand on one side and the applicants on the other. If the applicant had bad breath, I had to step back a couple of feet. As you know, today almost everywhere around the world bulletproof glass separates the interviewing visa officer from the applicants, and the conversation is conducted through a microphone. None of that existed then. Because there were only three of us in the section, the Section Chief did the American citizen services, while Ed Kata and I would alternate between doing nonimmigrant and immigrant visa work. About every six months we would switch. When our boss, Rex, was away either Ed or I would take on the American citizen services work. This meant that in the course of this first assignment I got my feet wet in every aspect of consular work. I found this quite a good way to get used to my new professional world. The American Citizens work was not very burdensome, but we had a pretty significant and complex visa workload. But I found it interesting to talk everyday with Turks from all walks of life.

Q: Were there any long-term prisoners? Was there anybody in jail?

KILNER: Not that I became involved with. I recall there were a few cases, but not many. Some of the old timers reading this might remember a movie from the 1970s called "Midnight Express," which offered a sensationalized version of a young American man's experience in a Turkish prison. Those FSO's who had some personal involvement with that case thought the movie was a real hatchet job. Turkish courts and the prison system do leave much to be desired. But that said, Midnight Express was still a hatchet job that created a terrible image problem for Turkey. Anyway, that case had been resolved by the time we arrived in Istanbul, and there weren't any other serious prisoner cases of that caliber. Regarding American Citizen Services more generally, I recall once helping an elderly American man whose wife unfortunately had died on a cruise ship. I went out to the Istanbul airport to keep him company and explain how his wife's remains would be repatriated. He was very nice, and indeed so grateful that after he got home he wrote a letter to Secretary of State George Schultz praising my efforts. It was a very kind letter, which I kept in my personnel file until the end of my career.

I confess that I found immigrant visa work rather routine and sometimes a little boring. It was quite formulaic, as long as there was no evidence of fraud on the forms. Much more interesting to me was the immigrant visa (NIV) work, given the complexity of Istanbul society at that time. The NIV workload was significant but not oppressive. Having to make a fair decision on whether an applicant was an intending immigrant — the key decision a consular officer has to make — was complicated because of the social and economic dynamics in Istanbul at that time. The country had just come out of a period of great turmoil, but the future remained quite uncertain. Conditions had become more stable, but for how long? Were applicants just trying to hedge their bets against an uncertain future by having a U.S. visa in their passport?

Q: Was there still, at that time, a German guest worker program for Turks?

KILNER: There were certainly Turkish guest workers in Germany, but the big waves had gone earlier — in the 60s and 70s. By the 1980s Germany was putting the brakes on that program. Besides the economic factors in Turkey, the ethnic lines were very complex. Istanbul was (and still is) the home of most remaining ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey. The Armenian community still there is overwhelmingly in Istanbul. There were other smaller Christian and Jewish minorities as well, each with complicated ties and loyalties to the Turkish state. And finally there was the Iranian factor. The Iranian revolution had taken place in 1979, and by 1982 there were something like a million Iranians in Turkey. They had walked across the mountainous border in the east or else found some other way to enter Turkey. And the great majority of these Iranians were in Istanbul. Before the revolution hundreds of thousands of Iranians had gone to study and work in the United States. So there were many family connections, and those in the U.S. were often trying to bring in their relatives any way they could.

So, we had all of these Iranians showing up at our consulate trying to get "visitor visas" to the United States. Those cases were very difficult for us to assess because we didn't know anything, really, about official Iranian documents — what was real, what was fraudulent, and how to assess them. So, under the direction of our boss, I think correctly, we took a very hard line. There had to be something very unusual and persuasive about a case for us to issue a non-immigrant visitor's visa to an Iranian. Our refusal rate was well over 90 percent. In fact at one point the Bureau of Consular Affairs in Washington started getting on our case a bit, telling us we were being too strict and that we should ease up. That was the Consular Chief's problem, but it definitely added some spice to my work. The visa work also was quite helpful language-wise. Even though I would ask the same questions over and over again, I had an opportunity every day to use Turkish and hear it spoken in an unending variety of ways. There was always a local Turkish employee standing by who could help if I got stuck, but after a while I was able to do those interviews pretty comfortably on my own in Turkish — which felt good.

Vice Consul Kilner adjudicating non-immigrant visa applications in his office in the Palazzo Corpi in 1983

One other important thing was my own career development in Istanbul. As you know I was an economic cone officer. So I was hoping that after my first tour, I would get an economic assignment. The Consulate's senior management was quite aware of this. So, the Deputy Principal Officer, who also had responsibility for economic reporting, took me under his wing. From time to time, he would invite me to join him for business meetings or lunches. I would participate in the conversation and then write up a reporting cable afterward.

Besides these meetings with the Deputy Principal Officer, I came to know the Commercial Officer from the Commerce Department pretty well, a fellow named Lincoln McCurdy. He had married a nice Turkish woman and so understood the country quite well. Lincoln once took me along on one of his commercial trips to the interior of the country. It was great fun to see the business side of the U.S.-Turkish relationship. These economic and career-development opportunities culminated when I was asked to do an in-depth report on the Turkish banking sector. Because I had worked in banking before I joined the Foreign Service, consulate management thought this was natural. I interviewed bankers, did some research and then wrote a rather long report. The embassy thought it was good and (perhaps with a little prodding from consulate management) sent me a nice little kudos message.

Q: By the way, who was the Deputy Principal Officer? Was it somebody whom you stayed in touch with later?

KILNER: Very much so. His name was Louis Kahn, and he was well known on the Turkey circuit. A very nice man, and very passionate about Turkey. In fact, one of the things that contributed a lot to my growing enthusiasm for the country was that during this assignment some of the State Department's old "Turkey hands" were still around. I'm thinking particularly of Lou Kahn and Consul General Daniel Newberry. Lou had previously served both in Izmir and Ankara. Dan Newberry had been the Political Counselor in Ankara. These were people who had been associated with Turkey going back in the 1960s and were able to pass along colorful lore and experiences. Unfortunately, both have now passed away — Lou, just a couple of years ago.

Q: I have gotten the impression that Istanbul was often a post that would bristle a little at being under chief of mission authority. Every once in a while, there would be some tension between the embassy and the consulate. How was it during your time?

KILNER: That is a good point. And in fact — "spoiler alert" — both my first Foreign Service assignment and my last one were in Istanbul: from the bottom of the totem pole to the top as Consul General some 30 years later. Particularly the second time, as Consul General, I was keenly tuned to the relationship with the Embassy. We can discuss this in more detail when we get there. But the point that you make is a good one. My perception is that there are a handful of countries, Turkey being one, where we have a large, important constituent post outside the capital. A big Consulate General wants to have some independence, but the embassy has to make sure that the U.S. Mission as a whole is coherent and marching in the same direction. I followed this dynamic in Turkey

reasonably closely over the years, and there were definitely periods of tension between ConGen Istanbul and Embassy Ankara. It would ebb and flow depending on the circumstances and the personalities involved. One sees the same dynamic in a few other countries — for example, the relationship between Embassy Moscow and our Consulate General in St. Petersburg.

Q: And Brazil?

KILNER: Yes, São Paulo and Brasilia. So back to the early 1980s in Turkey, the U.S. Ambassador was Robert Strausz-Hupé through almost the entire Reagan administration. He was there for seven or eight years, I believe. Bluntly put, he had good qualifications to be an ambassador, but was too old by that time. He was in his 80s, and had already been ambassador a couple of times before. Strausz-Hupé was born in Vienna during the Habsburg Monarchy. Anyway, although his office was in Ankara, he LOVED Istanbul and would come whenever he could. Throughout my 18-month tour he came to Istanbul every month or two. Consul General Newberry used to just roll his eyes when he announced that "yet another" ambassadorial visit was coming up. Strausz-Hupé was very demanding. He would expect to be wined and dined. On top of that, the consulate had to find an apartment for him along the Bosphorus that met his standards. So, his visits were a burden, but otherwise I don't recall any major tension between the consulate and the embassy.

Q: Did we have a naval or military attaché in Istanbul?

KILNER: For a Consulate, we had a significant presence of other agencies. There were several military representatives, although nothing compared with Ankara. DEA, the Drug Enforcement Agency, maintained an office as well.

Q: What was your view of the U.S.-Turkish bilateral relationship generally at that time?

Turkey remained under military rule throughout my entire first tour, so there was minimal overt political activity. Our poor, lone political officer at the Consulate was always looking for something to do because there were formally no political parties. So he would focus on human rights issues and religious minorities — things like that. The U.S. government was certainly communicating to the Turkish authorities that we expected a return to civilian government at the appropriate time. But it appeared to me that we were not pushing them very hard. We were willing to give them time to sort out some very difficult domestic problems.

It was my strong impression from Turks we came to know both inside and outside the Consulate that there was widespread relief when the military intervened in September 1980 and put a stop to the street violence and near-anarchy that had been emerging. The situation had really gotten out of control, most people felt. Having said that, however, we did start to hear some grumbling about where the military was taking Turkey. This was particularly the case among our friends at Bosphorus University. In the 1970s, Turkish universities had been hotbeds of protests, so after the coup the military cracked down on

them quite firmly. New rules and regulations were put in place — for example requiring academic service in more remote parts of the country, which faculty members in Istanbul did not like.

As the years have passed, I think my perspective of that period has shifted somewhat. I think the initial relief and enthusiasm for the military intervention began to fray and ebb. As months of military rule piled up, Turks increasingly saw the political and legal strait jacket the military was forcing on the country. So dissatisfaction and unhappiness grew more intense over time. In fact, I would say that by the time I returned to Istanbul for my last assignment, Turks were looking back at the early 1980s very differently. In hindsight, they came to see the period negatively because military rule had stunted Turkey's political growth and maturity. But this view in the rear-view mirror was quite different from how it felt at the time.

Q: Is there anything more you would like to add about your first assignment, either personal or professional?

Perhaps I can wrap up by talking a bit more about the personal reasons why we enjoyed this assignment and being Turkey so much — beyond the attractions of Istanbul as a city. Probably the most important factor was the many Turkish friends that we made. I would say that during my 32 years in the Foreign Service the best set of friendships we developed outside of work were in Istanbul. Many of these friendships were in the circle of university academics that we met through Jan, and we spent a lot of time with them. Even though these individuals — who were roughly our age — worked at an English language university and spoke English well, they encouraged us to use Turkish and so spoke to us in Turkish all the time. Jan's and my language skills got better, and that was very encouraging. Separately, there were also a few merchants in the Grand Bazaar whom we came to know very well. We spent time with their families, at their homes, and over time developed much more than a business relationship. Serendipitously, we even became very close friends with a young guy — about our age — who sold chickens in the village where we did our shopping. His name was Necmi, and for some reason he was interested in spending time with a junior American diplomat. Necmi was actually a university graduate, quite intelligent and severely under-employed. He introduced us to a couple of his friends and together we would go to soccer games, to the beach, to concerts — things like that. So in these various ways we pretty quickly gained a significant group of Turkish friends our age, and we got better and better in the Turkish language. These relationships were one of the things we liked most about our assignment.

I'd also like to mention one other thing that was unique about ConGen Istanbul. This was that it was the only U.S. diplomatic post in the world that had — and to this day still has — a motor launch. This is the *Hiawatha* — a rather small, but beautiful and genteel wooden boat built in the 1930s and imported into the country by the then U.S. Ambassador for transportation and representational purposes. Even after the embassy moved to Ankara, the consulate retained this boat for official representational purposes. During my first assignment, Consul General Newberry did use it to entertain important work contacts, but when it wasn't booked the Consulate and Embassy staff could use it for a modest fee. At

that time, the *Hiawatha* essentially operated as part of the motor pool. This has now changed, and you will hear more about the *Hiawatha* when we get to my last assignment.

Q: It sounds a bit like the situation in Russia where there are two dachas, and people can take out reservations to stay there.

KILNER: Could be. Occasionally on weekends a group of us would pay the modest fee to use the boat, and we invited our young Turkish friends. They thought this was fantastic! We would motor up and down the Bosphorus and into the Golden Horn, taking in views of all the beautiful Ottoman architecture along the shoreline. I remember thinking, "This is supposed to be a hardship post?! I am getting a 15 percent pay differential for this?! Man, did I ever choose the right profession!!"

I also learned during this assignment that Moslem countries are as good as Catholic ones in terms of the religious holidays — maybe even better. There are many holidays during the year, including two long ones. We used all of them to travel whenever we could. Before we left the U.S., we had purchased a little Peugeot, the rough overseas model with good suspension. On holidays, we would just get in the car and take off — down the Dardanelles, along the Aegean coast, into the Anatolian interior. We even got to the far eastern part of the country, although not in our own car. Even though our assignment was only 18 months, we packed in an incredible amount of travel. And we saw how rich and beautiful Turkey was.

Foreign Service Officers often have a special feeling about their first assignment. Not always but frequently. This was absolutely the case for us! In fact, the only bad thing about it was that it was so short — only 18 months, which was the general rule for first-tour assignments back then. I was never so upset over having to leave a place as when the gong sounded in Istanbul. I was literally in tears. However, the one thing that softened the blow was that I had gotten my top-choice for my next assignment, and I was very happy about that. This was to East Germany, which we can talk about next time.

Q: But it was hard to leave.

KILNER: It was really hard to leave Istanbul!

Q: And you had no idea that you would be back in Turkey for another 8 ½ years.

KILNER: I was determined to find a way to come back to Turkey sometime, somehow —by hook or by crook.

Q: I want to ask you about something on security. You arrived days or maybe a couple of weeks after the assassination of a Turkish Consul in Los Angeles in 1982. Do you remember that? And then you mentioned that you traveled all around in your car, and that you went to the far east, which I assume is a Kurdish area. Were there no security concerns?

KILNER: There were some, but nothing like what came later. In fact, security concerns had actually eased because of the military intervention and martial law. In the period before the1980 coup, there had been considerable security problems. Not the transnational Islamic terrorism that emerged later, but rather indigenous, Turkish ideological terrorism — the radical left against the radical right. The leftist extremists especially were very anti-American. I don't remember all the details, but there had been some targeting of U.S. military officers. I think that one or two that had been shot. I first heard about this during my A-100 class, and it belatedly dawned on me that serving overseas as a diplomat could actually be dangerous.

As for Armenian terrorism, that was inevitably connected with the huge issue of the Armenian genocide of 1915 and its legacy. Since that catastrophe, Turks and Armenians have had great difficulty finding a path toward reconciliation; to this day the Turkish government still refuses to fully acknowledge what happened in 1915, and this has led to enormous resentment within the Armenian diaspora outside of Turkey. In the United States and in Europe, a minority within the Armenian diaspora turned to violence and a wave of assassinations of Turkish diplomats began in the 1970s. Something like 30 Turkish diplomats and their family members were assassinated by Armenians over a period of about ten years, from the mid-1970s to the mid 1980s. The assassination of the Consul General in Los Angeles occurred toward the end of this period. It was of course a very big problem for the Turkish diplomatic service, and I think it hardened the Turkish government's views on the historic Armenian question. I should add that the Armenian community in Turkey faced a very different situation than those abroad. In general, those families who had decided to remain in Turkey just kept their heads down. They knew that many Turks considered them second-class citizens, but they were basically left alone as long as they kept quiet.

Q: On a different subject ten years later, the Turks were very concerned about Russian oil tanker traffic passing through the straits. There had been an oil tanker accident, but do you remember when you were there on your first tour, was there any tension over the increase in oil traffic? Or did that come with the fall of the Soviet Union?

KILNER: Well this was an issue with which I became deeply involved in a later assignment. In the 1990s I was assigned as Economic Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Ankara. One of our biggest issues was oil and gas transport, both by pipeline and by tanker, out of the Caucasus and to world markets. Tanker traffic that passed through the Bosporus was very much a part of that. There had been a number of accidents in the Turkish straits. The worst one, I believe, was a Romanian tanker that caught fire and exploded near the mouth of the Bosporus. This occurred in 1979, so a couple of years before I got there.

Q: So, it was an issue even then.

KILNER: Indeed. The Bosphorus passes right through the middle of a very densely populated city, with buildings that go right down to the shoreline. Even in 1980 there were about four million inhabitants in Istanbul. Today there are at least 16 million. And

in the early 1980s, vessel traffic management in the straits was still quite primitive. This changed, but only much later.

Q: We will look at these issues further in a couple of interviews from now. But I'm personally interested because I was working on Caspian oil pipelines from '94 to '96 in Washington. So you and I were working on the same issues, but just missed each other.

KILNER: Yes, I arrived in Ankara in the summer of '96 — probably just after you left the energy job in Washington. I was just up to my ears in those issues, but they were fascinating!

Q: Well, we will have fun talking about it, because it is one of my favorite issues. Final question: were there any tremors or earthquakes or discussions of earthquake preparedness? I think Istanbul is one of those places where they are waiting for the big one. Right?

KILNER: In fact Istanbul had a big one in 1999, in which nearly 20,000 people died! The epicenter was not precisely in Istanbul, but rather a bit east of the city, near Izmit. Everyone has long known that Turkey is seismically a very active zone. We knew that in 1982-3, but I don't recall anything being said or done at the Consulate to prepare for an emergency — other than hoping it wouldn't happen on our watch! Perhaps I just didn't know about preparedness work being done in other parts of the Mission, but I kind of doubt it. To jump ahead again to the time when I was Consul General, from 2010-2013, we took earthquake preparedness VERY seriously. We developed scenarios and plans as best we could, but I still could not help hoping fervently that "the big one" would not happen on my watch. There is only so much you can do to prepare for a major catastrophe like that.

Q: Oops, there is one more question. I know that at some point in your career you became an avid photographer. You haven't mentioned that until now. But were you taking a lot of photos then?

KILNER: I was! I started taking pictures with some seriousness in college — during those overseas adventures we talked about last time, both with Stanford and then on our personal travels later. I continued that hobby from the very beginning of the Foreign Service. That's the good news. The bad news is that all my photos were slides up until 2006, when I switched to digital photography. I still have all my slides piled in a closet. Even if I lived as long as Methuselah, I still would not have time to digitize them all. But it's the process, not the destination, right? It is fun to go through them.

Q: Well, I think we can close up today if you like. You mentioned that your next posting would be Berlin and you were happy about that.

KILNER: That is right, so let's start there next time.

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1983-1985: EAST BERLIN, GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Q: Good Afternoon. It is May 22, 2023, and we are continuing our conversation with Scott Kilner. Scott, you just finished your first wonderful tour in Istanbul. At that time if you weren't in the consular cone, you could only do 18 months, so you could then go on to work in your field. When you went on to East Berlin, were you assigned to work as an economic officer?

KILNER: I was. I felt extremely fortunate to get this second assignment because there weren't many economic jobs overseas at my grade level. And there were very few German language jobs. I very much wanted the opportunity to use my German, which I tested out of when I entered the Foreign Service. But there was just this one job on the open assignments list, the junior economic job at our embassy in East Berlin, so I put it at the top of my list and was thrilled when I got it! I might also mention, with respect to bidding for an onward assignment, I received some sage advice from our Consul General in Istanbul, Dan Newberry. Since this was my first real bid list, before sending it to Washington I met with the CG to go show him my list and ask his reaction. He thought it was a sensible list but had one piece of advice. When he saw that I had included Dacca, Bangladesh, Dan said, "Scott, if you have that anywhere on your bid list, you will probably get it. So you might want to take it off or set it aside for another occasion." So I did, and ended up getting East Berlin.

Q: And what year was it that you went?

KILNER: I arrived in Berlin in September of 1983 for a two-year assignment.

Q: And what was the structure of your section? And the embassy? Was there a separate economic office and did you have a good boss?

KILNER: Embassy Berlin was a very congenial, mid-sized embassy that included a small economic affairs office. Berlin was, in fact, the only mid-sized embassy I ever worked in. There were about 40 American employees, including three people in the Economic Section…well, really 2 1/4. The Section Chief was named Wyatt Martin, who I will talk about later. Then there was the junior Econ Officer, i.e. me, and a part-time Science Officer.

Q: So, would you like to start off by giving us context on what was going on in East Germany then?

KILNER: Sure. I think it would be useful here to describe the "lost world" of East Germany in those days because that world doesn't exist anymore. As of today, the former East Germany (more formally, the German Democratic Republic or GDR) has been unified with West Germany for more than 30 years. But while the Warsaw Pact still existed and the Iron Curtain was still in place, the GDR was an absolutely unique case. There were several states within the East Bloc, but the GDR was the only one that was

the fragment of a previously unified, much larger nation. So there was another German state right on the other side of the border. That reality had all sorts of implications for the political and economic viability of East Germany. The division of Germany created a kind of "laboratory experiment" — i.e. one country that had been divided in two, with each part placed under radically different political and economic systems. You could see very clearly which one worked better and which one worked worse.

The GDR was a small state of about 17 million people. I think it is fair to say it was the most tightly controlled of all the eastern European countries. It also had, as time went on, probably the most successful economy, relative to the others in the East Bloc. We established diplomatic relations with East Germany only in 1974, after West Germany, under Chancellors Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt, achieved a rapprochement with East Germany. The Western powers, including the United States, then established diplomatic relations with the GDR. From that point until the moment that the Berlin Wall came down was only about 15 years — not very long. So there are not many American diplomats who worked in East Germany while the Communist system was still intact. I was one of the few who had that opportunity.

Q: Do you have an opinion on the reasons it was the most tightly controlled? And the most successful economy.

The Berlin Wall (1985)

KILNER: It was the most tightly controlled because that was really the only way the state could remain viable. The Berlin Wall was put up in 1961 because East Germans were voting with their feet to leave, resulting in a continual drain on manpower and expertise. It was economically and politically not sustainable without essentially sealing off the country from the West. The internal security police, the infamous Stasi, was a major component of the control system. There were probably more internal security police per capita in East Germany than anywhere else in the East Bloc. Economically, I would chalk

up the GDR's relative success primarily to German efficiency — the same work habits and cultural traits of thoroughness and diligence that the Germans were known for in the West.

Q: OK, so you were there only nine years after the establishment of diplomatic relations, but it was nearly 40 years since World War Two was over. A whole generation of people had grown up in this environment. Did controls on the youth work, or was there still very much a desire from the younger generation to have what the people had in the west?

KILNER: With the passage of time, with the separation of these two societies, a different culture emerged in the east. The simplest way to put it is that we did not perceive huge dissatisfaction with the East German planned economic model. The East Germans knew they weren't as rich as their western cousins. But their basic needs, healthcare, and education were all being met at a reasonable level. There was not, from what we could see, a widespread desire to become richer and make more money. However, there was one big complaint that was widely shared in the East. That was the inability to travel widely, to get out and see the world beyond other eastern European countries. That really chafed over time.

I mentioned that I was very happy to get this assignment, in part because it would give me an opportunity to use my German language skills. However, I had been very involved with Turkish for the preceding two years, and my German was a bit rusty. So when I came to Palo Alto on home leave, I found a German expat who gave language lessons. I went over to her house for an hour or two of German conversation most days for a few weeks, which helped kick-start my German again. Then in September of 1983 Jan and I got on the plane and, after some consultations in Washington, flew to East Berlin.

I would say this transition from Istanbul to East Berlin gave me the most severe case of cultural whiplash that I ever had. We had found Turkey to be a warm welcoming society, as I described last time. In East Berlin we faced the exact opposite — that is, Prussian Communists of northeastern Germany. Let me offer a few examples to paint a picture.

It started even before we landed in the GDR. The rules of Berlin were such that we could not fly into West Berlin and then cross over to the East. We had to fly into the German Democratic Republic proper — to an airport in Schönefeld outside of Berlin in East Germany. There weren't many western flights that used that airport, but the East German state-run airline, called Interflug, did fly there from Brussels. So we booked seats on one of their old Soviet Tupolev planes. The departure lounge was in an obscure corner of the Brussels airport. When we got on the plane, it was perhaps one-quarter filled, deathly quiet, nobody talking — like a flying morgue almost. When we eventually landed at Schönefeld Airport, the backs of all the unoccupied seats on the plane flipped forward like dominoes in a way I've never seen before or since on any airplane.

Once in East Berlin we spent our first week or so in a hotel while our apartment was being made ready. I remember how on the first morning there I picked up a copy of the East German official newspaper, called "Neues Deutschland" (or "New Germany"), and saw its screeching, front-page headlines that gave the impression World War III was just

around the corner. The reason was that intermediate-range nuclear missiles were about to be deployed in West Germany. This had been a huge issue in NATO. I won't get into it here, except to say that this long-running debate was coming to a head right as we arrived, and the East German papers were going berserk.

Here's another little vignette on what it was like. On our first weekend we thought we would venture out of Berlin to see something beyond the city. Our car had not arrived yet, but an embassy colleague loaned us an old clunker — a Buick behemoth — for the weekend. So we drove out to this ordinary village not too far away. It had a few old walls, gray buildings, and so forth — nothing special. Driving our giant car into that quiet village seemed pretty absurd, and I noticed a young East German couple walking by and eyeing us and the car suspiciously. So I simply tried to make a joke about it, because it was in fact rather goofy. That is what I would have done in Turkey, and it would have very likely led to a long, humorous conversation about the situation. But when I took that approach with these young East Germans they just stared at me, unsmiling, and walked away. It sent a shiver down my spine. I thought that if this was what we could expect for the next two years, it was going to be tough.

Scott in front of East German diplomatic housing (1984)

A word about embassy housing in East Berlin. Everybody had to live in East German government supplied housing. The top officers at the embassy lived in quite decent houses in the Pankow district of Berlin — a pretty nice leafy area with many tasteful brick buildings. Most of the junior and mid-level staff lived in a large diplomatic apartment complex on Leipziger Strasse, which was one of the main streets of Berlin very close to Checkpoint Charlie. In fact, from those apartments you could look over the wall into West Berlin. But those apartment houses had all been filled by the time we arrived. So we were one of the very few embassy employees put in a third diplomatic area that had been recently built in a kind of no-man's land outside the city center, on a

street called Arnold-Zweig-Strasse and named after a deceased German socialist writer. These apartment blocks were soulless prefab structures, and the occupants were a strange mix of foreigners. In our building, for example, we were the only Americans. Above us were Libyan diplomats, who later turned out to be involved in the bombing of a West German disco. There was also the local representative of a French car company. And of course the East German "Hausmeister," who kept an eye on all of us. There was also an Iraqi school bus parked in front of the complex, but rarely seemed to move. These buildings were really quite ugly from the outside but inside they were fine — not a lot of charm but spacious and functional.

As I mentioned, we liked the modest size of the Embassy, about 40 people, who all knew one another and interacted all the time. This, along with the specific personalities at that time, helped maintain very good morale. We had an exceptionally strong front office. Our ambassador was Rozanne Ridgway, who went on from that assignment to be George Shultz's Assistant Secretary for European Affairs. Almost everybody attended Marine House happy hours. We had a softball team that would play against other U.S. Embassies in the East Bloc. We called it the satellite league. And our community liaison office would regularly organize excursions around or outside of Berlin. There were lots of pretty lakes and wooded areas around the perimeter of the city, so almost everybody in the Embassy participated in those outings. By the way, my wife, Jan, served as the Community Liaison Officer one of our two years in Berlin.

As I mentioned, I was the junior person in the Economic Section. My boss, whose name was Wyatt Martin, and I got along fine. He was a nice man who tried to do the right thing. That said, he was also the craziest guy I have ever worked for in my life. Wyatt was an FS-01 Economic Officer, and I think this turned out to be his last assignment in the Foreign Service. He was incompetent, but fortunately benignly incompetent. I could take a full hour telling you different stories about things he did. But just a couple of examples. Once he forgot to tell his wife, Fiona, that he had organized a representational dinner at their home in Pankow; after the guests arrived, Fiona came downstairs in her bathrobe wondering what was going on. Fiona was as loopy as Wyatt, but in a different way. Once she crashed her car into the Berlin Wall while passing through Checkpoint Charlie. It was a little bit of a slalom to drive through, but not difficult. However, she managed to crack into the wall, after which the East Germans apparently requested damages from the U.S. Embassy for hurting their wall. Wyatt also imported a little boat into East Germany, which he would take out onto the lakes around Berlin.

On the other hand, we had a terrific Front Office with Rozanne Ridgway and her deputy, Jim Wilkinson. They were a great pair, and they understood "the situation" in the Economic Section sooner than I did. They "protected" me from Wyatt's craziness in a way that I only came to fully understand and appreciate over time.

Wyatt was happy to confine himself to commercial work and little else. More specifically, there was an annual trade fair in Leipzig, which had existed for centuries. In the 1980s there were some, but not many, American companies that participated. The United States had an official booth, and somehow Wyatt took the whole year to busy himself with this trade fair. This meant that all of the Embassy's general economic

reporting was all left to me — which was great! Economic analysis in East Germany was a curious undertaking. I had two official East German contacts with whom I was authorized to speak. They were both in the Foreign Trade Ministry. That was it!! Once in a while I would go to talk to these people, but it was hardly worth even the ten minute walk to go over there.

Q: It sounds like you needed to become a Kremlinologist where you got information about the economy in a different way.

KILNER: There were a few ways that I gathered information. First, I would read the East German published sources. Every day there were economic articles in the newspaper, as well as other published official reports. Separately, there were professional western economists, especially in West Berlin, who tracked and analyzed East bloc command economies. They had their own methods for massaging the numbers and coming up with estimates of "real" GDR economic performance. There were one or two such analysts in the United States, but the main ones were West Berlin. So every now and then I would go over to their offices for a conversation and get their latest published publications. So, I put all of these written sources together and tried to paint a sensible picture for Washington.

The other thing I did periodically was make factory visits around the GDR. In the Communist jargon of the regime, the large state-owned enterprises were called "Kombinate" — or "combines" if you translate the term literally. With a little bit of forewarning and preparation it was possible to visit most of these plants. It was not so different from factory visits that econ officers make in more open economies elsewhere.

After the Berlin Wall came down and German unification proceeded, I came to see my economic work in the GDR in a very different way. It became clear that the East German economy was extremely vulnerable when not protected from competition with much more efficient western companies. It did not take long after unification for virtually the whole East German industrial structure to collapse. And that collapse, in turn, required tremendous resources and support from western Germany to keep the eastern part of the unified country afloat.

So in hindsight, I wish I had done more factory visits than I did. I think I should have gotten out of the Embassy more often. And I should have paid more attention to what I was seeing with my own eyes, rather than relying too readily on the analysis of outside "experts" and "analysts" — whose estimates of the dynamism and the strength of the East German economy turned out to be wildly exaggerated. The weaknesses of the GDR economy were quite visible in its aged industrial infrastructure, and all of us should have been paying more attention to what we saw with our own eyes.

Scott with "the other George Shultz" in Usedom, GDR (1984)

Q: So, what were you seeing was a very slow economy?

KILNER: Yes, very small scale and quiet. There was no sense of dynamism and energy. I remember how during one visit plant managers touted their recycling of materials. But all they had was an old courtyard with a bunch of scrap lying around. I never saw anything like a humming factory with assembly lines.

Frankly, much more interesting than my limited economic work contacts were the East Germans Jan and I got to know in other ways. We were pretty successful at developing friendships completely unrelated to my job at the Embassy. We had a circle of about a dozen East Germans, most younger than us, who had nothing to do with my work but who nevertheless offered fascinating insights into East German society. What they had in common was that they were not trying to "make it" within the Communist system. They weren't really dissidents, but you might say they were "dropouts" in a way. And they were very curious about the outside world. Mostly they would come to our apartment in Berlin, but occasionally we would visit them or their families. These young East Germans knew they were being watched by GDR authorities, but they didn't seem to care. As long as they weren't protesting or active politically, they were pretty much left alone. Of course Jan and I always kept in mind that some or all of them may have had to report to the Stasi about our conversations, so obviously we never discussed any information that could be considered "classified." Most of these younger East Germans had affiliation with the Lutheran Evangelical Church. The Church was the one non-governmental organization that could provide East Germans with a little bit of space and breathing room — even a little bit of political protection. One of our best friends

from that period was a cook in the church. Anyway, every week or two one of these friends would come over to our apartment, or we would meet them somewhere else.

Our conversations were always in German and covered every subject under the sun, so they were very helpful for improving my language skills. Very few people in the GDR spoke English. We had a few opportunities to visit the family homes of some of these younger East Germans out in the provinces. One family managed a facility for handicapped individuals in a small village. It was not easy to get inside East German homes, but we managed to do so now and then — it was a real plus, I must say. I should add that several of these individuals we came to know emigrated to West Germany during, or soon after, our assignment. Over time we lost contact with most of them. There is one, however, — the "cook" I mentioned earlier — with whom we have kept in touch and still see occasionally. He still lives in Berlin, where we saw him on a visit last summer. He also came to our home in Palo Alto once. Anyway, these relationships were among the most rewarding parts of our GDR assignment.

Q: You mentioned earlier that there was not a lot of dissatisfaction with the economic system. Around this time in the Soviet Union there were a lot of economic strains that eventually allowed reformers to come to power and start trying to fix things in order to get the economy able to supply the services that were needed. Did you see any strain like that in East Germany?

KILNER: Not the same kind of pressure. The East Germans, for reasons we were discussing earlier, were able to make the rickety Communist economic system work better than in other countries. It seemed to be good enough that most individuals felt their material needs were being met. That was our perception, at least. I never had the sense the country was a pressure cooker about to blow — except for the issue of travel.

I'd like to talk a little more about the peculiarities of Berlin during this period. At the end of WWII, the victorious powers divided both Germany as a whole, and Berlin as the former capital, itself into four sectors of occupation. It had originally been three, but we and the British decided to bring in the French too. So from our two-thirds we carved out a French sector. Until German reunification in the early 1990s, the highest governmental authority of Berlin was the four occupying powers, and there were very complex rules and procedures for how Berlin operated. It was so complicated that entire generations of Foreign Service Officers made careers out of mastering "Berlinery," as it was called.

For example, the embassy where I worked was called the American Embassy TO the German Democratic Republic, but not IN the German Democratic Republic — because we never recognized Berlin as part of the GDR. The East Germans, however, considered the eastern sector of the city to be their capital. All diplomats, in east and west Berlin, had an ID card, an "Ausweis," that enabled them to travel back and forth across the wall. Checkpoint Charlie was the crossing point closest to the U.S. Embassy, but it was not the only one. There were others that we used as well. Think of those John LeCarre movies, in which spy exchanges took place. Those were at other crossing points like Bornholmer Strasse and the Glienicker Brücke. We could, and we did, go back and forth all the time.

We did not have a cafeteria at the Embassy, so everyone had to go out for lunch. It was faster to scoot through the checkpoint to a Greek or a Yugoslav restaurant on the other side of the wall than it was to go to an East German hotel restaurant. There was a GDR Diplomatic Club, but the food wasn't that good and the service was painfully slow. Scarcely a weekend went by in which Jan and I didn't go over to West Berlin for at least an afternoon. We did almost all of our shopping in the west. We would frequently go to department stores. West Berlin was a very interesting, vibrant city, and everyone who visited Berlin in these years was struck by the contrast between West Berlin and East Berlin. The contrast was perhaps greatest in the 1960s and 1970s. By the time we arrived in 1983 most of the wartime damage in the east had been repaired, especially in the neighborhoods near the wall. Still the atmospherics between east and west were like night and day. There were very few cars out on the wide boulevards in East Berlin. It was never crowded anywhere. The buildings, almost without exception, were of gray colorless stucco, somber, and rather depressing. That was the way it felt everywhere. But West Berlin had neon lights and clubs and everything, so going back and forth was always an experience.

Q: How did the border guards stop people from going to West Berlin? They would check passports to see if they had an exit visa?

KILNER: As I mentioned, we had the diplomatic ID cards. For us, all the border guards did was check the ID card and make sure the picture matched. Then they let us go. We sort of got to know these Checkpoint Charlie guards. They had long shifts of duty and we recognized their faces. In fact, some of the wags in the Embassy developed nicknames for them. One became known as "the whip lady" because she usually wore a leather coat and had a foreboding expression. Another was nicknamed "Lurch" after the Addams Family character. As for the East Germans, with few exceptions the only ones who could travel to the west were older pensioners who had exhausted their economic lives. They weren't working any longer, so they were, if you will, a small drain on the state rather than contributors. The calculation was that these people in the autumn of their lives weren't going to want to leave as long as they could go back and forth to visit relatives. And even if they did leave, so what? The GDR mainly did not want to lose the best and the brightest to emigration.

In West Berlin we had a very large Mission — far bigger than the embassy in East Berlin. There was a fair bit of contact, and some good-natured rivalry, between the Mission and the Embassy. In some ways, West Berlin was one of the plum assignments in the Foreign Service. Housing for U.S. diplomats in the west was paid for by the West German government and unbelievably good! Almost everyone had an individual house in one of the nicest, leafy areas of the city. But the advantage of being in the East was that we could travel around the GDR, which our West Berlin colleagues could not do easily. They were able to circulate freely in East and West Berlin, but could not go beyond the Berlin city limits without special permission. It was not easy for a foreigner, especially a Westerner, to travel in East Germany. In many ways the GDR was the most closed country in Eastern Europe. It was difficult to get a visa, and few westerners tried — apart

from West Germans. The opportunity to travel throughout the east was really pretty extraordinary for an American.

Another aspect of working in East Berlin was that diplomats in all of the western embassies maintained close contact with one another. I got to know British, French, Austrian and other counterparts quite well. We regularly shared information and exchanged views because the GDR was such an impenetrable place. But the most striking thing about this diplomatic landscape was that, for the only time in my career, the United States was NOT the biggest, most well-informed, most robust embassy; the most important was the West German Mission, for pretty obvious reasons. It wasn't called an embassy, but rather a "Permanent Representation" or *"Ständige Vertretung"* in German. West German diplomats had insights on what was going on in the east that far exceeded anybody else's, so we were all trying to pump our them for whatever information we could.

So, I've already talked about the grayness of East Berlin. That atmosphere applied to the rest of East Germany as well. Some of pre-war Germany's most important cities were in the east — Dresden, Leipzig, Weimar, Chemnitz, and others — and most had been badly damaged by bombings in WWII (although not Weimar). Most were still in fairly bad shape, by western standards. Outside of these major urban areas, however, the smaller towns and villages remained much as they had been before. In fact, they had changed very little since before WWII. The East German highway network was essentially the autobahn that Hitler had built. There was nothing like the modernizing, forward-looking culture that developed in West Germany after the war. In fact, many West Germans would visit the East and wax unrealistically nostalgic about what they were seeing. They sometimes thought what they were seeing was the "real Germany" that had not been "corrupted" by capitalism — reflecting the "authentic German soul," if you will. It was rather ridiculous, but that was the perspective of more than a few West German visitors.

Anyway, Jan and I took many driving trips around East Germany. It was not a big country, and we could get anywhere within a day. We quickly learned, however, that if we wanted to stay someplace overnight, we had to make reservations in advance so that the authorities would know exactly where we were. The hotel managers also wanted assurance that it was OK to offer a room to these "suspect American" visitors. If we did not have a reservation in advance, we would be told that the hotel was completely booked even if every key was still hanging on the latch behind the reception desk. We did a lot of traveling. Our trips were generally not a barrel of laughs, and finding good food and the like was a challenge, but the travel was always interesting and well worth doing. I might add that the GDR government managed two rural retreats for the foreign diplomatic community. One was a group of cozy cabins in the woods a couple of hours outside of Berlin — a place called Menz. It was quite a pleasant facility to spend a quiet weekend. Another similar grouping of cabins was up on the Baltic Sea coast, near a town called Lodin. We went to both of these retreats a few times.

Q: Was this the Prussian heartland? What was East Germany historically?

KILNER: The territory of the GDR was very much part of the Prussian heartland. Berlin had been the capital, and Prussia had extended significantly further east than now — into what is now Poland. East Prussia went as far east as historic Königsberg, where Emmanuel Kant lived. That's now Kaliningrad, a Russian enclave. South of Berlin, the area around Dresden and Weimar was part of Saxony and another very important part of the German world. The forested Thuringia region of the GDR had picturesque timber-framed houses and villages like you could see in West Germany. They were rather run-down during our time in the GDR, but have since been greatly spiffed up thanks to West German investment in infrastructure and tourism. Up on the Baltic Sea coast, several of the old port cities that formed the medieval Hanseatic League were interesting to visit. Their large brick churches with very tall steeples are quite striking architecturally.

OK, we have discussed work and free time in Berlin, and talked about travel around the GDR. Now I would like to take a few minutes to talk about what I would call "the strangeness of the GDR." Because it really was just weird a lot of the time. Interestingly weird, but still weird. So here are just a few examples in no particular order.

Given the omnipresence of the secret police, the Staatspolizei or Stasi, we always had to assume that we were being followed or watched or listened to, and to act accordingly. As I mentioned before, we knew that those younger East Germans who came to our apartment might be pressured to report on us. We just got used to that and did not talk about certain subjects. And really, they almost never asked us questions about what was going on inside the U.S. Embassy. I also briefly mentioned those cozy cabins in the woods that were made available to foreign diplomatic personnel. Once we went there — the one called Menz — for a quiet weekend soon after our son was born. We were in the sitting room after dinner, enjoying a peaceful evening, when a microphone in the planter box next to the sofa started to crackle and make a kind of feed-back noise. We thought it was funny, and joked about how we had thought German intelligence services were better than that.

On another occasion a colleague of mine put me in touch with an East German man whom I had not met before. We had lunch together, after which he brought out an old Nazi photo album. It was an official collection of Nazi photographs taken about midway through the war, probably in 1941 or 1942. He wanted to sell it to me for West German marks. I told him I really could not get involved in that, but that I would love to look at the album and then return it to him. So, he gave it to me "on loan." But later when I tried to return it to him, he kept coming up with one excuse after another as to why he could not take it back. And he continued to ask me to buy it for western currency. I think he wanted about 250 Deutsche Mark. Finally, I succeeded in returning it, but I was a bit worried that I was being set up for some kind of illegal transaction, so I reported the whole affair to our Embassy Security Officer, who also thought it was rather strange. As a second tour Foreign Service Officer I wanted to be squeaky clean on the security front. I'll confess that since then a part of me has wished I'd said ok and given him 250 Marks for the Nazi photo album. But I did give it back to him.

Earlier I mentioned contacts with other embassies. Those were overwhelming with western diplomats, but every now and then I tried to get an appointment with one of the East Bloc embassies. The GDR seemed to have a particularly good relationship with Czechoslovakia, so I thought it would be interesting to talk to one of their economic officers. I requested an appointment, but it probably took close to a year before I got a positive reply. But I eventually did, so one morning I walked over to the Czechoslovak Embassy, which was not far from our own. The appointment was at 10:00 AM, but the Czech official who met me already had an ample supply of brandy laid out on the table, and he started to try to ply me with liquor. Whenever I raised any economic issue that he was supposedly responsible for, he would plead ignorance and not say anything. Anyway I learned nothing from this meeting, and I didn't take any brandy. I returned to the Embassy and told our DCM, Jim Wilkinson, what had occurred. Jim thought this was pretty interesting and asked me to recount the meeting at our next Country Team meeting as an example to others.

Another strange aspect of diplomatic life in East Berlin had to do with currency exchange. As I'm sure you remember, all of the East Bloc countries had official exchange rates that were markedly different from market exchange rates. That was certainly the case between the East German "Ostmark" and the West German D-Mark. The official exchange rate was one-to-one, but the market rate in West Berlin was about five to one. What that meant was we all could buy Ostmark in West Berlin, bring it into East Berlin and effectively pay just one-fifth the price of what an item would cost at the official exchange rate. Actually, this was not such a big deal, because there wasn't much in East Berlin that any of us wanted to buy — perhaps books, or records, or restaurant meals. They were dirt cheap for us. Well, there was an inspection of the Embassy while we were there, and one of the inspectors' recommendations was to get rid of our ability to bring what they said was "black market currency" into the East. Ambassador Ridgeway then got into a big fight with the inspectors and refused to accept their recommendation. She argued that the existing practice was completely consonant with the rules of governing Berlin under Allied control. Berlin was one city, and what applied in one part applied in all. It was a big argument, but Amb. Ridgway as usual ended up winning, and the existing practice was retained.

So, we were allowed to continue such currency exchanges on the condition that Ostmarks purchased in the West were to be spent only in East Berlin, not elsewhere in East Germany. The rationale was that the regime governing occupied Berlin was different from that elsewhere in East Germany. However, this rule on how Ostmarks were to be used was self-policing, and you might guess how well that worked. Anyway, not too much later a few clever diplomats – French and American – figured out a way to buy cheap Ostmarks in the West, deposit them in an East German bank, and then use that bank account to buy airline tickets on Air France. In that way it was possible to get super cheap fares on Air France. Well, there was one guy at our embassy who exploited that "loophole" to the max and bought a cheap ticket on the Concorde to go to Rio De Janeiro for Carnival!! For a modest sum, he bought a ticket that should have cost thousands of dollars. Ambassador Ridgway got wind of this escapade, and was not amused. So the

hammer came down, and I think the whole exchange-rate shenanigans more or less came to an end.

Earlier I described how my boss, Crazy Wyatt Martin, did most of the work on the Leipzig trade fair. Nevertheless, each year I also went to Leipzig during the fair for three or four days to help out. The first year I stayed in a hotel, but the second year all the hotels were already booked when I tried to get a reservation. So I stayed in an officially approved East German apartment, owned by a middle-aged woman who rented it out during the fair. She was polite enough. I basically just slept there and was out the rest of the time. The fair came and went, and I returned to the Embassy. But then about a week or two later my boss, Wyatt, took me aside to say that our section's economic assistant – a very shrewd East German woman who worked on another floor – was saying that complaints had come in about my behavior in Leipzig. Specifically, the woman who owned the apartment I stayed in had reportedly claimed that I had been asking inappropriate questions and was very nosy. I had no idea what she was talking about. So, we presented this information to the Embassy Front Office so as not to hide anything. The DCM and Ambassador just sort of shrugged and said thanks for telling them. It made no sense, but such weird little incidents periodically just came out of nowhere in East Germany.

The last event I'll mention was perhaps more directly relevant to official U.S.-GDR relations. About midway through my assignment three young East Germans came into the Embassy to use the library. It was open to the public, but very few East Germans used it because East German police always stood next to the front entrance to "protect" us. Anyway, this threesome — all young men, as I recall — refused to leave when the library closed at the end of the afternoon. They said they wanted "political asylum" and would not leave until they got it. Of course an embassy cannot offer asylum. International conventions don't allow it. Then, in some way, word of this group's presence in the Embassy got out – I am not sure how – and became known on Capitol Hill in Washington. The episode of course had been fully reported to the State Department, and perhaps someone at State leaked it to Congress. Anyway, it became known there was a "sit-in" by East Germans in the American Embassy, and senators like Jesse Helms insisted that we not hand them over to the GDR authorities. So there was a stand-off for a few days. We didn't want to hand them over, but they couldn't stay in the embassy forever. Finally, a resolution was quietly worked out with East German authorities.

You may have read that in these years West Germany was literally buying out no small number of East Germans. In fact, there was a market for such transactions and a clear channel for such deals. An East German lawyer named Wolfgang Vogel was usually at the center of things. The going rate for buying out individuals that West Germany had an interest in, if I really correctly, was about $12,000 a head. So what was worked out regarding the sit-in trio was that they were turned over to the East German police and taken away, but on the understanding that a few weeks later they would quietly be allowed to emigrate to West Germany after an agreed sum of money had been paid.

The last thing that I would like to talk about was the birth of our son, our first child, in Berlin. This took place in November of 1984. We were of course living in the East, but

Jan's doctor was at an excellent German hospital at the far end of West Berlin — about a 45-minute drive where we lived. Several weeks before her due date, we knew it would be a C-Section. The baby had turned himself the wrong way and stubbornly decided not to move. So, Jan carried him to term, and when the time came, of course her water broke in the middle of the night about 2:00 AM. We had to call her doctor to let him know. At that time telephone calls from East to West Berlin were considered "international calls" and sometimes could take several minutes to go through. Fortunately, we did now have too much difficulty on this occasion. So we made the trek to the hospital, and little Derek was delivered the next day. Because of the C-Section, Jan's doctor kept her in the hospital for something like 12 days! German hospitals don't push you out the door at the first opportunity.

Finally, mother and son were ready to return home to our apartment in the East. This of course meant passing through a checkpoint — in this case Bornholmer Strasse — and we did our best to make all the necessary arrangements in advance. But when we got to the crossing point, the border guard said our papers were somehow not in order and that they could not let this little baby into East Berlin. It somehow seemed darkly amusing to suggest that we might be trying to smuggle an American baby into East Germany. German thoroughness was again kicking in. So for some time we were stuck in our car at the checkpoint, with a screaming newborn in the back seat driving us nuts. There were calls back and forth between the Embassy and somebody in the Foreign Ministry. Anyway, within about an hour or two they sorted it out, and we were able to pass back through. We finally made it home with the screaming baby and Jan still hurting from her surgery.

