

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

AMBASSADOR JOHN E. LANGE

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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INTERVIEW

BACKGROUND

Q: Okay. Today is the nineteenth of July 2018, with Ambassador John E. Lange, L-a-n-g-e. And this is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy.

And you go by John, I take it?

LANGE: Yes.

Q: Well John, let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

LANGE: I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on December 31, 1948. I grew up in the relatively rural community of Durham, now part of the distant Milwaukee suburb of Muskego.

Q: Let's talk about your family a bit. What do you know about the Langes on your father's side first?

LANGE: Both my father's and my mother's ancestors immigrated from Germany in the latter half of the nineteenth century. My father, Edward W. Lange, was born in 1917, the second generation born in the United States. He grew up on a sixty-acre family farm that was less than five miles from the home where I grew up. He would milk cows and clean up the barn every day before going to school, and he attended a public high school that emphasized teaching agriculture. But he decided he didn't want a career as a farmer.

After high school he wanted to go to college to be a schoolteacher, but his parents insisted that he stay home to work on the farm. I always thought it was a shame that he was never able to go to college. His younger brothers Ray and Marv stayed on the land as farmers for their lifetimes, but it turned out that my father didn't remain on the farm for very long. A year after graduating from secondary school he took a job selling cars at a small Pontiac and Buick dealership and gas station in Durham owned by Ed Bosch. He once told me how proud he was to be driving a new car every year, especially that 1938 Pontiac. He started dating Marion Bosch, whose father, Ed Bosch's brother George, owned the nearby Bosch Hardware and Implement store.

After four years, as he put it, "His friend, Uncle Sam," called. He was drafted and entered the U.S. Army a little over a month and a half after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He told me that his salary in the U.S. Army during World War II was \$21 per month for the first four months, then \$30 per month. He was promoted quickly from private to corporal to sergeant and spent time as a staff sergeant working in army hospital administration in Danville, Kentucky. Then he was sent to Europe. He wrote in his diary that their ship had its first contact with the enemy when fifteen enemy planes on reconnaissance, out of attack range, were sighted. But they made it across the Atlantic to Liverpool, England. He later landed on Utah Beach in France, which sounds historic—except that it was over three months after the Normandy invasion, and he waded to shore in a foot of water with his duffel bag on his back. He worked to establish an army hospital in Cherbourg, where heavy American casualties from the Battle of the Bulge led to an influx of patients. But he never saw battle. After hostilities in Europe ended, he expected to be transferred to the Pacific Theater. But then World War II came to an end. A little over a month after he was discharged from the army he married Marion, my mother, in January 1946.

Q: And on your mother's side?

LANGE: Marion Bosch was third generation born in the United States. She was born in 1922, an only child. In her early years, she lived with her parents in the back of the hardware store, Bosch Hardware and Implement, which had no indoor plumbing. They later moved next-door to a nice, new house, but her mother was ill and bedridden with high blood pressure. She died at age forty-five when Marion was just thirteen years old. I think that affected my mother for the rest of her life. Her father George never remarried, and his sister Harriet helped raise my mother.

Marion attended Marquette University in Milwaukee for a year but then decided to go to beautician school. She worked as a beautician in downtown Milwaukee during World War II. After my parents got married, my father started working for George Bosch at Bosch Hardware and Implement. Growing up, I got the distinct impression that it's not easy to work for a stern boss who also happens to be your father-in-law.

Q: You were a third- and fourth-generation German in Wisconsin. My grandfather came out of Wisconsin, Watertown, joined the Twenty-Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers during the Civil War. Was wounded in Gettysburg, then his regiment was part of a movement, he was put in Sherman's army, and they did the Atlanta campaign and the March to the Sea and all that.

LANGE: Fascinating history.

Q: Do you know where in Germany your ancestors were from? Does your family have any connections with their German roots?

LANGE: No, we didn't have any relations with distant relatives in Germany. One of my regrets, actually, is that I never looked up my roots even though I had tours of duty in neighboring France and Switzerland. During those postings in Western Europe, I visited Germany with my parents and we had wonderful times. We had eaten a lot of sauerkraut and sausages and potatoes when I was growing up, and much seemed familiar when we visited Germany.

Q: Okay. Well, let's talk about growing up. What was it like being a kid in your town?

LANGE: I have fond memories of growing up in what could be called a lower-middle-class household. My parents, my two younger sisters, Barbara and Cynthia, and I lived in a rather small brick ranch house that was built a couple of years after I was born. It was next to my grandfather's house, which was next to the hardware store. I remember watching the *Mickey Mouse Club* on a little black and white television and playing Little League baseball, even though I was not very adept at baseball. I started playing golf and at one point developed a makeshift nine-hole golf course on our property, very short holes that crisscrossed each other. That was fun until I learned how to hit longer drives and outgrew the course.