We were all exhausted from this experience, and then a couple of hours later the phone rang. It was the State Department Board of Examiners offering Jan a position in the next Foreign Service class. I haven't gone into this, but Jan had earlier taken the Foreign Service test as we had thought about becoming a tandem couple. Whether she laughed hysterically or not on the phone, I'm not sure, but Jan did explain the situation and said she would have to put her applications on hold. The Department allowed her to press pause for several months, but eventually we had to decide: yes or no. After considerable discussion, we decided that the complications and stresses of the tandem couple route were not what we wanted. So Jan withdrew her application.

The best and last story I have from this assignment took place in our final days in Berlin and also has to do with our son, Derek. As we prepared for our departure, a number of the young East German friends I've talked about dropped by to say farewell. One weekend afternoon, the guy we liked most — the cook, named Hansi, with shoulder length hair — spent a few hours with us, including playing around with little Derek who was now about nine months old. At one point we noticed, however, that Derek was coughing and his face was getting blotchy — something clearly was not right. Then it occurred to Jan that she had given Derek his first taste of peanut butter, little sandwich squares, earlier that afternoon and that he might be having an allergic reaction. I'm afraid we were not sufficiently diligent parents to know about this in advance. So Jan called over to the hospital in West Berlin and described the situation. They said he almost certainly was

having an allergic reaction to peanuts, and we should take him IMMEDIATELY to the nearest hospital because of the possibility that his breathing might be impaired. The nearest hospital was, of course, in East Berlin. We somehow knew that the best one, which the Communist Party officials used, was in the city center, very close to the Berlin Wall and about a 15-minute drive from where we lived. So we all piled into our little Peugeot, including Hansi. We planned to drop him off along the way to the hospital.

Once in the car, I started racing down Schönhauser Allee, a main road into the city center. And I was stopped for speeding by an East German policeman!! He said not only had I been going too fast, but that I was speeding through a construction zone. This was the only time during my assignment that I was stopped by the police. The policeman came to the car and gave me a quintessentially German, finger-wagging lecture. I said I was sorry, but our infant had a medical emergency and we were rushing him to the hospital. He peered into the car and could see that Derek was not doing well. The policeman then said (all in German of course), "Nevertheless, you were still speeding! I am writing out a ticket and your embassy will be hearing from the foreign ministry." I said fine. While all this was going on, our East German friend with the long hair was in the back seat trying to look as inconspicuous as possible. The last place he wanted to be was in a westerner's car stopped by the GDR police. Fortunately, the policeman kept his attention focused on me, and he finally let us go. I drove a little further, let Hansi out of the car (with my apologies), and then continued on toward the hospital. We got within about four blocks of the hospital when, in the middle of a major intersection, our car ran out of gas and came to a stop. This was the only time in my life I have ever run out of gas. The car literally stalled out in the middle of the intersection. I couldn't believe it!! Obviously I had been rushing around, doing so many things during my last days at post, that I hadn't paid attention to the gas gauge. So what were we going to do now?

Very soon a little East German Trabant — those "legendary" GDR cars built mostly of plastic and pressboard pulled up behind us. The driver got out and started to give me another one of those East German finger-wagging scolding: "Mein Herr, you are not allowed to stop in the middle of the street." I explained that I had run out of gas while trying to get our son to the emergency room!! Could he please help us? He looked in our car and could see that Derek was not well. He asked if he was contagious, and I said that he was having an allergic reaction. The man's demeanor then changed immediately! He helped me push our car over to the side of the road to get it out of traffic. Then we piled into the back of his tiny car, which already had two people in it. With us all sandwiched in together, he drove us the remaining four blocks to the hospital. Fortunately, things then started to go more smoothly. The nurses quickly gave Derek a shot to counteract the reaction and thank goodness he was OK. But they wanted to keep him overnight for observation. So I went back home after things stabilized, while Jan and Derek spent their penultimate night in Berlin in an East German hospital looking over the wall into West Berlin.

Q: Something never to forget.

KILNER: It was pretty dramatic…one of our better Foreign Service stories I think.

Q: I want to ask about the ambassador, Roz Ridgway. She was your ambassador all the time you were there?

KILNER: Yes, she was. She left about a month before I did. She returned to Washington to become Secretary Shultz's next Assistant Secretary for European Affairs.

Q: What did you learn from that experience, from the ambassador or from being involved in a range of activities? What did you learn from that posting?

KILNER: Well, for starters I had an excellent opportunity to hone my economic reporting skills. In an earlier conversation I talked about my background in journalism, which proved very useful. But there is a way to shape Foreign Service reporting that is distinctive. I remember how one of the first things I wrote in Berlin had to do with the quarterly performance of the GDR economy. DCM Jim Wilkinson called me to his office to talk about my draft. He said, "Scott, this is a nicely written report. It is clear. It is concise, but a Foreign Service reporting cable should always have a point: why are we sending the report. This can be done in a comment section at the end or maybe a summary at the beginning, but there needs to be a clear message." So we talked about what the point was and came up with a clear message. That was the kind of lesson I received early in this second assignment. As for Roz Ridgway, you couldn't have a better example of leadership in both large and small ways. She was very smart about big picture U.S. foreign policy goals, and George Shultz admired her enough to bring her back for a top job. But Roz also paid close attention to Embassy morale. She was always at the Marine House. She would join Embassy community outings. She insisted on high standards, but was unpretentious in her style of leadership. That was a very good example for me.

Q: Did you have visitors from Washington during your tour?

KILNER: Very few. In contrast to almost every other place I worked, we had very few. If memory serves, we had two Congressional delegations during my two years there. Later I worked in Paris and Rome and Istanbul and saw the other end of the visit spectrum. But hardly anyone came to East Germany.

Q: Did you make any contacts that became important after you left the station? You didn't meet Angela Merkel or anything.

KILNER: Not really. The East German officials I dealt with were mid-level bureaucrats who didn't do much after reunification, as far as I know.

Q: Did you get tenure during this assignment?

KILNER: I did. I was pleased and a little surprised that on the first time I was eligible, I not only received tenure but I was promoted to FS-3 as well. That promotion, along with the support I received from the Front Office, boosted my confidence in my abilities a lot.

Q: At some point the function of commercial work had moved from the State Department to the Commerce Department. But State Department economic officers still handled the commercial portfolio in the many countries which Commerce chose not to staff. This change had happened a bit before your time, right?

KILNER: That is right. My recollection is that this change in commercial responsibilities came in with the Foreign Service Act of 1980. You have described it correctly. Our commercial relationship with East Germany was so minimal that it was probably one of the last places where the Commerce Department wanted to invest any resources.

I'd like to say one more thing about East Germany before we move on. Very often when I talk to people about this assignment, they ask whether I (or we) saw the fall of the Berlin Wall coming. The answer is: absolutely not. I don't think anybody in our Embassy thought that this whole thing was going to collapse within five years. That said, I did have a feeling in the back of my mind that the Berlin Wall and East Germany – from an historical perspective -– were not sustainable in the long run. But at that moment it looked pretty durable. I was certain that in some way things would evolve over time… but definitely not in such a short time frame. One big thing I drew from this assignment and what happened afterwards was an early, salutary lesson in humility — humility regarding one's ability to see even just around the next corner and what the future might hold. I think I learned early that a reporting officer overseas should communicate and analyze as best he or she can — but always keeping in mind the possibility that one might be dead wrong.

Q: The idea of imagining a new world. It is not like trying to predict who is going to win an election. This is like regime change. Very good. Were you easily able to get an onward assignment or was that a tortured route?

KILNER: It was a little bit of a surprise. I will try to summarize briefly. With two overseas assignments under my belt, the logical next step was to return to Washington for mid-level training. Mid-level training had gone through many different iterations, but at that time there was a six-month course.

Q: Particularly for economics officers.

KILNER: For everyone, I think. But that format was not a big success, and it did not last very long. Anyway, I was assigned to go back to Washington for six months of mid-level training. But then, some months before the end of my Berlin assignment, I received a phone call from EUR/EX saying that an unexpected vacancy had arisen in Adana, Turkey. Adana was a small post of only three officers. The FSO assigned to the Pol-Econ position, the number two at the Consulate, had volunteered to go to Beirut. The Department was looking for someone who knew Turkish and had the right substantive skills. I fit the bill, so they asked if I would be interested? They gave me a week to think about it. I talked to a few people and mulled it over with Jan. I had not really considered Adana, but after about a week I decided that it sounded more interesting than the mid-level training course. So I said, OK I would do it. The training assignment was quickly broken, and I was paneled for Adana. The footnote here is that the "decision

week" I've described happened to occur when Ambassador Ridgway was away from post, so I did not have the opportunity to see what she thought about it. I did talk to Jim Wilkinson, who was Chargé at that point. He was a rather free-thinker and encouraged me to go ahead. But when Roz got back, she thought I was nuts…that I had made a stupid decision. I think she had plans to get me a job in the Operations Center. She ultimately changed her tune a bit when she saw that Turkey actually worked out pretty well for my career. But at the time she really thought I was crazy.

Q: Well on that note we will end for today.

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1985-1987: ADANA, TURKEY

Q: OK, so it is May 25, 2023, and we are continuing the conversation with Scott Kilner, Scott I think we are in the year 1985 and you have left East Berlin.

KILNER: That's right. We ended our last conversation with a short explanation of the quirky way that I landed this assignment — having been paneled into training in Washington but then given the opportunity to jump to Adana. In hindsight, it seems that the quirkiness of that assignment process foreshadowed the quirky nature of this posting as a whole. Mostly positive, but not all.

So, following home leave during the late summer and early fall of 1985 I finally got to Adana in October of 1985. From the very first day, it was a bit of a jolt and I quickly realized how very different this is going to be from Istanbul. Well loved Istanbul, but Adana was an entirely different kettle of fish. If you ask Turks in other parts of the country what they think of Adana, they will usually smile and say one of two things. They'll say, "Oh Adana! It's the biggest village in Turkey!" Or they will say: "Oh Adana! It's so hot there!" The city lies in a plain about an hour or two inland from the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean sea. It has long been an agricultural area. On top of that Adana also became the center of Turkey's textile industry after cotton came to be planted in the region. At the time we were there, the United States was the only country to maintain a full consulate. Many countries were represented by honorary consuls, a system the United States doesn't use at all, to my knowledge. But many European countries had local representatives there.

The U.S. had a small consulate with three Foreign Service Officers and five local employees. The reason for this presence was that the United States' biggest military presence in Turkey was and is located just outside of the city. This is Incirlik Air Base — a NATO base under Turkish control, but staffed primarily by Americans. Many people do not recall that the United States used to have an important air base in Libya, from which we did a lot of training in the clear skies over the southern Mediterranean. But when a colonel by the name of Qaddafi came to power in 1969, he kicked out the Americans. So we looked around for a suitable alternative for air force training missions, and we ended up at Incirlik in Turkey. So, the Consulate was set up there, at first mainly to provide support for all the military personnel at the base: issuing passports and birth certificates,

or assisting servicemen who might get arrested, that kind of stuff. But over time the Consulate also became a very important watching post for the southeastern quadrant of Turkey, which was the Kurdish region in all its complexities. More recently, Consulate Adana played an important role in dealing with the crisis in Syria that erupted in 2011. But I'll get to that in a later conversation. So those have been the main purposes of Consulate Adana. During my time this small post was located on the ground floor of a six story residential apartment building on one of the main streets in town. The building was owned by a major Turkish industrial family, the Sabanci family. In addition to the office space on ground-level, each of the three officers also lived in the building on the upper floors. So we were all right there together, all the time.

Q: Who was the Consul General?

KILNER: We weren't even a Consulate General — just a Consulate, and one of our smaller ones at that. The Consul at that time was named Mary Virginia Kennedy. She was a Middle East hand, whose career was off to a very strong start. She was an unusually hard charger for a little post. But thought that getting a Principal Officer position as an FS-02 officer would be good for her career. Mary Gin (as she was called) had worked on the Deputy Secretary's staff before Adana. After Turkey she went to Lahore, Pakistan as Consul General and apparently found it an unsettling experience. I believe that one or two people were killed on her watch. I think she then decided to retire from the Foreign Service and go into law.

To return to the subject of culture shock upon returning to Turkey… I recall walking around the neighborhood the first week we were in Adana and remembering all the things we enjoyed so much in Istanbul. Hardly any of them were to be found in Adana. Where were the fruit and vegetable sellers? Where was the tea garden? Where were the restaurants? There was like none of this. There were simply nondescript buildings with hardly any life. One small thing did catch my attention, however, and I mention this because it was a straw in the wind that had big implications for Turkey's future. In this rather unimpressive neighborhood, we noticed a Benetton's outlet. Then a little further on there was a Mitsubishi auto dealership. Just two years earlier this would have been unthinkable, even in Istanbul. The point is that these were signs that the liberalization and opening up of Turkey's economy had already begun. That liberalization accelerated dramatically in the following years, having a major, positive impact on the country's economic and social structure, and on the standard of living generally.

At the time we were there, Adana had about a million people, as I recall. It is several times bigger now as a consequence of rural-urban migration. There was a tiny little historic district that really didn't have much to offer. And there was a new university, where in fact my wife, Jan, taught for a period. I will come to that in a moment. The social life in Adana was very limited. There was no international community to speak of. And we didn't really socialize with people out at the base. Jan's mother visited us during our assignment. My parents also came, as did our neighbors from Berkley. But those were all the visitors we had over our two years.

In terms of restaurants, Turkey has fabulous cuisine. The Ottoman culinary tradition is really one of the great cuisines of the world. But not in Adana, unfortunately. At least at that time, Adana restaurants focused on only one thing: kebabs. Admittedly, the "Adana kebab" is famous throughout Turkey. It's a very tasty skewer of ground up lamb mixed with onions and other spices. It was everywhere, but there was nothing else! The one exception, the one halfway decent Turkish restaurant with a more diverse menu, was located at the little Adana airport — probably because the upper crust of Adana would escape on weekends by flying to Istanbul just to get away. So there was a good restaurant to cater to that affluent crowd. Unfortunately, however, even this venue was often degraded by open windows through which jet fumes wafted inside. But it was better than nothing.

As I mentioned, we lived and worked in the same apartment building. Our apartment was up just one floor above the Consulate office. It was a short commute! Being close to a major street, it could be a little noisy sometimes, but the only real problem was if we neglected to close all the windows before the mosquito abatement truck rumbled by, spraying some kind of noxious gray chemical into the air that would float into our apartment.

For just three people — Jan, little Derek, and me — our apartment was quite spacious, but in a strange way. There were three bedrooms along a corridor, but the rest of the apartment was one gigantic space, divided into a dining area and three sitting areas. More than anything else, it felt like living in a furniture showroom stocked with government GSO furniture. The apartment had parquet floors, so Derek could zoom around on his tricycle or fire truck to his heart's content. In this building, besides the three Foreign Service families, there were two members of the Sabanci clan — one of the biggest industrial famous in Turkey, as I mentioned. The daughter of the then-President of the country also lived in the building. The President at that time was still General Kenan Evren, who had led the 1980 military coup.

As for the working environment, it was quite congenial. Fortunately, the five Turkish national employees were all extremely nice. Some were more competent than others, but they were all considerate and nice. So, working together in this quasi-residential setting really felt like a kind of family operation. I had the office furthest in the rear, but one of the Turks out front would always come back to tell me when fresh Turkish tea had been prepared — or perhaps just bring me back a glass, because they knew I always like it. For sure, Turkish "çay" is a central part of the culture. Everyday I would walk upstairs for lunch with Jan.

Living and working in the same building led to one memorable experience I should mention. Sometime close to New Year's, President Evren decided to come and visit his daughter upstairs from us. He spent just one night there and of course had a considerable security detail with him. It just so happened I was the Duty Officer at that time (with such a tiny staff each of us was "on duty" once every three weeks) and in the middle of the night a phone call came in to report that an American citizen had gotten into trouble downtown. It was not a crisis, but there was a routine procedure that I had to go through. So I had to go down to the office to do a few things. Since it was just one flight down the

stairs, I simply put on my bathrobe and slippers and went into the stairwell with my keys to the office. But as soon as I came out of our apartment door there were four soldiers with machine guns pointed at me: President Evren's security guard. I explained to them in Turkish who I was and what I was doing. They nodded and let me go into the consulate.

Q: That was kind of a shock.

KILNER: Definitely a surprise! So maybe a few more words about Incirlik Air Base. The Consulate relied on the base for all of our secure communications. We had no telecommunication equipment other than ordinary telephones (fixed land-lines at that time, of course). From our little consulate we organized one or two base runs every day to carry the cable traffic back and forth. Classified or unclassified, all messages were received and sent through the base. Incirlik was, and I believe remains, our largest and most important military installation in Turkey. So, it was very important during and after the first Iraq War, when it had a no-fly zone over northern Iraq. That was done mostly out of Incirlik. I think it is an open secret that there were nuclear weapons stored there during the Cold War. So, it was and is an important place. In fact, I did very little with the base myself. The Consul, Mary Gin Kennedy, took on that liaison function, working closely with the Pol-Mil Section in Ankara. And as I came to see how gnarly pol-mil issues with the Turks could become, I was very happy that I had nothing to do with that side of the Consulate's work. I was quite content to stick to my political and economic reporting work — which I'll come to in a minute.

Before I arrived in Adana, I knew there was a big military base just outside the city, but I was sure that I wouldn't be spending much time there. I would rather be out meeting Turks rather than wasting time on a military base. But reality soon set in, as I discovered how little there really was to do in Adana. Moreover, we had a small child. So, in fact, we ended up going out to Incirlik almost every weekend. It became a part of our routine. There was a bowling alley, a Baskin Robbins ice cream store, playground, and tennis courts — so that was how we typically spend one day each weekend.

Before turning to my work, let me say a word about Jan. Despite the fact that we had to look after a small child, we did have a Turkish maid who could take care of Derek for a few hours at a time. That worked out well, so Jan decided to take on a teaching job at the local university — called Çukurova University. In contrast to Istanbul, where she taught biology, in Adana Jan taught English, but with a twist. While part of her job was straightforward English language instruction, in view of her background in biochemistry the university asked her to develop an English language program for university students studying the sciences. She became quite involved in that project and found it interesting. Her students were very nice and occasionally they would organize outings to family farms in the area on weekends, which were fun.

So her work provided a rewarding, extra dimension to her life in Adana…until she provoked a diplomatic crisis. Well, she didn't provoke it, the Turks provoked it. This teaching and curriculum development work had been proceeding fine for about a year.

But then one day Jan was asked to report to a local government office, where Turkish officials told her Ankara had decided she would have to give up her diplomatic immunity in order to continue working. Of course, this was a non-starter. We reported the development to the Embassy and the Embassy reported it to Washington. That led to a series of discussions between Embassy Ankara and the Turkish Labor Ministry and the Turkish Foreign Ministry, but initially to no avail. There never was a clear explanation as to why, but I think that behind it all was the Turkish government's desire to keep a very tight leash on foreign teachers in the country. They probably were trying to make it so difficult that she would just stop working and quit. After this problem remained unresolved for a few months, the State Department's Office of Foreign Missions came into play and invoked reciprocity. If Turkey was going to treat our diplomatic families in this way, the USG would revoke work permits for spouses of Turkish diplomats in the United States — of which there were far more than for American spouses in Turkey. This finally got the Turkish Government's attention and eventually, well after our departure, a bilateral work agreement was worked out. But my dear spouse was the one who triggered this whole process.

So let me then turn to my job. I was the one and only political-economic officer at the Consulate. And given that there were only three of us, we all wore more than one hat. One of my other hats was that of post security officer. We had no RSO in Adana at that time, so I oversaw our small guard force — about half a dozen Turkish men. I hired a few new ones during my tenure, and then fired one of them for drinking on the job. A few times I received firearms training at Incirlik Base. I also had evasive driving training at the base, learning how to do J-turns on the runway, which was fun. I had to make sure the shotguns we had in the consulate were stored safely in the room-sized vault. In addition to the weapons inside the vault, there was also a safe where we could keep classified material. So I had to oversee all of that.

I paid attention to certain economic issues — the impact of Turkey's nascent liberalization, for example. Also, in southeastern Turkey there were important economic development plans. Most notably, there was a huge multi-year project — called the Southeast Anatolian Project — to build a series of dams and reservoirs along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to bring irrigation and electrical power to the region. This was, after all, the upper end of the Fertile Crescent, if you will. The Turks very much wanted to improve the economy of the poorest part of the country through these efforts. It was very interesting to visit these impressive projects as they emerged. There was also significant overland transit trade from Iraq through Turkey to Europe. An endless stream of tankers and truck traffic rumbled along the highway that passed right through Adana. These were all issues that took some of my time, but my bread-and-butter reporting issue was the growing Kurdish insurgency in southeastern Turkey.

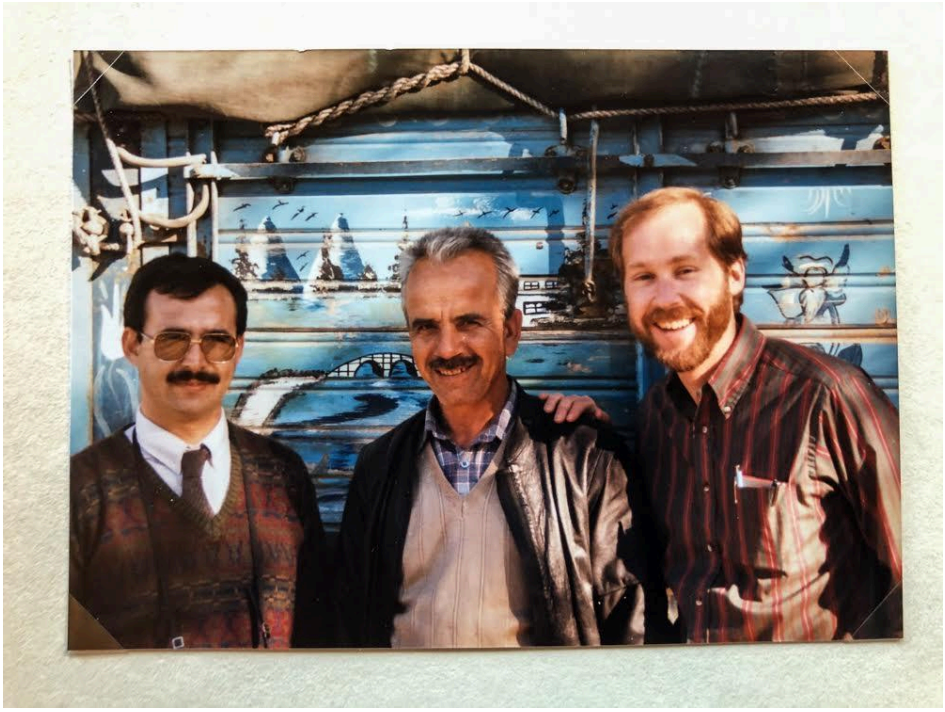
Turkey's Kurdish minority composes roughly 20% of the population of the country — perhaps a bit less. Tensions between ethnic Kurds and Turks go back to the beginning of the Republic, if not earlier. There were significant uprisings in the 1930s, but the latest round of unrest began in August 1984, when a group you may have heard of — the Kurdish Workers party or PKK — started attacking police stations and government

facilities in southeastern Turkey. Radical members of this group had essentially been flushed out of the country after the 1980 coup, but they had subsequently regrouped up in the mountains of southeastern Turkey, along the borders with Iraq and to some extent Syria. These attacks started on my predecessor's watch, but continued to steadily worsen. (Parenthetically my predecessor Adana was Jim Jeffery who later became U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, among many other high-level assignments.)

Q: So the PKK was a pretty new issue when you were there?

KILNER: Yes it was. Even attentive Turkey-watchers in Washington were scratching their heads, trying to understand how serious it was. Unfortunately, it turned out to be quite serious, exploding into a real threat to internal stability in the 1990s. But that came later. So the way I covered the issue, in addition to reporting on what little appeared in the Turkish press, was to make regular trips to the very remote southeastern provinces of Turkey. I made about one extended trip each quarter, except during the dead of winter, accompanied each time by a very talented and capable local national who worked at the Consulate. His name was Hamza Uluçay, and he was an ethnic Kurd. Frank Ricciardone (who had also served in Adana and eventually also became U.S. Ambassador to Turkey) had hired him around 1980. So Hamza had been with the Consulate for about five years when I arrived. He was an excellent linguist and very capable.

Typically on these reporting trips I would fly to Ankara for one or two days of consultations at the Embassy to catch up on their concerns and perspectives. Then I would fly out to the city of Van, which is a main city in far eastern Turkey, not too far from the Iranian border. In the meantime, Hamza and a driver would travel out there in a Consulate van to meet me. Then, for the next seven to ten days we slowly made our way back to Adana. We took a different route each time, so that we kept in touch with all parts of this quite expansive geographic region. We had packed programs every day, which Hamza had arranged before we left. Our days were very full, one after another. Sometimes if we had a long drive, I fell asleep in the car. It was physically tiring, but always fascinating! We met with all kinds of people: military commanders, governors, journalists, lawyers, businessmen — the whole spectrum. Even a few semi-nomadic tribes now and then. Conversations were always in Turkish, which I could usually manage as I was mostly asking questions. But Hamza would help me out when needed. And at the end of the day, Hamza and I usually took an hour to review what we had heard during the day. My notes served as the basis for the cables I wrote after returning to the Consulate.



Scott on a southeastern Turkey road trip with FSN Hamza Ulucay (L) and driver (1984)

Of course, we had to notify Turkish authorities of our travel in advance. Turkish intelligence and other authorities were keeping tabs on us for sure. But nowhere was "off limits" to us. That came later in the 1990s, after the insurgency became a full-blown violent conflict and triggered large-scale Turkish military deployments to the southeast. It really became horrible later. Villages were burned to the ground if they were perceived as supporting PKK insurgents. All the nasty stuff that goes with an insurgency… but that lay in the future. Especially looking back, these reporting trips were an incredible opportunity to get out and see the remotest areas of Turkey, which became inaccessible later. Southeastern Turkey is extremely rugged, majestic territory with high mountain peaks and picturesque river valleys lined with poplar trees. Mud hut villages dotted the countryside — exotic and colorful in every way.

Perhaps I should say a bit more about the demographics of Adana's Consular District, which borders on Syria, Iraq, and Iran — i.e. pretty sensitive territory most of the time. The ethnic Kurds were the dominant ethnic group in the southeast, but they were mixed together with a lot of ethnic Turks as well. Along the Syrian border, in particular, there were many ethnic Arabs — in villages and in cities like Urfa and Mardin that lay on the edge of the Mesopotamian Plain. There were also remnants of very ancient orthodox Christian communities. These pockets of Syriac Christians still conducted services in Aramaic, which many experts think was the language that Jesus spoke. Then there was Hatay Province — the finger of Turkey at the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea that extends down into Syria. It had been a disputed area between Syria and Turkey. In the Hatay there were still vestiges of a cosmopolitan Levantine community that has been there for many decades. Many of these families were involved with shipping and

trade and could speak four or five foreign languages. It was another very colorful area to visit.

Q: Is Turkey organized in provinces? Were there a lot of provinces in your district?

KILNER: There are, I think, 81 provinces in Turkey, so about a third of them were in Adana's consular district.

Q: What about the geography and climate?

KILNER: Much of Anatolia is a high plateau. Ankara, for example, is at about 3,000 feet. In the mountainous southeast, summers are delightful but winters are brutally cold and travel is very challenging. You may recall that one of Orhan Pamuk's novels took place in this area; it is aptly titled "Snow."

Q: I read half of it.

KILNER: (Laughs). Pamuk is not an easy writer, even if he did win the Nobel prize.

Q: Did you have representational responsibilities when you went out in the countryside?

KILNER: A little bit, but not a lot to be honest. I would take people out to dinner or lunch. And I did some public events that got some publicity in the regional press. For example, I once visited an Afghan refugee camp near Van. They were refugees from the Soviet era in Afghanistan. And we made it known we wanted to meet with human rights organizations in the region. Very few foreigners came to the Southeast, so doors were always open and it was not difficult to get some public attention locally.

Q: Did the U.S. have a peace corps presence?

KILNER: There had been, but it had closed up shop by the time I arrived in Adana. I think the Peace Corps wrapped up its presence in Turkey in the late 1960s or the early 1970s.

Q: As you traveled around to the Kurdish areas did you get any sense of dissatisfaction with the government or a desire for separatism?

KILNER: Dissatisfaction yes, but not separatism. Of course I would hear the government's position during calls on Turkish civilian and military officials. But when I met with bar associations or mayors, the complaints would come out quickly. The overall impression I had was that Kurdish Turks overwhelmingly wanted to have more local autonomy and freedom of cultural expression. They wanted to be able to speak their native language openly, to have it taught in schools, and to have radio and newspapers in Kurdish. Very rarely did I encounter overt separatist sentiments. That was what the PKK wanted, but I never met with the PKK representative. That was strictly off limits.

Let me pause on these cultural issues, because it is important. For years the official Turkish governmental position was simply that there was no such thing as Kurds. They did not exist, period. What we called Kurd were, they claimed, just "mountain Turks." Kurds were supposedly an imaginary construct of foreign sociologists. Literally, if you went into the Foreign Ministry before the mid-1980s, they would tell you this with a straight face. That was very much the talking point when I was in Istanbul the first time. And I remember how surprised I was when, in Adana, I saw the word "Kurd" ("Kürt" in Turkish) in a Turkish newspaper for the first time. Anyway, as time went on, Turkish governments gradually stopped denying the reality of Turkey's ethnic diversity. Kurdish political parties emerged and had a bit of political space, especially after Erdogan and the AKP came to power. But relations between Turks and Kurds have ebbed and flowed significantly.

To return to my reporting trips, despite the remoteness of the Southeast and the lack of economic development, in fact a pretty good road infrastructure had been built. So we could get most places by car without difficulty. In most of the small cities we visited there was a simple and clean hotel to stay in. If not, occasionally we stayed in a state-run guest house — for example, attached to a cement factory or an oil refinery. I was so taken with these colorful trips that once Jan, toddler Derek, and I made a ten-day driving trip through the region as a family. Another embassy family joined us; they had a small daughter about the same age as Derek. Together we travelled to a number of very colorful places near the Syrian border — Arab villages near Mardin and a few of the ancient Syriac Christian sites I mentioned. In one small village, Turkish security had deployed sharpshooters on the walls of an ancient stone village we explored. On another occasion we were escorted by not only police cars but armored personnel carriers as well. It was a very memorable family trip — an adventure and a half really.

Q: Archaeological sites?

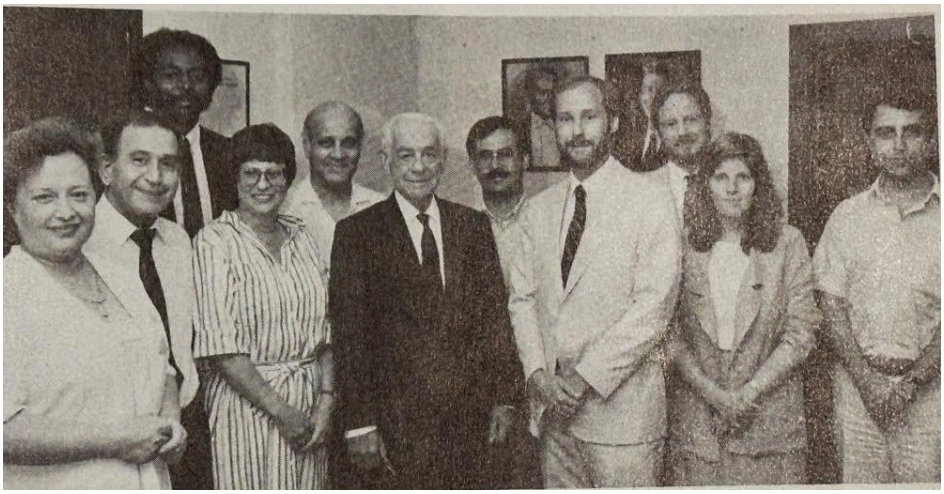
KILNER: There were many fantastic archaeological sites. The famous Greco-Roman ruins are in the western part of the country, generally along the Aegean coast. But near Adana and further east there are also castles and fortresses from previous civilizations. The urban stone architecture of cities like Mardin is quite dramatic — stone buildings on hillsides looking out on the Mesopotamian plain that extends into Syria. We also visited a few archaeological sites that now lie submerged under reservoirs that were under construction at the time. In some such cases there have been archaeological "rescue excavations" that produced world-class Roman mosaics and other treasures. One beautiful, ancient site along the Euphrates River was called Hasankeyf. It is now gone, but we had a chance to see it before the reservoir was filled. Perhaps I should add that, apart from that one family adventure in the Southeast, most of our personal travel was closer to home and in western Turkey where the infrastructure is better and the climate gentler.

Before we conclude our discussion of my Adana assignment, I would like to acknowledge the loyal and indispensable service to the USG of Hamza Uluçay, the Consulate's ethnic Kurdish local employee. Hamza was instrumental in making all of our reporting trips work. As I mentioned, he had been working at the Consulate for five years

when I arrived, and he continued to work for another 30 years or so. He literally took generations of Foreign Service Officers to southeastern Turkey and showed them the ropes. Never was Hamza's role more important than after the first Iraq War, when half a million Iraqi Kurds fled to the mountains on the border with Turkey. As U.S. civilian and military officials worked to manage this refugee crisis, Hamza escorted many senior American VIPs to the region. He was selected as EUR's "FSN of the Year," although he did not win the global award.

Tragically, or rather scandalously, in the severe Turkish government crackdown following the failed 2016 coup attempt, Hamza was arrested on bogus terrorism charges. (Sorry, but I'm jumping many years forward here.) Actually, three local national employees within the U.S. Mission were arrested under Turkey's infinitely elastic definition of associating with terrorists. Besides Hamza, the other two were at our Consulate General in Istanbul. Because Hamza had worked on Kurdish issues, the government charged him with associating with the PKK. He ended up spending two or three years in prison. Every living U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, several DCMs, myself, and other senior officials signed a letter on Hamza's behalf and sent it to President Erdogan, but to little effect. He was ultimately released, but much later than he should have been. I understand that there are still charges against him and he cannot leave the country. His career with the Consulate basically ended, and I think he lost his pension. He paid a big personal price for the service he rendered to the U.S. government. It was really a sad postscript for someone who had given such loyal service to the U.S. government. I personally believe all the charges were trumped up. Hamza was caught in the dragnet that hurt thousands of people after the coup attempt.

The last thing I could talk about is a very memorable family trip to Syria from Adana. The border with Syria is only a few hours' drive from Adana. I had never been to Syria and was very interested in visiting. But that was not possible for most of my tour because, as is so often the case, our relations with Syria were in the toilet. The main issue was Syria's involvement in international terrorism. We had withdrawn our ambassador from Embassy Damascus, so there was a Chargé in place. The ambassador was William Eagleton, one of the Department's senior Arab specialists. The Consulate Adana had a direct relationship with Embassy Damascus because every few weeks they made a run to the commissary at Incirlik Air Base for supplies, which our Consulate facilitated.



Consulat Adana Staff (1986); Photo from State Magazine

In the spring of 1987, a few months before we were to leave, relations with Syria loosened a little and, with Embassy Ankara's help, Jan and I were able to obtain visas. So, in May of 1987 Jan, Derek and I loaded our little Peugeot, which we still had, and drove down through the Hatay to the border crossing into Syria, which is very little used. When we arrived, there was almost no one else there. Nevertheless, it took us FOUR! hours to get through that crossing point. I was shuttled back-and-forth, from one office to another, one stamp, one exchange of currency for another. It was pretty clear they were just waiting for me to pay a bribe, but I did not. We knew it was going to take a long time, and Jan wasn't yelling at me. We eventually just waited them out, and they let us through. So that was the first of our "adventures" on this trip.

From there we headed to Aleppo, stopping en route to see the ancient monastic ruins of St. Simeon the Stylite. Nobody else was there except a lone Syrian guard. Late afternoon. Beautiful sunlight. We eventually got to Aleppo and spent a couple of nights in the hotel associated with Agatha Christie, with more than a whiff of the colonial ambience. Aleppo had a tremendous souk, a market that rivaled anything in Turkey We spent a good deal of time there. After a couple of days in Aleppo we then drove out through the Syrian desert to the spectacular Roman ruins at Palmyra. Our route took us through the cities of Hama and Homs, which have a sort of a tortured past as the subject of repeated crackdowns in recent years. It was calm at that time, so we drove through the city. But then came the second "adventure" — our little Peugeot getting sideswiped by a municipal bus. The bus stopped. Our car was dented but fully drivable. The driver spoke only Arabic of course, so I quickly realized there was nothing to be done and we continued on. We got to Palmyra, where we had reservations at an excellent French hotel that had been built on the edge of the archeological site.

The next morning, we went out to see the Roman ruins, which were hugely impressive. The three of us took our time walking around. Derek was a toddler, walking but very still small and unsteady on his feet. I was watching him closely to make sure he didn't tumble off one of those big marble blocks with which the ruins were built. But because I was focused on him, I wasn't paying attention to my own feet, and I stepped off one of those

blocks — falling about three feet straight down onto another marble block and landing on the side of my ankle. I felt a pain shoot up through me, from my ankle to the top of my head, as I had never felt before and never have since. I knew I had done something not at all good. After resting a few minutes, I determined that I could still hobble, so we limped back to the hotel. My ankle swelled up to the size of a melon. And by that time, putting ice on it did little good. Anyway, without going into too much detail, the long and the short of it was that we were able to continue our trip, with me kind of limping along and Jan taking over the driving for the rest of the trip. My injured foot was the right one, so I could not operate the brake and the gas pedals. So that was adventure #3.

We persevered, and the last stop was Damascus, where we were received at the Embassy by Chargé David Ransom. He was very nice and received us in his office. We chatted a while, and then David said, "Scott, we don't get many visitors here, and we don't have an ambassador. So I think the most practical place to put you up is in the Ambassador's Residence. There is a big king-sized bed that the three of you will fit in." I was very impressed!

So, we were placed in the Residence and saw right away that Amb. Eagleton had been withdrawn so rapidly, and on the assumption that he would return to Post at some point, that he had left all his possessions in place. All of his suits were hanging in the closet. He had a fabulous collection of mainly Kurdish carpets on the floor. He had a great map collection. Even in the backyard his two little dachshunds were still running around. So that's where we stayed for a few days. Memorable experience #4. I thought Damascus at that time was a surprisingly attractive city. As everywhere else in Syria, we would occasionally run into small groups of young men just hanging out. Of course we were instantly spotted as foreigners, of which there were very few at that time. So we were certainly curiosities, and if any of the men knew a little English they would approach us to chat. But they were always extremely friendly and welcoming. So we had a fine couple of days in Damascus. Then we drove back to Adana. Upon return I went right away to the hospital at Incirlik. They took some X-rays, and told me that I was lucky. I just had a very bad sprain, not a break. I had to stay off the ankle, relying on crutches for about ten days. The experience impressed upon me how continuously one uses one's hands. I hated it, and resolved never to do such a boneheaded thing again.

Q: *So, Scott, before we leave your tour in Adana — wasn't this the area where a very big earthquake hit earlier this year?*

KILNER: That is correct. In fact, I think that since I left Adana in 1987, there had been two important developments that have changed that part of Turkey in a big way — perhaps permanently. The first was the civil war in Syria that broke out in 2011. Something like four million Syrian refugees have made their way into Turkey. While they have spread out all over the country, their impact was felt most directly in the border regions around the Hatay. They have changed the demographics of that region in a big way.

The second event that has had a major impact, as you suggest, was the devastating earthquake February of this year, 2023. Unusually, there were in fact two major shocks of around 7.0 on the Richter scale. One of those would have been enormous, but two back-to-back were just catastrophic. Estimates are that something like 60,000 people were killed. Probably close to a million people were displaced, as structures either collapsed or were rendered uninhabitable. There has also been massive economic damage through the region. That area has changed in many ways: refugees, earthquakes, and the worsening of the Kurdish insurgency during the 1990s.

Q: There was criticism–I don't know how well founded–that the damage and deaths were unnecessarily high because of lax enforcement of building codes. Do you think that was the case?

KILNER: I do. After the 1999 earthquake outside of Istanbul, in which about 19,000 people lost their lives, my understanding is that building codes were increased and improved substantially on paper. But enforcement of those codes left much to be desired. This gets into the problem of corruption in the real estate sector and the crony capitalism connected to the government in Turkey. It's a huge issue.

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1987-1992: WASHINGTON, DC (EUROPEAN AFFAIRS)

Q: Good afternoon. It is May 29, 2023, Memorial Day here and we are continuing our conversation with Scott Kilner. So, Scott, we are about to move on to your first tour in Washington. You moved back to Washington and, I think, landed in a very busy and well-respected office at the State Department headquarters.

KILNER: After three successive assignments overseas, in the summer of 1987 I did finally return to Washington. I calculated that, by this time we had moved five times in six years since we left Berkeley. As much as I liked to travel, I was getting a bit pooped, as was Jan. We had a three-year-old boy and in fact another one on the way. So we were happy to be going back to Washington. We stayed in DC for five years — as long as we could. It turned out to be a great period for us as a family. In fact, I'd say that these years were transformative for both our family and on the work front. That transformation is the theme that I would like to focus on in this discussion.

So, we arrived there in late August or early September of 1987. We knew we wanted to buy a house, so we sold our home in Berkeley and began looking for a new one in the Washington area. Happily, before long found one we really liked in the Sumner neighborhood of Bethesda — a colonial style with (theoretically) four bedrooms. It was just a mile beyond the district line. We paid the "astronomical" $425,000. At the end of the year our second child, Melinda, was born — literally on New Years Eve, just in time to get a tax deduction for 1987. Melinda was born in George Washington Hospital in the District. Not surprisingly, then, for the next five years our family life revolved around

these two small children. I say "our family life," but in reality the burden very much fell on Jan. These were still the pre-maternity-leave days in the State Department. When Melinda was born, I took all of one week off, and that was using my own annual leave. So there were no paternity benefits at all. I was pretty much expected to be back in the office after one week.

Being back in the States also enabled us to participate in more extended family gatherings in ways we had not been able to for several years. For example, Jan's mother was widowed and then remarried late in life to someone who had a house on the shores of Lake Michigan near Saugatuck. So every summer we would go to the lake for a week or so. Also, Jan's brother and family lived in the Boston area, and we usually went up there for Christmas, and they would come down to Washington and have Thanksgiving with us. We even went to Hawaii once for my dad's 60th birthday. On a more daily basis, there was of course the unending merry-go-round of activities connected to our kids, which Jan especially threw herself into: pre-school President for a year, Cub Scout den mother, a book club. Jan even helped teach a sex education class of fifth graders in the District of Columbia. So lots going on at the home front and it was all good. Maybe that is enough for personal things. So now I will switch to Foggy Bottom and talk about what was going on there.

Q: So, you went into the European Bureau at the State Department.

KILNER: That's right. I mentioned earlier that our Ambassador in East Berlin, Roz Ridgway, had been skeptical — to put it mildly — of my decision to take the job in Adana. But despite that she had not forgotten about me. Roz had become Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, and, as I understand it, instructed one of her deputies to find a place for me in EUR.

Q: She was an Assistant Secretary now.

KILNER: Yes. Roz had caught George Shultz's eye. When she finished in East Berlin, Shultz asked her to become his Assistant Secretary for European Affairs. Roz and her deputy, Jim Wilkinson (who had been her DCM in Berlin) found a place for me in the office then known as EUR/RPE, which stood for Regional Political and Economic Affairs. This was the office of the European Bureau that handled multilateral European organizations apart from NATO. NATO affairs were handled in a completely different office. The bulk of EUR/RPE supported our Mission to the European Communities in Brussels, known as USEC for short. The European Union had not been created yet. Brussels. Our office also supported the U.S. Mission to the OECD in Paris, and a few other things.

So that is the office where I ended up at first. I was very appreciative of having been hired for a job in the European Bureau because I was quite interested in European affairs apart from Turkey. That said, however, the job that I ended up in did not really meet my expectations because it turned out to be rather different from what I had been promised. I would have to describe that first job as a hodgepodge of responsibilities. I was essentially

the Desk Officer for the NATO Economic Committee. You probably didn't even know that NATO had an economic committee, did you? The U.S. had two people at the U.S. Mission to NATO in Brussels who worked on the Economic Committee, so I was their guy in Washington. I also backstopped and followed the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe — another organization that few people knew existed. I think it still exists, but it was a product of the Cold War — the UN body to facilitate trade and economic interaction between Eastern and Western Europe. I had a few other dribs and drabs of work to look after. But my boss was kind of a schemer and kept all the higher-profile responsibilities for himself.

All that said, this was my first real job in the State Department and I had a lot to learn about Foggy Bottom. I remember how in my first staff meetings I was completely baffled by all the acronyms being thrown around, and by references to people I'd never heard of. It was like a foreign language swirling around me. And I'll confess that even if my job didn't amount to much, I did get a few pretty nice trips out of it. I spent a week in Paris once, and two full weeks in Geneva another time for the annual meeting of the Economic Commission for Europe.

Q: Now in those jobs, the people in the Missions your office supported needed to go into meetings with positions and talking points that had been cleared in Washington. Did you have a lot of work like that?

KILNER: Some, but it wasn't as demanding as on the NATO Desk, for example. But then, completely unexpectedly, things changed for me in a big way. We have come to what I look back upon as a pivotal moment in my Foreign Service career — an event that changed my trajectory in a very positive way.

One winter morning in 1988, I went down to the cafeteria to get a cup of coffee about 10:00. I needed a little more caffeine on a seemingly ordinary day. The cafeteria was largely empty, but I noticed that over in one corner Assistant Secretary Ridgway and her deputy Jim Wilkinson were sitting together talking. After getting my coffee I just sort of nodded in their direction, but then Roz asked me to come over for a minute." So I did but had no idea what she wanted. She said, "Jim and I were just talking about how my Special Assistant, Walter Andrusyszyn, will finish his assignment this summer. I'll need a new Special Assistant. Would you be interested in the job? I should warn you that the hours are terrible."

Jim Wilkinson later told me that the look of surprise on my face was more than obvious. Because, very candidly, such an opportunity was the last thing I had expected. I still felt so new and green in the ways of Foggy Bottom operations. The Special Assistant position was above my grade and there were countless other officers in the European Bureau who had more experience than I did and who would have loved to have this job. Anyway, many thoughts instantly raced through my mind, but I didn't hesitate and immediately said "yes" right on the spot.

So, I finished out my one year in RPE, and then in the summer of 1988 moved to the EUR Front Office. The Special Assistant had an office that connected directly to the

Assistant Secretary's office. There was a door between the two offices, so Roz could just pivot anytime to ask me to do something. When she wanted to have a private conversation she just shut the door. The Special Assistant was essentially a glorified "gopher." But what a gopher hole!! I was an informal channel of communication between the head of the European Bureau and everybody else. Of course the Deputy Assistant Secretaries formally supervised their respective offices, but in all sorts of ways the Bureau's many Desk Officers and Office Directors frequently sought an informal reading on what was happening in the Front Office. That's what I was able to provide. I would run errands; I would communicate messages. I would learn what was going on in different offices and could communicate that to the Assistant Secretary. I loved this role and benefited from it in several ways. People obviously knew that I had been hired for this job because Roz Ridgway liked and trusted me, so the doors around EUR were always open. Nobody would ever say no, or that they didn't have time. I could just pick up the phone and call anyone.

EUR Assistant Secretary Rozanne Ridgway presents Superior Honor Award to Scott

EUR was the largest bureau in the State Department. I got to know literally everybody, so the contacts I formed were enormous. I also soon realized that if I had the right attitude — if I tried my best to be helpful, maintained a sense of personal modesty and a sense of humor, never acted as if I were the Assistant Secretary, and provided intelligence without betraying confidences — I could win a lot of friends by helping others do their job better. Beyond building these professional contacts, I learned an incredible amount about the way the State Department functioned. Where the power centers were. In EUR there were two centers of gravity: the NATO office (EUR/RPM) and the Soviet Union office (EUR/SOV). They were the heavyweights. I learned, for example, how the formal system of "clearing" memos could be circumvented via informal channels.

But perhaps the most interesting part of this job was the daily meeting Roz had at the end of every afternoon, informally known as "vespers." It took place in her office every day around 5:00. Participants included all the Deputy Assistant Secretaries, the Director of EUR/EX and me. So, I was kind of a fly on the wall, taking notes and occasionally given a task. This was the time when Roz and her deputies would both report on what had happened that day in their respective domains, and also strategize on achieving objectives and overcoming obstacles. Who or where was the problem? How could EUR win the next bureaucratic battle? This was all incredibly interesting to me.

Q: It sounds like a lot of your work was also communicating what the Front Office really wanted from the various offices, right?

KILNER: That was the core of it. Especially in urgent, short-fuse situations, I could run to an office and say, "Roz needs this in ten minutes!" Or if an office wanted to bring an urgent matter to the Assistant Secretary's attention immediately, I could do that.

Q: Were there serious disagreements on policy among the various offices? Or did the Bureau run pretty smoothly?

KILNER: EUR was generally very well run. Everyone knew that Roz had Secretary Shultz's confidence, so morale was good. Almost everyone in EUR was happy to be there at that time. This was not only because EUR was a real force in the State Department, but also because earthshaking developments in East-West relations were starting to take shape. This was the era of Gorbachev and FM Shevardnadze in the Soviet Union. Things hadn't yet collapsed, but cracks were appearing and the opportunities were there.

The camaraderie in the European Bureau Front Office was very high. You could see this, for example, in how every Saturday morning everyone came into the office in casual dress for half a day — until perhaps 1:00 or 2:00 PM. It was a relaxed atmosphere, but all the Deputies and I were expected to be there. So the work-week was 5 ½ days, and the days were usually quite long.

In addition to all the work in Washington, I was able to accompany the Assistant Secretary on a few of her last trips. One was to Moscow for arms control talks with the Soviets; another was to Vienna for a grand ceremony marking the inauguration of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which replaced and upgraded the CSCE or Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The event was a massive dinner for hundreds of people in the neo gothic Vienna City Hall. We also went to Paris for another Secretarial event there. These were very interesting and enjoyable trips, but they also laid bare the rivalries between various departments and agencies of the U.S. government. Especially on the arms control trip to Moscow, the gap between DOD and State was very obvious. So this was also very much part of my education process.

But soon the end of the Reagan administration arrived. In the election of 1988, George H.W. Bush was elected and he brought in James Baker as his Secretary of State. To put it bluntly, Roz Ridgway wanted to become Baker's Undersecretary for Political Affairs in

the new administration. She knew she could do it, and probably felt in some sense that she had earned it. I suspect that George Shultz had put in a good word for her, but Baker had other ideas. He ended up selecting Bob Kimmitt for that position.

I remember the day that Roz went to interview with Baker and, I think, Margaret Tutwiler. The interview did not go as Roz had hoped. When she returned to her office, she had a crestfallen look on her face with an expression I had never seen before. She knew at that point that she was not going to get the job. After that, there followed a sad, rather depressing "interregnum" in EUR, during which Roz was essentially a lame duck. Ray Seitz, a career FSO who had been DCM in London, was the person Baker brought in to be the next Assistant Secretary for Europe. I don't really know what Roz's calculus was, but for whatever reason she decided that, rather than taking another ambassadorship overseas, she would resign. Roz probably could have had her pick of ambassadorships — to NATO, for example — but she didn't want to go that route after having been Assistant Secretary. She didn't want to be taking orders instead of giving direction. So she quit. I recall the sad day she left the State Department. Roz had lived and breathed the Foreign Service. At the end of her last day, she walked down the corridor to the basement parking garage wearing a big red hat — perhaps to cover the tears in her eyes. Anyway, Ray Seitz arrived, and I worked with him for about a month until his new Special Assistant came into place. I helped Ray get settled as best I could, but it was totally different from working for Roz. Then I went "downstairs" to the Office of Central European affairs, EUR/CE, for my next job as a Desk Officer.

Q: Before we move on from there, how clearly did we see what was happening in East Germany and other countries in the region? Because 1989 was the year of revolution, right?

KILNER: In fact, I had a ringside seat when I moved downstairs from the EUR Front Office in late July or early August. By that time there were definitely rumblings in Eastern Europe, in Hungary for example. The Soviet satellite governments were starting to go their own way. In June 1989 the barbed wire was cut at the Hungary-Austria border — a pivotal event in Eastern Europe. A lot was in play in Eastern Europe, but Washington's attention was still focused most intensely on Moscow, given the importance of the Soviet Union.

Q: With Gorbachev and Shevardnadze as foreign minister, it was a time of great opportunities for the U.S. to try to forge a new path with the Soviet Union.

KILNER: Absolutely.

Q: Before we move on, is there anything more you would like to say about your year in the EUR Front Office.

KILNER: Perhaps just one other curious sidebar. As I mentioned earlier, as Special Assistant I dealt with all of the bureau's Office Directors. One of them, the Director of EUR/RPE, was named Felix Bloch, who had arrived after I left that office. Felix was a courtly, old-world gentleman. He seemed competent but didn't particularly stand out in

any way. I was with him frequently. But then one day he just disappeared. We soon learned that Felix had been arrested on espionage charges for having passed classified material to the Soviets while he had been DCM in Vienna some years earlier! It took everybody by great surprise. His arrest didn't have huge repercussions, as far as I know, but it certainly was a big surprise.

Q: People were quite shaken, I am sure. So you moved from the EUR Front Office to The Office of Central European Affairs, which basically handled German-speaking Europe, right?

KILNER: That's correct. So, the obvious next step for me was to become a desk officer in EUR. There were many countries in the European Bureau and, to be candid, I basically could just pick the one I wanted. The one I chose was the Desk responsible for Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. I think this surprised a lot of people, who perhaps assumed that I would pick one of the "big, serious countries" like Germany or France. But I had this Austrian connection because I had studied in Vienna. Even though it was a small country, to me it was an interesting one. I knew less about Switzerland, but for some reason it interested me as well. Switzerland, you know, has long had a unique international role as a neutral country. So that is what I chose.

My choice, in fact, turned out to be quite a good one for a couple of reasons. In EUR/CE at that time there was a Director, a Deputy Director, three people working on the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), a Berlin Desk Officer, an East Germany Desk Officer, and one more FSO who handled inter-German affairs. In other words, there were many people working on Germany one way or another. Then there was me covering both Austria and Switzerland. And given the events in Germany between 1989-91, even the Director and Deputy Director of the office were focused intensely on that country. This created a situation in which I had a great deal of autonomy and was very beneficial in terms of professional development. Whenever our embassies in Vienna and Bern needed the attention of our office, they had to go through me. Ditto for the Swiss and Austrian embassies in Washington. So even as a mid-level Desk Officer, I dealt directly with the Swiss and Austrian ambassadors and DCMs all the time, and I was regularly invited to their events. Likewise, our DCMs in Vienna and Bern would call me because they knew our Office Director didn't have much time for them.

The Swiss and Austrian Embassies were great to work with — staffed with excellent professional diplomats. Working with them was a great part of my job. I worked like a dog because I had to do everything that desk officers do, all by myself and for two countries. I've often joked about this. Do you remember Rodney Dangerfield — the comedian who always complained that "he got no respect?" I would often joke that the Austria-Switzerland Desk was a Rodney Dangerfield job. I would frequently run into colleagues around the Department, in the cafeteria for example, who would say, "Well Scott, at least there is one person EUR/CE who is not being crushed by the workload." But the reality was just the opposite. With perhaps one exception, there was nobody in the office who kept longer hours than I did.

Q: So what were the main issues that you had to deal with in your new job?

When I landed in the EUR/CE, in early August of 1989, the big issue was the Waldheim Affair. Kurt Waldheim, as you may remember, was a top Austrian diplomat who was then elected twice as United Nations Secretary General. After that he was elected President of Austria. So Waldheim represented the absolute pinnacle of the Austrian government. But the United States had determined that he was also a war criminal. The Department of Justice's Office of Special Investigations (OSI) had spent years investigating and gathering testimony on Waldheim's World War Two activities — especially his involvement in the deportation of Jews from the Balkans to NAZI death camps. OSI ultimately determined that these activities met the threshold of ineligibility for a visa to the United States. All of this had transpired before I arrived on the Austria Desk, and the ban on Waldheim's travel to the U.S. was a firm decision. To categorize him as a war criminal was, as you can imagine, a huge deal for Austria. I presumed that I would be spending a lot of time trying to manage the fallout from this issue, but in fact "the Waldheim Affair" was soon swamped and superseded by the opening of the Berlin Wall in October 1989.

Q: So why if you were the one person in the office not working Germany, why was your job affected?

KILNER: The political earthquake of 1989 may have been centered in Berlin, but its shockwaves were felt throughout the entire region. All of the Warsaw Pact countries were directly impacted, of course. But the opening of the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian borders, for example, had a huge impact on Austria. More broadly, the unravelling of the East Bloc raised fundamental questions about what it would mean to be "neutral" — as both Austria and Switzerland officially were — in a post-Cold War world.
There were big debates in Austria over such questions as: Could Austria join the European Community? What about export controls that had been imposed on the East Bloc? Would they continue? What about security cooperation with NATO? Would that be possible for Austria or Switzerland? All of this was suddenly up for debate, and Austria and Switzerland would often answer these questions differently. These issues occasionally attracted the attention of EUR Assistant Secretary Ray Seitz and Bob Hutchings at the NSC.

Another major consequence of the collapse of the old order in Eastern Europe was the future of Yugoslavia. Slovenia, after all, is right on Austria's border. Larry Eagleburger was James Baker's Deputy Secretary of State at that time; he had previously been U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia and so took a strong interest in the region. Eagleburger had a strong relationship with his Austrian counterpart, Thomas Klestil. I don't know exactly when that relationship started, but they had known each other for a long time. So as things started to unravel in Yugoslavia, Eagleburger thought the U.S. might be able to benefit from insights the Austrians had on how to deal with those problems. So, he tasked our office — which meant me — and our embassy in Vienna with setting up a bilateral mechanism for consultations on Eastern Europe generally, but with a focus on Yugoslavia. This was something we created from scratch. It was a forum for exchanging

views that existed for a couple of years while things were very fluid. Twice each year we organized bilateral meetings between eastern European experts in Washington and in Vienna. It was useful for a couple of years.

The Swiss account was rather different. Questions of neutrality and the future of Eastern Europe were not as salient as with Austria. But Switzerland had a very long, very interesting, very quiet role as a trusted intermediary. For example, during this period they served as a communication channel to Iran. Whenever senior Swiss diplomats or other government officials came to Washington, I was usually the notetaker for their meetings. I would get into meetings between the Swiss Deputy Foreign Minister and our senior Middle East point-person, Dennis Ross, for example. It was fascinating to see how all that worked.

Q: Doing all of this and more for two countries, you kept very long hours.

KILNER: Very much so. There was one other person in the office who worked even later than I did. That was Andrew Goodman, who was the notetaker for many of the two-plus-four talks on German reunification. But night after night, I never left before 7:00 PM, and it was often 8:00 or 9:00. Yet I had a nice office all to myself, with a beautiful 4th Floor view on the C Street side of Main State. I could look out at the Lincoln Memorial and across the Potomac River towards the Robert E. Lee mansion as the sun was setting. Then I would think to myself, "only three more hours before I can go home." But I would not have traded it for anything. It was a real opportunity and very satisfying work.

Q: It must have been hard on your wife with the little kids. It must have been hard on both of you.

KILNER: Well, the drill was that when I got home — at whatever time it was — the kids would be in bed and there would be a plate of food for me on the kitchen counter. I would put the food in the microwave. That was my dinner night after night. The buses had stopped running by the time I usually went home, so I had to call a cab night after night. One thing I insisted on to my bosses was reimbursement for my ten-dollar taxi fare every night.

Q: What about Liechtenstein? Did you have much to do on that small country?

I can offer three anecdotes regarding Liechtenstein. First, the one and only time I received a phone call directly from a U.S. Senator was on a Liechtenstein matter. Senator Claiborne Pell had an interesting and somewhat quirky connection to the royal house of Liechtenstein. I can't even remember what the issue was — it was a small matter — but he wanted to speak directly with the Liechtenstein Desk Officer. The second anecdote is that while I was on the desk Lichtenstein applied for full membership in the United Nations. Literally the morning of the vote somebody from the U.S. Mission in New York (USUN) called me up and said, "Hey Scott, before we go vote on this, we just want to make sure there are no State Department objections against letting another little micro-state into the U.N. General Assembly. We are OK with it here at USUN." The

subject had never come up; I had never heard of it. But off the top of my head, I just replied "No, the Department has no objection. You can go ahead." So that was one occasion in my career where I actually made U.S. policy! There was never any second guessing or blowback, by the way. As for the third little anecdote: we handled our relations with the government of Liechtenstein through our Consulate General in Zurich, which was our diplomatic post nearest to the capital city of Vaduz. Our Consul General was the accredited U.S. representative. So when I went to Switzerland for consultations, one day I traveled with CG Ruth van Heuven by car to Vaduz for lunch with the Foreign Minister himself. Admittedly, they have a tiny Foreign Ministry, but I thought it was rather cool to have lunch with a cabinet minister even as a "lowly mid-level Desk Officer." Such were the advantages of working on a small country.

Q: How small is the population?

KILNER: Only about 40,000, roughly.

Q: Desk Officers generally have to help new ambassadorial appointees prepare for their confirmation hearings. Did that come up on your watch?

KILNER: Yes, indeed. Once for Austria and once for Switzerland at the beginning of the George H.W. Bush presidency. Both were wealthy political appointees who had been active fundraisers for the Republican Party. For Austria, President Bush picked an oil man from Texas named Roy Huffington. He both looked like and talked like John Wayne!! It was quite striking, but he was a real gentleman — very smart, very good with people, and a pleasure to work with. For Switzerland the person nominated was Joseph Gildenhorn. He was a Washington real estate guy. He was also fine to work with, but a little more prickly than Roy Huffington.

As you know, any new ambassador should have senior-level briefings from all U.S. Government agencies that have issues and activities in the country to which the ambassador is being sent. Desk Officers are responsible for organizing these briefings and generally accompany the appointee as a notetaker — to the Treasury Department, or USTR, or the ExIm Bank, or the Department of Energy, and so forth. I found all of these calls to be very interesting. They allowed me to get a feel for several other government agencies and their top leadership. And it helped me get a clearer sense of inter-agency dynamics in Washington. In any case, the confirmation hearings for both Huffington and Gildenhorn were a breeze — really just a formality. And then, after they got out to their respective Embassies, I already had a good, personal relationship with each of them, which certainly helped.

Q: Now you just for the record later you served in this position from '89 to '91.

KILNER: That's right.

Q: And the previous one as EUR Special Assistant was from '88 to '89.

KILNER: Yes.

Q: Anything else we would talk about?

KILNER: Actually there is, because I stayed in EUR/CE for a third year, but in a different job. This is why. The Austria-Switzerland Desk was a two-year assignment, as was standard. But it so happened that in the summer of 1991 every single person in the office was leaving except for the Office Director, Olaf Grobel. Turnover had clearly gotten out of sync, and Olaf was desperate to have somebody stay on to provide some institutional continuity. At the same time, I had been scouting out overseas assignment opportunities, and I had identified a job in Paris opening up at the right time. I talked about it with Avis Bohlen, who was going out to Paris as the new Deputy Chief of Mission, and she seemed supportive. But I didn't have French, so I would need to fit that in. Anyway, I worked out a deal with Olaf that I would stay in the EUR/CE for another year, if I could move over to the Germany Desk to do something different. That's what ended up happening, as I took over responsibility for the economic side of the Germany portfolio.

It was a very interesting time to work on German economic issues. With reunification now legally accomplished, the economic integration of the former East Germany with West Germany was a major concern. Monetary union between East and West was a huge deal. Chancellor Helmut Kohl, for political reasons, made the decision to agree to a one-to-one conversion rate between the Deutschmark and the East German Ostmark, even though the market exchange rate was about five-to-one. That decision had big implications for prices and competitiveness of industry in the eastern provinces.

Then there were many questions related to the complex problem of what Germany would do with all the East German state-owned enterprises. Would the government try to restructure them to make them competitive, or would they be unwound completely? As I had been to a number of these state-owned enterprises during my assignment to the GDR, these issues were both intellectually challenging and personally fascinating. During this third year in EUR/CE I was able to make a couple of trips to Berlin to see things first-hand. One trip was in October of 1991. The Economic Counselor at Embassy Berlin, Mike Mosur, and I visited several East German enterprises that were trying to find their way in a brave new world. The former Communist apparatchiks who ran them were totally at sea. They had no idea what was going to happen or how to deal with their new environment. Having seen those kinds of enterprises and those people back in the "GDR heyday," the new reality presented an astounding contrast!

If I may, I'd like to back up slightly. Actually, I had already visited unified Berlin once before, in May of 1990, while I was still on the Austria-Switzerland Desk. After stops for consultations in Bern and Vienna, I decided to go to Berlin on my own dime. This was really an unusual time — a kind of "twilight zone period" in which the Berlin Wall was open, but formal reunification had not yet been finalized. This meant that the forms of the GDR were still in place. The East German border guards were still there. The wall was still there. But they didn't mean anything. At Checkpoint Charlie I actually recognized a couple of the East German border guards on duty from my Berlin assignment five years earlier. They had been quite stern back then, but now they were just standing around

letting people go back and forth. At one point I gave my camera to a tourist and asked him to take a picture of me standing with one of these border guards. I was holding a can of beer. Along the Berlin Wall there were all kinds of GDR and East Bloc flotsam and jetsam: East German pins, Russian military hats, pieces of the wall. It was like a big flea market, with entrepreneurial Turks living in West Berlin particularly active. I got together with a few of my East German friends from that earlier period. Together we went to an abandoned watchtower outside the city center and climbed to the observation platform. I took some barbed wire and fragments from the wall, as well as a few other souvenirs. I still have them in my basement here at home in Palo Alto. It was really unforgettable to see the city during this twilight transitional period.

East German border guards in May of 1990—still in place but doing nothing after the Berlin Wall fell

But before we finish discussing my three years in EUR/CE, I would like to mention one other episode that was completely separate from everything else. It concerns the immediate aftermath of the first Iraq War in early 1991. You will recall that this conflict was provoked by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. In response the Bush administration built a broad international coalition that succeeded in liberating Kuwait and defeating the Iraqi army in short order. President Bush made the decision — correctly in my view — not to go all the way to Baghdad to overthrow the Iraqi government. But that left Saddam Hussein's regime in place.

One immediate consequence of that strategic decision was that it quickly triggered a Kurdish refugee crisis in northern Iraq. Saddam had brutally repressed the Kurdish minority in the north, including the use of poison gas against some Kurdish villages. Iraqi Kurds had every reason to fear what would happen if Saddam remained in power and coalition forces withdrew. So, within a matter of days after the war ended half a million Kurds fled into the mountains along the Iraq-Turkey border.

The U.S. Embassy in Ankara monitored this refugee crisis as best it could, but the Embassy soon became overwhelmed and asked Washington for reinforcements. A call for volunteers went out, and of course I knew this region well having recently served in Adana. I was immediately interested; to help out with this crisis for a few weeks sounded like a real adventure. I talked to my bosses, who agreed to let me go provided I wasn't away too long. So I raised my hand to volunteer, and within about three days I was on a plane to Turkey. This was in late March of 1991.

The first stop was Ankara for a couple of days of briefings. From there I flew to Incirlik Air Base and then, by helicopter to the town of Silopi near the Turkish-Iraqi border. For the next month or so, I lived in a tent among American, British and French military forces on the Turkish side of the border. Besides me, there were a couple of other civilians from Embassy Ankara and Consulate Adana. But otherwise, this was a military deployment. At the time, U.S. and Coalition forces were paving the way for what became a years-long "no fly zone" over northern Iraq. But the immediate goal in those early days after the war ended was to stabilize the border region so that the Kurdish refugees in the mountains would feel safe enough to return to their homes. My role, and that of the few other civilians, was to monitor what was happening and report to Embassy Ankara what we observed. Every day we would get into a jeep and cross through the Habur Gate into northern Iraq and travel around for several hours. In the late afternoon we returned to our "tent city" near Silopi and wrote a report that we sent by fax to Embassy Ankara. We were also asked to liaise with local Turkish officials to work through any bureaucratic snags on the movement back and forth across the Turkish-Iraqi border. Fortunately, there weren't too many problems in that regard.

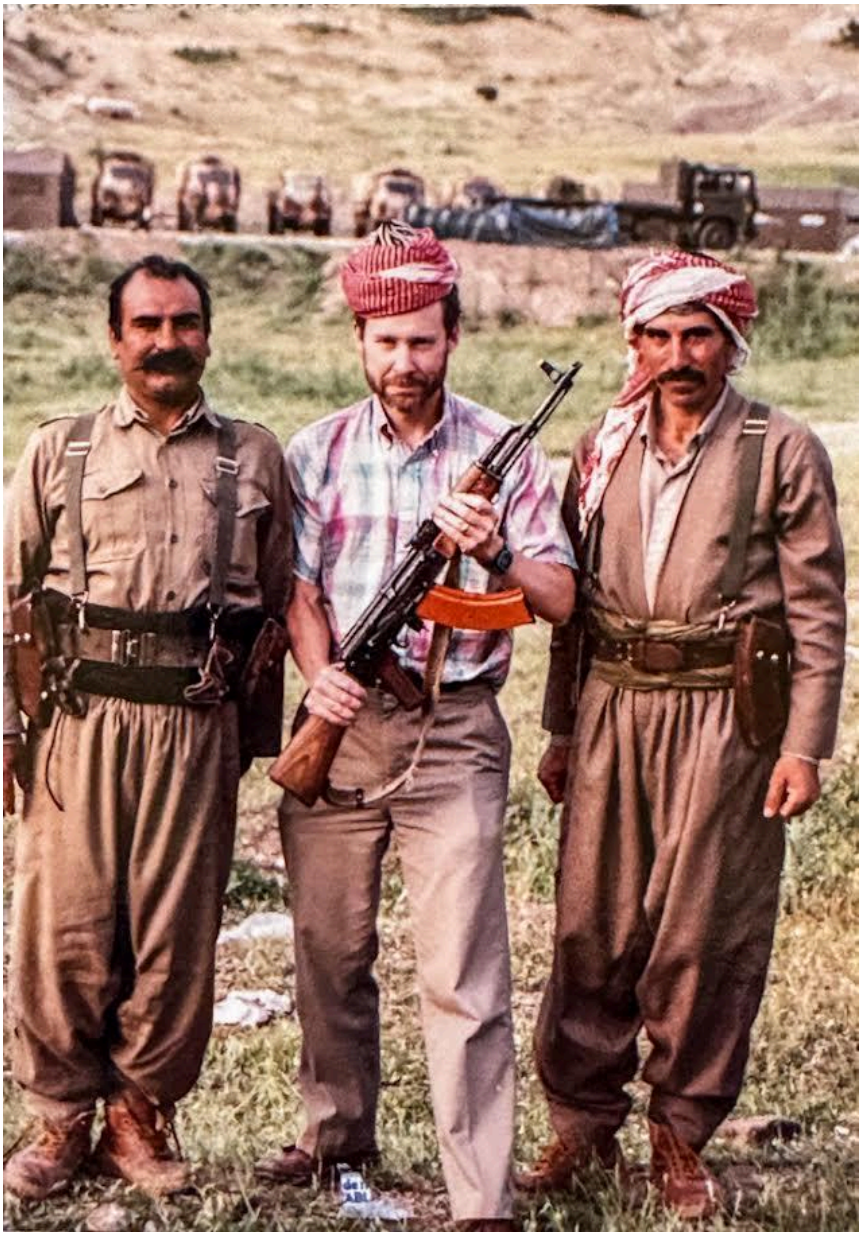
This was an incredibly interesting experience in many ways: to see how humanitarian relief deliveries were carried out in the mountains of Kurdistan; to observe what U.S. military deployments to the region looked like on the ground; to witness the destruction that Iraqi forces had wrought against towns and villages in the north. I was also struck by how dramatically beautiful this mountainous region was in the early spring. In any case, "Operation Provide Comfort" (as the mission was called), was a very successful effort. Before too long, stability was restored and refugees started coming back down from the mountains to their towns and villages. At the time, no one knew how difficult the operation would be and how long it would take. But it worked out as well or better than anyone had hoped. As a footnote, I might add that I lost about ten pounds during the month I was out there, getting down to my lowest weight since college! I later found out that this may have been due partially to an intestinal parasite I had picked up. It took a while, but I eventually succeeded in bombing that unwanted guest out of existence after I got back to Washington.

Q: What was it like to live in a military"tent city" during that period?

KILNER: Well, the U.S. military managed all the logistics. "MREs" — i.e. "meals ready to eat" became my steady diet. Of course I didn't know it at the time, but this experience turned out to provide a helpful frame of reference for my later assignment to Afghanistan. I should also mention that this deployment gave me the opportunity to reconnect with a few of the Turkish employees at Consulate Adana — especially Hamza Uluçay, the Kurdish-Turkish local national. There were also a few others from the Consulate staff, all of whom I knew very well. The days we spent together driving around northern Iraq almost felt like "old home week" at times.

The environment along the Turkish-Iraqi border was often quite surreal, with Iraqi government officials, Kurdish guerrillas, and coalition military all intermingled with one another. We frequently encountered informal checkpoints manned by colorful Iraqi-Kurdish "peshmerga"guerrillas. Once, not far away, we then came upon an Iraqi police station, still open as we had allowed the Iraqi government to remain in place. Those Iraqi police, however, did not have the power to do much. In fact, while we were there the Iraqi police station came under attack by a Kurdish mob, so U.S. marines intervened to PROTECT the Iraqis police. Very weird.

A few days later, we came across another one of those Peshmerga "checkpoints." I was traveling with Adana FSN Hamza Uluçay, who spoke Kurdish and started to chat with the guerrillas. They were very relaxed and unthreatening, despite the Kalashnikov rifles each of them carried. I asked Hamza to see if I could have my photo taken with them — they were really very colorful characters! The Peshmerga thought that this was amusing and readily agreed. Then, when I stood next to them, one guerrilla took off his headdress and plopped it on my head. The other one handed me his AK-47. And I ended up with a great photo that I still have here in my home. When I got back to Washington I wrote an article about this TDY for State Magazine — the November 1991 issue to be precise. It was about six pages long and included several of the photographs I had taken. But State Magazine refused to include any of the photos of me with the Peshmerga guerrillas. (Laughs).



Scott joking around with Kurdish Peshmerga in Northern Iraq
(Operation Provide Comfort TDY in spring of 1991)

Q: What were your impressions of how well the coalition did in setting up the no-fly zone and the humanitarian assistance?

KILNER: I think the part I was involved in was a great success. Our immediate concern was the Kurdish refugee crisis and that was resolved within a matter of weeks. At the time we were concerned with just a narrow strip of Iraqi territory inside the border. But that strip was then enlarged southward and a no-fly zone set up. I think there was a hope, misplaced in hindsight, that the internal political dynamics within Iraq would move in a more positive direction. But in the meantime, we were committed to protecting the Kurdish part of the country with a no-fly zone that was destined to endure for many

years. U.N. sanctions were also applied against Saddam's government. The no-fly zone — largely supported out of Incirlik Air Base near Adana, by the way — remained largely effective. The sanctions regime was less effective and began to erode over time. I'd say that the weakening and circumvention of sanctions over time was part of the reason why George W. Bush, after September 11, concluded that more forceful action against Iraq was needed.

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1992-1996: PARIS, FRANCE

Q: Hello. It is May 31, 2023. Continuing the conversation with Scott Kilner. Scott, the year I believe is 1992. You are heading for a job at Embassy Paris in the Economic Section. Is that right?

KILNER: That's right. Perhaps I can pick up our last conversation about my five years in Washington by noting that, after I got this assignment to Paris, more than a few colleagues asked how I had managed that. I did not speak French or have previous experience in France. My half-joking response was that I had cashed in my chips built up through five years of slave labor in EUR, working horrendous hours.

I don't think I've yet mentioned that I was promoted to FS-2 during my second year in Washington. So after my five years in EUR, the obvious next step was an FS-2 economic job in Europe. And I soon saw that one such position was coming open at the right time in Embassy Paris. I bid on and lobbied for that job, and I got it. EUR/CE Olaf Grobel graciously allowed me to leave the office in March to study French at the Foreign Service Institute. I had the full 24 week course through the spring and summer, and then went out to Embassy Paris in the early fall. I received a S-3+/R-3 score on my final French exam, if I remember correctly. The entire family was very excited about moving to Paris. Jan was delighted, forgiving me a little for having come home so late every night for several years. We talked about France with our kids, although they were still quite young. Our daughter, Melinda, had not even started kindergarten, while our son, Derek, had finished first grade. Both of them could sense our enthusiasm, although they really had no idea what lay ahead of them.

With all that said, however, the move from Washington to Paris turned out to be perhaps the most challenging of my entire time in the Foreign Service. There were a few reasons for this. First, we had simply become really settled in the Washington area. We had been there five years; we had a home. The kids had had five years of their early lives there. So the process of uprooting ourselves was more of a jolt than I had anticipated. A second factor was that moving to a big metropolis like Paris is never easy. OK, the City of Light and all that…but Paris is also a big, crowded, competitive city that takes time to get used to. And third, when we arrived our permanent quarters were not ready for us. We were, frankly, "dumped" onto an Embassy housing compound on the periphery of the city. Most of the other employees there were technical staff, many of whom were single. It

was not an attractive place, and it took 45 minutes to get into the Embassy by public transport. This was not how we had imagined Paris.

Here is one little vignette that seemed to symbolize what our first weeks in Paris were like. On one of our first weekends in early autumn the weather was beautiful, so we decided to go to a park for a family picnic. In negotiating the Metro system I kept my attention focused on our two small kids. As I passed through one control-gate a heavy metal door slammed on my finger, bruising it terribly. I was lucky it didn't break my finger, but it hurt like hell! Finally, we arrived at the very nice park and had laid out our picnic lunch under a tall chestnut tree. But a few minutes later a large chestnut chestnut fell from a height of 50 feet or more, making a direct hit on our son, who started wailing in pain. For our first few months we seemed to have one incident after another like that.

But then, around December, things took a turn for the better. Most importantly, we got into our permanent apartment, and it was wonderful! The building was on the Rue de Courcelles in the 17th arrondissement, constructed around 1900, with lots of character, plenty of space, and in a great neighborhood with everything that Paris had to offer. By this time we also had the kids settled in school. We put them into a Marymount grade school in the close-in suburb of Neuilly-sur-Seine. Melinda was just starting kindergarten. Derek was supposed to go into second grade, but after a couple of weeks the school said he was already well-prepared for third grade. So things settled down for the family, and from then on it was much better.

At work in the Embassy there was also a change for the better. The job in the Economic Section to which I was assigned was one of four mid-level econ officers — the "worker bees" if you will. Our immediate boss was the Economic Counselor, Jim Gadsden. A very nice guy. My portfolio consisted of basically two separate areas: 1) energy issues and 2) economic assistance to the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. Remember this was 1992. The Soviet Union had recently collapsed and the Warsaw Pact had unraveled. So for a few years, assistance of various sorts — technical, financial, educational, etc — to the newly independent states of the former USSR was an important foreign policy priority. France, like the United States, was an important contributor of such assistance and we strived to coordinate closely with them. Energy and assistance were interesting issues, but before very long I started to have doubts that they would be sufficient to keep me engaged for three or four years. My portfolio just seemed rather thin.

I started to stew over this a little, but then in October the promotion list came out, and to my surprise I had been quickly promoted again to FS-01. Moreover, it happened that that summer Jim Gadsden (the Economic Counselor and my boss) would be leaving that summer, so his job was coming open. Over Jim, the top economic position in the Embassy was Minister-Counselor Janice Bay, whom I am sure you know. At that point, she had been in Paris for two years, with two more to go. We had not known each other very well before I got there. But we worked together for a few months before the promotion list came out. And Janice, bless her heart, supported moving me up to the 0-1 Counselor position. The Front Office also agreed, and so I was paneled to Economic Counselor, effective the summer of 1993. This stroke of good luck and fortunate timing

made a big difference, because I found the Counselor job far more interesting than what I was doing initially. So, in the summer of 1993 I became the Number Two State Department economic officer at Embassy Paris, with direct supervision of the General Economic Policy Section.

At this point it might be worth talking a bit about the working environment at Embassy Paris. First, this embassy was much, much larger than any of my three previous overseas assignments. Paris in fact is among our largest embassies in the world. This meant, for example, that at the Ambassador's weekly Country Team meeting there were about 40 people around a huge conference table. Every U.S. government agency that had any overseas activity seemed to have found a reason why they needed to have a presence in Paris. At the same time, the Embassy was filled with many people who had a high level of French language competency. In fact I would say that among all the places I worked in the Foreign Service, Embassy Paris had the level of language competency. Higher even than Embassy Vienna or Embassy Rome. Many people of my generation had had a solid exposure to French — either studying and living in France or another francophone country prior to joining the Foreign Service, or perhaps previous diplomatic assignments in francophone Africa. Finally, the American staff in Paris consisted of quite senior representatives of their respective home agencies in Washington. They were overwhelmingly competent and morale was good at the embassy.

One frequently hears that big embassies in Europe have poor morale because people go there with unrealistic expectations. They may think they've reached the end of the rainbow, which is almost never the case. In Paris, I'd say that most employees worked very hard and had many challenges, but almost everybody felt very lucky to be there. The U.S. Embassy building dates from the 1930s, so it is not an old, historic building. But it occupies a spectacular location at a corner of the Place de la Concorde. There was a small gym in the basement, a gift shop, and a cafeteria. A few times each week I was able to go jogging at lunchtime along the Seine River. We all had private offices of one size or another. So it was a nice, very functional workplace.

One reason the atmosphere was quite good at Embassy Paris was that our ambassador was Pamela Harriman. She had been appointed by Bill Clinton. Harriman was Winston Churchill's daughter-in-law, although that marriage did not last too long. Later she married Averell Harriman. Pamela Harriman had a very colorful life in historic times. She was an intelligent, sophisticated woman. She spoke French quite well, and I think the government of France was delighted to have her as ambassador. She was a piece of living history. The more colorful side of her personal life made her all the more interesting to the French. In short, she was a great choice for an U.S. Ambassador.

The Ambassador's residence on the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré comes close to fulfilling the fantasies of what an ambassador's residence should be like. On the walls were many museum quality paintings, including works by Van Gogh and other impressionist masterpieces from the Harriman personal collection. And the parade of American VIPs that came through was very impressive. To name a few, these included President Bill Clinton, George and Barbara Bush, Bill Gates. George Soros, George Mitchell as Senate Majority Leader, Jack Valenti, Al Gore, Ted Turner, Jane Fonda, and

so many more. The list goes on and on. For U.S. Independence Day receptions more than 1000 invitees packed the beautiful garden behind the Residence. All in all, Paris was a rather intoxicating work environment! As Economic Counselor, I was just high enough up the food chain to receive fairly regular invitations to events at the Residence.

Ambassador Pamela Harriman with Melinda Kilner at the Residence on Easter weekend (1995)

Q: So what was happening in France at that time politically or economically.

KILNER: At the time I arrived François Mitterrand, as Socialist, was still president. He was midway through his second seven-year term of office. The big event when I arrived was the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty — the result of long, highly complex negotiations to transform the European Community into the much more comprehensive European Union.

Q: France was one of the leading proponents of the EU, is that right?

KILNER: Mitterrand and his government were strongly in favor of the Maastricht Treaty. In essence, France saw the European Community, and then the European Union, as a vehicle for projecting French power and influence on a larger scale in Europe and beyond. But there were always nationalist forces in France that were highly skeptical of ceding power to Brussels.

Q: I was in the State Department's Economic Bureau at this time, and one of my responsibilities was to follow European integration. I vaguely recall that the French were fretting over whether expanding EU powers would mean having to eat only cheese from pasteurized milk and other kinds of bureaucratic restrictions that could infringe on their traditional ways of life.

KILNER: There was a real debate over ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. There were those who were worried about it, but Mitterrand was four-square behind it. By the endgame, Mitterrand had prostate cancer. There was one very important televised debate on ratification of the treaty just before the final vote. Mitterrand was clearly suffering and in pain, but he powered through the debate because he felt so strongly about it. France ratified the Maastricht Treaty, and Mitterrand did not have too much longer in office. He died not too long after he left the Élysée Palace.

Outside of the economic area, a critical issue for Embassy Paris during these years was the breakup of Yugoslavia and the wars in the Balkans. As Yugoslavia started to fall apart, the French and the British were the two European powers able to project force in the Balkans. As Serbian aggression and other dynamics led to an increasingly dire situation, our Political Section and military attaches were talking to their French counterparts almost every day. It seemed to me that more often than not we and the French had divergent approaches, so there was considerable tension. I had nothing to do with the Balkans work-wise, but I would hear a lot about it at every meeting with the DCM or the Ambassador.

Q: Who was the DCM?

KILNER: For my first three years, Avis Bohlen was the DCM. Then Don Bandler replaced Avis for my last year in Paris.

During my assignment, the other very big issue for Embassy Paris, including Ambassador Harriman personally, was an economic one: the endgame of the Uruguay Round of GATT trade negotiations, which led to the creation of the World Trade Organization. The Economic Section was at the center of that work. The GATT negotiations were hydra-headed, years-long multilateral trade negotiations involving more than 100 countries, struggling to find consensus. There had been several previous rounds of GATT negotiations to reduce tariffs and liberalize trade. The process had been enormously successful in increasing trade and prosperity globally. But each new round of GATT negotiations became more difficult, and in fact the Uruguay Round turned out to be the last one — or so it seems.

As the Uruguay Round approached the finish line, France became a center of Washington's attention, because two of the last major stumbling blocks were issues that were very important to France, and where we did not see eye to eye. The first issue was how trade in agricultural products would be treated. For both historical and economic reasons, agriculture is extremely important to France, and there is a long tradition of protecting that sector. The other big area of dispute was how the "audio-visual" sector (i.e. mainly the movie industry) would be treated. The French had a film industry they wanted to protect from our "Hollywood behemoth." They demanded an "*exception culturelle"* to protect their film industry. They insisted that "culture" was not a commodity like steel or potato chips. In addition to our regular reporting from the bowels of the French trade bureaucracy, we had many high-level visits to work through these issues. They got a lot of attention.

Q: In the parlance of trade they wanted quotas I think, so that 30% of their film industry would be of national origin. Things like that.

KILNER: That's right. There was a lot of emotion on both sides. And this debate was not confined to specialists, but seeped into popular French culture. For example, one French radio station decided that it would play not just 100% French music, but the French national anthem, the *Marseillaise,* around the clock. They had several different versions of the anthem, but that was all one would hear on that station for several weeks. So that was the environment.

Q: But even the French people wanted to see Star Wars, right?

KILNER: You might call that the "McDonald's syndrome." Many governments are afraid their economies will get steamrolled by American multinational juggernauts. One reason is that their citizens want to consume many of our exports, especially in the area of culture. Anyway, the Uruguay Round finally reached a successful conclusion. All of us in the Economic Section felt very good that we had played a small but meaningful part in a big global priority for the United States. That was satisfying.

Q: I wanted to ask if you have a perspective on the new "dispute settlement mechanism" that was established by the new World Trade Organization?

KILNER: I'm certainly well aware of it. I don't recall that we in Paris got particularly involved in that aspect of the negotiations. In all of these trade issues we worked very closely with our Mission to the European Community, USEC, in Brussels. The Economic Minister-Counselor at USEC was Charley Ries, whom I had gotten to know in Turkey. We also studied French together at the Foreign Service Institute. Paris and Brussels are just a short train ride apart, so Charley would frequently come to our Embassy and our staff would go to Brussels. I recall that Charlie was a big proponent of using the dispute settlement mechanism aggressively whenever we had a beef with the French.

Q: What about other economic issues, beyond trade?

KILNER: There were several.

The Embassy was closely following EU negotiations over the European Monetary Union, which ultimately led to the creation of the euro. The Treasury Attache in the Embassy had the lead on this issue, but there were also considerable political implications. I became quite interested in the issue and became a kind bridge between the Treasury Office and the State Political Section in trying to work out the implications.

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Another big event that erupted in late 1995 was a major French transport strike. Strikes are not uncommon in France, but this was one of the biggest in decades. For a month in December 1995 it brought the capital to its knees. All of us at the Embassy could take neither a bus nor the metro to work, so I walked 40 minutes to the Embassy each morning and then 40 minutes back home in the evening. Every afternoon around 5:00, I would walk across the hall to Minister-Counselor Janice Bay's office to look out the window onto the Place de la Concorde. It was effectively a parking lot, just a sea of red and white lights of cars caught in an apocalyptic traffic jam. This was more than just prurient entertainment, because the terms of a strike settlement would determine whether the government of France would be able to hold the line on expenditures and meet the targets under the newly agreed European Monetary Union. So it was a dramatic visual event, but also very important from an economic and political perspective. This strike was such that it finally forced the resignation of Alain Juppé as Prime Minister.

Q: What were the immediate reasons for the strike?

KILNER: It had to do with both salaries and work and retirement rules. Public sector workers in France have, over time, gained very generous terms of employment — in pay, retirement, work rules. Eventually some of those become unaffordable, but it is very, very difficult to claw back any benefit. They were viewed as permanent acquisitions.

To switch gears again, I'd like to mention another issue that impacted the Economic Section and the Embassy as a whole during this period. I'm afraid I can only talk about it in general terms — although the outline has become public knowledge. At one point Ambassador Harriman and our Political Minister-Counselor were summoned to the French Ministry of the Interior on short notice. The minister read Ambassador Harriman the riot act over certain activities in the intelligence arena that the U.S. had been doing without informing the French. Not only did the French not know, but neither did Ambassador Harriman. Well, there was hell to pay inside the Embassy. The agency responsible for these activities was reined in significantly. The affair became quite public and very unpleasant.

Q: If I'm not mistaken, France had the Presidency of the G-7 Group during your time in Paris. Is that right?

KILNER: Absolutely. The French G-7 Presidency led to a number of events — not just in Paris, but also in other parts of the country. There were many, but let me mention the most important ones. In March of 1996 France hosted a G-7 "Jobs Summit." The Clinton administration, I think about 1994, had launched the idea of an annual "Jobs Summit" to demonstrate G-7 commitment to full employment and job creation. The U.S. had held the

first one in Detroit, and the French were happy to host the second one. Job creation was also a high French policy priority, so they organized the second summit in Lille, a fairly depressed industrial town in the northwest region of the country. It was a two-day event, and the U.S. sent an all-star delegation to the meeting. Our contingent included Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, Labor Secretary Robert Reich, and Council of Economic Advisors Chairman Joe Stiglitz. You can't do much better than that for an economic conference! I was assigned to be Stiglitz's control officer. This meant that I was a back-bencher at a working dinner of the principals hosted by the French. After the dinner was over, I ended up riding back to the hotel in the same car with Summers and Stiglitz. I was in the front seat, and I remember that Summers spent the whole ride, about 15 minutes, reaming out Stiglitz for his supposedly incompetent management of the Council of Economic Advisors. Summers was verbally abusive. I was just a "fly in the front seat," but it was an eye-opener for me.
I could hardly believe what I was hearing.

Q: Stiglitz was a Nobel Prize winning economist, right?

Amb. Pamela Harriman with Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, Secretary of Commerce Ronald Brown, and Embassy Commercial Counselor at the Ambassador's Residence in Paris. Secretary Brown died in a plane crash outside Dubrovnik a day or two later (1996)

KILNER: Indeed! There followed another drama associated with this delegation. After the Lille "Jobs Summit" was finished, the U.S. delegation came back to Paris for a grand reception that Ambassador Harriman hosted. Among the attendees was Commerce Secretary Ron Brown. (He had been out shopping and so arrived a little bit late.) Brown was in fine form, holding court and the center of a lot of attention. The reception eventually concluded, and everyone adjourned for the rest of the evening. But Brown had further stops on his travel itinerary and so was off the next morning. Then later in the day we received the shocking news that Secretary Brown's plane had crashed into the hills behind Dubrovnik, Croatia. I have been to that airport and can see how it could happen.

The airport is right next to a very high hill and apparently the pilot tried to land in very dense fog. The plane crashed into the mountainside.

The biggest G-7 event came right at the end of my four-year tour. As G-7 President, France hosted a Heads-of-State Summit during the summer. They chose Lyon as the venue. Lyon may not be a top-tier tourist destination, but it is one of the loveliest cities in France. I was selected to be the lead Site Officer for the summit, which meant I had to — twist my arm — spend three weeks in Lyon working with the French on all the details of the event. It was both an interesting and enjoyable assignment — not particularly difficult during the preparatory phase. I'll confess that we did get out to a few very nice restaurants in the evening. But the day before and the day of the Summit were very intense! A G-7 Summit is a big deal. If you screwed up, your derriere would end up in a noose! But all went well on game day.

The morning after the Summit, President Clinton before departing came around to thank all the staff, who had assembled along the rope line. I was there, too, but it so happened that on each side of me was a young, female staffer. As President Clinton made his way down the rope-line, he made eye contact and smiled with each one of them, but I had become invisible to him. It was as if I did not exist. So that was memorable too.

Important as the G-7 Summit was, it was surpassed by an even more important, historic event that took place midway through my four-year assignment. That was the unforgettable 50th commemoration of the World War Two D-Day landings on the beaches of Normandy. June 6, 1994. Some parts of Embassy Paris, especially the military attachés, had been working for a year on this mammoth undertaking. It was a huge deal. In the final weeks before the date, almost everyone in the Embassy was mobilized for one task or another. Several FSOs travelled in advance up to Normandy for advance staff work. But of course, a skeleton crew had to stay back and keep the lights on at the Embassy. And as time passed, it looked more and more like that was going to be my fate. Somebody had to draw the short straw.

I had pretty much resigned myself to this, but then about a week before the event Ambassador Harriman decided that her personal guests at the D-Day ceremonies should have a control officer — and I was selected. Her personal guests were Stuart Eizenstat, then our Ambassador to the European Union, and Robert Forbes, of the famous publishing family. The Forbes family owned a château in Normandy which was where Amb. Harriman and her two personal guests would stay. This meant that their control officer also had to stay there — admittedly in one of the tiny rooms in the attic, but nevertheless still in the château. On June 5, the night before the main events, Forbes hosted a marvelous candlelight dinner in the château, at which Harriman recounted to a spellbound dinner table some of her personal memories of D-Day, what it was like to be Winston Churchill's daughter-in-law, and other inside stories.

The following day on the beaches there were several events, but the three main ones were the focus of the U.S. delegation. Harriman's guests had tickets to each of them, and I was able to accompany them. The premier ceremony was a speech at the American Cemetery at Omaha Beach by President Clinton, with Walter Cronkite as his warm-up act. Both

speeches were excellent. There was also a parachute jump by WWII veterans, including former President George H.W. Bush, whose 70th birthday was just a few days away.

After the U.S. Cemetery event concluded, and everyone was headed back to the parking lot, I had an opportunity to meet Walter Cronkite briefly. I think he was waiting for his transportation to appear. Robert Forbes spotted him and asked if I would like to meet him. Cronkite could not have been more gracious as he asked a few questions about what I did at the embassy and so forth. Anyway, without doubt those few days at the D-Day 50th Commemoration were one of the most memorable experiences of my Foreign Service career.

Walter Cronkite at ceremonies commemorating 50th Anniversary of D-Day landings on Normandy beaches (1994)

Of course, outside of my work our family did lots of personal travel that I won't bore you with. We found ways to do most of it with our young kids. So, despite the rocky start of my assignment, the longer we were there, the more we liked it. We really tried to take advantage of being in France. Lots of events in glamorous places, concerts at Versailles and things like that. But I had better stop there because those are the kinds of reminiscences, my wife reminds me, that give the Foreign Service a bad name to outsiders.

Q: Before we end, let's talk a little more about your job. This is your first time being a boss and a member of the Country Team. What did you learn in this tour as far as managing and leading?

KILNER: I think I learned several things about both "managing up" and "managing down." For starters, I learned the importance of being prepared for meetings and of

anticipating questions I might be asked by my superiors. To the extent possible, one should try to avoid being in a reactive mode. Here's one small example: Before the European Monetary Union was formalized, before the Euro was created, there had been a European Monetary System in which currencies were supposed to be kept within a narrow exchange rate band. One day we woke up to the news that the French government had unilaterally decided to severely breach, to break out of, that band. What did this mean? At that time I was the Acting Minister Counselor, so I knew that at 9:00 I would go into a Senior Staff Meeting at which I would surely be asked about the financial headlines in every newspaper that morning. I had a general sense, but I called our Treasury Office and reached the right people to get a much more precise understanding. And sure enough, right at the top of the meeting the Ambassador and DCM raised the French move. I had a good answer, with which they were clearly satisfied.
So, to the maximum extent possible, be prepared. And if you really get caught short, say that you will find out the answer and get back to them immediately. Never say "It's not my area; somebody else is working on it."

In terms of managing the office, as Economic Counselor I directly supervised four FSOs and two French staff members. The FSOs were of varying quality. Two were exceptionally strong, and two were more average. Our trade officer, for example, had a very important job, but much of what he wrote was not up to the standard I thought we should be producing. I was pretty interventionist at the beginning on correcting and editing his reports. Probably too much so, in hindsight. After a certain point, too much "fine tuning" can undermine a subordinate's self-confidence and sense of autonomy. But on the other hand, I didn't want to send "garbage" up the chain. So I think I learned the importance of striking the right balance between not being overbearing, yet also ensuring that high standards were maintained.

Q: And you had people coming and going, as FSOs completed their assignments, right?

KILNER: Yes, there was some turnover.

Q: Wasn't there a position detailed to the French Foreign Ministry before coming to work in the Embassy?

KILNER: You are thinking of the program to send one FSO each year to the French *École Nationale d'Administration (ENA)* in Strasbourg, after which that officer spent time in the French MFA before moving to the Embassy. You had to be a very strong French speaker to do this.