The thing that dominated our family life was Bosch Hardware and Implement. When I was in high school, I even wrote a paper on its history. The business sold hardware as well as International Harvester tractors and other farm implements. George Bosch, the owner and my grandfather, employed a mechanic, a salesclerk, and his son-in-law, Ed Lange. So, even though my father had not wanted to stay on the farm, he ended up dealing with farmers all the time.

As you would expect in farm country in America's Dairyland, the store sold milking machines for the dairy industry. Well, when you have dairy cows they have to be milked twice a day. I still remember occasions, maybe once every four to six months, when our family would be sitting at the dinner table at 6:00 in the evening and a farmer would

knock on the door, interrupting my father's dinner to say, Hey, my milker's not working and it's an emergency. And my father would have to leave and go fix the milker, the milking machine.

My father put in incredibly long hours. He worked Monday through Thursday and on Saturday from around 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. with a break at home for lunch and maybe a short nap. And the hardware store was open on Friday evenings, making for a very long day. It also was open on Sunday mornings from something like 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The only time my father really had off was on Sunday afternoons and on a one-week vacation every summer.

Q: Well, did you end up working there, I mean, when you were a kid?

LANGE: I thought of myself as an occasional part-time employee, but I really didn't do all that much work in the store. One of my favorite memories of summers was to "go to town," as we used to say, with my father on Fridays. He would drive into Milwaukee every Friday with the hardware store's truck and when I wasn't in school I would accompany him. We traveled seemingly all around Milwaukee going to hardware wholesalers, who sold goods in bulk that retailers like the hardware store then sold to consumers. And so, whether it was buying light bulbs and light fixtures or buying nails and bags of animal feed, whatever, there were different wholesalers all around Milwaukee. Sometimes over the summer I would take a friend along for the excursions, which usually lasted till early afternoon. For me, it was such fun. Even today, when I walk into a Home Depot, the smell brings back pleasant memories of my times in the hardware store and visiting those hardware wholesalers. Though I have to say that one of the less pleasant duties was to carry fifty-pound bags of animal feed to help empty the truck after we got back to the hardware store.

Ed Lange took over the operation of Bosch Hardware and Implement in 1961, when George Bosch was seventy-six years old. My father was proud that the store contained some 30,000 types of merchandise, while the average hardware store in that period had about 20,000. Once her three children were off to school, my mother began working in the store as a salesclerk while still maintaining our household. As I said, the hardware store really dominated our family life.

But I have to admit that I was never enthused about entering the hardware business as a career. If I had wanted to succeed my grandfather and father as the owner of the hardware and implement company in Durham, Wisconsin, I know I could have done that in a minute. My father would have been happy to have me inherit it. But I just wasn't geared to that. I wanted to go to college. And in today's world, a small store like that could never compete against the likes of Home Depot.



Edward (center) and Marion (right) meet with a customer in their hardware store (1974), where John worked while growing up

Q: You said you had two sisters?

LANGE: Yes. Barbara was born in 1952 and Cynthia was born in 1955. All of us graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which my parents were very proud of. Barb and Cindy both married Wisconsinites and still live in the state. [Addendum: Barbara died in May 2025.]

Q: Let's take elementary school. How were the teachers?

LANGE: Quite good, I thought. The Durham Hill Grade School was located right next to my family house. There were no kindergarten and no middle school back then, so I attended first through eighth grade in elementary school. When I started, there were, I believe, just two classrooms. And so, there would be a small number of students in each grade, first through fourth, all located in one classroom. I don't even know how a teacher could work like that, teaching four grades in one classroom.

Q: In the family, was there much discussion about events, I mean at meals and all, or was this sort of a quiet time? Was there any mention of Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy?

LANGE: I don't recall any discussions of Joe McCarthy, who died when I was about eight years old. My father was always really interested in politics, and once in a while we would have those discussions over the dinner table. He not only subscribed to the *Milwaukee Journal*, now called the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, which at that time was an afternoon newspaper, but also to the *Chicago Tribune*, which arrived every day by mail. I remember watching John Kennedy's inauguration on television with my father.

And I recall him coming home very worried during the Cuban Missile Crisis and saying something to the effect of, Well, we don't know if we're all gonna be around in the days to come.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: I think my father, a small businessman, was pretty conservative back then. He was very interested in current events throughout his life, but he wasn't really engaged with a political party. When I was in high school in 1964, I remember going to see Barry Goldwater give a speech in the Milwaukee Arena during his campaign for the presidency and I think it was because of my father's influence. To this day, I have never really gotten involved in party politics.