Q: Didn't Sandra Clark do that program and then come to work for you?,

KILNER: That's right! It had slipped my mind! Sandra was one of the very good French speakers. In fact, I think that exchange program became a kind of model for other countries. The U.S. later established a similar exchange program with the German Foreign Ministry, as well as with a few other countries.

Q: And as the State Economic Counselor, did you work a lot with the other economic agencies in the Embassy?

KILNER: In a few very large U.S. Embassies around the world, including Paris, for some years there has been the position of Economic Minister-Counselor. The role of that senior position, in good part, is to coordinate the work of the various economic agencies and bring present a single voice to the Front Office. Janice Bay had this position during my first two years in Paris, and she was very good at this coordinating role. She had a light touch and good interpersonal skills, but she kept track of what everyone was doing. Of course, each agency — Treasury, Agriculture, and Commerce being the main ones — guarded its turf. Treasury was not going to let anyone else muck around in the French Finance Ministry; same for the Foreign Agricultural Service and the French Ministry of Agriculture Ministry, and so forth. But what I found was that any frictions that developed between economic agencies within the Embassy were more the result of personalities than substantive disputes. During my time, Treasury and FAS were led by people who were very competent and were not bureaucratic schemers or overly ego-driven. They just wanted to do their job.

The biggest problem was with the most "lightweight agency," the Foreign Commercial Service, which was led by the least competent agency chief. He also had the biggest ego and was perpetually complaining about being "excluded" from Front Office meetings. Basically, nobody paid attention to these complaints, and he just had to stew in his own juice. Candidly, I could never really see what value added FCS had to a country like France. Commerce adds a lot of value in a country like Turkey, for example. We can get to this in more detail later, but in Ankara (my next assignment) I worked very closely with the Foreign Commercial Service. In Paris I don't know what they really did. The scores of major American companies present in France are quite capable of taking care of themselves. It's a fully developed foreign market. Nevertheless, the head of the Commercial Section thought he had a critically important role to play.

Q: One final question on what you learned. You worked a lot on organizing visits and events — as a site officer or a control officer. What did you learn about how to make a big event successful?

KILNER: I think I learned a lot about managing visits simply through experience and by watching and listening to more experienced FSOs. I learned that paying great attention to detail is critically important! There is nothing that will make a visiting U.S. official more unhappy than for some logistical aspect of their program to unravel and fall apart. So from start to finish you really have to think through every step of the program — and have a "Plan B" for when something does go wrong. Because things rarely go perfectly. One needs to have a backup plan.

Q: If the car breaks down, or the suitcase gets left behind, or somebody has to leave early — those kinds of things.

KILNER: Right. Without jumping ahead too much, I should add here that what I learned in Paris about managing visits became very important later — especially during my

assignments in Vienna and in Istanbul. In both of those assignments we had a crazy number of visits, and I was the senior career officer. We will get to those later, but yes, I ended up managing many, many visits during my career!

So, Robin, may I end this session with another little story? This might not match the Berlin story from the end of that tour, but it's probably a close second. It still makes me laugh when I think about it!

So, for years I was something of a tennis player. I played on our high school tennis team. Through most of my Foreign Service career I continued to play when there was an opportunity. In Paris I didn't play a great deal, but I did now and then. One of the guys I played with was Joe Yun, who was a State Department person in the Embassy's Treasury Office. Joe went on to have a great career in Korean affairs, but he was an excellent economic officer as well. We saw a lot of each other at work, and our two families did a great deal together outside of work.

One nice summer evening, Joe and I drove in his car to a park not too far from the center of the city. We played a few sets on the outdoor courts. I don't remember who won — we were pretty evenly matched. By the time we finished it was dark, and the court lights were on. So we walked back to his car, a Toyota, to drive home. But when we reached the car, a couple of policemen came up to us with flashlights. They ordered us to stop where we were, put our hands up against the car, and stand there spread-eagled while they searched us. Joe and I were thinking, "Well, this is pretty strange!" But we were certain there had been some kind of mix-up. We were both wearing our tennis whites. After the initial search, we asked the policemen why are you doing this. They said we were driving a stolen car! We explained there was some confusion, and that we are both American diplomats. They asked to see our diplomatic ID cards, but neither of us had bothered to bring them. I usually did not carry mine around with me in Paris, and there certainly seemed no need to have it at the tennis court.

So: no ID card and a "stolen car." The police said we would have to go with them to the police station, which we did. There we eventually were able to make phone calls to our respective spouses explaining what had happened. It was still all rather confusing at this point, but we told them we would not be home right away. Then we called the Embassy's Security Duty Officer to explain the situation. The Embassy then made a few calls to the French police and/or other authorities. Finally, after another hour or two, we were released and allowed to return home.

So how did this happen? Well, we still were not sure that night, and in fact it took a few more days to piece things together. It turned out that several days earlier Joe had parked his car in the Embassy parking lot next to the car of another employee who also drove a nearly identical Toyota. And that other employee had gotten into Joe's car by mistake. Moreover, her car key worked in Joe's car's ignition, so she just drove off in his car. (She must have had a long day!) Joe then came out later and saw that his car was gone! So he reported it to Embassy Security as having been stolen, and the Embassy Security Office reported the "theft" to the police. A couple of days later, Joe and the owner of the other Toyota somehow figured out what had happened. So they each got their own car back,

and told the Embassy Security office that in fact no car had been stolen after all. Yet somehow that information never made its way into French police records. So Joe's car was still on their books as "stolen." Pretty funny, isn't it!

In conclusion, let me say that through our four years in Paris, I came to admire the French very much. Besides being a very pleasant country to live in, I admire the French for having ideas that they care about and will defend, and for having great traditions and a proud history. Paris was perhaps not my very favorite posting, but it was a great one and a fabulous opportunity, for which I've always felt extremely fortunate. Whenever I hear Americans badmouth the French, I will rise to their defense.

Q: Terrific. What did you do next?

KILNER: From there I went back to Turkey again — for the third time, but not the last.

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1996-1999: ANKARA, TURKEY

Q: Good afternoon, It is June 6, 2023, and I am continuing our conversation with Scott Kilner. So, Scott, I believe the year is 1996 and you are on your way to Ankara. Is that right?

KILNER: That's right, Robin. Good to talk with you once more.

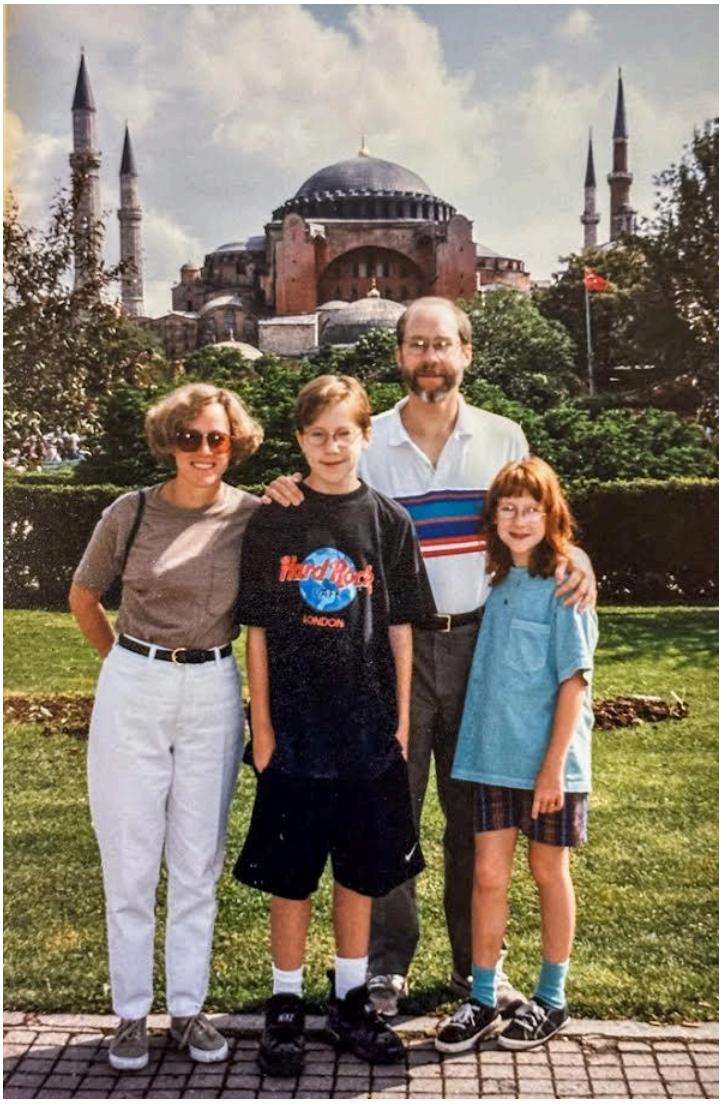
In recalling how I got to Ankara from Paris, I'm afraid I have another quirky story to tell. I was due to leave the Embassy Paris Economic Section in the summer of 1996, which meant going through the regular bidding process in the fall of 1995. But one year earlier, in the fall of 1994, I noticed that the position of Economic Counselor in Ankara — a Senior Foreign Service job — was already being advertised via one year of Turkish language training. Since I already had the necessary language, I was able to bid on that job "a year early" if you will.

I knew it was probably a long shot to bid on a Senior Foreign Service job as an FS-01, but I figured I had nothing to lose. So I threw my hat into the ring and just waited to see what would happen. I watched the assignment process proceed with updated bid lists published almost every week. And week after week I saw that there were no other bidders on the Ankara job. Central personnel advertised the position as having "insufficient bidders," but still no other bidders emerged. I was the only one. I think that FSOs who were already in the Senior Foreign Service did not see the Econ Counselor job as "career enhancing;" another negative may have been having to study Turkish for a year relatively late in one's career. So there were no senior bidders, and I gradually began to think that I might be able to land the job. However, to be assigned to it, central personnel would have to grant a mid-level "stretch" across the senior threshold, which they were very reluctant to do.

The weeks and months rolled by, and finally, I decided to get more assertive. I went to our DCM, Avis Bohlen, to ask if she could help. Avis offered to call our ambassador in Ankara, Marc Grossman, to support my candidacy for the job. She apparently did a good job, because Marc then weighed in with Washington to break the logjam. And I got the job.

But that's not the end of the story — there is an ironic twist. I got to Ankara in September of 1996, and very soon learned about a Foreign Service-wide exercise to downgrade a large number of Senior Foreign Service positions to make them available to mid-level FSOs. And my new job — which I had struggled so hard to get — was on the downgrade list. I protested mildly to Ambassador Grossman, but he said the die was already cast, and the downgrade soon became official. But even more ironically, exactly one year later I was promoted into the Senior Foreign Service, presumably based on my work in my new job. So rather than spending my Ankara tour in a "senior stretch" position, I ended up serving two of my three years in a "down-stretch" — that is, as a senior officer in a mid-level job. But that did not disadvantage me in the least, because it was a very meaty, very substantive assignment. And I've told this story often to younger officers, with the advice that they should not worry much about the grade of their job. What matters is the nature of one's responsibilities and how well you carry them out. Sorry to go on at length, but I think the lesson is an important one.

OK, now back to the story more directly. So, we left Paris on July 5, right after our last Fourth of July reception, in 1996. We were a little sorry to leave, but we had had a great four years there, and we were looking forward to going back to Turkey. We had a good home leave. I managed to spend four weeks at FSI brushing up my Turkish. There aren't regular language classes in the summer, so they were able to give me one-on-one tutoring, which helped a lot. Then we got to Ankara in early September of 1996.



The Kilner family back in Turkey again

First, perhaps just a few words about the environment and our family situation. We had a decent apartment in a three-story building in Ankara's Çankaya district, not too far from the presidential palace. Several other Foreign Service families lived in the neighborhood, but there were also many Turks, as well as a Turkish military compound nearby. It was a pleasant environment. Regarding schools for our two children, one option was the DODDS (Department of Defense Dependents) school. But we decided to go in a different direction.

For our daughter, Melinda, there was a very good, well-established elementary school on the British Embassy compound, called the British Embassy Study Group. The school welcomed American families, and we were happy to place Melinda there for three years. The program gave all of us some interesting insights into British culture and traditions. Things like Guy Fawkes Day and the annual St. Andrews Ball. We had never served in the UK, so it was fun to be a little bit part of that.

For our son, Derek, we took more of a gamble. There was a brand new but highly regarded university on the outskirts of Ankara, and attached to that university was a new preparatory school. It was called the Bilkent University Preparatory School (BUPS) and it had a very international student body. Instruction was in English. The students were a mixture of smart young Turks and foreign students. Only one Embassy family had used this school at that point, but they were pleased. So we decided to try BUPS. In fact, it worked out very well for our son. The academics were challenging, and I think our son benefited from the diverse student body. Derek had a good three years and was well prepared for the big public high school in Bethesda that he attended after we returned to the U.S.

Jan threw herself into all sorts of activities related to the Embassy and the two schools. She was the head of the Embassy employee recreation association. She was the chair of the Girl Scouts governing committee in Ankara, for which she traveled to Ramstein military base in Germany for training. This reminds me of one little anecdote I cannot resist telling. After several months in the Girl Scouts position, Jan and a few other mothers took a group of girls out for an overnight camping trip to a very safe area on the outskirts of Ankara. After this group of mothers and daughters had set up "camp," a few Turkish policemen on patrol saw them and looked perplexed. The policemen approached the mothers and asked them," But where are your men?" In other words, what are you women and girls doing by yourselves out here in the middle of Anatolia?" After the mothers explained the situation, the policemen left them alone, probably chalking up the incident to another example of "crazy foreigner behavior." Jan and I have always thought it was quite funny.

Jan and Scott in Ankara

I don't know if you have ever been to Ankara, Robin, but in years past it had a reputation for being rather boring. Worse than that, in years past it had a terrible winter air pollution problem due to the burning of soft coal. But by the time we got there Ankara had changed

quite a lot, and definitely for the better. One could make a crude analogy with Washington, DC, which in the early years of the Republic was not much more than a swamp. But just as Washington, being the national capital, acquired a certain "gravitational force" of its own and generated its own cultural and economic life, something similar happened to Ankara. As Turkey became more important economically and politically, the capital city began to flourish. After Turkey started importing natural gas, mainly from Russia, the air quality improved greatly. Good restaurants started popping up. And actually we were pleasantly surprised by how interesting many neighborhoods there were to explore. There were some very good Roman ruins still standing in the old center of town. The early Turkish Republican architecture was quite striking and beautiful. In short, we found Ankara a perfectly pleasant place to live. Our daily existence was rather calm and even routine, apart from personal trips that we made. I played a lot of tennis on weekends, and Jan and I spent considerable time in our favorite rug shops.

But we also did a good deal of traveling around Turkey as a family during this assignment, even though we had already seen a lot during our previous two assignments in the country. As I've stressed before, Turkey is incredibly rich archaeologically and historically. As a family, for example, we took a two-week drive all the way to the Armenian and Georgian borders in the east, and then back to Ankara along the Black Sea coast. We traveled a couple of times to the other-worldly landscape and "underground cities" of Cappadocia. We spent vacations on the beautiful Mediterranean coast, and traveled to Cyprus and Crete. Twice we rented a cottage in the English Cotswolds over Christmas break. All that good stuff you can do in the Foreign Service. So altogether, Ankara was a very good assignment — both family-wise and work-wise.

Now I'll turn to the Embassy more directly. Embassy Ankara was a large embassy, but it was not huge like Paris. We had two superb career ambassadors during my three years. Marc Grossman was in his final year when I arrived. He was replaced by Mark Parris. Both Marc and Mark were true fast-track stars of the career Foreign Service. Mark Parris came to Ankara from the NSC, where I believe he had been Middle East Director. He had also previously been the Director of Soviet Affairs in the State Department and DCM in Tel Aviv, if memory serves. Marc Grossman went on to become EUR Assistant Secretary for Europe, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, and Director General of the Foreign Service. So we had very strong Front Office leadership, and I think almost everybody at the embassy felt that they had important and meaningful work to do. The work was very meaty, very complicated, and very interesting. And we felt that people in Washington were paying attention to Embassy Ankara.

This is certainly how we felt in the Economic Section. As Counselor, I was the head of the section. There were just four of us — i.e. not a big office — but we had a smorgasbord of issues that the Front Office cared about. We were not the "neglected stepchild" that economic sections can be in some embassies. Both Grossman and Parris were really interested in and directly engaged in our issues. Our DCM was Frank Ricciardone, whom I met in Ankara and ended up working for three different times. On the economic side, Embassy Ankara also had an active Foreign Commercial Service office, and a solid Foreign Agricultural Service rep. We worked closely with both FCS

and FAS without friction. The Front Office asked me to lead an inter-agency economic team, which I enjoyed. The Ag and Commercial counselors were happy to let me manage that kind of bureaucratic organizational work. There were very solid American and Turkish employees in all three economic offices and we all enjoyed working together as a team. There was plenty of work to go around! More broadly, there were also important political and even military dimensions to our issues, so I was constantly popping up to the Political Section or the Pol-Mil Section, as well as Public Affairs. I got to know everybody in the Embassy quite well. And I liked almost everybody, so Ankara was really a fun and rewarding working environment.

Q: What was the political and economic backdrop for what was going on in Turkey at that time?

KILNER: First, let me say that of my various economic jobs in the Foreign Service, the portfolio in Ankara was the best. Our small office had a fascinating set of issues. Even more so than Embassy Paris or Embassy Rome. The first one that reared its head, even before I left Washington, was the question of Iran sanctions. Just weeks before I departed for Ankara, Turkey had elected its first Islamist-led government ever. The Prime Minister was a mercurial figure named Necmettin Erbakan. His party, the Refah (or Welfare) Party, was a predecessor of Erdogan's "Justice and Development Party" or AKP. After the Welfare Party came into office (despite much unhappiness among the Turkish military) Erbakan decided that his first foreign trip would be to Iran. Then, while in Tehran, he signed a bilateral agreement for the construction of a gas pipeline from Iran to Turkey. Turkey had a high demand for natural gas and the new government thought Iran could become an important, new supplier. This, of course, was viewed very negatively by Washington. So very quickly, the possibility of applying Iran sanctions to a NATO ally was on the table. That would have been unprecedented, and for the whole three years of my assignment the Embassy fought a kind of rear-guard action to keep the Turks from doing something that would trigger such sanctions. At one point we actually succeeded in obtaining a copy of the signed Turkey-Iran agreement (from a GOT source who did not like it). We sent the agreement back to the State Department, which was impressed! The Iran Sanctions issue never went away, but neither were sanctions actually invoked during my time in Ankara.

Q: OK, before we leave that subject then, can you think of any persuasive arguments that you ended up championing? What did you do to help them avoid the sanctions?

KILNER: For one thing we helped them understand that a gas pipeline project like this goes through a long phase of development. It was one thing to sign an MOU. But before actual construction can begin, myriad details regarding financing, engineering specifications and much else must be worked out. We did all we could to encourage the Turks to proceed slowly and cautiously. As long as the pipeline was not actually up and running, we were able to keep the sanctions issue contained. In fact, construction of the pipeline did begin on the Iranian side of the border. We had satellite images of the work being done. But as long as it wasn't connected to the Turkish side, no one in Washington wanted to press the sanctions issue.

I would like to underline, however, that with respect to energy supply, another more important issue took center stage for the Economic Section. This was an initiative to begin developing a regional "east-west energy corridor" that would bring oil and gas from the Caspian basin to world markets via Turkey. The strategic objective was to help the new states of the former Soviet Union develop energy export options that did not pass through Russia. This east-west energy corridor initiative was launched by the Clinton administration right about the time I arrived in Ankara. Then-Energy Secretary Federico Peña travelled to the region in late 1996 or early 1997 to roll out this strategy, after which it received sustained high-level attention from Washington. The senior point person and coordinator was Ambassador Dick Morningstar, whom I'm sure you remember.

The east-west energy corridor was of course a long-term project that would not happen overnight. It was highly complex because so many actors were involved: several different governments and many multinational energy companies. But it was a fascinating, strategically important economic issue to work on with a pronounced political dimension. It was also fun to work on because the U.S. and Turkish governments were very much on the same page — in contrast to so many other issues on which we continually butted heads with the Turks. Because our respective national objectives were so closely aligned, the Turks were generally open with us and willing to strategize together. So I had great work contacts: the Turkish President's foreign policy advisors, the senior energy officials at the Foreign Ministry, senior officials in the Turkish Energy Ministry, and so forth. And as I said, Ambassadors Grossman and Parris were both keenly interested in this project as well.

Turkey stood to benefit from such an east-west energy corridor in two ways: first as the recipient of some of the gas and oil coming out of the Caspian, and second through the transit fees it would collect on energy destined for world markets. The first component of this corridor was to be an oil pipeline from Baku, Azerbaijan to Ceyhan, Turkey: the so-called Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. But there were always discussions of follow-on projects in both Azerbaijan and, more ambitiously, from Turkmenistan on the east side of the Caspian Sea. There were many ideas, but oil and gas companies were definitely interested. The majors were engaged and saw this as something real in the longer term, but there was no end to the combinations and permutations on how to get there. For our Embassy Economic Section this issue had everything: high-level foreign policy attention; the involvement of colorful countries in the region, including Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Iran; serious private sector engagement of the world's premier energy companies, such as BP, Exxon, Shell and others.

In addition there was a very intriguing international maritime dimension to this work, which pertained to the passage of oil tanker traffic through the Bosporus Straits. Before new pipelines were built, one of the important ways of getting oil from the Black Sea and Caspian regions to world markets was via tanker ships — from the Black Sea, through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, to the Mediterranean, and on to world markets. The prospect of increased tanker traffic through the straits raised big questions about maritime safety, especially within the city limits of Istanbul. In the 1990s Turkey still had a rather

antiquated vessel traffic control system, so we were constantly urging them to upgrade and install a more modern, state-of-the-art system to manage maritime traffic. I learned a great deal on this subject, which I found very interesting.

Q: Let me just pause there so I can get a sense of where this was in the summer of '96. As you know, I worked on these issues in Washington from 1994 to 1996 working to lay the political groundwork for this oil pipeline. When I left the job in 1996 we basically had an agreement between Azerbaijan and Turkey to build the pipeline and oil companies to participate in it. It wasn't a fully fleshed out thing, it was just an agreement to do that and before I left, the parties also decided to route it through Georgia. So, what happened next?

KILNER: We were always pushing simultaneously on many different sides of this initiative. There were conversations with oil companies. There were continuous government-to-government talks. Turkey maintained a very close relationship with Azerbaijan from the time it became independent. So we worked with the Turks to get the Azeris to commit to more precise intergovernmental agreements. Then there were the specific agreements with the companies themselves. There were many, many details that are difficult to summarize in a few sentences.

Q: During your time working on it, were there active discussions with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan about trying to get their oil across the Caspian?

KILNER: There were some, but discussions were definitely furthest advanced with Azerbaijan. For political reasons we tried to get Armenia into the equation, but because of deep disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan, that never got very far. On the other side of the Caspian Sea, further complications arose regarding transit of oil and gas across that sea. Many states border on the Caspian and claim sovereignty over portions of it, so the issues were more than a little complicated. Russia and Iran were among the littoral states, and they had their own views about how far into the Caspian their rights extended. During the time I was in Ankara, energy development east of the Caspian seemed more aspirational than real. We were much more confident that projects in Azerbaijan would come on-stream in the near-to-medium term — which in fact is what happened.

Toward the end of my time in Ankara, in 1999, the Turks organized an "energy summit" attended by heads of state from almost all the energy producing countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia, except Russia. Eduard Shevardnadze from Georgia came to Ankara; President Heydar Aliyev from Azerbaijan was there, as was President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan. But the most colorful and mercurial of all was the infamous Saparmurad Niyazov from Turkmenistan. All of them gathered in one of the big international hotels in Ankara for the summit meeting and for the many bilateral meetings on the sidelines.

Representing the USG was Energy Secretary Bill Richardson. I had the opportunity to attend his meetings with Shevardnadze and with Aliyev as the notetaker. Richardson also had a meeting scheduled with the crazy Niyazov, but it was unclear whether the "Turkmenbasi" (the "head of the Turkmen" as he was known) would actually show up.

As participants in that bilateral assembled, I was tasked with literally going to Niyazov's hotel room and knocking on his door in an attempt to coax him to attend the meeting. He ultimately did show up, but he brought with him to this "private meeting" his videographers who filmed the whole thing. Anyway the energy summit was quite a circus, but definitely a very interesting and entertaining couple of days. I'd say the event was more about political optics and regional "mood music" than anything else. It didn't really produce much concrete, but the Turks made a strong effort to keep all of those disparate countries moving in the right direction.

Our work on Caspian energy issues gave me the opportunity to make two memorable trips to the Caucasus. The first one was in 1997 to Georgia and Armenia. I went to Georgia first and then was driven in an embassy van overland to Yerevan, where I spent almost a week because of the very few flights between Armenia and Turkey. The next year I took a trip to Baku. In the early 20th century there had been a "first oil boom" there, and much of the extractive infrastructure built back then was still in evidence. It was very decayed, rusted out, and old fashioned — but still there. There were also grand, early 20th century urban palaces — heavy and imposing in style, but impressive in their own way. In any case, these trips offered unforgettable impressions of those colorful Caucasus countries while they were still trying to find their way in a new, post-Soviet world.

Q: I was in Baku for a day in 1996. I don't know that I saw much but when I was on the desk doing the pipeline job, I saw a wonderful report an embassy officer wrote about going around in a boat on the Caspian just reporting on what all this stuff was like but from the water. And then they said a group of them went swimming in the water. The Caspian water had been polluted with 100 years of oil and drilling chemicals and such. During my trip I met that officer and asked "Why did you go swimming in the polluted Caspian?" He said, "Because it was there." Yes, I think the one thing you are pointing out was the oil in Baku was so plentiful and accessible that there was almost no drilling to get to it. It was very inexpensive to tap that oil.

KILNER: Yes, I felt I had a very visual sense of Baku's earlier history. Although the massive, hulking urban mansions had not been cleaned in decades, I could see that they had reflected the great wealth generated from the first oil boom nearly a century earlier. And the grimy, rusted oil derricks just yards off the coast line continued to pump slowly. At the time of my visit the big oil companies had opened offices, and I had meetings with all of them. But Baku was beginning to change. I have not been back since 1998, but I've heard it has changed unrecognizably since then. Restaurants catering to foreign businesses were starting to pop up. I recall a "Ragin' Cajun" restaurant, along with several fast-food places. But it was just in the beginning of that transition, which was very interesting.

Q: I want to pause here and ask do you have any particular recollections about the people you mentioned? Shevardnadze, was he still on top of his game at that time? A little later former Secretary of State Baker had to help ease him out of his position. But I remember him being pretty important in this, trying to put Georgia on the map by being

part of the pipeline, to give Georgia some kind of status with the international community.

KILNER: For me personally, it was most interesting simply to observe these historic figures, especially Shevardnadze, up close — to watch them for an hour or so and gain a personal impression. I admit that I didn't follow the internal politics of those countries closely. Candidly, I remember thinking Shevardnadze seemed rather old and worn-out — someone who was approaching the end of the line.

Q: Shevardnadze had been Foreign Minister of the USSR.

KILNER: Right, Gorbachev's Foreign Minister during that critical period of change in the Soviet Union. But by the time I arrived in Ankara, Shevardnadze was back in Tbilisi as President of the newly independent state of Georgia. His tenure, as I recall, was not without controversy, and he was under pressure internally from various directions.

Q: Ok and then what about Aliyev? What was he like?

KILNER: Aliyev was spooky and formidable. I would not have wanted to run into him in a dark alley with his henchmen. He spoke in Azeri, which is not too far from Anatolian Turkish. So I could understand the gist of what he was saying, but not the details. It was more the manner of his presenting himself that impressed me. He struck me as an authoritarian thug, to put it bluntly.

Q: And what about Niyazov? What was colorful about him?

KILNER: His unpredictability. "Mercurial" is the adjective that comes to mind. To return to that scheduled bilateral I mentioned a few minutes ago — we had verified and double- and triple-verified with his staff where and when we would meet. When Niyazov did not appear on time, Ambassador Parris, Secretary Richardson, and Dick Morningstar weren't surprised. They told me to just do what I could to find him, but nobody was really upset. So, I went up to Niyazov's suite, knocked on the door. Two of his aides in bathrobes came to the door. I tried to explain that the President had a meeting now and we were all waiting for him. They said, "He is coming! He will be there!" So we agreed on where I would meet him. This was probably about 45 minutes after the originally planned starting time for the bilateral. Finally, Niyazov rolled up in a motorcade at the hotel. I was very relieved. The "Turkmenbasi" got out of the car, and I was there to escort him into the conference room. But it so happened that all this occurred just at the moment the Turks had scheduled a fireworks display in association with the Energy Summit. When Niyazov rolled up at the hotel, he spotted the fireworks in the sky and reacted just like a little kid. He stood outside the hotel for ten minutes watching the show. Eventually, however, he did go (with his videographer) into the hotel conference room. And he wore a mammoth gold ring on his finger, which all the Americans commented on later. As for the substance of the meeting, it was rather wacky and unfocused. I don't think it led anywhere, but it was a spectacle!

Q: Is there anything else you would like to mention on the embassy's economic work?

KILNER: In addition to energy supply, another big issue was the construction of power plants within Turkey. Turkey needed a lot of those for its rapidly growing economy, and there were potentially lucrative contracts for foreign construction companies. In this area the Foreign Commercial Service took the lead. The State Department Economic Section led on oil and gas transport issues, while FCS took the lead on power plant construction. Under Turkish law such projects were governed by a highly convoluted, barely comprehensible regulatory "process," but we had an outstanding Commercial Counselor. That was Jim Wilson. He lived and breathed these power plant issues, and he kept us informed and sought our advice periodically, just as we did with him on the energy transport issues. There were several big U.S. companies willing to invest a lot of time and energy dealing with the untransparent Turkish tender processes. It was an important issue for the Embassy as a whole.

Regarding other economic issues, the next one I would list was Turkish macro-economic reform and financial stability. By the time I arrived in Ankara in 1996, Turkey had opened up its economy greatly compared with my first two assignments in the 1980s. That process of liberalization had unleashed all sorts of new possibilities for the talented workforce that existed in the country. So, the economic growth rate was rapid, but it was not stable by any means. In the three years I was there, Turkish inflation was bouncing around the level of 60 percent annually. I could informally keep track of this by how much my taxi fare into the Embassy cost each morning, because taxi rates changed with the continuous devaluation of the Turkish lira. During my Washington consultations before going to Ankara, I had a good meeting at the Department of the Treasury. They told me Turkey was near the top of their watchlist of significant middle-income economies that might provoke an international financial crisis. They were quite concerned. There was no Treasury Representative at the U.S. Embassy in Turkey, so Treasury was following our macro-economic and financial reporting closely. We had good access to Turkish financial officials, who were generally quite sophisticated. I had access to the Governor of the Turkish Central Bank, whom I would see every few months. In general, we at the Embassy felt the financial abyss was never as close as Washington seemed to think it was. The Turkish Finance Ministry had top-drawer, internationally trained economists who knew what they were doing and were more able to manage state finances than Washington sometimes realized.

By the way, I'd like to offer an interesting anecdote regarding Turkish finances and economic management. Just a few days ago — from the time we are speaking now — Tayyıp Erdoğan was reelected for yet another five-year term as President of Turkey. He has announced a new cabinet, and international financial markets are encouraged because he is bringing back to the post of Finance Minister an individual named Mehmet Şimşek. Şimşek had been one of the two main economic ministers in an earlier Erdoğan government, but was pushed out as Erdoğan tilted towards more unorthodox economic policies. But Şimşek's return is being interpreted as a return to more sane financial management by the new government.

I mention this because in 1996, when I arrived as Economic Counselor, Mehmet Şimşek was one of two local nationals working for me. We had two Turkish FSNs in the section, and Mehmet was the finance and macroeconomic specialist. He was a Kurdish Turk who had been with the Embassy for some years. He had his own little office down the hallway from me. He was obviously very smart and very knowledgeable. He was also very quiet and even shy, but obviously brainy. We had been together for a year when Mehmet applied for — and happened to win — in the annual visa lottery for a green card to the United States. (I don't know if that lottery program still exists.) In any case, Mehmet won one of those lottery visas and decided to use it. So he emigrated to the United States. I forget all the details, but he landed a good private sector finance job. I think he might have been married briefly as well. Then after a few years he had an offer to work for Merrill Lynch in their London office. So Mehmet moved to London, but he kept up his contacts in Turkey. And he started bringing high powered international investors to Turkey to let them see firsthand what was happening in the country and to encourage foreign investment. Through that process of bringing foreign investors back and forth Mehmet caught the eye of Tayyıp Erdoğan, whom he had not known before. And Erdoğan ended up offering him a job in the government.

But to return to U.S.-Turkish economic issues, beyond what I've discussed so far there were several other priorities. Intellectual property rights protection was a major concern. So was the further privatization of Turkey's many state-owned enterprises. They had a Privatization Agency we would meet with periodically. Aviation security was another issue. We organized regular FAA visits to look at security in Turkish airports, especially Istanbul but also Ankara. And our Foreign Agricultural Service colleagues were perpetually locking horns with the Turks on their highly protected agricultural sector.

All of these economic issues together convinced Washington to elevate our economic dialogue with Turkey by forming what came to be called a "Joint Economic Commission" (JEC). This was roughly analogous to the more well-known Gore-Chernomyrdin forum with Russia. Each side committed to having senior level engagement on a range of issues on a regular basis. We did not do this with many countries because of the time commitments involved for very busy people. But Washington agreed to establish such an arrangement with Turkey. So each year I was in Ankara we had a round of these high-level multi-agency bilateral meetings. On our side they were led by the State Department Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, first Al Larson and then Stu Eizenstat, both of whom came to Turkey.

In the private sector, there were also active organizations. The main one was the American Turkish Council (ATC), which hosted a large two-day conference each year, alternating between Ankara and Washington, DC. Those gatherings were heavily oriented toward defense industries. Large defense contractors would schmooze with one another on the margins of more formal talks, at dinners, and all of that stuff.

So all in all, there was a lot happening on the Embassy's economic agenda, which is why I found the job so interesting and rewarding. Here I think it's worth contrasting this dynamic, hopeful, overall productive economic agenda with what my poor colleagues on the political side of the Embassy were dealing with. The mid-late 1990s were among the

more depressing, moribund periods of Turkish political history. I mentioned earlier that an Islamist government had come into power just before I arrived. Only a year or so later, in 1997, this government was muscled out of power by the Turkish military. That maneuver has been variously termed a "post-modern coup" or a "coup by memorandum." In essence, the Turkish military — which has long seen itself as the "guardian" of the secular republic and was in the driver's seat when push came to shove — ratcheted up the pressure on the government until it collapsed and Prime Minister Erbakan was forced. He was succeeded by a not very capable politician named Mesut Yılmaz. He lasted a few before being succeeded by an aged center-left politician, Bülent Ecevit, who had been a real force in the 1970s but by this time was old and doddering.

So Turkey had pretty hapless political leadership during my three years in Ankara. And the Kurdish insurgency in southeastern Turkey — which I talked about in my Adana interview — had gone from bad to worse. The 1990s were the worst period. Turkish security forces, probably in league with some right-wing vigilante groups, were waging a very aggressive campaign in the southeastern provinces. Kurdish villages were being burned down. There was mass migration from the countryside into the cities as Turkish villagers lost their homes. It was really a terrible period. There were also major scandals and corruption. One of the few bright spots came in 1999, when Abdullah Öcalan — the legendary leader of the Kurdish workers party (PKK) was captured abroad and returned to Turkey. Öcalan had fled the country and had been given refuge in Syria for several years. The Turks at one point came very close to invading Syria to go after him. Finally the Syrians kicked Öcalan out of the country, and the Turks caught up with him in Nairobi, Kenya. He is still in prison on an island in the Sea of Marmara. When he was captured it was a huge coup for the Turkish government.

Anyway, after three very satisfying and interesting years, my assignment came to an end in the summer of 1999. Several of my main senior level contacts hosted gracious farewell dinners for us. Even more touchingly, the Turkish staff of the Embassy's cafeteria, with whom Jan worked as head of the Employee Recreation Association, invited us out to dinner at a lovely hilltop restaurant on a beautiful midsummer evening. A crescent moon, with a star in the middle, hung in the sky, while the city of Ankara sparkled down below us. It was magical, and a touching personal gesture (to Jan more than to me) from a few working-level Turkish employees at the Embassy.

I have to laugh when I think back on my actual departure from post. Our family was all set to leave on day X in July. But then about ten days before we were to leave, Ambassador Morningstar scheduled another one of his many visits to discuss Caspian energy issues. These were always big deals for the Embassy, and so Ambassador Parris asked me to stay through this visit. When I went home to give Jan the news, she was (according to my personal notes) "mad as a hornet." Because it meant that, yet again!, Jan would be saddled with two kids, a dog, and a cat all the way to San Francisco. I pleaded that it was outside of my control, but she scowled that I owed her big-time. So that was the way it played out. I had about a week in Ankara by myself at the end of my tour.

On my final day at the Embassy, the Management Counselor invited me to join him at his gym for a work-out together, after which we would have lunch. I said OK. I did not get

back until mid-afternoon and still had a few last-minute errands to do around town. With all of this, I didn't begin to clear out my office and get things reasonably in place for my successor until about 10:00 PM that night. I continued organizing papers and cleaning up until 5:00 AM. This was obviously not a stellar example of efficient time management, but as it started to get light outside I had pretty much accomplished what I needed to do. So I had the novel experience of leaving the Embassy as the daybreak call to prayer from all the muezzins echoed around the city. I took a cab home and had a quick shower to clear my head and freshen up a bit. I was already packed, thank goodness. After my shower, I went up to the apartment rooftop to look out over the city one more time. Then I went down to where the Embassy car was waiting, and was driven to the airport. And that was that.

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1999-2002: WASHINGTON, DC (SENIOR SEMINAR, EUR)

Q: Good afternoon, it is June 8, 2023, and we are continuing the oral history conversation with Scott Kilner. Scott, you left Turkey in 1999. What did you do next.?

KILNER: Hi, Robin. As I noted at the end of our last conversation, in August of 1999 I departed Ankara and we headed back to Washington again. Returning to DC at this point was a pretty easy decision. We had seven years overseas in two posts. Also, we had promised our son, Derek, to get him back to the U.S. for his last three years of high school. So for both personal and professional reasons we looked forward to returning to our home in Bethesda and a job for me at Foggy Bottom. When it came time to bid on my next assignment, the long-established and highly regarded Senior Seminar program was one option that very much caught my eye. (It was a great program, which sadly was later abolished, but I'll get to that.) One didn't actually "bid" on the Senior Seminar. I just had to express my interest to central personnel and send them a little bit of background information. Then they just made the selection. There wasn't really a way to lobby for the job as in a regular assignment. So I raised my hand and said I would like to do it.

I don't know how many other people you've interviewed have talked about the Senior Seminar. So let me just mention a few points. There were just 15 State Department slots and 15 slots from other agencies in the Seminar — 30 participants altogether. It was supposed to be 50-50 between State and non-State. The State Department positions were very consciously balanced across functional cones and by gender. All participants were supposed to have been newly promoted into the Senior ranks, so basically the State participants were all newly minted Senior Foreign Service Officers with (hopefully) several years of senior level service ahead of them. That was the profile, and I fit it exactly.

The other position I was interested in was that of Executive Assistant to the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, who at the time was Stu Eizenstat. You may recall that I had met Stu in France and spent time with him when he was Ambassador Harriman's personal guest at the D-Day 50th anniversary commemorations at Normandy (1994). Perhaps more to the point, Eizenstat came twice to Ankara as head of the USG team to

the U.S.-Turkish Joint Economic Commission. I worked quite closely with him during those two exercises. Apparently I had made a decent impression and was told pretty early on that I was on the short list of people Stu was looking at. So, I thought there was a chance the Exec Assistant would work out. That would also be a great opportunity, I thought.

So those two options were at the top of my wish list, and I talked to several people whose opinions I valued about the merits of each assignment. In fact, I found myself genuinely torn between the two. One person I talked to was Janice Bay, my old boss from Paris, who afterwards became both a DAS in the Economic Bureau and a senior deputy in the Director General's office. When I consulted Janice, she did not mince words. She told me I would be crazy to turn down the Senior Seminar if offered. She argued that it was a unique opportunity and I should not let it pass. So, I thought about this for a few days, and then in fact I did get an offer to join the Seminar. After more agonizing, I decided to jump in that direction. I took a deep breath and withdrew my name from the Executive Assistant competition. Then I went on vacation and tried to forget all about it.

That's the way it played out, and at the end of August we moved back to Washington. Here I'll touch briefly on the personal side of being back home. We enrolled our son in Walt Whitman High School, a very good and very big public high school in Bethesda. We were a little bit concerned over whether Derek would be able to parachute into this large American environment after having been out of the U.S. for seven years. But in fact he soon found his way and did absolutely fine there. Derek went on to have an editorial position on the school newspaper and got good grades. As for our daughter, Melinda, we were even more wary of placing her in a large Maryland public middle school, so we decided instead on a K-8 private school in Bethesda. She was in 6th grade at this point and so did 6th, 7th, and 8th grades at this school. Jan threw herself into all sorts of activities with her usual energy. The kids made a lot of new friends and reconnected with some old ones. So these years in the U.S. were again a very good ones for our family.

We also got a new addition in the form of a Welsh Corgi puppy, whom we named Strummer — after Joe Strummer, the drummer of the "The Clash" rock group. Melinda had pestered us for a couple of years about getting a dog and we finally caved. We ended up having Strummer with us for 17 years, which is a long life for a Corgi. In addition, we decided to remodel the kitchen and family room in our Bethesda house, which was a big project that took several months. We were very happy with the outcome but, ironically, enjoyed it for only about a year before we went overseas again — never to return to this house again, as it turned out.

Turning now to work at the State Department, I would like to talk about two things. The first is the Senior Seminar; then I'll discuss my follow-on job at Main State. The Senior Seminar billed itself as "the United State Government's premier senior foreign affairs training program." As I mentioned, its primary purpose was leadership development for people with a strong track-record and who were expected to hold senior-level jobs for several years to come. Simply stated, it was indeed a truly fantastic year! One of the very best years I had in the Foreign Service. It was an absolutely unique experience — low stress, but extremely interesting and great fun. And, I got a lot out of it in terms of

professional development. So that was a combination that you don't encounter very often. Our group was the 42nd Class of the Senior Seminar. We called ourselves the "millennial class" because it extended from the fall of 1999 through the spring of 2000.

Beyond leadership development, a secondary purpose of the Seminar, especially for State participants, was to re-familiarize senior level officers with the United States. The thinking was that this cadre of FSOs had spent large chunks of their 20+ years in the Foreign Service overseas, but now they were going to represent the United States at senior levels to foreign counterparts around the world. So the Seminar tried to ensure that participants emerged from the program solidly grounded on what the United States was like today, in all its diversity and rapidly changing dynamics.

With respect to the leadership development component of the program, we met in Arlington Hall, the "semi-historic" building on the National Foreign Affairs Training Center campus in Arlington, VA. We convened every day at 9:00 AM and got out of work at 4:00 PM. How about that?! Then, one week in every month we would travel to different destinations around the United States. One part of the Washington component of the program was essentially skills development — useful but rather predictable. Things like exercises in public speaking, practice in giving testimony before Congress, how to manage a diverse workforce. Things like that.

But a second aspect of the leadership development program in Washington was more interesting. Senior Seminar participants were charged with inviting leaders from any organizations they chose to come and speak to our group about leadership in their respective areas. These could be private companies, NGOs, government agencies, or what have you. Given the talent pool in the Washington area there is a lot to draw upon. As the U.S. Government's premier foreign affairs leadership training program, we were able to attract some very good people. Not everybody was famous, but for example we did have David Brooks from the New York Times and Alaska Senator Ted Stevens. The Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps also came. There were many other less publicly visible leaders in private and public organizations of all types. They were almost invariably interesting to listen to and ask questions of.

The most memorable part of the program, however, was the regular travel we did around the United States. Each month we spent one week in a different region of the country to meet with a wide range of organizations and institutional leaders. The program for each trip was constructed completely by Seminar participants. I'll give you a few examples to make this more concrete. In the Pacific Northwest we went to Seattle to visit Boeing and Microsoft, focusing on high tech and trade in that area. We also met with Seattle civic leaders who were preparing for a big international trade conference. Then we continued on to Alaska to examine environmental issues and the concerns of indigenous Americans. On a Midwest trip, each Senior Seminar member stayed a couple of nights on a family farm to learn about recent advancements in agricultural technology. In the South, we took a bus ride down the Mississippi Delta to look at racial and economic development issues, with stops in Memphis and New Orleans. In New York, we opened the NASDAQ stock exchange one day, and then went on to Boston to see the enormous "Big Dig"

infrastructure project. Probably my favorite trip was to the Southwest, where we visited the Department of Energy's Los Alamos and the Sandia laboratories. Then we met with native American leaders at a couple of Indian reservations. From there, we continued to Nogales, AZ and Nogales, Mexico to discuss immigration issues from both sides of the border.

42nd Senior Seminar (1999-2000) on trip to Hawaii

I probably shouldn't continue, as this may sound like too much of a boondoggle, but we also managed to pull off a trip to Hawaii and a ride on a submarine, courtesy of the Navy officer in our class. And quite unusual for the Senior Seminar, we took one overseas trip, thanks to the efforts of the Air Force officer in the class. He got us transport to the Balkans, via stops at Ramstein Base in Germany and Aviano Base in Italy. From Aviano we flew on to Bosnia where we spent a couple of days. Balkan issues, of course, had been very much at the center of U.S.- European relations in the 1990s. Anyway, I'm sure you can imagine how incredibly interesting all this travel was for our group.

At the midpoint of the Senior Seminar program, we had a three-week break around Christmas & the New Year. Each class member was charged with doing an independent project of their own choosing, wherever they wanted and on whatever subject they wanted. The idea was to examine a significant national issue, write a paper on the subject, and make a presentation to the class when we reconvened after the break. This all had to be funded out of our own pockets, more or less, but I knew I could easily find free room-and-board in the San Francisco Bay Area, courtesy of my father in Palo Alto. So I decided to look into the phenomenon of Silicon Valley as the United States' leading technology center. The timing was excellent, because this was the turn of the year 2000 and the peak of the first so-called "Internet Bubble." I had quite good luck in tapping into

personal connections, and managed to set up some 40-50 interviews with people mostly in the private sector who were involved in, or impacted by, the tech sector one way or another. Most were in business, but not all. For example, I met with a psychologist who dealt with the personal fallout of searing competition in this kind of environment. I also found experts who could address ancillary issues such as transport and housing pressures in the Bay Area. I really threw myself whole-heartedly into this project; the deeper I got into these issues, the more interesting I found them. At the end of it I wrote a 15-page paper that I was pretty proud of. You'll perhaps remember that the tech-heavy NASDAQ reached an all-time high in March of 2000. So it turned out I was doing my project right at the peak of the so-called "Dot.Com" bubble — which popped a few months later. The paper I wrote (and sent a copy of to everyone I had met with) turned out to be a kind of a time-capsule of a historic moment in the history of America's high-tech sector.

Q: Was there anybody notable in your class?

KILNER: Notable? We were all notable! (Laughs). One person in our class was Margaret Scobey, who was in fact an A-100 classmate of mine. She had a distinguished career in multiple Middle East countries, becoming U.S. Ambassador to Syria and then to Egypt.

Q: What ranks were the military participants in your Seminar.

KILNER: My recollection is that they were colonels, which would be the equivalent of an FS-01 Foreign Service Officer. That may have formally been a rank below the State participants, but our military colleagues were outstanding additions to the class. They had come out of very different organizational environments and were able to offer the rest of us many interesting insights and different perspectives. I really valued their participation.

Q: Then for the other civilian agencies were they new SES's?

KILNER: They were. The Department of Defense, the CIA, and NSA all sent strong participants.

Q: So, you didn't know it yet, but the Senior Seminar would be terminated just a few years later. Under Secretary Colin Powell, right?

KILNER: Unfortunately, yes. I'll get to that, but first I would like to say a few more words on the subject of leadership development — which was really the core of the Senior Seminar. We were pointed to a number of books on leadership to read. I read a few of them, maybe three or four, but to be honest I found almost all of them tedious. The one exception was Daniel Goleman's well-known book on "Emotional Intelligence." But most of the others just took two or three simple ideas and then spun them out to two or three hundred pages of puffery and repetition.

Far more useful than these books was the opportunity over an extended period of time to meet with leaders from a wide range of organizational environments. What we saw was a great variety of leadership styles. There were of course the "Type A" archetypes, who exuded dominance. But there were other very different, yet very effective styles. A few

that really impressed all of us, including me, were native American tribal leaders in Arizona and New Mexico. A few of them spoke very gently, meaningfully and persuasively about the importance of "leadership from the heart." Afterwards it was clear that these individuals had made a big impression on almost every member of our group.