Q: Were you much of a reader early on? What about, we're talking about the early years, were you at all interested in the world beyond the United States at all?

LANGE: Yes, I liked to read all along. And, to my parents' credit, I got my urge to travel and sense of adventure from our family driving trips. We once went on a trip to Gettysburg, New York City, and Washington, and I still remember how we were burglarized while staying at what used to be the Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge across from the Watergate Hotel, if you know where that used to be.

Q: Oh, yeah.

LANGE: One of our other trips was to Denver, where my father attended a hardware convention. On the way we visited Pikes Peak and Mount Rushmore. Over the years we also visited Niagara Falls, New Orleans, the Kentucky hospital where my father had served during World War II, et cetera. All in all, even though our family lived a modest lifestyle, I read newspapers and had the pleasure of traveling that gave me an awareness of the broader United States.

A central feature of my growing up, which is still a part of my life, is a log cabin in the Wisconsin Northwoods where we would spend a week most summers. It was built on the Chippewa Flowage by my great-uncle Ed Bosch in the mid-1940s, during World War II. The land borders an Indian reservation, and Ed hired Native Americans to build it of genuine, rough-hewn logs, not the kind of refined logwood cabins you see today. The cabin property encompasses over twenty-eight acres with over 1,700 feet of lake frontage and is across from an uninhabited island. Ed sold it to his brother George, and my mother inherited it when my grandfather died in 1972. It's currently owned by my two sisters and me.

Because there were gaps between the logs, we encountered lots of bats and mice, but that made a week at the cabin more of an adventure. I have fond memories of going fishing with my grandfather and having lots of fun with friends. We would go swimming and, after I bought a motorboat, water skiing. The cabin has been improved over the years, including the addition of hot water and a shower, but it still has no telephone and remains just a beautiful, secluded, idyllic place.



Daughter Julia and John at the family cabin in Wisconsin's Northwoods (2024)

Another thing to mention is that I'm a lifelong baseball fan, following in the footsteps of my father. He first followed the Minor League Milwaukee Brewers in his youth, whereas for me it started with the Major League Milwaukee Braves. And my father, because he was self-employed, running the hardware and implement business, was able to get complimentary tickets to maybe eight or ten games a year from wholesalers who were trying to get his business. I got to see Hank Aaron, Warren Spahn, Eddie Mathews, and all those great players in their heyday in the old Milwaukee County Stadium. One of the crushing moments for Milwaukee baseball fans was when the Braves left for Atlanta after the 1965 season. It took until the 1970 season for Milwaukee to get another baseball team, the Brewers. A few years after he retired from the hardware store in about 1975, my father became an usher for the Brewers, a job he had until the last years of his life when he physically was no longer able to do it. If you love baseball, as he always did, that's the perfect part-time retirement job. He was compensated to attend baseball games—though he was only paid minimum wage and on top of that had to pay union dues.

Q: Oh, yes. Well, let's talk about high school. Where'd you go to high school?

LANGE: Muskego High School, which still exists, whereas the Durham Hill Grade School was torn down for a road expansion, even though the house next-door where I grew up is still there. Muskego High School was, I don't know, maybe a seven-mile, eight-mile ride on the school bus that took maybe thirty to forty-five minutes with all of the stops.

Q: What subjects grabbed you and which ones didn't?

LANGE: I liked studying history and current affairs, and I also liked mathematics. I was particularly interested in math at that time and at one point was recognized by the University of Wisconsin's Mathematical Talent Search for high school students. I took

Spanish classes for two years, and later, when I joined the Foreign Service, I was tested by FSI [Foreign Service Institute] and my speaking and reading scores were just embarrassingly low.

Even though I didn't remember much of my high-school Spanish, I clearly had an international interest back in high school. In 1967 I won the peace essay contest at the local Lions Club for my essay on the role of the United Nations. And I participated in a conference our school hosted for ten schools on "Mankind as a Basis for Peace." So, yeah, I always had that kind of curiosity and international interest from an early age, shall we say.

I was news editor and then feature editor of the school newspaper. But I think the biggest influence on me in high school, in retrospect, was participating in debate. I was on the high school debate team, competing against other schools. We went to debate tournaments to argue either the affirmative or negative case of that year's proposition in front of a high school teacher serving as a judge. We were very competitive. You had to do a lot of research to bolster your case. One summer I attended debate school at Marquette University. I can't even remember what the debate topics were, but it was something that I was good at and was really probably one of the most significant things I did that helped me later in life, including in law school.

Q: What about your leisure time?

LANGE: I was really into rock music, a fan of mid-1960s groups like the Yardbirds and the Animals and the Rolling Stones. I took golf lessons and played a lot of golf with friends, though I was never good enough to make the high school team. I still play golf. It's a lifelong passion, actually.