By the end of our nine-month odyssey, I became convinced that three qualities lie at the core of successful leadership. The first is competency: people under you have to believe that you are competent. The second is commitment: subordinates must clearly see that you are committed to and truly care about the goals of the organization. And third, a leader must be seen as authentic — not a phony who is just playing a role. The importance of these three characteristics were the focus of the final paper I wrote on leadership at the end of the class. In fact, those qualities or principles became my guiding philosophy through the rest of my assignments in the Foreign Service. I might add, however, that over time I came to see two other qualities as also important to successful leadership. The first is empathy — really being able to understand how others perceive whatever the issue is. And finally, ethics. Some may think me naive, but I do believe that a strong moral compass is essential to successful leadership in the long run. But the key takeaway for me was that within the four or five parameters I've just noted, a wide variety of leadership styles can be successful. The realization that I did not have to conform to one or two molds was something of a revelation. And I became more relaxed about finding my own style and confident that I could be successful doing things my own way. That was extremely helpful.

Scott working at "Martha's Kitchen" food bank in Washington, DC as part of Senior Seminar program

There is one other thing I found extremely valuable about the Senior Seminar. That was the bonding experienced over a nine-month period with 29 other people at roughly the same stage of their careers as I was. That bonding over time provided an extraordinary opportunity to slowly, step-by-step, peel back the layers of what these colleagues really thought about what mattered most in their careers and in life. These exchanges would happen at unexpected moments; they were unplanned, but they would regularly arise.

I'll give you a few examples. We had a wonderful, big-hearted African American civil servant in our class who worked in the personnel division of the State Department. He was quiet much of the time, but then from time to time he would speak eloquently about the complexities of race relations in the United States. With great nuance, he discussed how he saw things personally as an African American and professionally as a human resources expert in a government agency. Then we had a Jewish member of our class who was very well-liked and always congenial. But one day during a planning discussion, he

got very angry with the rest of our group because no one's planning proposals took account of the Jewish high holidays. It had not even crossed our minds! The rest of us all looked at one other and said, "God, you are right!" It was a humbling experience. The last example I'll offer is that of an army colonel in the class. We were on the subject of professional ethics and the question of compromises with personal principles — pragmatism and practicality versus abstract standards, things like that. The colonel stressed the importance of maintaining one's moral compass. "You just have to decide in your own mind how you are going to play the game. You have to decide and stick to it," he said. That phrase — being honest with yourself about "how you are going to play the game" resonated greatly. It never left me through the rest of my career.

Q: Is that because you faced some dilemmas along the way?

KILNER: I have to think about that. But off the top of my head I don't recall ever having to confront an excruciating moral challenge — for better or worse.

Q: I found that idea of making sure that you stick to the moral compass very important as I started to lead more people.

KILNER: I completely agree. It makes it much easier to live with yourself, to be comfortable in your own skin.

Let me conclude on the Senior Seminar by returning to the point that ours was one of the last sessions before the program was terminated. Now in retirement, I am frequently asked who my favorite Secretary of State was. My usual answer is that I thought the most effective Secretary was James Baker. But the one I liked the most was Colin Powell, mostly because of his attitude towards the institution of the State Department. He brought with him the ethos of "taking care of your troops," along with great personal warmth. Powell was something of a tragic figure in the Bush administration because he was outmaneuvered on some major policy debates — especially regarding Iraq.

But as much as I admired Secretary Powell, I strongly disagree with the decision he and Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage made to abolish the Senior Seminar. My understanding is that they did so because they felt that too many resources were being focused on too few people. Powell and Armitage wanted to spread finite training resources across a broader group of people. That's a completely rational position. But the problem was that in doing so, the more pedestrian parts of the Senior Seminar program — the skills development training mostly — were retained and integrated with other training components at various levels of one's career. But what was lost and could not be replicated was the best part about the Seminar — the domestic travel and exposure to a wide range of leadership styles, as well as the experience of spending a lot of time with an excellent cadre of similarly placed professionals and exploring very important professional questions with them. The special part of the Seminar, which made it so unique and valuable, was lost. I was sorry to see it go.

Q: Your feelings are well shared. By everybody who had the chance to do it.

KILNER: Is that right? That's interesting.

Q: Did you bid in the beginning on your next job?

KILNER: Yes, almost immediately! Since the Senior Seminar was actually about nine months long, rather than a full year, we all had to start thinking about onward assignments very quickly. My general goals were pretty clear. Jan and I absolutely wanted to stay in Washington another two years for both personal and professional reasons. So an Office Director position seemed the obvious next step. And I soon saw that two bureaus were interested in hiring me. One offer I received was as Director for the Office of Caucasus and Central Asian Affairs within the S/NIS world. (At that time, S/NIS was the "pseudo-bureau" encompassing all the states of the former Soviet Union.) They thought that my Turkey experience and work on energy issues would be good background for this position. I was interested, but then soon found out that I was also very much in the running for EUR/WE Office Director, which covered the countries of southwest Europe. This office had long been considered one of the core offices of the old European Bureau. I was talking to both bureaus, EUR and S/NIS, and it soon came to the point where I had to make a decision. I'll confess that it became rather uncomfortable for me as, within 24 hours, I received phone calls from both EUR Assistant Secretary Marc Grossman and S/NIS Director Steve Sestanovich. Both made a pitch for their respective job offers, and I had to decide within about 36 hours. I was truly torn, and vividly remember how, during the lunch break the following day out at Arlington Hall, I walked out on the campus lawn and sat for about half an hour in the shade of a big tree. In an almost meditative state, I tried to make a "gut check" of my feelings. It was hard, because I knew that my decision would very probably lead in two quite different directions: Central Asia or Western Europe. So, I sat there for about half an hour…and then came to a decision. You could perhaps say I wimped out, but I recognized that I had been consistently very interested in European affairs since college, and so decided I should stick with it and not reject an excellent opportunity. So I said yes to EUR/WE.

Q: Did this cover Italy and France and Spain?

KILNER: EUR/WE had three big countries and three small ones. The former were France, Italy, and Spain. The smaller ones were Portugal, Malta, and the Holy See (i.e. the Vatican). Like most Washington jobs, the Office Director position was a two-year assignment. And it was a good job, and I never regretted taking it. Once I had made the choice, I was quite happy and had no second thoughts. During my two years I did not face the kind of historic drama that I had previously confronted in the Germany/Austria office. But there were lots of management challenges, so I had many opportunities to deploy the skills I had learned in the Senior Seminar.

Q: What was the year that you started?

KILNER: The summer of 2000 until the summer of 2002.

Q: That was a pretty tumultuous time.

KILNER: Well, it seems like it's always tumultuous in Washington.

Q: But 9/11 happened.

KILNER: Indeed! I will get to that.

First let me try to describe the general shape of my new office, EUR/WE. As I said, we covered six countries — managing the organizational machinery that connects Washington to our embassies in those countries, and serving as a primary point of contact for those counties' embassies in Washington. We have very dense bilateral relations with France, Italy, and Spain in particular, so the volume of diplomatic traffic was enormous and unrelenting. Every day we were churning out briefing memos for top State Department officials in connection with official foreign visitors, or travel by U.S. officials, or even a senior-level phone call between Washington and a foreign capital. It was unending and we did not have a huge staff. We had two FSOs working on France. And only one each on Italy and Spain. Anyway, it was a very, very busy office. I would jokingly refer to us as the "EUR/WE sweat shop," in that our Desk Officers were like workers on an assembly line — only rather than sewing undergarments, we stitched together briefing memos.

Fortunately we had very good people in our office. Especially during my second year, we had a completely solid office, so no complaints about that. Of course we all got to make consultation trips out to the region, and we had a nice region to cover. I personally made several good trips to our embassies abroad. The most unfamiliar part of that territory for me was Malta, which I had never been to. When I visited Malta I learned that a State Department Office Director was able to meet with the President, the Prime Minister, and the Foreign Minister, as well as have his picture in the newspaper. So that was kind of fun.

EUR, as a bureau, changed considerably during these two years. For years, EUR had been the largest bureau in the State Department. But after Colin Powell and Rich Armitage came in, it got even bigger because Powell and Armitage decided to fold the S/NIS operation – the states of the former Soviet Union – into EUR. Beth Jones came in as the new Assistant Secretary, succeeding Jim Dobbins. Beth was a good choice because she had experience in both sides of this new behemoth organization. EUR daily staff meetings, bringing together the Front Office with all the Office Directors, were enormous! After the "merger" the biggest conference room in EUR was packed to the gills every morning — not only every seat around a very long conference table, but also a second row of seats around the perimeter of the room. Discussion ranged from my issues at one extreme — talking about Rome and the Vatican — to the wilds of Tajikistan at the other. So it was quite something. By the way, a propos of Rome, the Deputy Chief of Mission there was an FSO named Bill Pope. I always had to be careful in referring to him because Beth Jones would get confused as to whether I was talking about THE Pope or "just Bill Pope." Anyway, the merger between "old EUR" and S/NIS changed the feeling of the bureau considerably.

Within my office, the most interesting account at that time was Spain. This was because a new center-right Spanish government had come into power, led by PM José María Aznar. Aznar was an ambitious politician who wanted to raise his country's profile internationally, and he found a willing partner in the George W. Bush administration. Both Secretary Powell and the White House blessed the idea of raising our bilateral relations with Spain. The way we went about doing that was to negotiate a set of non-binding public protocols, which we called a "Joint Declaration" by our two governments. The Declaration covered the gamut of our bilateral relations and set aspirational goals for what the two governments would do together. To be perfectly candid, it was mostly putting old wine in new bottles, but the intent was to signal publicly a new political commitment by both sides. Mechanically, Ambassador Ron Newman was brought in to lead negotiations on the Joint Declaration. As Office Director, I essentially served as Ron's deputy, or right-hand man. Of course our Spain Desk Officer was also quite involved. Ron was a prince of a guy — really great to work with. He and I made a couple of trips to Spain to negotiate with our Spanish counterparts. Those were both interesting and enjoyable undertakings. In fact, I would say that our work on Spain was the most rewarding part of my two years in the office.

Q: Were all your ambassadors political appointees?

KILNER: You are a step ahead of me. That was the next thing I was going to talk about. My first year in EUR/WE saw the election of 2000 and the narrow, controversial victory of George W. Bush. So the inauguration of a new administration in January 2001 brought with it many changes — including new ambassadors to every one of my office's countries. Now when it comes to France, Italy, Spain and the Holy See, ambassadorial nominations always go to some of the most plugged-in political and financial supporters of the political party in power. So before long our office was deep into the business of preparing for confirmation six, white, male businessmen — all with different personalities, but essentially cut from the same cloth. That is the way it was.

Q: And you had to get them confirmed all around the same time. That is a lot of work.

KILNER: Indeed. Recall that I had done this a couple of times already as Desk Officer for Austria and Switzerland, so I was pretty comfortable with the process. The Presidential Appointments Office was run by a very capable woman named Sharon Bisdee. And the lack of diversity in the Bush nominees notwithstanding, I have to say that I enjoyed meeting and working with them all. They were all engaging, and I had no difficulty with any of them. When they got out to their respective embassies, some did very good jobs, although a couple developed somewhat testy relations with their DCM. But anyway, it was a fun experience to get them prepared for their confirmation hearings and to get them launched. By the time they got to post, I had already developed a good relationship with each of them; in fact at that point I knew them far better than their DCMs did.

Q: Who was your first principal DAS?

KILNER: Our principal Deputy Assistant Secretary was Charlie Ries. That was another good part of the job, as I knew Charlie pretty well already. We had studied French together, and we had had considerable contact when I was in Paris and Charlie was in Brussels. The DAS directly responsible for my office — to whom I reported directly — was first Jim Gadsden, for whom I'd worked in Paris. Jim was then replaced by Bob Bradke. Both of them were terrific individuals! I was very lucky regarding the people I worked with in EUR. They were all excellent.

OK, now I would like to talk about September 11. Everybody has their own September 11 story, so I guess I should briefly tell mine. September 11, 2001 was like when John Kennedy was assassinated. Everybody remembers where they were and what they were doing when this terrible event fell out of the sky, literally and figuratively. In my case, that gigantic morning EUR staff meeting I just described was assembling. We had some 50 people in the secure conference room. Beth Jones was a little bit late, but when she arrived she commented, "I don't know if any of you had time to look at the television before coming here, but a plane of some sort has crashed into one of the World Trade Center towers in New York. It doesn't look good at all." Then we proceeded through a 45-minute staff meeting, covering the usual business. Afterwards, as was my routine, I walked down to the cafeteria to grab a cup of caffeine to take back to my office. But as I approached the cafeteria I just saw a mass of people huddled around one of the television monitors in the corridor. By that time the second Trade Center tower had been hit. So, it was becoming clear something very different from an accident had occurred. And then, as we all watched the TV screen, some guy came running down the corridor yelling that the Pentagon had been hit. Everyone was stupefied! So I immediately hurried back up to my office. The news was just spreading like wildfire. I had to make sure everybody was in the office and waiting for instructions. After just a few minutes, an announcement came over the loudspeaker system to evacuate the building, which we did. We had a designated assembly point rather nonsensically located in the little park area directly opposite the 21st Street entrance. So everyone in our office, along with many other employees from the building, stood there for quite a while.

As everybody remembers, it was one of those perfect fall days, with brilliant blue skies and perfect sunshine. Beautiful in every way except for what was happening. So, we all stood out in that little park for about an hour and a half. Finally word came that we could all go home. I had my car parked in the garage at the State Department, and I was allowed to go in to get it. I offered to give my new Deputy Office Director a ride home. That was Judith Cefkin. She lived not too far from our house in Bethesda, so we got in the car and drove off. Many streets were blocked off, and we had to drive over the Memorial Bridge to the Virginia side and then proceed up the river. As we drove across the bridge we could see off to the left the Pentagon with smoke coming out of one side. It was absolutely surreal! The traffic was terrible, and we inched along slowly. At one point we decided to stop for a cup of coffee and talk about things going on in the office. As I mentioned, Judith was brand new to the office, so we had a lot to discuss.

Eventually I made it home, and I have to confess that this was not my finest hour as a spouse. By this time several hours had passed since the terrorist attacks, and I had not once called home to let Jan and our kids know that I was OK. Jan, shall I say, was not

amused. Of course she was glad I had made it home safely, but there had been rumors at one point of a bomb at the State Department. All sorts of misinformation was flying around, and I had not even thought to call home. I have regretted that ever since. Apart from this lesson in humility, one other thing strikes me as I reflect back on that day. That is how slow I was to grasp the full significance of what had happened. In the Foreign Service there is a premium placed upon maintaining one's calm and not panicking in a crisis. I certainly had absorbed that ethos, but as a consequence I think that for a long time I did not understand how radically things can sometimes change in an instant. September 11, 2001 was such a moment, and it took me some time to grasp that the world was not going to be the same.

Moreover, those attacks on September 11 were not the end of it. Not long after — and this tends to get forgotten except by people who were involved at the time — we started to have an anthrax scare in the Washington area. There was not a large number, but a few letters laced with anthrax poison showed up in government offices around town. This was at least as unnerving as September 11 because people were already so on edge. It was hard not to wonder whether you might "draw the queen of spades," so to speak, by having such a letter show up on your mailbox. Now it so happened that during this anthrax scare period, several EUR offices — including mine — were being renovated. So we were relocated to temporary offices in another part of the Main State building. And it turned out that our temporary digs were located right next to one of the satellite mail distribution rooms. There is a main mail center in the basement, but then also a few little distribution rooms around the building to which the mail is parceled out. We were right next to one such room, and one day I came back from lunch to find that the corridor to our little area had been cordoned off with yellow tape because anthrax spores had been found in that mailroom. And that room was literally right behind my personal office — separated only by a wall. I was not thrilled about this, of course.

A few days later there was a Department-wide "town hall meeting" to discuss these events, because many employees were getting very anxious about the situation. After the formal presentations had been made, there was an opportunity to ask questions. So I got in the queue of people lining up. When my turn came I said that my office was right next to one of the contaminated rooms. For a week I had been trying to get somebody to test or "sweep" my office to determine whether it was safe, but nobody had responded. I strongly repeated my request that my office be checked. Anyway, within a day or two someone did come and performed a sweep of the area. I was told there were no traces of contamination. So that was that.

Well, Robin, unless you have any questions, the last thing I would like to talk about today is the issue of politically appointed ambassadors. That is what we had in EUR/WE, as do most embassies in Europe. Over the years, and definitely now in retirement, one of the most frequently asked questions I get from friends and acquaintances outside the diplomatic world is: "What do career diplomats really think about political appointees? Do you resent that there are so many of them?" So not surprisingly I've thought a good deal about this this issue, and I have come to believe the following:

In a fantasy world, like most FSOs I would like nearly all ambassadorships to go to career Foreign Service Officers, with just a few exceptions for highly qualified outside appointees. But we all know that is never going to happen. It's just not the way our system has ever worked or as far as I can see ever will. If a career FSO decides to concentrate on European affairs, as I did, one just has to accept that there is essentially a glass ceiling at the DCM level — again with just a few exceptions mainly in the Balkan countries. All of "Western Europe" and now even most of what we used to call "Eastern Europe" are blanketed with political appointees.

Given this reality, to me the question comes down not to "career or non-career" appointments, but rather "QUALIFIED or UNQUALIFIED" appointments. Non-career ambassadors can be excellent if they have the right skills sets. I had the good fortune to work for a few of them. Pamela Harriman in Paris was a superb ambassador. Mel Sembler, for whom I worked in Rome, as well as his successor Ron Spogli, were well-qualified, good managers, with good connections in Washington. When I arrived as Austria Desk Officer, Henry Grunwald, the former editor of Time Magazine was our ambassador in Vienna. He spoke German fluently, along with many other talents. Those are the kinds of political appointees we should be sending out to our embassies. But unfortunately, they are not all like that.

In my experience (and this is just my personal rule of thumb), across Republican and Democratic administrations, roughly 10 percent of political appointees fall into this very good to exceptional category. Another 10 percent are at the bottom, in the "disaster and/or embarrassment" category. And then about 80 percent fall into a big middle category of political appointees who rather benignly just "keep the wheels turning." They do no harm, they come, they go, and they leave no long-term trace.

Fortunately, I never had to work for one of the disastrous political appointees. However, when I became EUR/WE Director, two of our embassies did have terrible ambassadors. Fortunately they were both gone within three or four months of my arrival, so I didn't have to deal with them long. One of them was in Rome and another in Malta at the time. In both cases, the biggest reason for the problem was a breakdown in trust between the ambassador and the DCM and career staff. When that happens, the embassy almost inevitably becomes dysfunctional. In the Malta case, the Ambassador essentially stopped coming into the Embassy, but rather just worked out of the Residence. No one at the Embassy really knew what this ambassador was doing. In the case in Italy the Ambassador pursued a personal agenda that had little to do with Washington's priorities. I think there can be different reasons for such a breakdown, but the most common one is the big difference between how government agencies and private companies operate. If a political appointee is a hard-charging individual who is used to calling all the shots at his or her company, it can be a real jolt to run up against all the rules and regulations that impact how the government operates — including rules governing ethics. These individuals are not used to being told that they cannot do certain things. They do not like being told by the DCM, "I'm sorry Mr. Ambassador, but you cannot do that."

The last thing I would like to say is a word about why "outside individuals" accept political ambassadorial appointments in the first place. This seems to me an interesting question, because those individuals have to jump through a lot of hoops! They take huge cuts in pay; the paperwork for security clearances and financial disclosure statements is enormous; and then they find themselves constrained by all sorts of rules and regulations even after they arrive at their embassy. So why do they do it? My perception is that these high-achievers, who have proved themselves very successful at making lots of money, are now looking for something more — something in the realm of psychic rewards. Having made a ton of money, they want to feel they have also contributed to the public good. An ambassadorial appointment is an ideal way to gain such psychic reward because, in addition to being able to tell yourself you have done something for our country and the public good, you also come out of it with a prestigious title you can carry for the rest of your days.

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2002-2005: ROME, ITALY

Q: Good afternoon. It is June 13, 2023. I am continuing our conversation with Scott Kilner. Scott, I believe we have just finished up in 2002 with your tour as Office Director for Western Europe in the European bureau. What happened next?

KILNER: Hi Robin, good to see you again. Last time we discussed my three years in Washington, one with the Senior Seminar and two as an Office Director in EUR. At this point, my wife and I were both ready to go overseas again. Having already been an Economic Counselor, in Ankara, one next logical step would have been a DCM job overseas. However, not long after I began my EUR/WE Office Director job, I saw that the Economic Minister-Counselor position at our embassy in Rome would be coming open at the same time that I would be up for reassignment. This immediately captured my interest, and I soon decided it would be my first choice. I've mentioned earlier that many, perhaps most, of my onward assignments involved a convoluted chain of events — but this was not one of them. In fact, I was perfectly positioned to compete for this job. As I had been working every day with our Embassy in Rome, and gotten to know all the main players there. My office had shepherded a political appointee ambassador through his confirmation hearings. I was very well known to the EUR Front Office. And I had friends in the Economic Bureau as well, so I pretty much had the bases covered, and it worked out without a lot of to-ing and fro-ing.

Q: Did this job need Italian language?

KILNER: It did. That was probably the trickiest thing I had to deal with. There aren't many people in the Foreign Service who speak Italian well. Johns Hopkins SAIS, for example, has a program in Bologna, and FSOs who had spent a year there may have learned to speak "*trattoria Italian*." But Italy is not like France or Spain, for which the Foreign Service has a large number of strong language speakers. With respect to language competency, Embassy Rome was quite different from Embassy Paris. Anyway, with the cooperation of both FSI and the European Bureau I was able to get a full course in Italian

before going to Rome. After I was assigned to the position, I started going to the Foreign Service Institute over an extended lunch hour once or twice a week during the last few months of my job in EUR/WE, receiving individualized basic language instruction. The Italian department was very nice and very flexible. EUR then let me leave the bureau early May, so at that point I joined an FSI class that was already in progress. And I stayed at FSI until September. So I got the full 24 weeks of instruction, and came out with a S-3/R-3+ language score.

I went out to post at the beginning of September. In taking this job, and having served in Paris (another "dream embassy"), I was very cognizant of the danger of inflated expectations. But I had encountered this phenomenon in France, and I believe I was pretty realistically grounded on what to expect.

It did take a while to get settled in Rome, like in any big city, but after we did, I have to say that it was a truly wonderful assignment. I think the main reason — in addition to being in Italy — was that the assignment offered probably the best work-life balance I ever had. The job as Economic Minister-Counselor was essentially the fourth-ranking person in the Embassy, after Ambassador, DCM, and the Political Minister-Counselor. That meant I would serve as Acting DCM now and then, as circumstances allowed. I was involved in most all small group meetings in the Front Office and had excellent access to the Ambassador and DCM. Our office's economic agenda was interesting and I felt fully engaged. At the same time, my workload was not a crushing one, like the DCM of a huge, sprawling embassy had for example. So my hours were not terrible. I was able to get home for dinner at a reasonable hour most nights. The assignment also worked out perfectly for our family, especially because our four coincided exactly with our daughter's four years of high school. She attended an excellent international school, Saint Stephen's, on the Aventine Hill in the center of Rome. Our son, meanwhile, spent his four years of undergraduate work in the U.S, at Stanford. And I had a happy spouse, who learned a good bit of Italian and loved living in Italy. In sum, we were more than fortunate.

Jan and Scott at local pizzeria

Scott working off the pizza in the Embassy gym

As for housing, the Embassy has a four-story building, the *Villa Pinciana,* for senior State Department staff, about a 15-minute walk from the Embassy. It's located on the Via Pinciana, directly across the street from the Villa Borghese Museum and park. Our apartment overlooked the museum and its garden, and I could literally walk to work through the park under the "pines of Rome." We knew how lucky we were. At this point, I'd like to recount a little vignette, which is no doubt "inside baseball" but perhaps offers an example of life in the Foreign Service. I mentioned that the gracious *palazzo* in which we lived had four floors. The DCM was on the ground floor with direct access to the garden. Three Embassy Minister-Counselors (i.e. State Department Section Chiefs) each occupied a separate floor above the DCM. And there was a detached out-building for a fourth Minister-Counselor. However, Embassy Rome had FIVE State Section Chiefs, which meant that one person had to live elsewhere. And it so happened that the "odd man out" the year before I arrived was the Political Minister-Counselor. I won't mention any names, but the Political M-C essentially made a play for what for years had been the Economic M-C's apartment — i.e. a play to snatch "my" apartment away before I got there. Fortunately, my predecessor, Margaret Dean, saw the game and was able to thwart it. That was a bit of melodrama, and I was extremely grateful to Margaret for protecting the ECON housing turf.

Q: Who was the DCM when you arrived?

KILNER: The Deputy Chief of Mission was Emil Skoden. But to back up for a moment, the political appointee Ambassador whom we shepherded through confirmation was Mel Sembler. He was a Florida real estate and shopping center developer, and a major fundraiser for the Republican party. But, somewhat unusually, he had already been an

ambassador once, to Australia under Bush 41. He had done a very good job there, by all accounts. So Bush 43 appointed him Ambassador to Italy.

Q: So, it was nice that he was experienced in the diplomatic realm. He knew the embassy and what the job was.

KILNER: Exactly. In our last discussion, I talked about what makes a successful political appointee and what some of the reasons are for failures. Sembler was a good example of one who succeeded. He was an intelligent man, had great people skills, and really knew how to build a cohesive team. In the case of his DCM, I saw that process close up, and I could tell from the very beginning who he was going to pick. Although he interviewed all applicants, he had a previous relationship with Emil Skoden, who had been one of Sembler's Consuls General in Australia. I also knew Emil a bit already and I liked him. He had very good people skills. In any case, Sembler and Skoden worked together very well at Embassy Rome, so we had an excellent Front Office.

Q: OK, I do want to ask you about the environment and what was happening in Italy, as former PM Silvio Berlusconi passed away yesterday. Before we do that, could you just outline your responsibility to the economic section? And then as minister-counselor did you have any responsibility for the other agencies?

KILNER: Sure. As we discussed in the case of Embassy Paris, years earlier the State Department had created the rank of Minister-Counselor for the heads of section in our biggest embassies. The reason, as I understand it, was to strengthen State's coordinating role with respect to other agencies. That coordinating role was especially relevant to the economic work of the Embassy, because there were several other economic agencies with staff and responsibilities in Rome, just as in Paris, London, Tokyo, etc. These included first and foremost the Commerce Department and the Agricultural Department. But other smaller agencies had pieces of economic work as well, such as the Secret Service. (We did not have a Treasury rep in Rome.) The Ambassador asked that these economic agencies form a team, of which I was the chair. That team met with the Ambassador and DCM every other week to discuss our collective work. This coordinating function was a significant part of my job, as we prepared for our bi-monthly "dog and pony show" with the Front Office. I think the other section heads were happy to let me take on that work, so that they did not have to. They didn't want to be bothered with such "bureaucratic stuff," but I didn't mind at all. Fortunately, each of the other agency heads was quite competent and fine to work with. Agriculture and Commerce each had well-defined responsibilities, which included some important bilateral issues. In agriculture, biotechnology was a significant area of contention with the Italians. FCS worked a lot on opaque public procurement issues that disadvantaged American companies. The Secret Service was very involved in counterfeiting issues related to the mafia and law enforcement. We also had an FAA attaché. And the Labor Officer in the Political Section would also join in our discussions. So we had quite a diverse team, which worked well together almost all of the time.

Q: Did the Economic Section engage with the U.S. Consulates in Italy?

Embassy Rome Economic Section

KILNER: Although we used to have quite a few consulates in Italy, many have been closed over the years. Today the only one of significant size is in Milan, which is the economic capital of Italy. It's not a huge consulate, but it is significant. The Consul General was Doug McElhaney most of the time I was in Rome. Apart from American Citizen Services, they focused on economic and commercial work. We also had a small consulate in Naples. There were only three substantive officers, as I recall. They did a little economic work but not much. And then there was a one-officer post in Florence. Florence may sound like a dream job, but it wasn't. That one FSO, who was Bill McIlhenny during my time, watched over a stable of FSNs, but otherwise did everything himself. Bill had a very heavy representational schedule, and his district had thousands of American students in Florence and hundreds of thousands of American tourists getting into trouble every year. Florence is a beautiful city, but the Consul's job is pretty thankless.

Q: OK. So you arrived in Rome in September of 2002, a year after 9-11. The U.S. was already in Afghanistan, but not yet in Iraq. Silvio Berlusconi had come to power. So what was your focus after you got there?

KILNER: The United States' controversial military intervention in Iraq began in March of 2003, about six months after my arrival in Rome. It quickly came to overshadow virtually every part of the Embassy's agenda. The Political and Pol-Mil sections handled the bulk of our engagement with the Italians, especially at first. But as the first phase of the conflict "ended" — and before insurgencies broke out — the issue of Iraq

reconstruction moved toward center stage. And that was an issue in which the Economic Section was very much involved. Among much else, we helped organize one major conference on Iraq reconstruction, bringing together both public and private sector players.

More broadly, the Iraq conflict became a huge issue all over Europe for quite a while. Public opinion in almost every European country fell somewhere between skeptical and deeply hostile to the American actions. But there were three major European governments that lined up with us. There was of course the UK, but also Spain and Italy. In Italy, Ambassador Sembler had formed a very good relationship with PM Silvio Berlusconi. Sembler could get in to see him when he needed. I would say the Italian public was more pacifist than stridently anti-American. So the political headwinds Berlusconi faced for backing the U.S. were not terribly strong. And Italian officials were never personally hostile to any of us at the Embassy.

I can offer a couple of examples of how the Iraq War affected the general environment in Rome and at the Embassy. While I was there, Vice President Dick Cheney visited twice and President Bush came once — in June 2004, I believe. Italian security for these visits was unbelievable! When President Bush came, they essentially locked down the entire center of the city. There were ten thousand Italian security forces out on the streets, helicopters buzzing around, and the like. I could not help feeling rather sad to see that this was necessary in an allied country, but neither we nor the Italians (who have a lot of experience dealing with organized crime and counter-terrorism) wanted to take any chances.

Q: Regarding Berlusconi, did he enter Italian politics simply as a flamboyant businessman? Or did he want to make big changes in how the country was run?

KILNER: Well, this was not Berlusconi's first time in government. Two political parties — the Christian Democrats and the Communists — had dominated Italian politics for decades after World War Two. But when they collapsed in the 1990s, mostly because of enormous corruption scandals, a political vacuum emerged, which Silvio Berlusconi filled. He became prime minister for the first time in 1994 and was reelected several times. Berlusconi ultimately became Italy's longest-serving post-war PM. His legacy is very conflicted, however. He did not deliver on his promise of economic reform and renewal, but rather presided over a long era of economic decline. He was enmeshed in numerous scandals and countless court cases against him. His business interests, especially media holdings, strongly impacted Italian government policies. So, for better or worse, Berlusconi had a huge impact on Italian society, culture, and politics. You could love him or hate him, but you could not ignore him.

Q: So he was back in power again when you arrived in Rome.

KILNER: Very much so. He was definitely more popular inside Italy than outside. *The Economist* magazine, for example, loathed Berlusconi and criticized him severely for years. I think most Europeans outside of Italy just rolled their eyes at the mention of his name. But inside Italy was another matter. While I was in Rome, one national election

took place. In the run-up to the vote, I was interested in what Italians I met or knew well were thinking. And I cannot recall a single instance of someone saying that they enthusiastically supported him. But nevertheless, Silvio was comfortably reelected. You can interpret that as you will, but one conclusion I drew was that Italians very frequently will dissemble when it comes to their real political views.

Q: Thank you for bearing with me in my questions on context. I am now going to give you the floor.

KILNER: No problem. First, why don't I run through a few of the main issues that occupied the Economic Section. I've already mentioned Iraq reconstruction. It may not sound very sexy, but protection of intellectual property rights (IPR) was another very important issue. There were lots of concerns about Italian enforcement of IPR. Many American companies with large investments in Italy complained about piracy and infringement of patents, trademarks and copyright. Every year the Economic Section organized a major IPR conference bringing together Italian and American experts on IPR enforcement. It was a serious forum for discussion and an effort to move these issues in the right direction.

Another issue for us was Iran sanctions, as Italy had one of the softer European governments vis-a-vis Iran. For example, Italian companies happily sold state-of-the-art speedboats to the Iranian navy, which in turn used these "fast boats" to harass tanker traffic in the Persian Gulf. Those boats came up again and again.

Biotechnology, especially in the agriculture sector, was a big issue as we tried to get fair and objective Italian treatment of genetically modified plants and products. The Italian "Slow Food" movement was very much opposed to GMOs and that opposition resonated deeply with Italian culture.

And always lurking in the background was the issue of Italian economic reform. Italy still had a big, inefficient state sector and many, many inefficiencies embedded in how the economy was organized and functioned. After the boom years of the 1950s and 1960s, Italian economic growth had generally been quite anemic compared to Germany, France and the U.K., as well as many smaller European economies. Our core concern was that Italy was only going to be as strong a NATO ally as its economy would allow. Even though Italy had the fourth biggest European economy after Germany, France and the UK, it had consistently lower growth rates compared to those others. So we did what we could to encourage a bolder approach to economic reform in Italy.

To shift to another subject, I can't resist saying a little bit about the Embassy Rome Chancery and the Ambassador's Residence, which are among the most impressive U.S. diplomatic properties in the world. The main Embassy building is known as the Palazzo Margherita, located on the prestigious Via Veneto. It was a 19th century palazzo in the grand Italian style with high, ornate ceilings. The grounds on which the palazzo was built were in classical times an imperial garden owned by Julius Caesar and his successors. So there is a lot of archeological treasure still in the ground. So much, in fact, that whenever the Embassy had to do any kind of underground work, like repairing or upgrading

communication cables, it had to call in a professional archaeologist to monitor the digging. I recall that on one such occasion, Embassy workmen had to dig a 15-20 foot trench through the parking lot to get at some underground cables. In the process they unearthed half a dozen ancient Roman tombstones. There was also an ancient, frescoed, subterranean passageway, known as a "*crypto portico,*" that literally connected with the machine shop of the motor pool. This classical Roman tunnel lay right beneath the Fords and Cadillacs that were in the garage undergoing maintenance. For some reason I always found that funny.

The Ambassador's Residence, known as the Villa Taverna, was located about a ten-minute drive from the Embassy, or one could walk there in about 40 minutes. It was a very nice house with a truly spectacular garden, replete with sculptures and fountains. The garden could accommodate about 2000 people on the Fourth of July.

By the way, I'm sure you are aware that in addition to the bilateral Embassy, where I worked, the U.S. has two other diplomatic missions in Rome: one to the U.N. agencies in Rome and the other to the Vatican. The former occupied a small building about a ten-minute walk from the bilateral Embassy. Embassy Vatican was farther away, near Palatine Hill.

Q: Who was the Ambassador of our mission to the U.N. Agencies at that time?

KILNER: It was Tony Hall, a former congressman from Ohio, who had followed George McGovern by the way.

Q: George McGovern, that is interesting.

KILNER: McGovern had left shortly before I arrived. In Congress Tony Hall had been very active in international food issues. The most important of the U.N agencies in Rome is the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and Hall was very engaged with it throughout his tenure. My Economic Section didn't have a lot to do with that work, but I had the impression that Hall did quite a good job.

As for the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See, i.e. to the Vatican, it was a tiny little embassy in a beautiful location. The Ambassador at that time was Jim Nicholson, who had previously been the Chairman of the Republican National Committee. Mel Sembler, the bilateral ambassador, had been the Finance Committee Chairman of the Republican National Committee. So both of them were big players in the Republican party. Not surprisingly, the political appointee Ambassador to the Holy See is always a Catholic. My impression was that, just because of the "aura" surrounding the Papacy, political appointees who go there often believe they are getting something very grand and special. In some ways they are, because the Papacy is a unique, global institution with lots of pomp and ceremony. But organizationally, our Ambassador to the Vatican has a tiny "empire" compared to that of the bilateral Ambassador. Nicholson, for example, had been above Sembler in the Republican Party hierarchy, but in Rome Sembler supervised several hundred employees, whereas Nicholson had perhaps five Americans and a dozen local Italians under him. And Nicholson was not supposed to get involved with Italian

politicians and businessmen; that was Sembler's responsibility. This occasionally led to some interesting dynamics, but nothing that caused any serious problems, as far as I could see.

There is one other aspect of the USG's physical footprint in Rome that I'd like to mention. It had long recognized that it was rather inefficient to have three separate properties for these three distinct parts of the U.S. diplomatic presence in Rome. However, the two smaller missions wanted to maintain their independence — physically as well as organizationally. Well, midway through my assignment a huge 19th century building, which for years had housed the Italian national insurance agency (INA), came on the market. It was located right behind the Palazzo Margherita. Ambassador Sembler had been a major real estate developer, so he quickly saw the opportunity to consolidate the U.S. presence in Rome by purchasing the INA building. The price tag, as I recall, was about $80 million, but Sembler argued that in the long run it would save the USG money. However, when he went to the State Department with his proposal, the Office of Building Operations would have none of it. It was just too expensive, they said. Sembler took the matter as high as he could in the Department, but the answer continued to be no, no, no!

Well, all of us career bureaucrats in the Embassy thought that this idea was dead; there was no way it was going to happen. But in his good-natured way, Sembler told us he was not giving up. "Don't bet against me," he would say with a wink. Then Sembler turned to his Congressional representative, who was Bill Young, the long-time Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee from Sembler's district in Florida. Young was quite a character, but he and Sembler were thick as thieves. And he got an earmarked appropriation for the INA building Sembler wanted — completely rolling the entire State Department bureaucracy in the process. So we bought the building. All of this happened midway through my tour in Rome. By the time I left we had refurbished the enormous structure and were starting to occupy it — primarily for unclassified work. The consolidation of the U.S. physical footprint in Rome was well underway. Anyway, I thought the episode was a pretty impressive display of political influence and power in action.

Let me conclude this discussion of our four years in Italy with a few interesting anecdotes. The first pertains to the death of Pope John Paul II, who had been Pope for many years and was a unique world figure. When he died, for three days there were enormous queues of people standing in line around the clock to see his coffin in St. Peter's. A few minutes ago I mentioned the IPR conferences that our Economic Section organized annually. Well, it so happened that one of them took place in Perugia the very same week as John Paul's funeral. So while all of Italy and the entire Catholic world was focused on the Vatican, several of us from the Embassy were in Perugia talking about intellectual property rights and just watching the papal drama on television. However, several weeks later, after the College of Cardinals selected Cardinal Ratzinger as the new Pope, an enormous, extravagant inaugural mass was held in St. Peter's Square for the installation of Pope Benedict XVI. My wife and I had a good relationship with our DCM at the Vatican and his wife (Brent and Sasha Hardt). And Brent was able to get tickets for us to the Inaugural Mass. It lasted something like three hours and was an incredible

spectacle. Say what you will about the Catholic Church, but they know how to put on a good show! It was a real treat to be able to attend.

Q: John Paul II had been Pope for a long time. He was Polish and really important in directing global attention to alleviating poverty, as I recall.

KILNER: He was very, very active and travelled widely. As Cardinal Wojtyla, he had been instrumental in accelerating the demise of Soviet control over Eastern Europe, and ultimately the breakup of the Soviet Union. So, it was a world event when he passed away. Something like a million people came to Rome for his funeral. People camping out in parks because the hotels were overwhelmed. It totally dominated the city for about a week. But we were up in Perugia, so I didn't see any of that in person.

Q: Was there anything noteworthy about the selection of Pope Benedict?

KILNER: I think there were two things. First, he was the first German Pope in a very long time — a few hundreds of years if I'm not mistaken. John Paul II had been the first non-Italian in quite a while. I am not an expert on the organizational structure of the the Vatican, but as I understand it, Ratzinger (i.e. Benedict) had basically been the senior guardian of Church ideology and doctrine. A lot of the Church's very conservative doctrinal positions came out of Ratzinger's office, and he carried that approach with him as Pope. You know, he didn't remain pope for very long. Just a few years and then he resigned, becoming "Pope-Emeritus." He just ran out of gas, it seems. Now we have Pope Francis from Argentina, who is bringing a very different approach to the Vatican.

Here is another vignette: I mentioned before that I was essentially the number four in the Embassy hierarchy. But it so happened that at the end of my third year, in the summer of 2005, Ambassador Sembler, DCM Emil Skoden, and Political Counselor Tom Countryman all departed the Embassy at the same time. This meant that Scott would be Chargé d'Affaires for about three weeks. At that point, I had never been in charge of a large diplomatic post. It was not a long period, but I thought it was pretty neat.

But I mention this mainly because my brief tenure as Chargé happened to coincide with the single most infamous incident during my assignment. I am sure you remember, Robin, how after September 11 the Bush Administration's so-called "war on terror" gathered momentum. We began to track down people who were specifically linked to Al Qaeda, and the issue of how we were tracking them down and what we were doing with them gradually became known and was highly controversial. In what came to be termed "illegal renditions," we were snatching such people when and where we could, and then bringing many of them to Guantanamo Base in Cuba. And one of the most notorious of those illegal renditions had taken place on the streets of Milan without Italian permission. It was a burning issue at the time I took over the Embassy. I won't go into much more detail but if you just Google "Abu Omar Milan," you can read about it. This all became public, the Italians were very upset about a violation of their sovereignty, and it was a huge issue for Washington. For the weeks I was in charge I spent a lot of time with the Chief of Station. I will just leave it at that.

Q: Did you have to address crowds or deal with the Italian government?

KILNER: I recall conversations on the secure line with EUR Assistant Secretary Dan Fried regarding what our talking points should be with the Italian government. This controversy very quickly landed in the Italian courts, so there were pointed discussions as to what we could or should ask the Italian government to do vis-a-vis their judicial system. But most of the communications were going through intelligence channels. I was kept informed and made sure I knew the general state of play. But the details were handled in intel channels.

Q: You yourself would be leaving post shortly thereafter?

KILNER: No, I stayed around until the late fall. But let me offer one more little vignette. Then I promise to stop. This is one of my personal favorites. It may sound odd, but even though I don't have much hair on my head, I've always found it important to have the right barber during overseas assignment. A barber shop offers a unique environment, different from the rest of diplomatic life. I always wanted a barber who did not speak English so I could chat with him in the local language and observe ordinary locals coming in and out of the barber shop. I've always found it an interesting and amusing environment. So, after one false start in Rome with a guy I did not like, I stumbled across a little barber shop on a side street, which I would pass walking to or from work. So I started going there regularly and liked it very much.

The barber was this little guy named Pino. He and his wife lived a floor above the shop. After quite a few visits, one day I happened to go in there on a Saturday afternoon. Nobody else was there, so I had the shop all to myself. Pino was not in any hurry, so we had time to chat about this and that. I had noticed some cartoon drawings on the wall, so I asked Pino about them. He replied that they had been drawn by the famous Italian film director Federico Fellini. He went on to explain that Fellini had been a regular customer for something like 35 years. Then Pino began to regale me with stories about the Great Man. In addition to being a movie director, Fellini was also an excellent caricaturist. The drawings on the wall were examples of his work. My favorite one showed Pino cutting Fellini's hair while on a step-ladder. The joke was that Pino — who was probably little more than five feet tall — had to stand on a ladder in order to reach the top of Fellini's head! Very funny! Pino also said Fellini had given him a big part in one of his movies — a cameo appearance as a barber!

But weirdest of all, Pino took me to the back of the shop, where he opened a small glass cabinet, which I had not noticed before. Inside the cabinet were all sorts of barber-related implements connected to Fellini — the razor Pino had used to shave Fellini, for example, and the scissors he used to cut his hair. There was even some of Fellini's actual hair preserved in a little dish! It was a little creepy — rather like a Catholic shrine devoted to Saint Federico!

At one point in the latter part of my Rome assignment, we took a trip to Paris to visit our son, Derek, who was studying at a Stanford program there. While in Paris, I found a very

attractive little porcelain jar, stylishly French. I bought it and brought it back for Pino and his wife. Somehow I knew that they would soon celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary, so I gave them this little French porcelain as a gift. Pino teared up a little when I presented it to them and said he was very touched. It was nice to have that kind of relationship with my barber.

OK, I had better not bore you with any more war stories except as a segue to my next assignment. In sum, in many ways I thought Rome was a perfect assignment for our family and for me. I had extended for a fourth year and thought I would never leave a day earlier than I had to. But in fact, I ended up leaving about seven months early for reasons I'll explain.

Q: Before we move on to the next adventure, were there any successes on the economic front that you would want to discuss? Did you have to slug it out on Boeing airplane sales or things like that?

KILNER: In all honesty, our work consisted primarily of keeping the wheels turning, especially in the area of biotechnology. Washington thought we had gotten certain promises from Berlusconi during a meeting with President Bush, but the Italian bureaucracy never moved an inch. I'd say we never had any big disasters, but neither did we have any breakthroughs on the IPR front. Likewise on economic reform, there was neither backsliding nor great forward movement.

In my opinion a lot of the most important work in countries with which we have mature, deep, long-standing ties — like Italy — takes place in a dense web of working-level cooperation among experts from both countries. With Italy, a lot of this goes on in the scientific arena, which I now realize I have neglected to mention. The Economic Section included the science and technology portfolio, and we were quite active in facilitating contacts between experts on both sides. Experts came to Italy regularly from the U.S. to meet with people they had known for decades. Italy, for example, has real expertise in space and aeronautical issues. Energy is another area — think of Italian nuclear research dating back to Enrico Fermi. Marine biology is another area. I recall very interesting projects that experts from the Monterey Bay Aquarium worked on with Italy. There is a lot of excellent, productive work done in such fields, but most of it is largely invisible to people not directly involved.

Q: I think that is a really good point. U.S. Embassies often serve as a platform to allow real experts on both sides to continue their good work. That is really an important point you are making.

KILNER: I think it is too often under-recognized and under-appreciated, even within the Foreign Service. Such collaboration is real, it is concrete, and I think it is valuable. Even though we weren't able to move the Italians on GMOs or on agricultural biotech policy writ large, we had for example wine industry experts on both sides trying to solve common challenges. These visiting experts were always happy to come in and talk to us

about what they were doing. They didn't insist, but I liked to meet with them whenever I could, as their projects were almost always important and interesting to hear about.

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2005-2009: VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Q: Good afternoon, it is July 11, 2023. I am Robin Matthewman and am continuing the oral history conversations with Scott Kilner. We are in the year 2005 and you have left Italy. Why don't you tell us what you did next?

KILNER: Hi, Robin. Well after a very nice assignment in Rome, I assumed that my next assignment would be to a country where desert sand or something similar featured prominently. But it turned out this was not to be. What did happen is a good example of how serendipity and chance play such a big role in one's Foreign Service career. So by this time I had twice been head of the economic section at two large embassies — in Ankara and in Rome. After Italy, Jan and I both wanted to stay overseas, because I knew I did not have too many years left in the Foreign Service. Therefore the obvious next step seemed to be a Deputy Chief of Mission assignment somewhere. I decided to cast my net as widely as possible, and bid on DCM jobs in several different bureaus — anyplace where I thought I could make a credible case for my candidacy. I remember I bid on New Delhi and a few Embassies in East Asia. I also threw in a bid on Embassy Vienna just because I had spent so much of my career on European issues and was well-known in the European Bureau. But I thought Vienna was highly unlikely for anyone coming out of Rome. In addition, for the first time in my career I decided to go back to Washington to "lobby" in person for the job.

Then, just as I was getting ready for that trip back to Washington to walk the corridors, I received a phone call from the Director from the Office of Central European Affairs — Dan Weygandt, whom I had known for many years. Dan was a thoroughgoing German hand. On the phone, he explained to me that the current DCM at the Bilateral Embassy in Vienna was being pulled out early for an assignment as Ambassador to Iceland. At the same time a new political appointee ambassador, with no previous diplomatic experience, would be arriving in December of 2005 — just a few weeks before Austria would assume the Presidency of the European Union on January 1, 2006. So the State Department was desperately looking for a DCM who knew the terrain well and could truly hit the ground running. Dan knew that my qualifications covered the bases: I had spent years working on EU issues; I had solid German; I had reasonable management experience. So I was very much a round peg for a round hole. Dan asked me if I would interview with the ambassador-designate, and of course I said yes right away. Her name was Susan McCaw. Dan also asked me if I could get released from Embassy Rome early, in order to get to Vienna by December. I said I would try my best.

So, with that background I flew to Washington. I did visit other offices in the State Department to discuss my other bids, and I also set up about a one-hour phone interview

with Susan McCaw, who was in California. That phone conversation went well, but Susan said that because her selection of a DCM was such an important decision she said she would like to meet me in person. She offered to fly me out to the San Francisco Bay Area to meet her near Stanford University, where she would be for meetings as a member of the university's Board of Trustees. At this point I don't believe she knew that my father was living three miles away from Stanford and that our son was an undergraduate there. So her offer was fortuitous in multiple ways. Anyway, I flew out to the Bay Area for brunch with Susan in Palo Alto. I recall that our conversation lasted about three hours and seemed to go very well. By the end, I was pretty sure I was going to get the job. A few days later, Susan told the State Department she would like me to be her DCM.

I then returned to Rome and explained to my boss, DCM Anna Borg, what had happened. Anna was very supportive and almost immediately said she would find a way to release me early from the embassy. This required some explaining to Embassy Rome's recently arrived political appointee Ambassador, but she managed to convince him not to object to my early departure. So the pieces of my transfer to Vienna fairly quickly fell into place. The main wrinkle, personally, was that we wanted our daughter, Melinda, to be able to finish her senior year at the high school she had been attending for 3 1/2 years. There was no way we were going to pull her out at that point. Here I must say that Embassy Rome was incredibly supportive. Most importantly, they let Jan and Melinda remain in our very nice apartment until the end of the school year, even after I had left, because my successor in Rome would not be arriving until the summer time. Our request that they be allowed to stay was not unreasonable, but Embassy management certainly did not have to agree to it. Anyway, this reassignment process worked out incredibly well — far better than what I would have ever expected.

So shortly before Thanksgiving I departed Rome, a city I never thought I would voluntarily leave a day earlier than I had to. But trading six months in Rome for three and a half years in Vienna was a deal I was willing to make. I then had a week or ten days in Washington for consultations, making the rather head-spinning transition from Italian to Austrian affairs. Then I flew to Vienna. I arrived in early December of 2005, literally three or four days before the arrival of Ambassador McCaw.

Before kind of getting into the details of the assignment, let me try to explain why Vienna occupied a very special place in my Foreign Service career. Of course Vienna is a lovely city. It routinely ranks among the most livable in the world — frequently Number One in the rankings of *The Economist* magazine. Beyond that, however, I had made a real investment in Austrian affairs over the years. I had studied in Vienna while an undergraduate at Stanford. I had worked for two years as the Austria Desk Officer in Washington at an historic moment in European history, and had gotten to know quite a number of successful Austrian diplomats.

So, with all due modesty, I felt I was really very well qualified for this job — perhaps more qualified than anyone else in the Foreign Service. My assignment to DCM Vienna was a stroke of very good luck in terms of timing and the needs of the Foreign Service. That was essentially my mindset going into that job. I knew that Austria was far from the

center of U.S. foreign policy. I had no illusions about that. But the country has a very particular, very interesting history and position in Europe, which I found engaging, both professionally and personally.

So, even though Vienna was not the most fast-paced American Embassy on the globe, it was on the cusp of an unusually active period when I arrived in December 2005. Austria would assume the six-month rotating Presidency of the European Union on January 1, 2006. And I had a brand-new political appointee ambassador to get oriented. And in fact, the first six months of my assignment turned out to be highly active and very interesting. The impact of Austria's EU Presidency became apparent to me almost immediately when, on the first weekend in January, I got a call from EUR Assistant Secretary Dan Fried. He explained that the Russians appeared to have shut off a natural gas pipeline that flowed through Ukraine into Europe, passing through Austria. Washington did not have much clarity on what was happening and wanted to engage the Austrians on the matter in their EU Presidency capacity. So we did. Right out of the gate, that gave me a taste of what was to come.

For the next six months our embassy was involved in all the duties of any U.S. Embassy in an EU Presidency country. We had demarches to deliver, meetings to organize, high level visits by U.S. cabinet officials coming to meet with their European counterparts. Then to cap it off there was a U.S.-EU Summit meeting in Vienna near the end of the Austrian EU Presidency. As you know, the U.S.-E.U. Summit was/is an annual event, with the venue alternating between Washington and the EU Presidency capital. In 2006 it was the E.U.'s turn, so the meeting would be held in Vienna in early June. In the meantime I was working with Ambassador McCaw to help her settle into her new role. As part of that I accompanied her on all her introductory calls, including her presentation of credentials to Austrian president Heinz Fischer. The Austrians are world champions at protocol and rolling out the red carpet, so I had to rent a white tie and tails for the credentialing ceremony, which was great fun. Ambassador McCaw also had meetings with almost every Austrian minister, so accompanying her to all of those was quite interesting and an excellent way for me to get on top of all our bilateral issues at the beginning of my assignment.

Q: Scott if you don't mind, the tux and white tie and tails and all has piqued my interest. Could you describe the credential ceremony as it applies to Vienna?

KILNER: It takes place in the Hofburg Palace, a sprawling complex originally built for the Habsburg emperors, but where the Austrian President now has his office. There was a modest outdoor ceremony before proceeding inside the palace for the presentation.

Q: Did she drive up or was there a horse and carriage.

KILNER: We drove to the complex in her car, but then walked the last stretch on foot, escorted by Austrian protocol. Personally, I was glad there was no horse-and-carriage involved, because I'm very allergic to horses! Inside the Hofburg, we proceeded down a very long, gilded hall with red carpets, paintings of Empress Maria Theresa, numerous chandeliers, and ornate furniture.

Q: Was it just her or was there a series of ambassadors presenting their credentials?

KILNER: It was a one-on-one ceremony. There were probably other recently-arrived ambassadors "processed" that day, but it was not a group event. I suspect that they reserved perhaps half a day on the President's calendar to receive a series of ambassadors.

Now turning back to the U.S.-E.U. Summit, George W. Bush was President at this time, so he came to Vienna for the event. It was the first visit of a sitting U.S president to Vienna since Jimmy Carter — in other words, a rather rare occurrence. As we all know, presidential visits are a logistical juggernaut. That certainly was the case for this Summit. The White House advance team started to arrive in Vienna about three weeks before game day. As we got closer to the event the numbers increased — to the point where there were close to a thousand people for the event itself. The great majority was for the security, communications, and administrative underbelly of the operation. The policy officials were far fewer in number.

I was the senior embassy control officer for the Summit. The Embassy's role was essentially to serve as an interface between the White House advance and the Austrian bureaucracy. As we knew both sides, we could help work through the myriad planning details with a minimum of friction. We have all heard legendary stories about difficult advance teams that run amok and cause all sorts of problems with the host country, but fortunately we did not get one of those teams. In fact, we had a very good Lead Advance person, an agreeable woman with a lot of experience. She was quite good to work with. The planning work for the Summit was long and complicated, but worked out well.

On a personal side note, the Summit happened to be scheduled for just a few days after the graduation of both our son from Stanford and our daughter from high school in Rome. Both of those graduation ceremonies were literally to be held the week before the Summit, for which I was the lead control officer. In the end, I was able to fly to Rome for our daughter's high school graduation. I literally flew down in the morning, in time to attend the ceremony and one reception, and then back to Vienna in the late afternoon. But it was simply impossible to get out to California for Derek's graduation, so I missed that. Fortunately, Derek and the rest of the family were understanding and pretty much gave me a pass.

As for the Summit itself, it unfolded smoothly. I had an opportunity to meet George W. Bush briefly. He was taller than I had expected, and quite friendly in our five-minute chat. The leadership of the European Bureau in the State Department had been a little worried that the Austrians — who were quite critical of our intervention in Iraq — might cause mischief. But in fact they played their role perfectly and without any gamesmanship. Even Assistant Secretary Dan Fried — who was no Austrophile — grudgingly admitted that Austria played it straight and did a good job. At the conclusion of the Summit, after Air Force One had wheels up, Ambassador McCaw, her husband Craig, and I went out for pizza at an open-air Italian restaurant in the city center. It was a

lovely, warm evening, and we all ordered some good Austrian beer to toast our success. We all felt pretty good about it.

So enough for the E.U. Presidency. Let me now talk about my Front Office responsibilities during this assignment. The big picture is that during my 3 1/2 years in Vienna I worked for two political appointee ambassadors, with a couple of long stints as Chargé d'Affaires in between. Vienna, as you probably know, is the quintessential political-appointee ambassadorial posting. Austria is a wealthy, highly livable country of minor importance to the United States. So no ambassador is going to provoke a crisis in U.S. foreign policy. Washington can pretty much send anybody there, and in the past we have had some strong ones and some problematic ones. Susan McCaw was a good choice for ambassador. She was a graduate of Stanford and of the Harvard Business School. She had had a successful career in finance and been active in Republican Party fundraising. The big money in the family, however, was from her husband, Craig McCaw, who had put together the first nationwide cellular telephone network, McCaw Cellular, which he later sold for a bundle.

Susan was smart and she was serious about her job. We worked well together. Robin, you'll recall that in an earlier conversation I offered my views on how and why political appointee ambassadors may succeed or fail. Fortunately, Susan had confidence in the Embassy staff — and not only the career FSOs. She really liked the professional Austrian staff, and she reached out to them continuously. Morale was good in the Embassy, and I tried to encourage Susan's instinct for inclusive management. So, I enjoyed working for her.

On the personal side, Susan McCaw had three young kids under the age of 10, as well as a rather demanding husband who was sometimes there but often not. When Craig did come to Vienna, it was in one of his two or three private airplanes. The McCaws also had a yacht, the *White Cloud,* based in Monaco. So when the weather was good they frequently flew to Monaco to take their yacht out for a long weekend. She often had a four-day work week at the Embassy. Given this pattern, I soon realized that I was going to be spending a lot of time in Vienna, because the European Bureau had a strict rule forbidding the Ambassador and the DCM from being out of the country at the same time. But there were worse places to be "marooned" than Vienna. Perhaps I should not exaggerate this, as Jan and I were able to get away on vacation, but we had to plan far in advance to coordinate our absences with Amb. McCaw's schedule. This rule requiring me to be in the country whenever Susan was away played out in some curious ways. Vienna, as you know, is at the eastern edge of Austria. So I could go to Innsbruck — seven or eight hours away by train — but I could not hop over the border to Budapest or Bratislava, both only an hour or so from Vienna. But that's the way it was.

Scott and Jan at the 2007 International Luge Championship outside Innsbrück

Q: Was the staff pretty small?

KILNER: The American staff at Embassy Vienna was surprisingly large, but mostly because of the number and size of USG agencies other than the Department of State. There weren't as many U.S. agencies as in Paris or London, but there were still quite a few. Even though Austria is nominally a "neutral" country, we had a military attaché. We had a Drug Enforcement Agency presence. But the big numbers were in one particular agency on the top three floors of the chancery building. There is a long history behind this, related to Austria's position as the "third UN city" after New York and Geneva. The international organizations in Vienna bring a large and diverse assortment of diplomats to the city. And Austria, because of its "neutrality," was very tolerant regarding who could be accredited and what they could do. So among all the foreigners everybody was watching everybody else, and the United States has for years had a lot of people watching other "diplomats" accredited either to Austria or to the international organizations there.

A moment ago I mentioned the considerable family demands on Ambassador McCaw. I think largely because of those demands, she decided to resign her position just shy of the two-year mark. This move did catch me a bit by surprise. In any case, she left Embassy Vienna in November of 2007, and I became Charge d'Affaires for what turned out to be the next eight months. During my first week or two in my new role, I kept thinking of the movie "Home Alone," but it did not take long to find my footing and comfortably establish a new rhythm. In fact, I thoroughly enjoyed being Chargé. I was frequently asked if it wasn't very difficult to hold down "two jobs at once" - i.e. DCM and Acting Ambassador. Truth be told, however, I found it easier than being a regular DCM because I didn't have to constantly think about keeping the boss happy while running the internal Embassy operations. I had more independence, as well as a very good staff, so it was actually quite rewarding and fun.

Q: Did you also assign an Acting DCM?

KILNER: No. Embassy Vienna was not that complex, so I never felt that I needed one.

In addition to internal Embassy operations, as Chargé I had more outside representational work to do. That also turned out to be rewarding and enjoyable. The Austrians really know how to make foreign diplomats feel very welcome. It's one of the country's real strengths. Of course in protocol terms I was not an accredited ambassador, but Austrian officials knew I was the senior representative of the world's most important country. So I was treated very well and could see almost anyone in the government I needed to. And of course I received all sorts in invitations to events of all kinds. The weeks went by, spring rolled around, and then summer was just around the corner. Gradually it dawned on me that I might be serving as Chargé d'Affaires for an unusually long period of time: There would be a U.S. presidential election in November of that year (2008), so it seemed almost too late for the outgoing Bush Administration to send out another ambassador. And after the November election a new set of political appointee ambassadors would have to be nominated and confirmed regardless of who won; Austria would certainly not be at the head of the confirmation queue. For these reasons I had almost convinced myself that I would remain Chargé for two years or so. But that did not happen.

In mid-June of 2008, the Bush Administration managed to push a small group of ambassadorial nominees — four or five, I think — through the Senate confirmation process. And one of them was for Austria. It happened incredibly quickly. The names were announced and hearings were held within a week or two. The nominee for Austria was David Girard-diCarlo. He was a Philadelphia lawyer, basically corporate law but with a lot of work in Washington. David had been deeply involved in Republican Party politics, both as a fundraiser and as a political operative. He and his wife arrived in Vienna on July 3, 2008.

This meant that the Embassy's very large Independence Day reception at the Ambassador's Residence, with more than 1000 attendees, that was David's coming out party, so to speak. At first I was mildly disappointed that my vision of a very long "Chargédom" had evaporated, but I got over that pretty quickly. Mostly because David Girard-diCarlo turned out to be an excellent boss and great fun to work with. In fact, I

don't think I've ever enjoyed working for anyone more. David was an excellent manager. He had superb people skills and a wonderful sense of humor. He was also very sensitive to my situation — that is, having led the Embassy for several months but then having to step back when he arrived. So he gave me a lot of running room, and the transition worked better than I ever would have predicted. David was not a glory hog in any way, but rather was perfectly happy to share credit with everyone. In addition, as the U.S. presidential election approached it was fascinating to hear him talk about behind-the-scenes machinations in the Republican Party. He was on the phone to his contacts back in the U.S. all the time and would share some of his inside scoop with me. It was really very interesting.

There is one particular incident that stands out in my mind. In Vienna, as in many embassies around the world, there is an expansive front office suite. The Ambassador's office is on one side and the DCM's on the other side; between them is a large reception area with two office managers. David and I constantly walked back and forth between our respective offices when we had something to talk about. So, one afternoon I was catching up on some paperwork in my office, and he came storming in shouting profanities. I could not imagine what had happened. I'll omit the profanities, but he was beside himself after having just learned that John McCain had selected Sarah Palin as his running mate. "We've just lost the election!!" he shouted. Well, I don't know if that was the decisive factor, but the selection of Palin obviously didn't help McCain. Anyway, Barack Obama won the election of November 2008, of course. Even though David was on the other side politically, he took this outcome with very good grace, recognizing the historic significance of the election. He also knew he had immediately become a lame duck, and he had no intention of trying to stretch out his tenure any longer than necessary. I recall that he and Connie ended up leaving sometime in December, even before inauguration day. He had been there only about six months, but it was quite an interesting and entertaining six months.

So before long I found myself wearing the Chargé d'Affaires hat once again. I will confess that it did not feel the same as the first time. Oddly, it was almost a bit anticlimactic — like "here we go again." In hindsight, I suspect that my different frame of mind had a lot to do with the emergence of my assignment to Afghanistan — which will be the next chapter. So there you have the trajectory of my 3 1/2 years in Vienna — with two political appointee ambassadors and two long stints as Chargé.

Q: What were some of the most important issues you worked over the course of this assignment?

KILNER: To describe my responsibilities, it would help to first explain the structure of the U.S. diplomatic presence in Vienna. Like Paris, Brussels and Rome, Vienna is one of those cities in which the U.S. has multiple diplomatic missions. There are three in Vienna. One is the Bilateral Embassy where I worked. Another is the U. S. Mission to the OSCE (USOSCE), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. And then third is the U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Vienna. In other words, three diplomatic missions, with three ambassadors and three DCMs.

Broadly speaking I would say that the U.S. Mission to International Organizations (UNVIE) is the most important for Washington, mainly because its work focuses on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is headquartered in Vienna. In recent years, all the controversies surrounding Iran's nuclear program have centered on the IAEA. Our Mission to the OSCE also received considerable attention during the latter years of the Cold War, before the breakup of the Soviet Union. Today I would say that it is less important.

Candidly, in terms of U.S. foreign policy, the least important of the three missions is the Bilateral Embassy, except perhaps when Austria holds the EU Presidency. Nevertheless, the Bilateral Embassy is far and away the largest in terms of staffing. This may sound surprising, but there are two reasons. One is the "other agency presence" I noted before. The second reason is that the Bilateral Embassy provides all the administrative support for all three U.S. Missions. If I'm not mistaken, our diplomatic presence in Brussels operates the same way. That structure had a big impact on my work as the Bilateral Embassy DCM. First and foremost, it meant that my job had a very large management component. As the Embassy's "Chief Operating Officer" I had to ensure not only that my own Embassy functioned well, but that the other two U.S. Missions were being treated fairly and that their requirements were being met by the Management Section that reported to me. In this context, I tried very hard to maintain a close relationship with my two fellow DCMs. Fortunately, both of them were collegial and highly competent, so our relationships were quite good almost all of the time.

Happily, I also soon discovered that Embassy Vienna had an extremely good staff of local Austrian employees. In fact, I would say Vienna had the best local staff, overall, of any Embassy in which I worked — and in embassies like Paris and Rome, we had many outstanding local employees as well. On the American side, the Foreign Service staff was also quite strong. Even though an assignment to Vienna is rarely seen as a "career enhancing opportunity," it is such a desirable place to live and work that many excellent FSOs are interested in serving there. So at least while I was in Vienna, we had little trouble recruiting very good FSOs for our jobs. Putting these elements together, I used to joke that I was perfectly suited to running Embassy Vienna, because it was such a well-oiled machine with all the resources and staff it needed. All I had to do was keep problems from arising. And with all due modesty, I was pretty good at keeping staff happy, tamping down internal conflicts, and basically keeping the diplomatic wheels turning.

The only real downside to all these management responsibilities was the very large number of employee evaluations (EERs) I had to write. I always took writing evaluations seriously because, as DCM, it was the one concrete way I could reward people. If someone had worked hard for me and performed well all year, the best way I could pay them back was to write a careful, persuasive EER. By my calculation I wrote more than 100 of these reports over my 3 1/2 years in Vienna. It cost me many weekends each spring, but that was a small price to pay for such a wonderful assignment.

Now moving to substantive policy issues, there are a few worth highlighting. One was long-running U.S. concern over one particular Austrian bank's connections with the Ukrainian gas sector. Remember this was during a period when Ukraine's government still had close ties to Russia, and there were always allegations of corruption and shady deals swirling about. In a somewhat related vein, Austrian financial institutions' role in international money laundering was a perpetual concern to Washington, as was Austria's adherence to Iran sanctions. Austrian officials would frequently raise with us the government's constraints and obligations as a "neutral" country; we often saw this as camouflage for other motives. Another issue was the fate of war-on-terror detainees at Guantanamo base in Cuba.

While not a high policy issue, I should also note the importance of Vienna as a "U.N. city" and a global center of international conferences — conferences which often brought significant participation by American officials and important private citizens. For example, during my tenure in Vienna we helped Austria commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Marshall Plan. Austria had been a major recipient of Marshall Plan assistance. We also marked the 50th anniversary of the Fulbright Exchange Program, in which Austria had long been very active. There was a Women's Empowerment Conference that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice personally attended. And Austria has long been a favorite summer watering hole for U.S. Supreme Court Justices. Several of them — including Justices Ginsburg, Roberts and several others — frequently came for summer symposia and conferences in picturesque Alpine settings. One such annual conference took place in Alpbach, Tyrol, every summer — a kind of Davos-wannabe confab, very Arcadian. Anyway, whenever Supreme Court Justices came to Austria, the Embassy obviously had to pay attention and look after them.

Q: Switching gears, I just watched the movie Woman in Gold *again, about the restitution of a famous painting by Gustav Klimt to its rightful owner. As you know, the painting had been stolen from its Jewish owners by the Nazis. It looks like the Austrians lost the arbitration for the painting in 2004. So, was that all over by the time you got there?*

KILNER: It's interesting you mention that. I was not going to get into it because the negotiations had concluded before my Vienna assignment started. I agree that *Woman in Gold* is a very good movie, which I would recommend to anyone interested in restitution issues. My personal view is the Austrians were unbelievably pig-headed on the whole matter. They could easily have retained those Klimt paintings if they had really wanted to. Even at the end of a bitter arbitration process, the Government of Austria could have purchased them from Maria Altmann for market price. But for reasons I have never really understood, the government simply refused to do so, even though they considered those paintings part of Austria's national heritage. Austria is a wealthy county. They could have easily afforded the $100 million or whatever to keep them in the Belvedere Museum, but they refused. By the way, it just so happened that the very first weekend after I arrived in Vienna was the final showing of the Klimt paintings in the Belvedere before they would be packed up and sent to the United States. When I learned this, of course I scurried over to the museum to see them, one last time, where they had been exhibited for many years. I had seen them before, and this weekend it was very crowded. But it was a poignant way to spend my first weekend in Vienna.

Q: Are there other work issues you would like to discuss, in the area of Embassy management or otherwise?

KILNER: We had a couple of important real estate issues that I became involved in, related to an Embassy Annex building and questions of physical security. I also spent a good deal of time on the status of the American International School in Vienna. Such matters may not be "high foreign policy," but they are very important for the Embassy community, and they were very different from all my previous Foreign Service work. I actually found them quite interesting in their own way, and I learned a lot.

Q: In my own DCM work, I always found board memberships and the oversight of the American schools to be very complicated.

KILNER: It is not easy, for sure. My wife, Jan, served on the International School board in Vienna for a couple of years, and she has some stories to tell! It can often feel like thankless work, but it is important.

Q: But I found that doing what you can for the community in things like schools and housing can very much affect morale.

KILNER: I agree with you completely.

So, before I offer a few closing vignettes, I would like to circle back to what I said earlier about why Vienna was a very special assignment for me. Beyond the high quality of life in Austria and the professional opportunities I had as Chargé d'Affaires, my previous encounters with Austria strongly colored my feelings about this particular assignment. I had the sense of "closing the circle" in a couple of very satisfying ways.

First, you will recall that I had served as the Austria Desk Officer in Washington from 1989-91. In that capacity, I came to know several Austrian diplomats in Washington quite well, and a few of them had since moved up to very senior positions in the Austrian Foreign Ministry. One was Ferdinand Trauttmansdorff. He had been the Austrian Embassy's Press Officer during the Waldheim era, and I dealt with him regularly. By the time I arrived in Vienna, Ferdinand had risen to become the Foreign Ministry's Legal Advisor — which in the Austrian system is one of the highest positions in the ministry. Another diplomat, named Peter Launsky, whom I had known as a mid-level political officer in Washington, had risen to become the Spokesman for the entire Foreign Ministry. Having known people like these for some 20 years was very helpful. And the Austrian Ambassador to the United States while I was on the Desk had retired from diplomatic service, but was now a senior official with Austria's most important business association. This was Friedrich Hoess, whom I would see regularly in Vienna. Sadly, Fritz died of a heart attack midway through my assignment.

Beyond this, returning to Vienna closed the circle in another, more deeply personal way; that was to return as a senior American diplomat to the city that had made a profound impact on me while a student there in 1971-72. Let me describe one way that played out.

When I was at the Stanford-in-Austria campus, I participated in a program that connected me to a quite typical Viennese family. They were a modest middle class couple, living in a small apartment with two children in the 18th District. Each week I spent one evening at their home for dinner and conversation. Occasionally we took weekend outings together to destinations outside the city. I became very close to this family we had kept in touch long distance over the years. So we did not lose contact. After I arrived in Vienna for my diplomatic assignment, I allowed myself several months to get fully settled before contacting the mother of the family. After I did, I began visiting her — now in her 80s — in the same apartment I knew so well from 35 years earlier. I saw her about once a quarter, and occasionally her daughter as well. I'd say this was an emotionally very meaningful connection for both of us. A few years after my assignment ended, she moved to a nursing home and, in fact, passed away just a few years ago at the age of 96.

Now, as I have in some of our earlier conversations, I would like to conclude this installment with a few anecdotes on different subjects, if I may.

The first few have to do with the Official Residence of the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCMR), located at Linnéplatz 4 in Vienna's 19th District. This residence has to be among the best DCMRs in the world. It is a genteel mansion built in the 1920s by a wealthy Jewish Viennese family. As I understand the history, during the German occupation the house was confiscated and used by the Nazi Gaultier responsible for the Viennese region. The owners fled to the United States. After the war, the property was restituted to the original owners, but they did not want to return to Austria. So they sold the house to the U.S. Government for a modest price. It has been the DCM's Residence ever since. The main reason that it is not the Ambassador's Residence is because it doesn't have a huge representational space sufficient to accommodate very large receptions, such as on July 4. Jan and I could host up to 100 guests or so. Anyway, it was a simply beautiful, traditional, grand Viennese home, which we truly loved.

Because Linnéplatz 4 had been the DCM Residence for many years, occasionally mail for one of my predecessors would appear in the mailbox. Usually it would be for my immediate predecessor, but one day a piece of mail arrived for Felix Bloch, who had lived in the house several years earlier. As I mentioned in one of our earlier conversations, during my first long Washington tour, Felix was arrested for having passed classified information to the Soviets while he was in Vienna. So that was a little spooky.

Sticking with the DCMR, I have two anecdotes regarding our cook, whose name was Erwin. He was a good Austrian cook and a very nice guy. Every morning, Erwin would arrive early to prepare breakfast for me. During the day he did shopping for food and supplies, and he would return to cook dinner as well. But one morning when I came down for breakfast, I found him curled up on the floor in the corner of the kitchen, obviously in much pain. I asked him anxiously what was wrong. He said he didn't know, but needed help urgently. Well, my driver, Bernhardt, had already arrived and was waiting in the car. Bernhardt was a former policeman, in his 30s and still in very good shape. I ran outside and asked him to come inside to help. He did so, and upon seeing Erwin, Bernhard just scooped him up off the ground, carried him out to the car, laid him in the back seat, and rushed off to the hospital, where Erwin was treated in the emergency room. Jan and I

have conflicting memories over whether the problem was a burst appendix or a severely ruptured hernia. But in either case, we were told afterwards that if Erwin had not received such very quick attention, it could have been fatal. The Embassy later gave Bernhardt an award for his performance. It was a morning I will not forget.

There is also a second Erwin story. When Jan and I had dinner alone, Erwin usually kept to himself in the kitchen so as not to disturb us. But one evening he did come into the dining room, clearly upset, and asked if he could talk to me. "Excuse me for interrupting, Herr Kilner," he said in German, "but can I talk to you about something that has happened to me? It has really shaken me, and I just need to tell you about it. I'm not asking you to do anything, but you need to know." Erwin then explained that he lived in an apartment complex with a large inner courtyard, as is common in Vienna. In such a layout it is often easy to look across the courtyard and observe a neighbor's activities if the blinds or curtains are not drawn. One or two evenings previously, Erwin said that he had witnessed a heated argument between a couple, during which the husband literally murdered his wife. So now Erwin was a prime witness in the case. He felt traumatized by what he had seen and needed to get that off his chest. He became very much part of the criminal investigation, and periodically gave me updates on what was happening.

Q: Well before we leave Erwin, I have to ask: did he make some wonderful Viennese pastries for dinner?

KILNER: He certainly had his specialties. I have a soft spot for German-Austrian cooking more than Jan does. Prior to Vienna, we almost never had dessert after dinner at home. But Erwin made something for us almost every night. I enjoyed them, but asked that he keep the portion size small.

Q: Sounds like quite a heavenly cook to have.

KILNER: He was a very good guy.

Q: OK, any more stories from inside the Embassy?

KILNER: Yes, let's stick with the theme of food for a moment. I'm afraid this will be another one that reflects the darker side of Viennese society and culture. So, Embassy Vienna had a small cafeteria in the basement. It was a modest operation, but good enough that most American employees ate there most of the time. It was staffed by one American and one Austrian cook. The American was married to an Austrian woman and a permanent resident. Both the Austrian cook and the American had gigantic beer-bellies. Too much sausage or whatever.

The Austrian cook, Karl, was not a particularly friendly guy, but he did his job. Tragically, one day I arrived at work to be met with the news that Karl had shot himself the night before. So we had an employee many people saw every day who had committed suicide. I presume that his personal problems went beyond complaints about cafeteria food. Of course, this news spread like wildfire in the Embassy. So, I quickly called a

Town Hall meeting to tell everyone what I knew about the situation. I explained that we needed to protect the privacy of Karl's family, but that I wanted to give Embassy employees an opportunity to share any thoughts or concerns they might have. That was another day I will long remember.

Another morning I arrived at work to learn that the Regional Security Officer had to see me immediately. He told me there had been a "terrorist attempt" against the Embassy. It was not the news I expected, but then terrorist incidents were not unknown in Vienna. There have been several over the years: shootings, assassinations, occasional explosions. Almost all have been politically motivated in some way. Even though Austria is a very secure country, things like that do happen very occasionally. When we got further details on the incident that morning, it turned out that the culprit was a young Bosnian man who had claimed to have an appointment that morning. I guess he was persuasive enough that the Embassy guards let him into the controlled access facility, in which physical security checks were conducted. The Bosnian carried a rucksack, which, when run through the metal detector, was shown to be filled with explosives and nails. Our guards immediately detained him and called in the Austrian police. It became pretty clear this guy was rather mentally deranged. Still, it was a real event.

For my last anecdote, I'd like to return to the U.S.-EU Summit of 2006, which I discussed at some length earlier. Because President Bush was coming with the usual large entourage, of course the Embassy had to reserve appropriate hotel space for everyone. In Vienna most people still consider the most prestigious venue to be the legendary *Hotel Imperial* on the Ringstrasse, which dates back to the late Habsburg Empire. It was not large enough to accommodate everyone from Washington, but we thought it would be a good choice for the President and the senior members of his team. When we approached hotel management, however, we were told that the *Imperial* was booked. "Booked?!" we replied in amazement. "But we're talking about the President of the United States!!" "Sorry we are booked!" they insisted.

As we probed further, the hotel explained that the Rolling Stones had booked the entire *Imperial* much earlier. And they were not going to bump the Rolling Stones even for the President of the United States. So we found a couple of perfectly acceptable alternatives, which worked out fine. Then, ironically, shortly before the Summit took place the Rolling Stones cancelled their tour to Vienna. The *Imperial* informed the Embassy of this and said the hotel was now available if we still wanted it. However it was too late as all our planning had been built around the two other hotels we had reserved. But the funny part of this story is, as we later learned, that the reason the Rolling Stones had cancelled the Vienna concerts (and many others) was that guitarist Keith Richard — after Mick Jagger the most famous member of the band — had fallen out of a tree on the island of Fiji and suffered a severe head injury. The Stones had to cancel their tour because Keith fell out of a tree!! You can Google it for the details.

OK, now I really will wrap up this conversation. I would like to conclude with a few words about my final days in Vienna — an assignment that, as I've tried to explain, carried special meaning for me. During my last weeks a number of farewell events were

organized around my departure. Then, in the very final days I received two unexpected invitations. One was from the Secretary General of the Austrian Foreign Ministry — the number two position under the minister. His staff had called the Embassy to say the SecGen would like to invite me to his office just to thank me for the work I had done. His name was Hans Kyrle, and we had gotten to know each other reasonably well. We had a very nice conversation. As we finished, Hans said that, on behalf of the Foreign Ministry, he would like to present me with a plate made of fine *Augarten Porcelain.* He explained, "Scott, I know you're aware of our custom of holding a small ceremony for departing Ambassadors, during which we present them with the Ministry's official Augarten Plate. Our rules are that we can do this only for fully accredited ambassadors, but we know what you have done in Vienna. We know how long you have been Chargé d'Affaires and what you have done. So, even though we can't hold a ceremony, we would like to give you our official plate." As you can imagine, Robin, I was very touched. I keep the plate right here on my desk at home in Palo Alto.

Q: That is very touching. Why don't you read what it says? I can't see it.

KILNER: It has the Austrian Eagle at the top of the plate, and in the middle is the signature of the Foreign Minister. Underneath that, in German, it says "Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria." Yes, it was a very nice gesture. And that was not the end of it.

The following day I received another invitation, this time to make a farewell call on the President of the country!! His name was Heinz Fischer — a very nice man, whom I would occasionally run into at large events. So he knew who I was. In fact, once he even offered me a ride home in his official car (laughs). So I went to meet with President Fischer in his grand office in the Hofburg — the same place where Ambassador McCaw had presented her credentials. The only other person present was the President's Diplomatic Advisor, whom I had actually come to know a bit in Rome. He had been the Austrian Ambassador to Italy at the time I was assigned to Vienna as DCM. So the three of us talked for about 45 minutes. As we finished, I presented the President with a book, in German, about the life and career of my Stanford political science advisor, Kurt Steiner, whom I must have mentioned many interviews ago. (Professor Steiner was an Austrian Jew who had fled the country in 1937 or 1938, served as a U.S. Army prosecutor at the Tokyo Trials after the war, and then landed permanently at Stanford.) In presenting the book, I told President Fischer a bit more about my relationship with Steiner, and I said that I would like to give him this book in appreciation for the respect he had shown our Embassy. I think Fischer was touched by this. He knew of Steiner, not personally but by reputation. Fischer then called one of his aides, who brought out a big picture book of the Hofburg Palace, in which the President wrote a long inscription for me and signed the book. After that the three of us moved into the mail hall and had photos taken in front of a life-sized painting of Empress Maria Theresa. Then I left — pretty much on cloud nine after those two meetings. I thought to myself, "Well, I may be going to Afghanistan next, but this is about as good as it gets."

Farewell call on Austrian President Heinz Fischer (2009)

Q: We will always have Austria.

KILNER: One last footnote, if I may. On my final or perhaps penultimate evening in Vienna, Jan and I went to our final performance at the *Staatsoper*. I didn't go into this, but we had taken a deep-dive into the world of opera during this assignment and came to love it very much. Opera has remained a major cultural interest for both of us ever since. So there at our last performance, during one intermission we strolled out onto the large outdoor loggia to get some air. As we walked I noted that at one of the stand-up tables was former Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel, whom I had met a few times. He was one of Austria's most notable politicians at the time. Schüssel saw us and beckoned me to come over, which I did, and we had a short conversation in German. He explained to the friend with him, "This is Scott Kilner. He has been running the U.S. Embassy for much of his time in Vienna, and he really has carried out his responsibilities in the most professional way. We are sorry to see him leave."

2009-10: AFGHANISTAN

Q: It's March 23, 2023. I'm Robin Matthewman. Today I'll be interviewing Scott Kilner as part of our Afghanistan project. Scott, welcome.

KILNER: Thank you, Robin.

Q: Can you summarize your career prior to going to Afghanistan?

KILNER: The first point I would make is that my year in Afghanistan was an extremely powerful experience, as powerful as any in my thirty-two years in the Foreign Service. It was also radically different from every other assignment that I had, different in every

way, how I got there, what it was like, what the organizational structures were like. It was just something unto itself.

Afghanistan was my penultimate assignment in the Foreign Service. Apart from Afghanistan, every one of my assignments was within the European Bureau of the State Department. That's not quite as incestuous as it might sound because a big chunk of my career—almost ten years—was in Turkey, which bureaucratically lies within the European Bureau.

The easiest way to explain it overall is that I had nine overseas postings. Four of these were in Turkey. I also served four times in big European capitals: in East Germany before the Berlin Wall came down, in Paris, in Rome, and in Vienna. They weren't all back-to-back, of course, but perhaps that's why central personnel wanted me to go to Afghanistan or Iraq.

Scott Kilner on the compound of the Governor of Kandahar in April 2010

Q: When did you join the State Department?

KILNER: I joined the State Department in April of 1981.

Q: Were you an economic officer?

KILNER: Yes, I was an economic officer. I worked three years in banking before I joined the Foreign Service, so I was a natural for the economic cone. Up until becoming DCM [deputy chief of mission] in Vienna, immediately before Afghanistan, all of my overseas work had been economic jobs. In Washington, I had done mostly inter-functional desk jobs in the European Bureau—in German/Austrian affairs and later as the head of the office that handled southwest Europe—France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Malta, and the

Vatican. So a lot of Europe, a lot of Turkey, a lot of economic work. Then my last three assignments—Vienna, Afghanistan, and Istanbul—were inter-functional management positions overseas.

Q: What year did you go to Afghanistan and what was the job?

KILNER: I was deputy chief of mission in Vienna, Austria, from late 2005 until 2009. When I came up for reassignment, I threw my hat into the ring for a couple of ambassadorial assignments in the greater Turkic world, but those went to people with Russian experience, which I did not have. As that became clear, the job I set my sights on was consul general in Istanbul—a position that, in many ways, had long been my dream job.

My assignment to Afghanistan is a long, weirdly fascinating bureaucratic tale. But in a nutshell, after a lot of to-ing and fro-ing and behind-the-scenes maneuvers, it became clear that I would get the job in Istanbul if I first went to either Afghanistan or Iraq as a bridge assignment.

Q: You were talking to them in 2009?

Nangarhar Governor Shirzai meeting in Jalalabad with MG Mike Scaparrotti and Scott Kilner in July 2009

KILNER: That's right. In 2009, when it became clear what the requirement was, I then had to find a job in Iraq or Afghanistan, which was not easy at that point because most

senior jobs had already been assigned. I looked closely at one in Iraq, but then that disappeared. Then one day, I received a message from Under Secretary for Management Pat Kennedy, saying that then-Major-General Mike Scaparrotti, the incoming commanding officer of the Eighty-Second Airborne Division at Bagram Air Field [our largest base in Afghanistan], was looking for a POLAD. He hadn't found a candidate that he was satisfied with, so Pat Kennedy urged me to interview with General Scaparrotti, who at that time was the commander of Fort Bragg army base in North Carolina.

Q: Can you explain what a POLAD is?

KILNER: It's a foreign policy advisor to a military command or commander. We have them in many places around the world. They can be in the United States, they can be overseas, and a few of them are in combat zones. This was one of the latter. As I thought about this option, Afghanistan sounded much more interesting to me than Iraq for a variety of reasons, both for policy reasons and out of personal interest.

So I arranged for the interview with General Scaparrotti—he at Fort Bragg, while I was in Vienna. We had a one-hour conversation, and it seemed to go very well in both directions. I felt quite relaxed about it, telling him what I thought I could offer, what I could not offer, what my background was, what my strengths were, what the areas were where I had less experience. A few days later, General Scaparrotti notified the State Department that he would like me to join him, and I got the job. This all took place in December 2008 or January 2009. I actually deployed to Afghanistan in early July of 2009, leaving Vienna a few months earlier than I would have otherwise.

Before I started my actual assignment in Afghanistan, in addition to Washington consultations, I spent a week at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, with the Eighty-Second Airborne Division for the second half of their pre-deployment Mission Readiness Exercise. This is where I first set foot in my brave new world and got to know the main players I would be working with.

Then, a month or two later, I joined the Eighty-Second's Command Group—General Scaparrotti and his inner circle—on a pre-deployment trip to Afghanistan. We had a week of travel around eastern Afghanistan—our future area of responsibility—and received many briefings from the outgoing division located at Bagram.

Both the Mission Readiness Exercise at Fort Bragg and the pre-deployment trip to Afghanistan were very interesting experiences and informative on many levels. I obtained a sense of what lay ahead for me and—crucially—they helped me form strong personal relationships with General Scaparrotti and his team. When I got out there in July, we all felt we already knew each other.

Q: What did you mean when you said you felt that you would be exposed to new things? Are you talking about how the military works and how the State Department works?

KILNER: Up until this point in my career, my geographic knowledge was heavily focused on Europe and Turkey. I didn't know anything about Afghanistan! I often tell friends that I found myself tossed into the most high-profile and important job of my career, but it was also the one for which I was least prepared. I didn't have any language

training. I didn't have any serious area studies on my brief home leave. I didn't even know the names of the provinces. I did read a couple of books about Afghanistan, so I knew something of the history.

I had been to the Caucasus, and I had an interest in the greater Turkic world in Central Asia. I had also worked on or in several NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organizations] countries, although not doing political-military work. I had worked in Germany, France, and Italy, so I had been on many military bases and been on the edges of many political-military discussions. But I was not an expert in those areas. It was not completely foreign to me, but a combat zone was something very new. And working with the military in this way was just a completely new adventure, which was fun.

I should also stress that I was hardly the only Foreign Service officer [FSO] thrown into this kind of situation. After our military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the USG [United States government] got into the business of staffing up gigantic embassies in Kabul and in Baghdad—filled with FSOs on one-year assignments. Every year a whole new team rotated in. The only way the State Department could maintain such staffing was to pull people from all over the Foreign Service—and that's what happened. So I was far from the only one thrown into a completely new environment with little training.

Q: This is the beginning of the Obama administration?

KILNER: That's right. President Obama was elected November 2008 and inaugurated in January of 2009. I arrived in Afghanistan just after July Fourth, 2009.

President Obama felt that Iraq had been a mistaken U.S. military adventure, but that Afghanistan had been a well-justified intervention. He wanted to rebalance those two commitments—investing more in Afghanistan and less in Iraq. This rebalancing was going to have a huge impact during the year I was there, with U.S. forces and resources surging into Afghanistan.

Q: Both on the civilian side and the military side?

KILNER: Exactly. When people hear the word "surge" they think of a military surge, and there was that. Especially in the south of Afghanistan, there was a big military surge that began in the year I was there and continued on into the next year. U.S. forces peaked around 2011, if memory serves.

The "Civilian Surge:" Newcomers arriving at Embassy Kabul in January 2010

What gets less attention is there was also a civilian surge. In percentage terms, it was even greater than the military surge, although in absolute numbers, it paled by comparison.

Q: I've interviewed a few ambassadors who were serving at that time right before and it sounds like the president, on the advice of Richard Holbrooke, who set up the SRAP [Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan] office, had decided on the civilian surge first, but the actual military surge started happening faster. It sounds like the embassy was a little reluctant about that. They didn't think that was the right way to go in order to stabilize the country. Did you get any sense of that? The leadership and the embassy in Kabul were writing back home during the year you were there, saying they thought a military surge would be a mistake. Embassy leadership seemed to think it would be better to focus on the civilian surge and not militarize it too much.

KILNER: Absolutely. This is jumping ahead a bit in the story. President Obama had a reputation for being careful almost to a fault. His strategic review on whether and how far to go forward with a military surge in Afghanistan, analogous to the one that took place in Iraq under President Bush, dragged on for months, more than six months, as I recall. Everybody knew this "strategic review" was underway, but it kept going and going. And no decision was made until it finally came to a head.

When it became clear that a decision was imminent, Ambassador Eikenberry and Ambassador Ricciardone, Eikenberry's deputy, sent in a top-secret cable, with the most restricted distribution possible, containing a very strong recommendation along the lines of what you were just suggesting. That the military surge was not what they would

recommend, that it would not produce the desired results and that they counseled against it.

Despite all of the restrictions and limitations on how this top secret, no distribution cable was supposed to be held, a day or two later, it was on the front page of the *New York Times* and became very public. This led to quite a rift between the embassy Front Office and the senior U.S. military commander, General Stanley McChrystal, because of their divergent views. It was easily the most dramatic split in civilian and military perspectives I observed. But at the end of the day, Obama gave the military most of what it wanted, not all, but maybe three-fourths of their request.

Q: Let's get back to your initial job in Afghanistan. You had been selected, you had bonded with the team, and you went to Bagram. What was your position supposed to do? I worked with POLADs before, but this was quite a different situation.

KILNER: Foreign policy advisors basically do whatever the officer or the command they're attached to wants them to do. It's a very flexible position and can be used in any number of ways. This is why the personal relationship is important.

The way I saw it, and the way I talked about it in my first interview with General Scaparrotti, was that although I wasn't an expert in Afghan affairs and I wasn't a development expert, I knew quite well how the State Department functioned and how other civilian agencies functioned. So I could serve as a useful channel of communication and coordination between his command group and the U.S. embassy, as well as the State Department in Washington.

I felt confident that I could look at a foreign policy issue in a broader context. In Washington, I had done a lot of inter-functional work at various levels, so I felt I would be able to offer a civilian foreign policy perspective. Within those broad parameters, I saw myself being available for whatever specific requests General Scaparrotti would want to give me.

Now let me get more specific by talking about our counter-insurgency strategy in Afghanistan, which had been adapted from the experience in Iraq. According to this strategy, the military would "shape and clear" a given geographic area—stabilize it by making it secure against insurgent attacks. After the area was secure and stabilized, coalition military and civilian forces would then work with local authorities to strengthen and develop economic and governance capabilities.

The military spoke of three lines of effort: security, economic development, and governance. Security was naturally in the military lane, but General Scaparrotti asked for my assistance in the areas of economic development and governance. He frequently would turn to me to comment on such issues during our many virtual meetings with units dispersed around his area of responsibility.

Broadly speaking, I was with General Scaparrotti whenever he traveled around Regional Command–East—almost always by helicopter, roughly five out of seven days a week. There were also multiple meetings every day at Bagram, which I also attended. We had established a very good relationship, and I admired him greatly.

Scott Kilner with LTG "Rod" Rodriguez and MG Mike Scaparrotti (center) at Bagram Air Field on September 11, 2009

General Scaparrotti, at that point, was a major general, i.e. two-stars. His deputies told me there was no doubt he would become a four-star general. Everybody knew it. And in fact, after Afghanistan, he had several more high-level assignments, the last two of which were as head of U.S. and UN [United Nations] Forces in Korea and then finally SACEUR, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. He was really one of the army's top officers, and to work for him was a privilege.

Q: When he went on these trips each day, would he meet with Afghan officials as well as with his team?

KILNER: Yes, from time to time, he would meet with Afghan governors and senior Afghan army officers. But most frequently, he would meet with his commanders on the various bases and installations in his area, Regional Command-East. We're talking about eastern Afghanistan, including the border region with Pakistan. The military divided Afghanistan into four quadrants. The two hottest areas were the east bordering Pakistan, and the south, which included the Taliban homeland around Kandahar. The other two sectors—in the North around Mazar-i Sharif and in the west around Herat and the border region with Iran—were relatively calm by comparison. Some of the Afghan governors General Scaparrotti met with were quite colorful characters—former warlords who were now senior government officials.

Q: Were there other allied forces that you were working with as well?

Scott Kilner with Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at Bagram Air Field in July 2009

KILNER: Yes, but the United States was the big player. Outside the Joint Operations Center at Bagram Air Field, there were a lot of coalition partner flags, even including that of neutral Austria. What was that flag doing up there? I think they had sent one person just to keep tabs with what was going on. By the way, the Joint Operation Center, where the U.S. Command Group worked and lived, was built inside an old Soviet aircraft hangar. The hangar was really just a big concrete shell under which office space had been built out of prefab material.

To be fair, some allies shouldered important responsibilities in specific areas. The Poles, for example, were responsible for Ghazni Province—a very challenging area not far from Kabul. The Polish prime minister, Donald Tusk, paid a visit to the Polish brigade in

Ghazni while I was there. They were really pulling their weight. The French were also seriously active in RC-East.

I saw more of the international presence when I moved to Kabul because ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] headquarters was located there. In addition, my embassy job in Kabul oversaw activities in all parts of Afghanistan, not just the east. So I had an opportunity to see the Germans in the north, the Italians in the west, and so forth.

Q: The Poles were relatively new members of NATO at that point, right?

KILNER: That's right, yes.

Q: How long were you in this position at Bagram? Just a few months?

KILNER: It was a one-year assignment. I went to Afghanistan fully expecting to be in the POLAD position for twelve months and leave at the same time as the Eighty-Second Airborne. But that was not to be, and I should probably explain why.

Q: How long were you there?

KILNER: Just shy of three months, although it seemed like much longer. The majority of my time in Afghanistan turned out to be at the U.S. embassy in Kabul.

Q: Were there provincial reconstruction teams, U.S. teams or combined teams in Regional Command—East? And did you visit them?

KILNER: Yes. They were very much there, and General Scaparrotti and I would visit them. However, when I moved to the embassy, I became much more involved with the PRTs.

Q: The military itself had a lot of money for those other pillars, the development and governance pillars. They had teams that were working on using money to try to help in those areas, which they felt were secure enough from fighting. Correct?

KILNER: That's right, especially the famous Commander's Emergency Response Program, or CERP, funds. I don't recall a lot of detail on how CERP operated, but basically, it was a considerable pool of funds that could be accessed quickly and flexibly by military commanders to move forward with priority development and governance projects. These funds were generally used for short-term, quick turnaround, turnkey projects: constructing a building, constructing a school, building a road, building a new office for a provincial governor. You could see the visible results and point to it and then move on to the next thing.

This CERP approach was philosophically different from the way USAID approached development. USAID, which has a great deal of development expertise acquired over decades, generally preferred to lay the groundwork for the long-term sustainability of projects. While military-funded projects might become visible more quickly, unfortunately, they often turned out to be unsustainable.

Q: If you build a road and you don't have a long-term plan, equipment, or funding for maintenance, it's going to disintegrate.

KILNER: Right. You might build a school but then you didn't have the staff for sustained ongoing instruction there. It's quick but maybe not sustainable. USAID projects generally would be longer term and slower in gestation but more likely to remain viable over the long run. Each side had its frustrations. The military was frustrated by the slowness of USAID work and AID was frustrated by the lack of long-term planning on the military side. So you had those divergent perspectives.

Q: It was a very big area that you had. The east is a very big area and it was very dangerous. There was a lot of fighting going on, right?

KILNER: Yes, especially in the outlying areas. Along the border with Pakistan, there were pockets that were quite dangerous. But it was not as dangerous as the south became a few years later when the Taliban insurgency regained momentum.

Security varied a lot from place to place. Places like the Kunar Valley were very problematic to go into and operate safely. But other areas were much safer—like Panjshir Province, which had been the stronghold of Tajik resistance under Massoud. Panjshir was a protected area in which our PRT could operate quite safely, without body armor and the like. The situation did vary a lot from place to place.

Q: Is there anything notable that you want to talk about regarding how the military operated on these other pillars or how they worked with you? What was going on in those three months?

KILNER: We have talked about making their approach to development issues. Regarding governance issues, the U.S. military seemed to look mostly through the lens of anti-corruption. Corruption was long recognized as very problematic almost everywhere in Afghanistan. The culture of corruption was certainly widespread.

So there were efforts by the military through their intelligence sources and the people they worked with to identify and figure out how to deal with the most corrupt actors. It was a very complicated issue and always a big challenge. From what I saw in Bagram, the military's approach to governance was less about building capacity than about rooting out corrupt bad actors.

Q: After this period, Ambassador Crocker, who came in after Eikenberry, felt strongly about building an Afghan bureaucratic class, building the capacity for governance. I interviewed somebody who started as an anthropologist doing research in Afghanistan. He pointed out that Afghanistan didn't have this culture of governance; community leaders and governors didn't have a lot of power. Everything was still being decided in Kabul. He thought that PRTs had difficulty delivering the things that local folks would ask for because of the centralized structure of the Afghan government.

KILNER: A couple of observations. Afghanistan today is still a very tribalized, decentralized country. So much authority and ways of living and doing things rest with

tribes and community groups at the local or regional level. This reality is rooted in geography, history, and demographics.

But on top of this social structure is overlaid one of the most centralized governmental structures in the world. It's sort of a French model on steroids, where everything—at least on paper—is controlled from Kabul. The central government sends governors and sub-governors out to the provinces that are not elected by the people. They're appointed by the central government; they're responsible to get their resources from the center.

The disconnect and frustration expressed by the other person you spoke with probably stemmed from the fact that if one had to work mostly with the governors and the sub-governors, there could be lots of problems in the relationships with local communities. The disconnect between central government representatives and the tribal groups could be a big problem.

If a PRT, a combined civilian-military group, was working in an area, the real authority to get something done and make it stick probably depended on tribal leaders. But those informal relationships lay outside of the formal Afghan governmental structure. This was where things got very messy.

Q: Picking up on the tribal leaders, did you ever feel that tribal norms might work in one way but look like corruption to us? For example, stories about how governors would work with tribes on collecting customs duties and distributing them, things like that, might be more of a traditional way of working.

KILNER: It probably was frequently both—both a traditional way of doing business combined with corruption. An effective governor, and there were some, needed to be able to operate with tribal leaders and form cooperative relationships with them. In that sense, it's positive, but you can easily imagine such networks and relationships being corrupted—"buying tribal loyalty," if you will. It was obvious that the U.S. and, to an extent, other countries had so much money to throw around that everybody wanted a piece of the pie. Or several slices of the pie. The price of cooperative arrangements with local tribal leaders was perhaps a little bit like pork barrel legislation in the United States. You want my vote in Congress for this? Then how about funding that project in my district? Is it that different? It's a pretty gray area.

Q: How did the U.S. view the Afghan Army? It seems during the first decade of presence, the Afghan army still needed a lot of work. By the time we left, it had actually improved quite a lot, but it had taken years. What was the state of development of the Afghan military or how did we feel about them?

KILNER: At Bagram, I think General Scaparrotti had high respect for his counterparts in the Afghan Army. From what I could see, he genuinely thought they had some very high-caliber military leaders he respected and enjoyed working with.

More broadly, the effort to build up the Afghan Army was a huge challenge. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry had been one of the founding fathers of the new Afghan Army when he was there with the U.S. military, so as U.S. ambassador, he was still heavily invested in the project. I think there was a feeling that the army was steadily improving. A

comparison would be made frequently with what was happening with the Afghan police. The police force was always seen as much more problematic and a much weaker organization, more corrupt, problems with retention, much less successful overall.

To jump way ahead, to our final withdrawal, for a moment, it became quite evident that despite all the strengths the Afghan Army had developed, it remained heavily dependent upon U.S. contractors and upon U.S. Air Force support.

Q: That's a good point. One ambassador I interviewed said we just built them in our own image and that was a mistake.

KILNER: That's another way to put it. It was a structure that still needed our support in certain areas, even after we had been there for twenty years. When we removed that support, it just collapsed. If you're going to identify failures of the long-term U.S. effort in Afghanistan, that's one of the top ones.

Q: You were then asked by the embassy to change jobs and to go to Kabul. Talk about that.

KILNER: It's always cathartic for me to talk about this again. This was probably the most wrenching experience of my career in the Foreign Service. I had made a very big personal investment with the Eighty-Second Airborne and worked with the top levels of the U.S. military in Afghanistan—a group that I really admired and really enjoyed working with. I had taken a big psychological leap into this new military environment. I liked and respected them. And they liked and respected me.

What happened was the following: Between the time that I accepted the assignment as a foreign policy advisor to General Scaparrotti and the time I actually deployed, the Obama administration's policy and strategy on Afghanistan began to gel and take form. Karl Eikenberry, a former lieutenant general with deep experience in Afghanistan, left the military and was appointed U.S. ambassador in Kabul. In Washington, Richard Holbrooke was given responsibility for interagency work on Afghanistan.

During consultations in Washington before departing for Afghanistan, I was told that Ambassador Eikenberry was making big changes in the structure of the civilian presence both in Kabul and around the country in Afghanistan and that my job as POLAD was going to become something very different. The title that they were playing with was Senior Civilian Representative. One day while on home leave, I received a call from Deputy Ambassador Frank Ricciardone, whom I had previously worked for and who was now Karl Eikenberry's number two. Frank told me that this change in my position at Bagram was in the works. He didn't want me to be surprised and described it in very general terms. I listened carefully, but I didn't really absorb or understand what was entailed. And the reason was that such a position—a senior civilian representative—had not existed anywhere else before. It was a new construct that was being built.

When I arrived in Afghanistan in early July 2009—after having had consultations in Washington, including one meeting with Richard Holbrooke himself—at the embassy, I met with Ambassador Eikenberry. I spent time with Frank Ricciardone. I met with the head of the PRT office at that time, and none of them gave me any clear guidance on

what I was supposed to be doing at Bagram. I knew I had a new title, but nobody said, this is the plan; this is what we want you to do; this is what we want you to build.

To this day, I don't know whether everybody thought that somebody else was going to tell me. But even after I had covered those bases, it was still a complete mystery to me. So I decided that if nobody was going to give me anything more precise, I would just do what I came out here to do as POLAD. And that's what I did.

After several weeks, however, Eikenberry especially came to see that things were not changing particularly. It became clear he was not pleased with my performance. He saw that I was just working as a regular POLAD and not a senior civilian representative.

At the same time, within the embassy, another brand new structure that had never existed before had been set up. It was called the Office of Interagency Provincial Affairs [IPA]. The office was quickly becoming the second largest office in the embassy after the big USAID mission. IPA was supposed to bring a whole-of-government approach to provincial affairs—bringing together State, USAID, Agriculture, and military representatives under one umbrella to work on sub-national issues, meaning everything outside of Kabul. Although this office had been created, it was suffering from some very big start-up issues—internal management problems that generated considerable tumult and discontent.

The head of the Interagency Provincial Affairs office was a very experienced senior USAID officer named Dawn Liberi. Ambassador Eikenberry and Deputy Ambassador Ricciardone came up with the idea that Dawn and I should trade jobs. Frank Ricciardone knew my management style, and he and Karl thought that if I came into the embassy, I could calm the waters and get things running more smoothly in IPA. And Dawn Liberi, who had this long experience at USAID, could bring her economic development skills, which I did not have, to the table as a senior civilian representative.

The larger rationale for this big restructuring of the civilian U.S. presence in Afghanistan was to try to ensure organizationally that the civilian parts of the U.S. government would have a bigger say in policy formulation and implementation than had been the case in Iraq—where DOD and the military effectively ran the show. There was a feeling that one of the things that went wrong in Iraq was that the military and the Department of Defense really called the shots on everything.

While there were U.S. civilians and PRTs in Iraq, civilian agencies were constantly being out-maneuvered and sidelined by DOD and the military. Eikenberry's idea for how to prevent that from happening in Afghanistan was to develop a civilian structure that mirrored that of the military.

So at every level, in Kabul and around the country, there would be a civilian counterpart for the military. This meant that at Bagram, rather than being Mike Scaparrotti's civilian advisor, I was supposed to be on the other side of the table from him as his civilian counterpart.

Q: Without any staff?

KILNER: Essentially, yes. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that, while he had twenty thousand people under him and I would have twenty at the most, that's if you counted them all. The numbers were absolutely ridiculous. Conceptually, maybe this arrangement had some logic. But given the psychological and organizational commitment I had made to support the leadership of the Eighty-Second Airborne and given the enormous disparity in resources and numbers, I found it virtually impossible to make the adjustment.

The mantra of this new arrangement was civilian-military cooperation and integration. We can talk about how well it worked or didn't work.

Q: The structure of Embassy Kabul was rather unique.

KILNER: Yes, it was, and in so many ways. For one thing, Embassy Kabul had resources thrown at it like I had never seen before and never again saw after. Everywhere else in the Foreign Service, you scraped for pennies. But in Afghanistan, if you asked for something, you'd probably get it. Embassy Kabul was awash in funding and it was a huge embassy! At the top, in the Front Office, most of the time, there were four individuals with ambassadorial rank who had been ambassadors before. During the 2009 Afghan elections, there were five ambassadors in the Front Office. Karl Eikenberry was THE ambassador and the person who called the shots. No doubt about that. His deputy was Frank Ricciardone.

Q: Ricciardone had already served as ambassador in two large embassies.

KILNER: Yes—Manila and Cairo. I had worked for Frank in Ankara when I was an economic counselor, and he was DCM for Marc Grossman and then Mark Parris. So he had a lot of experience. After Afghanistan, he had one more ambassadorship in Turkey, where I worked for him a third time.

Frank's role, in large part, seemed to be as a political sounding board for Karl Eikenberry. They would talk jointly a lot about policy and strategy. The cable that we were talking about at the beginning was, I think, a joint effort between Karl and Frank. Frank also paid a lot of attention to the Political Section and their reporting. And he would advise Karl on how to work with civilians, with the State Department's Foreign Service, and how State's organizational culture differed from the military's. I'm not sure Frank's advice was followed a lot of the time. Karl was Karl.

Q: Then that year, Tony Wayne was the ambassador for economic issues.

KILNER: The third person was Tony Wayne. He had this mouthful of a title: the coordinating director for development and economic affairs, I think. Tony, of course, had been assistant secretary for economic and business affairs, so he knew those issues pretty well. He oversaw the two biggest offices in the embassy, USAID and my office, Interagency Provincial Affairs. I think he also oversaw the State Economic Section, whose purview was rather limited—confined mainly to the central government in Kabul.

Interagency Provincial Affairs staff members (Scott Kilner in white "Panama" hat) with Embassy Kabul DCM Joe Mussomeli in May 2010

Then there was Joe Mussomeli, who had the title of assistant chief of mission. Joe had previously been U.S. ambassador to Cambodia. His job was essentially that of a DCM in a normal embassy. Everybody thought of him as our DCM. My formal chain of command was to Tony. Every day, a hundred emails from Tony. I had to be in his office for meetings all the time.

Then theoretically, above Tony, I reported to Frank Ricciardone, who wrote the review statement on my performance evaluation. But I didn't really deal with him too much on a day-to-day level. It was Joe Mussomeli, who I saw more often. Our office had a lot to do with personnel issues and logistical support for civilians out in the provinces. These were things that Joe was concerned with. Tony Wayne and Joe Mussomeli were the two people that I spent a lot of time with.

Q: How did you organize that office? You mentioned that Interagency Provincial Affairs was a new office.

KILNER: Right. It was a new office. I had inherited the structure. There were nearly forty people in the office. Very crowded. Even after we got an upgrade in space, I was the only person who had an individual office where I could close the door and talk to somebody without being overheard. Everybody else did not even have cubicles—there were just rows of desks. It was a very crowded embassy in every way.

The people who worked for me were divided both geographically and functionally. We had officers responsible for geographic parts of the country: Regional Command South, RC East, and so forth. Then we also had other officers who focused on issues functionally, like the rule of law. This is where the interagency structure of the office came into play.

Most of these people were State Department. But we also had a couple from USDA [United States Department of Agriculture], a couple from USAID, and we had a couple of military people.

Q: Treasury Department?

KILNER: Not in our office.

Q: They might have an office parallel to the economic office.

KILNER: I don't recall whether they were integrated into the economic. I think they were a stand-alone unit.

The USDA people focused obviously on agricultural issues and the USAID officers gave IPA development expertise. The military colonel in our office—a good man named Pete Scammell—helped the rest of us connect with the military and understand their perspectives.

It doesn't take too much imagination to see how this kind of interagency structure, while having a certain logic to it, could very easily generate misunderstandings and turf wars between IPA and the embassy offices from which those detailed to IPA originated.

The USDA, for example, had a substantial agriculture office within the embassy, but then they also had a couple of people detailed to our office. So who do the ag experts in our office report to? To me? Or to the head of the agricultural office? The same tension existed between IPA and USAID.

The USAID and USDA representatives detailed to IPA often developed different perspectives from their colleagues in the main USAID/USDA offices in the embassy. There were more than a few misunderstandings, rivalries, and arguments over who had the authority to do what. That was one of the challenges we faced.

IPA was not really a policy-formulating office. Maybe the best analogy is that we were somewhat like an office in a geographic bureau of the State Department—where you have multiple desk officers working on different countries. Just as desk officers are responsible for reporting information from embassies overseas up the chain to the leadership of the bureau, and in the other direction, from Washington headquarters out to our embassies overseas, IPA "desk officers" served as an information conduit between the embassy Front Office and our civilians out in "the field."

Q: These were the PRTs and the civilian representatives?

KILNER: Yes. That's the analogy. If you think of IPA as a collection of desk officers, their "embassies" were, in fact, PRTs in various shapes and sizes out in the field. These

"desk officers" would channel information they received from the PRTs—on issues, problems, and opportunities—up the chain to the Embassy Kabul Front Office.

IPA also became deeply involved with logistical support issues. With the expansion of a civilian presence in Afghanistan during the Obama administration, we had new people arriving all the time. So we got quite involved with making sure the right people were going to the right places, that they had a reasonable support infrastructure, and that their housing was reasonable. Basic infrastructure support was something we paid attention to.

Of course, other sections of the embassy were also involved in logistical support—the Management Section, the GSO [general services officer] in particular. They had the financial resources, but we in IPA could bring problems to their attention. We could say, for example, that we've got these new people out in Lashkar Gah who don't have any decent place to sleep. We need to help them so they can do their work. So our office was in the middle of both recruiting new civilians and then integrating them into the workforce.

Q: Was this support for civilians in the provincial reconstruction teams, or were there other groups out there?

KILNER: PRTs came in many different shapes and sizes. You had civilians that were attached to the military at every level. Again, this reflected the idea of having a civilian presence that mirrored the military structure.

For example, at RC [regional command] East at Bagram Air Field, Dawn Liberi, who had replaced me and became the senior civilian representative, engaged with the military's Division Command. Similarly, at RC-South at Kandahar Air Field, which became even larger than Bagram during the military surge, we had many civilians.

At the brigade level around Afghanistan, there were civilians integrated into Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Usually, the brigade commander and his civilian counterpart would interact with the governor of the province. Finally, in some cases, there were one or two civilians attached to even smaller military units.

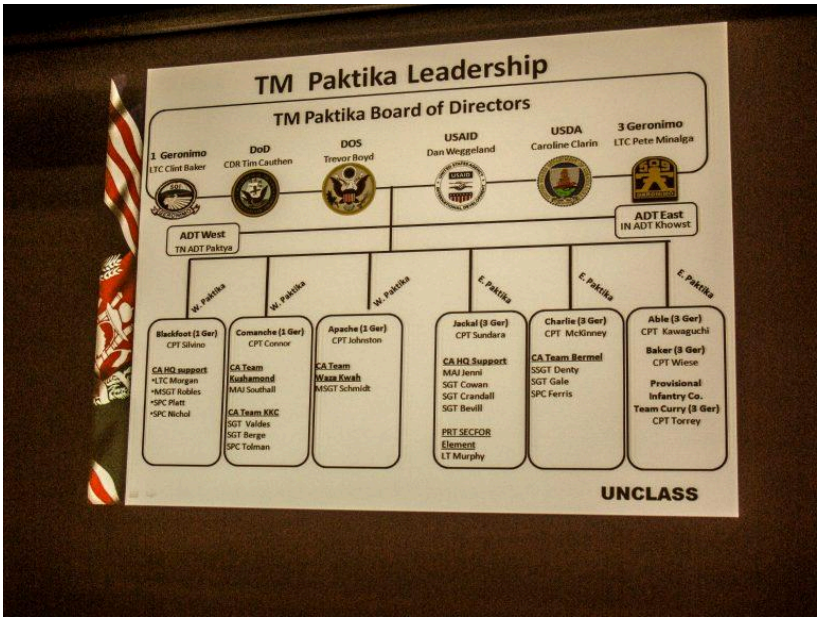
Q: They're very different. Some of the PRTs were under Polish or Turkish or French or German command.

KILNER: Yes, absolutely. For example, in Bamiyan, which was one of the quieter areas of the country, the New Zealanders ran a PRT. Within the context of Afghanistan, that was a pretty cushy assignment. There were a couple of American civilians out there in support mode, but basically, the New Zealanders were running the operation.

Ghazni, again, was another example. We had people there working with and for the Poles. Even when the others were in charge, they would always pay attention to whatever the United States had to say.

Q: A lot of your time was spent recruiting and taking care of the logistical needs of the people?

KILNER: Yes. But before leaving these PRTs, let me try to describe their internal structure. When it worked well, the idea was to establish a kind of civilian-military "board of directors" at each PRT. When we had high-level visitors from Washington, we'd take them out to see how those PRTs were set up. The PRT would show the visitors PowerPoint slides of an organization chart with a brigade commander and a senior civilian rep at the top. Then under them, you would have State Department, USAID, maybe a couple of military people and whatever other entities were there all working together to form a whole government decision-making process.



PRT Paktika – Interagency Organization Chart in October 2009

Q: How were they connected to their offices in Kabul?

KILNER: In terms of projects and initiatives out in the provinces, things were primarily field-driven. The embassy was not trying to micromanage the PRTs. We weren't telling them to do this or do that. A PRT would say across agencies, they had identified these priorities and these needs, and that was how they planned to spend their time and resources. It was our responsibility in IPA to stay on top of those PRT priorities and initiatives, and to communicate them to the embassy Front Office, making sure that there were no objections from embassy management. There usually was not. If the embassy Front Office had any feedback or concerns or particular perspective, we would communicate that to the field. But the priorities were largely driven by those that were on the ground and knew the particularities of their area. This was important because conditions varied enormously from place to place.

Q: Were there civilian representatives or reconstruction teams in every province?

KILNER: I don't recall if they were in every single province, but there were a lot of them. Probably, nearly all provinces.

Q: I spoke to one person who worked at a PRT in Nuristan from 2006–2007. He described the situation where he didn't have anybody in Kabul to be able to help get things done. For instance, they wanted to build a school and they needed the land and permission. He said there really wasn't anybody in the PRT office to help him do that work in Kabul.

KILNER: That's what my office, IPA, was set up for.

Q: That was two years later. You got there two years later.

KILNER: Yes. Let me mention one other point. As I've said, just as the military had divided Afghanistan into four sectors: north, south, east, west, we assigned a Senior Civilian Representative to each of these sectors. The idea was that over time those SCRs and their civilian staff would evolve into consulates. But that never really happened.

Q: Even the consulates that were built didn't last very long.

KILNER: Yes. The two calmest Regional Commands in the country were the north, at Mazar-i Sharif, and the west, at Herat. I remember visiting the buildings that the U.S. had purchased to house our future consulates. We were starting to renovate those buildings while I was there.

There is one other thing that I think is important to understand. As time went on, I saw that when it came to institution building, economic development, and governance, the issue of scalability in Afghanistan loomed over everything. If we focused enough resources on a limited given area, we could do almost anything. We could make almost any area secure. We could build things. We could move things in a positive direction. But then, as soon as those resources—military security, economic advisors, outside funding—were withdrawn or lessened, things might start to come apart and collapse.

We might have success here in this little district or that area, but how were we going to replicate that success across the whole country when it took so long and was so expensive? Toward the end of my year, there was an effort in a couple of areas to open up what was called District Support Teams. These were like mini-PRTs, but on a lower level. In Afghanistan, each province is divided into smaller subunits called "districts," and District Support Teams were supposed to align with those administrative units. By the time I left there, only about three of these DSTs had been set up. This is all just to say that achieving our nation-building objectives required a huge amount of resources for a very long period of time across vast expanses of the country. Ultimately, it proved to be unsustainable.

Q: Because they were at bases, were the civilians that you were supporting around the country mostly safe? The second half of your time there, there might have been an increase in fighting in a large number of areas.

KILNER: I guess it depends on your definition of "safe." Personally speaking, I find it interesting how over time, one recalibrates one's sense of risk and danger in a wartime environment. I remember being unnerved a couple of times during my first weeks at Bagram when I saw where we were going and what I would be doing.

Later, after moving to the embassy, I felt a similar nervousness the first time I accompanied Ambassador Eikenberry, as part of his entourage, to visit a market in a problematic area of the country. He wanted to demonstrate a visible U.S. presence and a sense of normalcy. So he strolled around the market without any body armor and I had to go with him. I kept my armor on. There were sharpshooters on roofs around the marketplace. There were sizable crowds in the market and you had no idea who was who or what they were doing. In the beginning, this was unnerving, but then after I had done it a few times, I got used to it.

Were conditions safe? The year I was there, as best as I can recall, we lost no diplomats. I recall that one or two were injured when an MRAP hit a roadside bomb and rattled everybody inside quite a bit. MRAPs—the armored military land vehicles used for transport—were supposed to be resistant to improvised explosive devices, roadside bombs, but they were not perfect. There were people from other agencies, DEA, and other agencies, who did lose their lives while we were there.

There were civilian losses but not Foreign Service diplomats. I always marveled that we didn't lose any State Department colleagues the year I was there. Not that I expected it to happen every day, but I was always braced for bad news. I'm relieved it didn't on my watch. In sum, there was a risk, but it wasn't terrible.

Q: How would you sum up what you were able to achieve and what you were frustrated about? Is there anything else you want to point out about the work or the situation at that time?

KILNER: One thing I should talk more about is the recruiting of civilians. As time went on, that became almost an overwhelming part of my office's work.

I'd say the most graphic way to demonstrate the priority that recruitment and placement of new civilians were given at that time is the following. When I was IPA director, every week, we would have a conference call with the deputy secretary of state on how we were doing on filling jobs. This was Jack Lew, who went on to become, among many other jobs, treasury secretary and OMB director. He was the number two guy at the State Department at that time. Lew was known to be a "detail guy," and that was absolutely the case.

We would have a one-hour to two-hour phone call each Wednesday led on the Washington end by Jack Lew and our end by Joe Mussomeli as the assistant chief of mission. We had some fifteen people around our table and Lew had an interagency group on his end. They had a spreadsheet on the number of positions to be filled by which agencies. If USDA hadn't coughed up the people they were supposed to, Jack would demand to know, "Why not?!" and he would be all over them. That was the level of attention. Lew would say, "President Obama cares about this. This is important to him and that is why we're doing this." It was bean counting, but it really had high-level attention.

To get the required number of civilians out to the field in Afghanistan, the agencies themselves had to recruit from outside the government. Washington agencies did not have

sufficient personnel to staff so many positions internally. There was a process in place to recruit from outside—called the "3161 Process," if I remember correctly. I don't really know the history of that authorizing legislation.

Q: A certain type of hiring mechanism?

KILNER: Yes. It was a hiring mechanism to get people relatively quickly from outside the U.S. government into the system. It was an intake process. The number had to do with the authorizing legislation. Many of the people that came to us were brought in through this process. Washington and the respective agencies were indeed able to find people. There were more than a few individuals who were interested in an adventure. Many of these outside hires had credible experience and expertise. But there were also serious problems.

Not only were these new recruits being brought into a very challenging working and living environment in Afghanistan, but they were also being integrated into an organization that they had no contact with before. So we might get an agricultural expert, but one who didn't know anything about USDA bureaucracy or how the Foreign Agricultural Service worked.

Then we had other cases of people who were past their prime physically but wanted to "relive their youth" or have one more adventure. Some of them could not climb in and out of military vehicles very easily. But we were not allowed to exclude such individuals because of the Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA]. I remember at one point, the embassy pleaded with Washington to include at least a minimal physical fitness exam in the hiring process—a test of whether someone could climb up steps or get into a jeep. Something like that. "No, no, no," we were told. That would trigger a pile of lawsuits under the ADA. We got nowhere on that issue.

In any case, once the newcomers arrived at Embassy Kabul, we would organize briefings for them—usually in groups on their first or second day. I would lead the briefing, with several other embassy staff members also making presentations. These took place in a big tent, usually with thirty or forty newcomers participating. We provided a general orientation about what they could expect, as well as some basics on the relationship between the U.S. embassy in Kabul and PRTs out in the field. New recruits were going into widely varying situations and environments, so the details of work assignments had to wait until they reached their final destinations. As in any organization, some of these individuals ended up fitting in quite well, others not so much.

I remember one really nice guy who had been working for the California State government in Sacramento. He was a solid guy, maybe in his mid-forties. He came to Afghanistan and ended up being placed at the end of the road in one of the most primitive military outposts. I went to visit him soon after his arrival and saw that his bed was basically just a sleeping bag on a wooden plank. He had to go out to a well to shower; his clothes were in a duffel bag over in the corner of a semi-enclosed area, not even in a real private room. This didn't happen very often. But when I saw this, I made a big ruckus back at the embassy, telling our admin office that we had to get this guy more. Most

people had much better conditions than that. In any case, the whole intake process was quite an experience.

Q: How did he do? Was he a trooper or did he want to go home?

KILNER: I really admired him. He stuck with it. We improved his situation and he stuck out the assignment. He became one of my favorites because of the grace with which he took this abominable treatment at the beginning.

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2009-2010: KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

Q: It is March 24, 2023. Today is our second interview with Scott Kilner as part of our Afghanistan project. Scott, in our last interview, you were talking about your year in Kabul. I thought it might be useful to explain the working environment in Bagram, which people in the States hear the name a lot, but it's hard to know exactly what that was like, and then also in Kabul.

KILNER: Thank you. I'm happy to continue. That would probably be a good place to start. So let me try to compare and contrast two very different working environments I experienced and how I fit into each one.

When I arrived in Afghanistan in July of 2009, I had been a career Foreign Service officer for twenty-eight years. I had the rank of minister counselor, the equivalent of a two-star general. This meant that at Bagram, as a foreign policy advisor to the commanding general, I was far and away the most senior ranking civilian on that large base of nearly twenty thousand soldiers. Apart from contract support employees, there were fewer than ten civilian professionals on the base.

When I moved to Kabul, I became the director of the most complex office in the U.S. embassy, which was also numerically the second largest. USAID was bigger but didn't have the complex interagency structure that we, IPA, did.

I thought of myself as being at the top of the middle section of the embassy, having a lot of responsibility to make the machinery run, to make sure that people got what they needed and that information flowed as it was supposed to. I was not really in a policy-making position, but I participated in many meetings at which policy priorities and strategies were discussed and worked through.

Yesterday I talked about how I had integrated into the command group of the Eighty-Second Airborne Division at Bagram. I have to say, I was very highly impressed by the people I worked with there every day, first and foremost with the Commanding General Mike Scaparrotti. But it was not only Scap. His two deputies, Bill Mayville and Kurt Fuller [both brigadier generals], were also very impressive. There were also several colonels in the command group. All were highly intelligent, very dedicated, and

personally warm. Their esprit de corps was something that I had never encountered before. It was patriotism and a willingness to make large personal and family sacrifices for the nation. I was very impressed by it.

I traveled regularly to remote parts of Regional Command—East with General Scaparrotti, to the command outposts and forward operating bases. And from what I could see, there was the same kind of dedication in those places.

Very memorably, after I had left Bagram and been at the embassy for a couple of months, General Scaparrotti invited me to accompany him on Christmas Day battlefield circulation in 2009. On Christmas morning, he was flown to Kabul in his helicopter, where I joined Scap and a small group of about five staff. We spent the whole day hopping around to nine different bases and outposts in the eastern sector of Afghanistan so that the commander could wish as many of his troops as possible a Merry Christmas and show his support for them. It was very, very moving. It was one of the most incredible days I've ever experienced. That was the environment there.

Sgt-Major Capel, Scott Kilner, Bagram Commander MG Scaparrotti pay last respects to a fallen comrade prior to air transport of remains back to the United States

At Bagram, I was also deeply moved by the respect and dignity shown to the remains of soldiers who had been killed in action. Whenever that happened, the coffin of the deceased soldier was loaded on a transport plane to be carried back to the United States. Each time there was a ceremony, usually in the middle of the night, out on the runway. I was very much a part of that, accompanying General Scaparrotti as the leading civilian on the base. Every week I would be awakened once or twice to join the commander and a

small group of others to see the caskets loaded onto the plane, a small band playing taps, prayers read, and so forth. It was very, very moving.

When I transferred to the American embassy in Kabul, I found a completely different working environment. In material terms, my standard of living improved greatly because, apart from being dramatically overcrowded, Embassy Kabul was a pretty nice place physically. There was good, relatively new housing—if you were lucky enough to get one of the real apartments. The embassy compound was far quieter and cleaner than Bagram. From a physical comfort standpoint, it was a lot easier than being at the base.

The embassy was also staffed overwhelmingly with good people—capable people who were trying their best, working very hard in a very tough, demanding situation. The Front Office leaders—four, sometimes five, ambassador-rank diplomats, as we've discussed—were also extremely smart, dedicated, and experienced.

That said, I have to stress that Embassy Kabul, during my nine months there, was easily the most unhappy place I ever worked in my career. There was great unhappiness, frustration, and even resentment at how the embassy was being run. This came from the very top—I'll leave it there. Many Foreign Service officers were basically in survival mode—just trying to get through the year. There was not the positive esprit de corps—thinking you were going to accomplish something—that I saw at Bagram. So in terms of the working environment, for me, the embassy was dramatically worse. That's the general contrast I would draw.

Q: That leads to a question I think you've thought a lot about. The reason we had—that year and in the years following—so many ambassadors was that you needed to match the military's ranks in order to be able to cooperate well. Since there were so many generals in Kabul, they would pay more attention to diplomats with ambassadorial rank than to officers of lower rank. It sounds like they also tried to apply this approach to the field as well.

In any case, I know you want to talk about civilian-military cooperation and how it went.

KILNER: I would like to talk about that because civilian-military cooperation was given so much emphasis at the time. As I mentioned yesterday, there was a view that one of the things that we could have done better in Iraq would have been to have the civilian perspective integrated more forcefully and clearly into the policymaking process. There was a desire to achieve that as much as we could in Afghanistan.

Civilian-military cooperation and integration were really the watchwords for so much that we were doing. But as I mentioned in our conversation yesterday, there were differences in perspective. The most dramatic difference came out in the context of the strategic review over whether to surge the military in 2010–2011. We talked about the cable that Ambassador Eikenberry and Ambassador Ricciardone sent in and then leaked almost immediately in Washington. The divergent views between the U.S. military and the U.S. embassy were very clear in that case.

Again to recap, on development issues, the military generally wanted to complete projects quickly and then move on to the next one, with perhaps less regard for long-term

sustainability. USAID generally wanted to proceed more slowly, laying groundwork more carefully for long-term sustainability.

There were lots of reasons to try to integrate civilian and military perspectives. And from what I could see, both the military and civilians understood this goal and tried to make it work. Neither side consistently tried to outmaneuver the other. We wanted to form a unified team and in many ways it was.

At all of the big staff meetings, there were civilians and military around the table. I regularly went over to ISAF Headquarters to attend meetings there. At the embassy, we had unending, high-level visitors from Washington: senators, cabinet officials, and congressmen. Anytime there was a briefing for such visitors, both Ambassador Eikenberry and ISAF Commander General McChrystal, as well as their deputies, were around the table. It was very much a joint operation most of the time.

I think there was a lot of desire to make civilian-military integration work. But the problem, as I saw it, was that despite the big increase in the number of civilians, there remained a huge disparity of numbers and resources. The sheer number of military personnel was far, far greater than the civilians, even though we had a very large embassy.

My perception was that the military was always intent on moving forward. Any movement was better than no movement. It was just perpetual motion. You might not know exactly where you were going, but you had to go forward in one direction or another.

On issues large and small, the U.S. military was always moving, working nearly around the clock from early in the morning until late in the evening. We, civilians, would get a notification that military meetings were being held and that we were invited. The door was open. We were always welcome. But oftentimes, we literally did not have the bodies to be everywhere where they were. The door was open, but if we weren't there, they would just roll on without us. And if we couldn't keep up, sorry, we invited you, but that's just the way it is. That was one problem.

Another reality was that despite this commitment to sharing information and discussing issues, if lower-level military officers had received clear marching orders from above, they were going to follow them, no matter what we civilians said. Say, for example, if there was a governance or development issue we were working on, and General "Rod" [Rodriguez] had already given his marching orders, our military colleagues were going to proceed no matter what the civilians said. General Rodriguez—a three-star general and basically number two in the U.S. military hierarchy—had a lot of impact on what we at the embassy were doing. If General Rod had given orders, military officers under him would tell us, "Sorry, General Rod wants this," and that was it. End of discussion.

Here is one example of how this played out: My office, IPA, dealt regularly with one central government ministry that had responsibility for working with Afghan provincial and district offices. It was the national government's interface with the governors and sub-governors around the country. Their focus was purely on development and

governance capacity building. There was no military angle to what this Afghan office did, and we in IPA dealt with them all the time. The head of that ministry was one of my most important official Afghan contacts.

Then we found out that one day the U.S. military had placed two military advisors permanently on the staff of this ministry without any consultation with us. We asked how our military would feel if our office started placing people in the Afghan Ministry of Defense without any consultation. Their answer was simply that this was the way General Rod wanted to do it. So we had a big argument. But they had the bodies and they could do something like that if they wanted to.

Q: Your office was handling certain things and then USAID was handling certain things. In Washington, at that period, USAID was chafing a bit about this idea, not being in charge of the development, but only one part of it of that coordination the State Department was doing. Did you have that kind of tension in the embassy that year?

KILNER: Yes, I think so. There were some tensions between the USAID officers that were seconded to our office and those working in the main USAID office. But then USAID also had their concerns about what the military was doing as well. I had less visibility into that, but I knew it was there.

Q: That's not that important in this case.

KILNER: Nation building is something we can talk about.

Q: It's a really big issue after twenty years. After we left in 2021, there was a whole lot of debate going on. How did it look to you at the time and since?

KILNER: I think the point I made yesterday is worth repeating. It seemed to me that if we focused sufficient resources on any given limited area, we could achieve the goals that we were working towards in terms of governance, development, and security.

But I began to perceive pretty quickly—even before I left Bagram and then ever more strongly while I was at the embassy—that this process was not scalable across the whole of Afghanistan. It would require too much time and too many resources—whether to maintain security in a problematic area or continue building infrastructure or train individuals to run an office competently. It was all very expensive and took a lot of time. And very often, as soon as Coalition support structures were removed, things would start to unravel.

Q: Do you mean as soon as the military wasn't there? You couldn't sustain that because you didn't have security?

KILNER: That was a big part of it. And to train people, to develop the human capabilities to run things, it's a long slow process. It's not something that you can switch on and off.

In terms of capacity building, from what I could see, the biggest effort and the most resources were put into building and strengthening the Afghan Army. We talked a little

bit about this yesterday. I would say we achieved the most progress in that area, even though I wasn't directly involved in those efforts.

As it turned out, as we saw what happened during our final withdrawal, it looks in hindsight like we built the wrong kind of army. A lot of structures that we built were almost permanently dependent upon U.S. and Coalition support—including contractors, including our air force that we had in the country. Even though Afghan capacity was strengthening, in some ways, it still remained very dependent on the U.S. still being there up until the very end.

The police we never seemed to get right. I can't say that I understand the problems with the Afghan police very deeply. But there were always big issues with corruption, recruitment, retention. It was a perpetual source of frustration.

In the areas of governance and development, the areas where my office was working, it was more than obvious to us that achieving our goals would require a very long-term commitment. A commitment to achieve essentially generational change in Afghanistan—helping them educate, train, develop a new generation of Afghan professionals. This was very much tied into the educational system.

But even while we saw this reality, the embassy, including my office, was being asked to show "demonstrable progress" within eighteen months. These were the parameters that President Obama had set. Washington was saying, "Okay, we're going to surge both military and civilians, but within eighteen months, we'll have to see that this is working or we're going to reverse course." That just did not make sense to a lot of us.

My doubts were there by the time I arrived at the embassy and just got stronger the longer I was there. I think this skepticism was widely shared among the people I was working with. But we were given our marching orders, so we tried our best to do what we were asked to do. We said to ourselves that it was for others to decide if this is the right strategy or not. That's how we approached it.

Q: If you were asked whether or not we should have been involved in such a generational, maybe decades-long nation building effort or if we should have had more modest goals, do you have an opinion?

KILNER: That is probably a good segue to our withdrawal in August of 2021. I have thought a lot about that, and I would try to summarize it this way. I felt, and I think virtually all of my colleagues in Afghanistan agreed, that the United States' intervention in Afghanistan after September 11, 2001, was a fully legitimate response to the attacks that we had suffered.

People might have had different views about Iraq. It wasn't a subject we discussed much, but I think many people, including myself, looked at our interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan very differently. Having said that, I think we lost our way in Afghanistan after not too many years in terms of what we were trying to achieve.

After expending so much blood and treasure in Afghanistan, a lot of which I saw close up for those months, it was painful to see all that go up in smoke or down the tubes,

whatever metaphor you want to use. Nevertheless, I would give President Biden high marks for finally cutting the cord where his three predecessors had failed to do so. I think, as messy as it was, it was the right decision.

To dig more deeply into that, regarding the execution of our withdrawal in the final weeks and days, no one wanted to see it play out the way it did. Of course, I wish it had gone more smoothly. But I wasn't there, and I have no doubt that there were factors I'm not aware of. So I would hesitate to second guess that we should have done this or we should have done that.

Why didn't we foresee the collapse of the Afghan Army almost overnight? Why weren't we better prepared to help Afghans who had supported us and were now in jeopardy under the Taliban regime? Why weren't we better prepared to get them out? Those are certainly fair questions, but I don't think I'm positioned to give a fair and full answer.

Overall, I do think it was the right decision to leave. The argument is made by Ryan Crocker and others that it would have been sustainable to stay in Afghanistan indefinitely at a much lower level. They say it would have been affordable in terms of both financial cost and risk to our limited forces there.

Undoubtedly we could have stayed, I think, but I don't believe that the price would have been worth it. Even with a much more modest footprint, mainly to continue counterterrorism operations and training of Afghans, which would have been the two purposes for a long-term commitment.

Such a commitment would have had absolutely no end in sight. A forever commitment. That is problematic right there, but also I think the cost would not have been negligible. It's very expensive to maintain even smaller military commitments overseas for a long time. If we were involved in counterterrorism and training, undoubtedly, that work would have involved continued casualties, not only among the Afghan military but among Afghan civilians, with all of the bad blood and the human trauma that goes with that. We would never have separated ourselves from all the unhappiness and resentment that accompanies civilian casualties.

Also, even if our commitment was more limited, Washington, as big as the U.S. government is, has only limited bandwidth. Look at all of the issues the Biden administration has to deal with simultaneously in different parts of the globe. Continuing to have Afghanistan in the mix didn't strike me as a good way forward.

Another counterargument to withdrawal was that if the United States withdrew, we would leave a vacuum for China, Russia, Iran, and Pakistan to fill. My response would be to ask, "To do what?" Well, have at it. Try your luck. Just because we are no longer there doesn't mean somebody else will seriously jeopardize our interests. In fact, I suspect just the opposite—that our adversaries in the region wanted to see us stay tied down, continuing to bleed as we had for the previous twenty years.

There's also the question of our moral obligation. I'm thinking especially of our moral obligation to Afghan women, which to me, is the most difficult and painful aspect of our withdrawal. Because women's education and women's access to professional life was one

area where we really did make a difference in Afghanistan. There really were some very big, positive changes, and it is very painful to see how that's gone into reverse since we left.

But can one really say that it is the obligation of the United States government to protect oppressed women everywhere around the globe? It would be wonderful if we could, but is it realistic? The difference with Afghanistan is that we had a substantial "sunk cost" there. We had done something very good and we had raised women's expectations. But did that mean we had an obligation to stay indefinitely to protect that progress? You can argue this in different ways.

Q: It wasn't just women. There was also the raised education and literacy throughout the country tremendously, and also health improved and a lot of infrastructure improved. Perhaps feeling abandoned is obviously natural.

I wanted to ask about a couple of things that you mentioned just in passing.

KILNER: Let me say one more thing regarding our withdrawal. I was personally hoping that Taliban 2.0 might be more different from the 1990s Taliban than they have turned out to be so far. It seemed an open question. I'm sure there are divisions within the Afghan leadership, but so far, the hardliners and the retrogrades in the government clearly have had the upper hand.

However, I'm not persuaded that we've seen the end of the story. We've trained and educated enough people and created, perhaps not a huge class, but at least a significant class that did not exist before. You see this bubbling up from time to time with stories of heroic, clandestine schools and the hunger for continuing education. We may not have seen the end of the story yet.

Q: I can tell that you worked closely with Frank Ricciardone because he said almost the same thing in almost the same words in my interview with him.

KILNER: I've heard Karl Eikenberry say the same thing, but I think we each arrived at that conclusion by independent thought processes. I really did think this before I heard either of them say it.

Q: I understand. It's interesting that many people worked so hard to come up with different points of view. I want to ask you about two things. You took a lot of photography when you were in Afghanistan.

KILNER: I did.

Q: Tell us what you saw, what you recorded, what you treasure now that you look at it.

KILNER: Afghanistan is a photographer's paradise in every way. I've never been much into the technical side of development of photographs or exhibiting photos professionally. But since I was a kid, I've always liked to take pictures—from my first Brownie or Kodak Instamatic cameras—and the hobby lent itself very well to a Foreign Service life and career. Everywhere I've been, I've taken photographs. I wish I had converted to

digital sooner than I did because I have way too many boxes of slides sitting around my home.

From 2006 onward, I took digital photographs. I brought two cameras with me to Afghanistan. One was a very good small pocket camera. This is before iPhones or other smartphones were an option in that kind of environment. Then I also had a bigger 35-millimeter camera. I always had one or the other with me wherever I went. In conjunction with this project, I'd be happy to make any of them available if they would help tell the story.

I've gone through and organized them all. There are more than three thousand photos from Afghanistan. I was allowed to photograph whatever I wanted, wherever I went because I was trusted to handle them appropriately. And I didn't breach that understanding.

No matter what I was doing with General Scaparrotti, I'd take my camera. I treasure my photographs from that Christmas Day battlefield circulation, with Scap addressing the troops surrounded by Christmas decorations or around a barbecue out on the border with Pakistan. The dramatic, rugged terrain in so many places in Afghanistan was visually just so impressive! I took photographs of Bagram Base from the air. I took them inside the Joint Operations Center during a promotion or farewell ceremonies. For example, one of Scap's deputies left Bagram for a higher-level assignment working for General McChrystal at ISAF Headquarters. Scap organized a very touching send-off ceremony that I photographed.

When we were out and about, I took lots of photos of military bases and soldiers, as well of civilians at PRTs. I have many photos of life at the U.S. embassy. In Kabul, for example, in connection with the new year's "Nowruz" holiday each spring, the embassy organized a big kite-flying festival within the compound. Kites are an Afghan tradition—you may remember the book titled *The Kite Runner*. I took lots of pictures of these colorful kites. Then in the few places where I was able to get out and about, I took more "normal" shots of people and places. There weren't many such places, but in Panjshir Province, for example, it was safe, and we spent a couple of days there without the huge security and envelope. Herat was also relatively safe, with some fantastic Persian/Afghan monuments, mosques, and other buildings—historically recognized by UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization]. Life in Bamiyan, where the enormous rock-carved Buddhist statues were tragically destroyed by the Taliban in their final days, was another safe area. I was able to get some very good photographs of just local Afghan life, as well as of the beautiful countryside.

Scott Kilner at Gazargah Shrine in Herat in February 2010

In Kabul, I never walked around outside of the compound. But I would be transported somewhere by car once every week or two. When I went to a ministry or did something in the city, I always had my camera at the window. Whenever we passed a crowd or got stuck in traffic, an incredibly colorful life on the street would pass in front of me. That worked, too. I would say I ended up with a pretty good collection of every dimension of my existence there.

Q: On a sadder note, you mentioned civilian casualties. This was a major preoccupation for Karzai and for the Afghans. There were things called night raids that were particularly upsetting. There were aerial bombings or drone bombings that were mistakes. Were you aware of that during your year there?

KILNER: I was certainly aware that there were these incidents. It was the ugly reality of counter-terrorism operations. This is difficult stuff, which was never going to be perfect, especially those night raids.

I rubbed up against that world a couple of ways, although I had no direct involvement in it. While I was still out in Bagram, I was interested to see how such operations worked, even though I didn't really have a need to know. Scap's deputy in charge of operations and intimately involved in such efforts said, "Come over to our center one night; you can stay as long as you want to watch and see how this works." So I did, and on a screen, I

viewed a live video feed of a compound under surveillance and observed people moving in and out and around it. Those controlling the surveillance had to decide what to do or not to do, when to intervene, and when not to. It was an interesting visual demonstration of how these operations were seen from headquarters.

Then at the embassy, my office had two Afghan employees. They were in a physically separate location, not in the main room with the rest of us. But they were part of the Office of Interagency Provincial Affairs and helped with things as local employees regularly do.

We found out one morning that one of them had been suspected of being an agent, if you will, for the Taliban. That he was thought to be sort of a mole inside the embassy. His house had been raided the previous night, and he was taken into custody. We knew nothing about it before it happened. We were given no warning, just woke up one day and told that he had been taken into custody. And that operation had been conducted without the embassy Front Office knowing about it either.

We went up first to Deputy Ambassador Ricciardone. When he told Ambassador Eikenberry, Eikenberry wanted the details right away. It was a serious deal for an embassy staff member to get caught up in one of these night raids. So it got a lot of attention at the top of the embassy.

Q: Was the U.S. military deliberate in this? They knew they went to raid because they thought he was a mole?

KILNER: Yes, they thought our employee had been associating with bad actors who were supposedly very problematic. As I recall, there were some others caught up in the raid as well. They were higher-value targets, but the Afghan who worked for our section was closely associated with individuals who were almost assuredly bad actors, so he became a suspect through association.

There was a flurry of high-level conversations between the ambassador's office and the military on what the hell was going on, and I saw some of that. Then we lost visibility. To be honest, I don't know how it played out. It's ugly stuff. It's going to happen and such operations were a huge part of why the U.S. was resented over time in Afghanistan.

We haven't talked about Carter Malkasian's recent book, *The American War in Afghanistan*. He does a good job of exploring Afghanistan's long tradition of visceral, deep, cultural hostility toward outside occupying forces.

Immediately after our invasion of Afghanistan in early 2002, after we overthrew the wretched Taliban regime, we enjoyed a relatively brief honeymoon period when there was some gratitude towards us. But the longer we stayed, and the more we became associated with civilian casualties and the like, the more we came to be seen as just another outside occupying force. Especially out in the villages and the remoter parts of the country, our image got worse and worse.

Q: I want to thank you for your generous time.

KILNER: One final word, if I may.

Q: Yes, please. Were there any other things you wanted to say?

KILNER: My parting shot on Afghanistan, and my main personal take-away, is that the experience made me a very big skeptic on the subject of nation building. Period. More precisely, I now believe that the capacity of any country—the United States or anyone else—to go into another society, another culture, that doesn't want us there and then change the internal dynamics of that country in a predictable manner, is extremely limited. We can intervene, we can stir things up, we can mess around. But to think that we're going in for this period of time to move this society in this direction is just not realistic and it's not going to work—especially if that society does not want you to be there for any significant period of time and doesn't welcome you at the popular level, which of course is almost always the case.

I think we've demonstrated twice now that if we can't do it over a twenty-year period—expending the resources that we did with all the strengths that we as a nation still have—no outside force is going to be able to build a new nation in an environment like Afghanistan or Iraq. And no comparisons please with Germany or Japan, please! There are so many differences in the circumstances. They're ridiculous analogies to make. I won't waste any breath on them there.

The final thing I would like to say is that, going forward, our elected political leaders truly need to be far more prudent, cautious, and thoughtful about when and where we ask young men and women to put themselves in harm's way. The costs are high, and there should be very compelling reasons for doing it, not just a hope and a prayer that things will turn out right. Because they might not.

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2010-2013: ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Q: Good afternoon. It is July 13, 2023 and we are continuing with one of the last interviews with Scott Kilner. Scott, we are picking up with your assignment as Consul General in Istanbul, Turkey, starting in 2010. If I am not mistaken, you were there until 2013, so I am going to give you the floor.

KILNER: Thank you, Robin. Yes, Istanbul, Turkey was my last Foreign Service posting — my ninth assignment abroad. Like Vienna, Istanbul was also a very special assignment for me because it closed another circle from an earlier part of my life. Istanbul had been my first posting in the Foreign Service, from 1982 to 1983, and now it turned out to be my last one as well. In my previous interview I discussed at some length how my assignment to Afghanistan was linked to a follow-on posting as Consul General in Istanbul. This position was of keen interest to me for several reasons. Istanbul is one of the largest constituent posts in the world. It is located in one of the truly great cities of the world — the most important city in Turkey in every way except for the seat of

government. It's the center of business, education, culture, arts, and the media. Istanbul has an incredible history and a stunning geographic location. Having invested so many years in the U.S.-Turkish relationship, I thought this assignment would be the perfect way to cap off my career. And in fact that is how it turned out. Jan and I had three fantastic three years there.

As I just mentioned this assignment had been sealed before I went to Afghanistan. After I left Kabul in late June, 2010, I had about nine weeks in the United States to decompress — which I very much needed. Jan and I went to the Hawaiian islands for a couple of weeks, where I met up with a close, long-time friend from graduate school, who had had a distinguished Army career that included service in Afghanistan and Iraq. This was Major-General (ret) Eric Olsen. It was very therapeutic to be able to talk with Rick about my experience; our conversations helped me process what I had been through. Following Hawaii, I had some regular home leave in the Bay Area, after which we flew to Washington for consultations and Turkish language brush-up. I also took the week-long retirement seminar, which I found useful. I managed to arrange a rather substantial Turkish refresher program at the Foreign Service Institute. I had been away from Turkey for 11 years and had not used Turkish much at all. The Turkish department at FSI knew me pretty well by this time, and they generously offered me six weeks of one-on-one instruction during the slow summer season. It paid off, as I came out of it with a score S-4/R-3+ — my best ever score in Turkish, which was satisfying. The instructors were clearly pleased with my progress.

Now I would like to talk first about the way Turkey had changed during the 11 years I had been away. I had left Ankara in 1999, and I knew Turkey had evolved considerably since the AKP came to power in 2002. (The AKP, or Justice and Development Party, is the party of Tayyıp Erdoğan, with roots in the more traditional, religious parts of Turkish society in central Anatolia.) But even after all my Washington consultations, I had not fully appreciated how much Turkey had changed. It was very exciting and energizing to encounter this new reality. And I was not alone in this perception. My new boss in Ankara, Ambassador Frank Ricciardone, was someone I had already worked for twice — in Afghanistan and in Ankara. Frank and I had both left Ankara about the same time, and were now returning at the same time. He fully shared my amazement at how Turkey had changed during the previous decade.

As we speak now, in 2023, it is very clear that the long rule of Tayyıp Erdoğan has taken Turkey in a much more authoritarian direction. These negative developments in recent years often obscure the hopeful period that characterized the first years of Erdoğan's time in power, that is from 2002 until around 2011. There were exciting, positive things happening in Turkey, and Erdoğan and the AKP deserved credit for many accomplishments. They had pursued sensible and successful economic growth policies. Delivery of public services to Turkish citizens improved greatly. They had created a more inclusive political system, which brought in more traditional Anatolian Turks who had been excluded under the rigid Kemalist secular framework. Civilian control of the military was exerted. Previously taboo subjects like rights of Kurds and Armenians were now being publicly debated. The United States Government supported all of these developments, and so did the Europeans. In fact it was just these developments that paved

the way for the European Union to open membership negotiations with Turkey. During that period there was actually some hope that Turkey might become a member of the EU.

Lastly, I would note that because of these positive changes many of Turkey's most talented young professionals, who got a good educational start in Turkey and then went to the United States or Europe for further study and perhaps a start in business, were returning to Turkey. Because that is where they saw the greatest opportunities. Again, all of this was very exciting and hopeful. But as we now know, it did not last. Later in this conversation I will circle back to talk about how this period began to unravel right at the end of my assignment.

Q: So just to pick up on the relationship you had with the Ambassador, did he talk to you about what he hoped the role of the Consulate General would play in relation to the Embassy?

KILNER: That's an important point, Robin, and Frank and I did talk about it early on. Both of us were well aware of the potentially tricky dynamic between an embassy and a large consulate general. In Turkey over the years I'd say there have been times when that relationship was quite good, and other times when it was not good at all. Ambassador Ricciardone and I both went out there with a commitment to make it work. We already knew each other very well, and Frank made it clear I could call him directly any time. That said, he also asked (not unreasonably) that under normal circumstances I use the normal channel of going through the DCM. That was absolutely fine with me, and in fact the Embassy had two very good DCMs during my time. So almost all of the time, there was a constructive, collaborative relationship between Embassy Ankara and ConGen Istanbul.

All that said, I had almost forgotten how very different working at a constituent post can be from working at an embassy. It had been 23 years since I had worked at a consulate (in Adana). The first reality that hit me was that the consulate was completely dependent on the "mother ship" for resources. The Embassy controlled the budget, full stop. So I knew it would be critically important to stay on good terms with the Management Counselor as well as the DCM in Ankara. I did all I could to take a collaborative approach, but it is true that occasionally we simply had different perspectives on what would work best. When that happened, I would say so and stand up for the Consulate. But it was not a frequent occurrence, and overall the relationship was very good.

There was another way that working in a consulate was very different from an embassy — different in a good way as far as I was concerned. This was that we were completely unburdened of the day-to-day government relations between the two national governments. We did not receive demarches from Washington to deliver to the Turkish government. Washington left us alone to an amazing degree, whereas there was a non-stop back-and-forth between Embassy Ankara and the State Department's Turkey Desk and other parts of the Washington bureaucracy. My role, as Consul General, was to engage with Turkish civil society in all its dimensions. And those dimensions were incredibly rich in Istanbul. My "outside role" was to show the flag, to represent the public face of the United States in Istanbul with all aspects of civil society: with business, with

universities, with the press, with cultural institutions, with NGOs. I found such work incredibly fun and liberating.

So what was the general environment in which I worked to carry out these responsibilities? I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that these years marked the high-water mark of U.S. Turkish relations — ever! The United States Government still generally saw Turkey as the world's most successful Muslim majority country, politically and economically. We saw the Turks as partners in achieving our objectives in the greater Middle East. George W. Bush certainly looked at Turkey this way, and initially Barack Obama did as well. Obama had visited Turkey very early in his presidency, prior to my arrival. We were eager to work with Turkey and they were interested in working with us. This was true not only bilaterally, but the Turkish government and PM Erdoğan were interested in raising the country's profile internationally and multilaterally. So they were willing to host almost any kind of a regional meeting or multilateral forum.

So between our bilateral cooperation and Turkey's eagerness to host multilateral events we had a continuous parade of high-level USG visits to Istanbul. In fact, I did more visit management during these three years in Istanbul than I did in all of my previous years in the Foreign Service combined. During my three years as Consul General we organized one visit for then-Vice President Joe Biden; six(!!) Secretary of State visits, four by Hillary Clinton and two by John Kerry; visits by several Cabinet Secretaries, including Commerce and Homeland Security. We had so many Congressional delegations I lost count. There were Libya Contact Group meetings and Syria-related conferences. There were Afghanistan-related meetings. And bear in mind, all of this was taking place NOT in the capital, Ankara, but in Istanbul. Most official visitors much preferred coming to Istanbul because it had better air connections and was simply a more interesting city than Ankara. Also, not insignificant was the fact that PM Erdoğan had grown up in Istanbul and had been its mayor before diving into national politics. He was not just willing, but eager, to profile his native city to the world.

So that was a big part of what we did: visits, visits, visits! They were so frequent that even SecState visits became routine. And if I may say so, we got pretty good at it. We developed an excellent reputation, and we started seeing the same advance teams over and over again. "Hi. Welcome back to Istanbul!" I should add that I was frequently the notetaker for high-level meetings, which gave me the opportunity to see more senior officials, Turks and Americans, that I normally would have had. It was always interesting to be a fly on the wall in these meetings and I never minded writing detailed reporting cables afterwards.

Q: Did the Ambassador come to Istanbul frequently?

KILNER: Yes, but it wasn't extreme. When Amb. Ricciardone came, it would be a lot of work for everyone. On average he came perhaps once a quarter. I know that some previous ambassadors had come to Istanbul much more frequently.

In between visits, of course, I was "showing the flag" and engaging on my own with Istanbul's diverse civil society. As the senior resident U.S. representative, I found that

doors were almost always open at a high level. I had little difficulty getting whatever appointments I wanted. We also did a lot of entertaining at the Consul General's Residence, and I received countless invitations from Turks and other Consuls General right from the start. Putting this all together, I was out perhaps 5-6 nights per week, very often with Jan joining me. It was at once exhausting and exhilarating.

Just a word on the Consul General's Residence (CGR) in Istanbul. It is a modern, not terribly grand building — nothing in comparison to our residence in Vienna. But its location is unbelievable! The CGR is situated on a bluff overlooking the Bosphorus, with a 180-degree view up and down the straits from the garden. Day and night we would see ships passing back and forth between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. In the dark the view was truly magical, as faintly illuminated ships glided silently past our Residence. This stunning location was an additional draw for events that we hosted there. Turks were always happy to come.

My command of the Turkish language by this time held me in good stead. Although far from perfect, it was quite serviceable. Among the many Consuls General in Istanbul, only four of us could function professionally in Turkish. So that was a big plus. Language competency, alongside the fact that I had already served three times in Turkey, gave me immediate credibility. Turks I met were visibly pleased that they did not have to begin the conversion with a "Turkey 101" explanation to another neophyte.

One particularly interesting aspect of my work was engagement with the several religious minority communities in Istanbul, each of which had very colorful traditions and ceremonies. The largest by far was the Armenian community. The tragic history of Armenians in Turkey is well known, and those that still remain are almost all in Istanbul. There is also a small but deeply rooted Jewish community, the descendants of Jews who settled in the Ottoman Empire after being expelled from Spain in the 1490s. The Greek Orthodox community in Istanbul is also tiny, but the Ecumenical Patriarch, with whom I established a very close relationship, is one of the most important Christian figures in the world. Each of these religious minorities has a constituency in the United States, whose views and concerns get reflected in Congress. And then there are the Kurds. The Kurdish community in Istanbul is very large. In fact, it may surprise you that Istanbul is the largest Kurdish city in the world. It is not the majority of the city's population, but a few million have migrated there from southeastern Anatolia in recent decades. And as you know, Robin, the State Department is tasked by Congress with writing separate reports on religious freedom and on human rights in every country in the world. Given the concentration of these various groups in Istanbul, the Embassy delegated drafting of the Religious Freedom report to our Consulate.

Farewell call on Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I

Now I would say a few words about the Consular Corps in Istanbul. To be quite candid, during my previous 30 years in the Foreign Service I had not devoted much time or energy to maintaining contacts with other foreign diplomats. At each foreign post there were typically three or four whom I found it worth spending time with. Not that I did not like them, but because with very few exceptions the U.S. Embassy was head-and-shoulders above the rest in terms of information gathering. So the information flow would be a one-way street in the wrong direction. The one big exception to this pattern was East Berlin, where the West Germans played an outsized role. But everywhere else the dynamic had been the same.

The Consular Corps in Istanbul, however, was something different. The position of Consul General there was viewed as a plum assignment by most other foreign diplomatic services, and it frequently went to very senior diplomats — often men or women who had previously served as ambassador in another country. There also were a large number of Honorary Consuls General, who were generally successful, well-connected Turks from the private sector. This system of honorary consuls is not used by the United States, but many other countries do rely on it. Smaller countries especially find it a way to save money in maintaining a foreign presence. In other words, this collection of senior professional diplomats and plugged-in honorary consuls general formed a large and very interesting community — about 60 individuals in all. After Jan and I had sized up this diplomatic landscape, so to speak, we consciously decided to go with the flow and participate actively with this group. So we did a lot with other Consuls General. I would see them all the time at functions around the city. Jan also became quite active in an association of Consular Corps spouses. In fact she was cajoled into becoming President of that organization for two of our three years in Istanbul.

Q: You probably had a lot of contact with the U.S. business community there, right?

KILNER: There was a good deal of U.S. investment in the greater Istanbul region. PepsiCo had a large plant just outside of the city. Cargill had a substantial agribusiness facility nearby. So of course I kept in touch with them. We tried to be helpful to American

companies new to the market. But if there were government regulatory issues involved, those tended to be sorted out in Ankara. So yes, the business community was important.

Q: Ok, then tell us about the Consulate internally.

KILNER: Sure. What I have described so far pertains to my "after 6:00 a.m. job." But I had a very substantial day job at the Consulate as well. From 8:30 a.m. until about 6:00 p.m. I was running a large Consulate General with about 65 American employees and some 200 Turkish employees. We had many different offices, but the largest were the Consular Section and the Management (i.e. Administrative) Section. One striking feature of the American staff profile was that it was heavily tilted toward more junior FSOs. In fact, I was the ONLY Senior Foreign Service Officer in Istanbul. We had one FS-01 officer; the rest were FS-02's, FS-03's, and entry-level officers. This meant that there was not a lot of depth and experience, so managing the staff was very different from Vienna, and I had to pay a lot of attention to it.

At an embassy, broadly speaking, there is an ambassador who does high-level policy work and public diplomacy. She or he is the public face of the U.S. Mission. The DCM in general concentrates on internal operations. But when I got to Istanbul I quickly realized that I was supposed to do both, external and internal, because there was no Deputy Principal Officer. The next person below me on the totem pole was the Pol-Econ Chief. One of my management accomplishments in Istanbul was changing this structure. It took a while, but after a year or so I succeeded in convincing both the Embassy and Washington to create the position of Deputy Principal Officer — which had in fact existed years before, but had been abolished. The establishment of the DPO helped me considerably in managing the workload. Still, even with that change I always felt that I was doing two jobs at once. Both were very interesting, but I was very busy!

Q: I think the Department eliminated several deputy principal officer positions as a cost cutting measure. They became much less common than they once were.

KILNER: I would also like to talk about the Consulate General building for a few minutes. It has an interesting history. In one of our first conversations, Robin, I talked about my first assignment in Istanbul (1982-83) and working in the historic Palazzo Corpi building. You'll recall that this was a beautiful, classical, Italianate structure built in the late 19th century. It had served as the U.S. Embassy during the late Ottoman Empire, and became a Consulate after Turkey's capital moved to Ankara. However, as Turkey's internal security situation deteriorated from the late 1970s onward, the Consulate found itself increasingly vulnerable to a terrorist attack. In fact there were a couple of rockets fired at the building at one point, which fortunately missed their target. In addition, as beautiful as the palazzo was, it was not very functional as a modern office space. So ultimately, the USG decided to move. After a lot of work, such a move was finally accomplished in 2003 when the U.S. opened a new and much more modern building up the Bosphorus in a neighborhood called Istinye. Many long-time Turkish employees at the Consulate — who loved the old building and its very central location — complained about our move to the city's periphery. But those complaints came to a stop when, about six months after this relocation, Turkish terrorists staged a severe attack on

the British Consulate General just down the street from the Palazzo Corpi. The car bomb they set off killed about 25 employees, including the British Consul General. After the attackers were apprehended, they said they had wanted to hit the Americans but could not. So they targeted the Brits instead. That stopped the complaints about our move to a new building and more secure location.

Q: Rightly so. What terrorist group was it?

KILNER: It was a left-wing Turkish group, not a fundamentalist international Islamic group. Broadly speaking there were two strains of terrorism in Turkey — one oriented toward international Islamist terrorism like al-Qaida or ISIS. And then there has been a radical leftist, secular, indigenous strain of Turkish terrorism that dates back to the early 1970s if not the late 1960s. The attack on the British Consulate was more the latter, as I recall.

Our new Consulate General was actually a very nice working space — tastefully designed with lots of light and adequate room for everybody. It has a nice view of the Bosphorus from the cafeteria. And the building includes a fountain designed by Maya Lin, who designed the Vietnam War Memorial on the Washington Mall. There are two negatives with the new Consulate, however. One is that, viewed from the outside and down below along the Bosphorus, it looks like a fortress or even a Crusader Castle up on the hill. It presents a quite negative image of the United States in some respects. The Second disadvantage is that the Consulate is quite far from the city center. Depending on the traffic, it would usually take 45-minutes to one hour to get to any business appointment. So a single meeting could chew up half of my work day.

On the subject of terrorism and security, there were two U.S. government officials in Turkey with 24/7 security protection. One of course was the Ambassador in Ankara. The other was the Consul General in Istanbul. My Residence was in a pretty secure location, although there was only one access road leading up to it. There was a guard booth in front manned around the clock. Whenever I went anywhere I was in an armored car, with a Consulate driver and a Turkish policeman in the front passenger seat. There was also a follow-car with a driver and another policeman. Whenever I got out to walk anywhere the two Turkish policemen would be at my side.

This arrangement took some getting used to, but the two policemen assigned to me were very polite, and over time I came to know them rather well. I got to exercise my Turkish all the time with them. When I first arrived at Post, the rule was that I had to call in this security detail every time I set foot off the residential compound, even for a short stroll in the picturesque neighborhood where we lived. This I thought was excessive, so I convinced the RSO to agree that I could take random neighborhood walks without any predictable pattern. So I gained that little bit of freedom, but otherwise the security detail was with me all the time. I must admit that in some respects it was very convenient. Istanbul had become a city of about 16 million people — super crowded, crazy busy, and I was going places all the time. It was a real luxury to have my OMS simply call the

drivers to say where and when I would be going that day. The car would be waiting for me, and I could read or whatever in the back seat while the driver battled Istanbul traffic.

We were always vigilant regarding security threats. Things did happen from time to time. The year before I arrived in Istanbul there had been a shooting just outside the front gates of the Consulate. It seemed to have been a local gunfight of some sort, but one or two policemen were killed. That left an impression on everyone.

Personally, my "closest call" came right toward the end of my assignment. Jan and I were being driven to the French National Day event — July 14, 2013. We were sitting in the back seat of the armored Cadillac, going to the *Palais de France*, the lovely French Consulate General in the very crowded central part of Istanbul. My driver had chosen a route through the back streets of a rather sketchy neighborhood. This was during a period of unrest in the city generally, which I will get to in a minute. All of a sudden we ran into a roving band of young men — presumably Kurds — with white bandanas masking their faces, rampaging through the area. They were picking up cobblestones and smashing windows — stuff like that. When they spotted a luxury car coming towards them they presumed it was some elite official, even if they did not know who. So they charged the Cadillac. Very fortunately my driver, Erdoğan, remembered the evasive driving techniques he had learned in training and reacted to the situation magnificently. He did a J-turn, throwing the car into reverse in a very narrow space and managing a 180-degree maneuver. That allowed us to get away…but not before one member of the gang caught up with the car and smashed a heavy cobblestone against the rear window — right behind my head. Luckily the "bulletproof" glass held, although it did crack and had to be replaced. We then continued on to the French National Day. And I had a story to tell at the reception.

By the way, my security detail never failed to impress the many personal visitors that came to our residence in Istanbul. We had many guests, although not as many as in Rome or Vienna. Often the single thing they remembered most about their visit was my personal security package. Non-Foreign Service guests had never seen this kind of arrangement and were pretty surprised and impressed that I had it with me all the time. "Life in the big city," I would shrug. (Laughs).

The last point I'd like to make regarding terrorism is that this was serious business not only in Istanbul. In fact, the worst incident during my assignment occurred at the Embassy in Ankara. A member of an Islamist terrorist group came into the controlled access facility through which visitors enter the Embassy. When the guards started to examine his belongings he blew himself up, killing one of the Turkish guards and injuring a couple of others. This attack on the Embassy attracted international attention and understandably gave all Mission staff quite a jolt.

Q: Was it also domestic or was this an international group?

KILNER: My recollection is that it was a group with foreign ties.

Q: Was it ISIS?

KILNER: I believe so, if I remember correctly. I think that's enough on terrorism and security. Let's turn to more positive issues related to this assignment.

I'd like to talk further about my engagement with Turkish civil society in Istanbul and the kind of events we did at the Consulate. This was the work that made my last assignment so interesting and so much fun. My predecessor as Consul General once told me that she thought her job was akin to "skimming the cream off the top" of diplomatic work in the Foreign Service. That's not a bad metaphor, and in Istanbul that layer of cream was about as thick as it gets. Let me offer a few examples to illustrate.

For years I have been something of a swimmer, and I especially love swimming in open waters when I have the chance. I used to do a bit of surfing in my younger days. Anyway, for several years there has been a midsummer swimming event in the Bosphorus, sponsored by the Turkish Olympic Committee. Authorities close the straits for about half a day to hold a cross-channel swimming competition for about 1,000 participants. I was among them during each of my three years in Istanbul. All swimmers were ferried to the Asian side of the Bosphorus, where we dove off a landing and then swam about four miles down the strait to another landing on the European side. The idea was to swim out to the center of the channel and be pushed by the current flowing south. Most people took between one and one-and-a-half hours to complete the swim. The trickiest part was getting out of the current at the right time on the European side; if the current swept you past the "finish line" you would humiliatingly be plucked out of the water by a patrol boat. I had been on the Bosphorus many, many times in various boats, but I found it incredibly exhilarating to be out in the middle of the channel just by myself. So much so that during my first year I simply stopped for a while to float around, gazing at the historic buildings, palaces, and fortresses that line the shores. I did less of this "lolling around" my second and third years in the event, so I improved my time each year. My third and last year, I also entered an even more challenging swim across the Dardanelles near Çanakkale, not far from the ruins of Troy. That one took almost two hours, but gave me a sense of accomplishment when I finally made it to the Asian shore!

Another memorable event was International Jazz Day, created under UNESCO auspices in 2011 and which Turkey agreed to host in April 2013. As you can imagine there was a large contingent of American jazz luminaries. So even though this was an international and Turkish event, our Consulate's Public Affairs Section played a supporting role. We hosted a big reception at the Consul General's Residence for the American stars, which included musicians such as Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Branford Marsalis and Esperanza Spalding. After a bit of coaxing, Herbie Hancock played a few pieces on our somewhat rickety piano. This event was a super-hot ticket, and our Turkish guests were over the moon about being invited. By the way, there were a few other opportunities to meet other top American performers who came to Istanbul. One was American opera star Reneé Fleming, whom I met at a reception after her concert in one of the city's historic Byzantine churches. Another time Jan and I met Ben Affleck while he was shooting a scene from the movie "Argo" in Hagia Sophia.

One of our first events in Istanbul was an international basketball (FIBA) championship, in which the final was between the U.S. and Turkish teams. Turkey's President and Prime Minister both attended, but the U.S. team won quite handily. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton came through once for a speaking event at a private university, so I had the opportunity to spend a little time with him. And former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor stayed at our Residence for two nights.

On a handful of occasions, our Public Affairs Section was able to arrange private tours for Jan and me as Consul General. One of the most memorable was an incredible "salvage excavation" of a one-time Byzantine harbor near the Sea of Marmara. Scores of ancient ships and other items were in the process of being "rescued" from a giant pit before construction work began on a major new transport system interchange. Toward the end of my assignment I had personal guided tours of the main Ottoman palaces — Topkapı Palace, Dolmabahçe Palace, as well as Hagia Sophia church. These are among Turkey's most popular tourist sites, but our personal tours were arranged on the day they were closed, so we had the places all to ourselves.

While most of our events were in Istanbul itself, some took place elsewhere. For example, every year there is a very moving set of ceremonies, including one at sunrise, to commemorate the World War One Battle of Gallipoli along the Dardanelles. One year I had the opportunity to represent the United States at this event. Less seriously, one year Jan and I attended the annual "greased wrestling contest" in the city of Edirne near the Turkish-Greek border. Bare chested, male wrestlers wearing calf-length breeches and soaked in olive oil would have it on a big grass field. The festival has a long tradition and is a sight to behold!

Perhaps the final point I would make is that, despite the fun of events like the ones I've just described, much of representational work at a Consulate — showing the flag — does get rather repetitive. Still, when unending receptions and dinners take place in stunning settings like Ottoman mansions on the shores of the Bosphorus, I never complained. I knew how lucky I was.

Q: And so while it is fun, such work is also a way of forming and maintaining a base of friendship between countries, so that when we get in tough spots there is some built-up goodwill that can hopefully provide room to work through problems.

KILNER: Yes, goodwill is the right word. If I am not mistaken, it was George Shultz who likened diplomacy to tending one's garden: it requires continuous attention in order to flourish. I think that's right. If you want to be able to call on people when you need their support, it helps greatly to have been engaged with them already under less stressful circumstances. It meant something to Turks of all stripes to have the senior U.S. Government representative show up at their dinners, their receptions, their conferences. My presence — not me personally, but "the American Consul General — added weight and prestige to their events. Even if I wasn't getting something out of it immediately, they saw that I was playing by their rules. Then later, if I wanted to get a high-level U.S. visitor in to see a busy Turkish official, they would be more inclined to return the favor.

I think soft power is not to be dismissed. Many times in my career I have worked where there was substantial skepticism toward U.S. Government foreign policies. But almost everywhere there has been real interest and enthusiasm for American culture, or at least some aspects of it. Culture offers a non-political way to promote a positive view of the United States in the world, and generate significant goodwill in the process.

Now, to switch gears again, I would like to address another important subject we have not yet touched upon. That is the subject of events in Syria at that time. This was for me a completely unanticipated development. You may recall that the so-called "Arab Spring" broke out in late 2010, first in Tunisia. From there it spread across the Arab world, reaching Syria by March of 2011. Initially it was very unclear where these protests in Syria were going, but it didn't take long before the Assad government started taking a very harsh and repressive crackdown. We all know now the terrible evolution of that conflict, but it was just unfolding while I was in Istanbul. And from mid-2011 through the remainder of my assignment the Consulate General became an important U.S. platform for keeping in touch with many of the Syrian opposition figures who had fled to Turkey. Many of them were at that time in Istanbul. So before long we had about ten State Department Arabists who set up shop in our Consulate and met regularly with Syrian dissidents in Turkey. One of them had been our DCM in Damascus.

Q: That is a lot of people.

KILNER: It was indeed! Over time, our small Consulate in Adana (where I had worked years before), has been beefed up and assumed much of the Syria work. But in the beginning ConGen Istanbul was the only place in Turkey that could accommodate such a staffing increase without too much trouble. At first I went to a few meetings with Arab dissidents just to see what it was like, although I didn't really have any substantive reason for being there. So after I had satisfied my curiosity, my contribution was primarily to provide managerial oversight of our Syria operation. I wanted to make sure that our newcomers were getting the office space and technical support they needed, but without severely disrupting the Consulate's regular work. Very fortunately, we were able to balance everyone's needs without too much difficulty because we were in a quite new and relatively spacious building, as I discussed earlier. DEA had to give up some space, as did the Regional Security Office. In any case, the conflict in Syria had a significant impact upon Consulate operations from mid-2011 through the rest of my assignment.

Q: Were there a lot of Syrian refugees coming into Turkey in order to get to Western Europe or did that start later?

KILNER: I think some had that goal in mind. Almost immediately, however, Turkey itself began to absorb very large numbers of Syrian refugees. Most seemed to hope they would be able to return home before too long. Sadly, that did not turn out to be the case. Turkey and Lebanon were the two countries with the most refugees — several million — largely because of their geographic position. As things went from bad to worse in Syria,

the refugee issue became a big problem for Turkey and refugees began to spread out from the border region to other parts of the country. But this all came after my time there.

Now, as we wrap up this conversation, I would like to talk about both the end of my Istanbul assignment and the end of my Foreign Service career. I've already noted how serving as Istanbul Consul General was personally a highly satisfying bookend to my career — the other bookend being my first assignment in the same city 30 years earlier. There were a handful of close Turkish friends we had made during that first posting and with whom we had stayed in touch over the years. To be able to see those friends again regularly during this last assignment was very heartwarming.

Another closing of the circle related to the Palazzo Corpi — the building where I issued visas in 1982-83. I've already explained why the U.S. moved out of that building in 2003. But despite that move, the U.S. did not sell the Palazzo Corpi. What happened to it is a long and complicated tale that I won't go into in detail. But in a nutshell, the U.S. Congress prevented the State Department from getting rid of this historic property, even though we could not use it due to security concerns. After many discussions and different ideas regarding what to do, the State Department ended up offering a long-term lease — 50 or 75 years — to a high-end British luxury hotel chain, which agreed to restore the palazzo to its former glory. This had all been negotiated before I arrived in 2010, but the restoration work had not started. So I had the opportunity to witness almost the entire renovation process during the course of my assignment. I made my first visit to the site just before work got underway and saw with my own eyes how this once beautiful building had been badly mistreated by its American occupants. It was in fact quite appalling! While a few rooms upstairs were still basically intact, in other areas — the communications office, for example — had been mauled and looked like a wreck. To walk through the old building that first time was like a visit to a spook-house. I almost had a kind of out-of-body experience! In the Consul General's office I could virtually see the ghost of former CG Daniel Newberry. My own former office was completely unrecognizable, having been converted into Marine Post One. Not long afterward, the serious restoration work started, and I have quite a number of photographs of the process, which I took on subsequent visits. I must say that the hotel chain invested a ton of money and did a marvelous job restoring frescoes, decorative molding, and the like. The U.S. Government never could have afforded that kind of work. I have not visited the palazzo in its new incarnation as a hotel, but I've seen photographs and it's very impressive! A stay there for one or two nights is definitely on my personal bucket-list.

Here's another closing of the circle. During our discussion of my first assignment to Istanbul, I mentioned that the United States was the only country that maintained a motor launch, a vintage boat named the *Hiawatha* that had been imported by the then-Ambassador Joseph Grew and his successor in the 1930s. Many European embassies had such boats in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but all had given them up except the U.S. The Consulate was able to maintain the *Hiawatha* into the early 1980s as effectively part of the motorpool. But not too long after I left Istanbul in 1983, the State Department decreed that no more public funds would be allocated to support the boat. The Consulate could retain the boat but would have to maintain it using outside resources. There followed a few rounds of private fundraising efforts in the business

community and with other "Friends of the Hiawatha," which literally and figuratively kept the vintage boat afloat for some years, But this was not a sustainable long-term model.

When we arrived in 2010, the *Hiawatha* was still running, but clearly rather worse for wear. We enjoyed a couple of outings during our first months in Istanbul, but before long another big engine problem emerged that would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to repair. So things were not looking good at that point. However, I had an idea. I knew that Turkey's leading businessman, Rahmi Koç, was an avid collector of many things. And he had a transport museum on the Golden Horn, which housed collections of automobiles, a small train, a few boats, and other things. I had heard that for decades Rahmi Bey had had his eye on the *Hiawatha,* as a unique addition for his transportation museum. So I thought that perhaps we could work out a long-term lease of the *Hiawatha* to the museum. Without much difficulty, I sold Ambassador Ricciardone on this idea. So one late afternoon, midway through my tour, Frank and I went over to Rahmi Koç's office and presented our long-term lease proposal. He was intrigued by it and agreed to appoint a team to work with the Consulate on the details. So soon thereafter, we started negotiations. The Koç side immediately said they wanted to buy the *Hiawatha* outright, but we stood our ground and said we would not sell it. Anyway, after a few months of back-and-forth discussions, with Consulate Management Officer Jonathan Mennuti handling the details, we successfully reached agreement on a long term lease. The agreement described the U.S. Consul General and Rahmi Koç or his designee as "Co-Custodians" of the *Hiawatha.* The Koç organization agreed to fully restore the boat, after which it would be permanently docked at the transportation museum on the Golden Horn. Importantly, the agreement also specified that during the warm weather sailing season U.S. Mission staff would have access to use of the *Hiawatha* within specified limits and conditions. In other words, Koç undertook the maintenance of the boat in return for the right to permanently display it, while the Consulate and Embassy staff retained the ability to use it within certain limits. It was a good deal.

In a way, the solution for the *Hiawatha* resembled that for the *Palazzo Corpi*: the USG granted an outside private entity a long-term lease in return for a substantial investment in a valuable American property. The Koç firm invested a lot of money to fully restore the *Hiawatha.* I have not seen the final result in person, but I have seen pictures. The boat has essentially been rebuilt from top to bottom. I'm sure it looks better now than at any time since the 1930s. So to conclude this vignette, I often tell people — only half-jokingly — that however ephemeral my other achievements in Istanbul, my one concrete accomplishment was to keep the Hiawatha afloat — hopefully for many years to come.

OK, let's wrap up on a more serious note. Looking back on the summer of 2013 and my final weeks in Istanbul, I see that period as a turning point for Turkey — the time when Erdoğan turned decisively away from a period of reform to one of authoritarian control. A decade of hope and promise gave way to the negative trends we have seen since then. The pivotal event was the so-called "Gezi Park protests" that broke out in Istanbul and spread to the rest of the country in May/June of 2013. The protests derived their name from a scraggly little park on one side of Taksim Square, the symbolic heart of secular

Turkey. Erdoğan's government had planned to redevelop the area according to a neo-Ottoman plan, including a big new mosque as the focal point of the square. The protests began as an environmental action against the removal of trees, but they quickly became political. And as unrest spread beyond Istanbul, the level of political discontent in Turkey became obvious to all.

Gezi Park protests in Istanbul, June 2013

The widespread protests clearly rattled Erdoğan and his government. For several days, observers were waiting to see whether he would reach out to the opposition or crack down on it. Soon it became clear that he chose the latter path, and Turkey's downward spiral began. The Gezi Park protests marked the beginning of that turn, but the trend later accelerated mainly because of two other developments. One was a series of corruption investigations by judicial officials into Erdoğan's family and inner circle. But the big one was the failed coup attempt of July 2016, which led to a severe and widespread crackdown against tens of thousands of Turkish citizens. Through the summer of 2013, however, the political situation still remained unsettled and fluid. Everyone was wondering where Turkey was heading, and it was this theme that I explored and reported on in all of my farewell calls at the end of my assignment. It made for a truly fascinating round of meetings — among the most interesting conversations in my entire Foreign Service career.

Let me offer one personal anecdote regarding the Gezi Park protests. While the protests elsewhere in the country petered out pretty quickly, they continued in Istanbul for a couple of weeks. Protesters had moved in to occupy Taksim Square around-the-clock, setting up an encampment. Initially it appeared that Turkish security forces would try to wait them out, and a kind of standoff developed. This standoff attracted national and even international coverage, and of course we were watching the course of events closely from the Consulate. I was personally incredibly curious what the scene was like up close, but I stayed away. I knew that if the U.S. Consul General (or anyone else from the Consulate)

were spotted among the protesters, all sorts of conspiracy theories would immediately spring up.

Q: What you mean is you would be caught up in the political controversies.

KILNER: Journalists would inevitably claim that the U.S. Government was pulling the strings behind the scene. The Turkish media is inclined to see conspiracies everywhere, very often with a supposed U.S. connection. I could just see the headlines, so I stayed away. Anyway, the standoff continued for a couple of weeks, and remained peaceful. So one Saturday afternoon when I had a little free time I decided to go down to the Covered Bazaar to visit some merchant friends and just hang out for a while. I did that, and then had my driver take me back home. But en route back to the CGR, on the spur of the moment asked my driver to park a few blocks from Taksim Square so I could take a stroll through the protest area on foot. I was just dressed in casual clothes — dockers and a polo shirt — so I didn't particularly look like a U.S. Government official. And I asked my two bodyguards to walk about 30 feet behind me — not at my side. I had my smaller digital camera with me , so I was able to take photographs. Things in the square were calm, and I strolled around taking pictures and soaking up the atmosphere for about an hour. More than anything, it reminded me of Berkeley circa 1968 — peaceful but with a radical, revolutionary-left communal feel: people cooking food and sharing it; pop-up libraries offering free books; people making speeches. After about an hour my curiosity was satisfied and I left — with indelible memories and a great collection of photos. At that point I'm sure my security detail breathed a sigh of relief. The coda to this story, however, is that that very night, Turkish security forces moved in with water cannons and flushed the protesters and their encampment of the Taksim Square by force.

Scott & Jan say farewell to the Bosphorus

OK, now I promise to conclude with one final anecdote — a personal one that means a great deal to me. The staff of Consulate General Istanbul, both Turkish and American,

was well aware how much Jan and I had treasured this final Foreign Service posting, so I was certain we would be given a nice send-off. But we were astonished and nearly moved to tears when, on my penultimate afternoon at the Consulate, the staff surprised us by unveiling a lovely wall-panel of Turkish Iznik tiles, which they dedicated in our honor. The context for this was that for many years there had been two such tile panels in the old Palazzo Corpi, dedicated to the decades-long service of two former local employees. When the Consulate moved to the new Istinye building, those panels were relocated to a prominent position on a ground floor corridor of the building. "Our" panel was designed to harmonize with the other two and placed in the same area. Next to the panel is a plaque that reads: "*This Iznik tile panel is presented by friends and colleagues of Scott and Jan Kilner in honor of their unique contributions to Mission Turkey and U.S.-Turkish relations during Scott's four assignments in Turkey over thirty-one years.*"

Consulate dedication of tile panel to honor Scott & Jan's four tours of duty in Turkey

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2023: REFLECTIONS ON MY CAREER

Q: Good afternoon. It is July 14, 2023. We are finishing our conversation with Scott Kilner. Scott, after a wonderful set of sessions over the past few months, I'd like to give you an opportunity to offer us your final reflections on the State Department, your career,

on foreign policy, on advice to new entrants in our career, anything you want to talk about.

KILNER: Thank you so much, Robin. This has been quite a project, and it's been a real pleasure to work with you! Thank you for making it easy and fun to reconnect with you after quite a number of years. I've found these conversations very engaging, and I appreciate your giving me the opportunity.

In our last conversation, I spoke about my final assignment in Istanbul and why it was such a satisfying conclusion to my Foreign Service career. Inevitably, all things come to an end, but for every door that closes another one opens. That was how I tried to look at things in September 2013 when the time to leave finally came. Our Consulate's crackerjack Management Officer, Jonathan Mennuti, had uncovered an obscure rule I'd never heard of — a rule that authorizes Principal Officers departing post for the final time to fly business class. So, for the one and only time in my career, Jan and I flew business class on official government travel back to the U.S. We toasted the occasion with a glass of champagne on the plane to Frankfurt and then on to San Francisco.

Before offering some general observations, let me say a word or two about the checkout process in Washington. I found I could get away with about two weeks of unstructured time in Washington before my formal retirement date. I was formally "seconded" to the Turkey Desk, but in reality I was able to come and go as I pleased. Some of the Turkey watchers around Washington were interested in talking to me, so INR organized an interagency roundtable, which generated an interesting discussion over a couple of hours.

But the most fun and personally rewarding part about those last two weeks was a series of lunches and dinners with Foreign Service friends I particularly liked and admired, and who were in DC at that time. It was not a long list — about ten people, as I recall. A couple of them were DCMs I had worked for along the way; two were my able deputies while I was EUR/WE Director. They were all individuals I had worked closely with but had not seen for a few years. So that was quite fun.

On my last day in the Department, the Turkey Desk told me they would like to organize a small office farewell at the end of the afternoon. I decided to arrive at Main State about an hour before that gathering. I wanted to wander up to the 7th Floor one last time, thinking I might never be able to see it again after that day. So I took the elevator upstairs and walked toward the Rotunda Room outside of the Secretary's suite — a room I had passed through countless times during my Washington assignments. Of course there was a security guard at the entrance, a very courteous African American gentleman, so I explained to him why I was there. I had a small pocket digital camera with me. Not a smart phone, but just a little digital camera. And I asked him if I could take a couple of pictures as mementos of the occasion, and he said "of course." And then he offered to take a picture of me wherever I wanted. I thought that was a very thoughtful gesture.

Q: That area has a lot of nice portraits of past Secretaries of State.

KILNER: Exactly. The walls are covered with official portraits. I surveyed them briefly, and the one that caught my eye was of Larry Eagleburger — the one career FSO who had become Secretary of State during my time in the Foreign Service. The portrait really captured "The Eagle" — glowering out at the painter in a manner that was both serious and humorous at the same time. I had some amusing interactions with Eagleburger while he was Deputy Secretary of State and I was working on Austria, a country in which he took a surprising interest. Anyway, the guard took a photo of me standing in front of Eagleburger's portrait, and then I left and went down to EUR/SE.

Scott's last day in the State Department, standing before 7th Floor portrait of former Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger

The send-off organized by the Turkey Desk was more or less a typical cake-and-bubbly affair. EUR Deputy Assistant Secretary Eric Rubin kindly came down from the EUR Front Office to say a few words and to present me with the Secretary of State's Career

Achievement Award, which I have right here on the wall of my home office in Palo Alto. What I remember most clearly was Eric's comment that he had been impressed by how much I had enjoyed my work in Istanbul…that I had brought real enthusiasm to it. Eric was right, of course, but it was nice of him to say it.

These events were all on a Friday afternoon, after which I returned to our hotel, the River Inn at Foggy Bottom. The following Monday morning, September 30, I walked to the Department for the last time. I turned in my State I.D. at the Badge Office in the basement and then left. It was a simple, mundane procedure, but nevertheless one that gave me a near out-of-body experience. A clear line had been crossed. For a few days this rather surreal feeling lingered on, but then faded and life continued. Jan and I flew out to the Bay Area and began our new life back in Palo Alto, the hometown where we had both grown up — and from where I have been speaking with you.

Q: So, what was your new life like? What kind of things did you become involved in?

KILNER: As much as I enjoyed my Foreign Service career, to be candid I was feeling a bit worn out. As interesting as my last few assignments were, after being overseas for 18 of the last 21 years, and on duty 24/7 in senior officer positions, I was looking forward to "a less hurried life." I think I've managed to do that pretty successfully and still stay involved on my own turns. Here in Palo Alto we were just a stone's throw from Stanford University; it's just a 15-minute bike ride from our home. I have not sought any kind of full-time commitment at the university (I'm too protective of my newly won freedom), but I have done a good deal of networking, especially with the Turkey crowd at Stanford. Very many events related to international affairs are open to the community, so I have selectively participated in those. And I've made myself available to speak to students interested in the Foreign Service as a career. I have also done a fair amount of public speaking around the Bay Area. When we came back here in 2013 everybody was interested in what was happening in Turkey. So I was invited to give a number of talks to local organizations such as World Affairs Councils, of which there are several in the Bay Area. After it became clear where Turkey was heading, public interest waned. But then as our withdrawal from Afghanistan unfolded, organizations asked me to share my experience in that country. And of course I've always looked for opportunities to talk to groups about the importance of foreign policy and maintaining a professional diplomatic service.

Another activity has been involvement with the Foreign Service Association of Northern California, an organization that provides a platform for retired FSOs to stay in touch with one another. It's a social organization that also does some professional outreach. Actually, I've been on the Board for about eight years, and President of the organization for the past four years.

Q: And photography, right?

KILNER: Absolutely! Continuing to organize the thousands and thousands of photos I've taken throughout my Foreign Service career.

Now I would like to offer a few general reflections on how I look back upon my career in the Foreign Service from my current vantage point. It's a subject I have given considerable thought to. The first point I would make is that, looking back across the arc of my 32 years in the Service, I see big changes in two areas. Neither of them will probably surprise you. The first is the communications revolution; the second is the security environment.

Regarding communications, of course everyone in the United States has been impacted by the advent of the internet, cell phones, digital technology, and so forth. But I think the impact upon the Foreign Service has been greater than for most organizations in the private sector or in the government because of the global nature of American diplomacy. Today "Headquarters," that is the Department of State, can communicate instantaneously with embassies and consulates wherever they are around the world. Information bounces back and forth in ways that would have been inconceivable at the start of my career. In some ways this "new reality" has almost erased the psychological distance between an overseas post and Washington. Of course living in a foreign culture is always going to be a different experience, but the fact that FSOs — especially senior officers — can be pinged by Washington anytime day or night for some ostensibly urgent reason has created a feeling of interconnectedness that did not exist before. One just has to accept it.

The rise of email also poses some interesting questions on the boundary between formal and informal communication channels — between "record cable traffic" and informal but very substantive emails channels. At the beginning of my career "record cable traffic" was all we had. All outgoing messages had to pass through a formal clearance process. In contrast, the controls on email communications and the status of such messages are much more ambiguous — or at least they were at the time I left the State Department. The advent of email gives rise to a host of questions on the handling and management of classified information in a very hierarchical organization.

The second big change I saw during my career was the steady deterioration of the security environment. I saw this from the very start. One of my A-100 classmates went to Beirut for his first assignment, and was in the Consular Section when the Embassy was bombed in 1983. He got under his desk and survived, even though half the ceiling collapsed around him. Then there were the 1998 bombings of U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. September 11, 2001 was a watershed event, spurring a worldwide State Department effort to harden its infrastructure. Many newly constructed buildings were fortress-like structures far outside city centers. We all saw the need for them, but everyone also regretted that they were necessary. Such secure embassy compounds do not project the image of openness and engagement with the local society that we all should want. As we discussed last time, ConGen Istanbul was a good example of such a facility. These buildings, which look like fortresses and have strict access controls, complicate and impede our public diplomacy efforts in particular.

And these security trends were not limited to overseas. When I think back on the way access controls at Main State changed during my career, it is remarkable! Unless my memory is playing tricks on me, in the early 1980s you could walk into Main State almost unimpeded. There was a reception desk to offer directions, but few if any real

controls. A turning point may have been an event in June 1985, when a mentally deranged young man got into the building and shot his mother on the 7th Floor of the State Department, probably not more than 100 feet or so from the office of Secretary Shultz. Especially after September 11, the changes to Main State's physical security have been dramatic. The block of C Street between 21st and 23rd Streets were effectively closed to regular traffic. Large cement planter boxes were placed to prevent vehicles and potential car bombs from getting too close to the building. Inspection of I.D. badges became much stricter. Security guards began to walk the corridors at all hours of the day, among other things to ensure that employees were wearing their badges. All of these measures have been implemented for legitimate reasons, but they have created a very different working environment from before.

Now to wrap things up, I would like to say a few words about what I see as the most important issues I was involved in during my career. I mean from a big picture, 30,000 foot level. I considered myself more than fortunate in that every one of my assignments was genuinely interesting in one way or another — some perhaps more than others, but not a single one was a dud. A couple of them may not have been of high importance to American foreign policy — thinking here of Vienna and perhaps Rome — but they were still really interesting cities where I enjoyed the work.

But in terms of my involvement in issues that did matter to U.S. foreign policy I would say there were three. The first was Germany. I was one of the relatively few American diplomats who served in the German Democratic Republic (1983-85) and saw that strange regime close-up. And then a few years later I spent three years (1989-92) in the Germany/Austria/Switzerland Office at the time the Berlin Wall opened and Germany was reunified. This was an extraordinary experience during an historic period in Europe. There was no better place to work in the State Department at that time. Of course the big decisions were being made far above our desk officer pay grade. Still, we were reading the cable traffic from Berlin and elsewhere as history was being made. We felt we had a ringside seat.

The second big issue in which I was even more directly involvement was Afghanistan. We had a couple of long discussions about that earlier, so here I would simply underline that at Bagram Air Field and at Embassy Kabul in 2009-10, the sustained high-level attention and material resources we received from Washington were completely without parallel in my career. It was off the charts and in a category by itself.

Finally, the third big issue was Turkey. Not any single assignment in Turkey, but rather being able to work on this strategic, complex country over a protracted period of time: four different assignments over more than 30 years. During these decades, Turkey evolved dramatically, as did its relationship with the United States. Turkey may not be in the very top tier of U.S. foreign policy priorities, like China or Russia, but it's definitely in the second tier. We continue to see this today with the influence that Turkey is having on the conflict in Ukraine and NATO expansion, to name just a couple of areas.

My last observation is that, when I think of all of the things we have discussed about a career in the Foreign Service, my strongest feeling is one of profound gratitude. In our

first conversation, I talked about the almost comical difficulties I had getting into the Foreign Service — failed exams, repeated security interviews, the Board of Examiners mis-scoring my application. But I am very, very glad that I stuck with it. If, at the time I finally joined the Foreign Service, I had asked a fortune teller to predict what my future would hold, and if she had listed precisely the assignments that in fact I did get, I would have asked for my money back!! In other words, my career far, far surpassed what I had anticipated at the outset. My wife, Jan, was a full partner and totally supportive throughout, for which I am eternally thankful. Together with our two children, Derek and Melinda, we were able to live in so many interesting places and undertake such rewarding work! Especially during the last 11 years, when I had great senior assignments in Rome, Vienna, Afghanistan, and Istanbul, I felt as if I had run the table in Las Vegas. So I am very grateful, and I appreciate having had the opportunity to share my thoughts and memories with you, Robin.

Q: Well, I think that is a perfect way to end these interviews. I don't have any further questions.

End of interview