And my first real job, other than my work at the hardware store, was at McDonald's. I worked from the summer of 1966 through the summer of 1967, including part-time during my senior year in high school.

Q: What were you doing?

LANGE: I was quick at math, so I spent most of the time at the sales counter taking orders. I've seen advertisements recently in which McDonald's calls itself the best first job, and there's a lot of truth in that. It was a structured environment where I learned some skills and had a good experience, actually. We didn't make a lot of money—I think we were paid minimum wage—but they would give us ten cents worth of food for every hour worked. And when I worked there, it was a big deal when the cost of a hamburger went from fifteen cents to eighteen cents.

Q: By the time you were in high school, did the Cold War sort of intrude on it?

LANGE: Well, I mentioned the Cuban Missile Crisis and my memory of that. I would say it wasn't so much the Cold War as the specter of the Vietnam War. In fact, just a week ago I had a relative visiting, and we went to see the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the

National Mall. I looked up a person there who was a year or two ahead of me in high school, was a star on our basketball team, and ended up dying in battle in 1967. Just nineteen years old. I didn't immediately have to worry about getting drafted because I was going to go to college, but the Vietnam War was something that affected all of us in one way or another.

Q: Well, you graduated from high school when?

LANGE: In 1967. I graduated third in my high school class out of, I think, 207 students.

Q: Good heavens. So, what were you pointed towards in terms of college?

LANGE: There were two possibilities that I looked at. One was the University of Wisconsin in Madison. And I was thinking of applying to Notre Dame. The University of Wisconsin-Madison was a big land-grant university that met all my needs because it had some topnotch professors, a wide range of courses and majors, et cetera. And it had the distinct advantage of being affordable through in-state tuition. I received a Wisconsin Honor Scholarship, which meant I ended up living in a small, cooperative, scholarship dormitory where everybody had to clean and work in the kitchen on a regular schedule to reduce costs. I really needed that because of my family's financial situation, without a lot of money.

Q: Well, you were in college at Madison from when to when?

LANGE: I arrived in the fall of 1967 and got my BA degree in the spring of 1971. After a year off, which I will explain, I started law school in the fall of 1972 and got my JD degree in the spring of 1975.

I started out as a mathematics major in college. I really thought I was going to like that. I had been doing very well in high school in math, as I said. I took honors mathematics courses at the beginning. I recall taking a class that was one course beyond the first differential equations course, which is quite complicated stuff. But now, if you ask me the most basic calculus question, I can't even remember how to solve it.

After a year or two I decided I wanted to switch to a major in computer science, which was this newfangled thing back in the days of punch cards.

Q: Oh, yeah.

LANGE: Punch cards were primitive by today's standards, of course. Laughable in terms of how basic they were. I ended up losing interest in learning the complicated intricacies of computing and my grades suffered as a result. I had been taking some political science courses and switched to that as my major. That's what I got my bachelor's degree in.

Q: Out of curiosity, as you're concentrating on math, what were you thinking of using it for?

LANGE: (Laughs) That's a good question. You know, sometimes you get into a college environment and the professors would love to have you get a PhD in their field of expertise so someday you, too, could be a professor. I don't recall what I was going to do with it. Computer science was this new area that was clearly part of the future, even though it turned out not to be suited to my interests. Years later, I worked for Bill Gates at the Gates Foundation, and I certainly was never going to be Bill Gates in terms of my computer science capabilities. (Laughs)

But one of the things that really piqued my interest was the United Nations, including the University of Wisconsin Model UN. There were lots of posters around campus back in those days—that's how you promoted things—and a friend who had participated encouraged me to get involved. Because I'd had this interest in debate and in the UN in high school, I thought, Well, that could be interesting. I was enjoying myself going to UW football and basketball games and Madison's beer bars—back then in certain bars in the State of Wisconsin you could legally drink beer at age eighteen—but I also wanted to engage in serious activities separate from math and computer science. The UW Model UN was held in the spring. I represented Algeria during my freshman year and was head of the U.S. delegation in my sophomore year. And I was the secretary general of the spring 1970 Model UN conference, a very good experience. Decades later, it's no accident that I'm now working at the United Nations Foundation.



John as Secretary General of the University of Wisconsin Model UN (1970)

I was looking through some old documents and found a paper that I wrote for an undergraduate African politics course on “Prospects for the Freedom of Three Colonies in Southern Africa: Namibia, Angola and Mozambique.” Got an A. (Laughs) More importantly, all three countries became independent. I never, ever expected that, years later, I would visit those three countries as the U.S. ambassador to Botswana.

So, while I was interested in math and then computer science, I had this broader, global interest all along—even though the only foreign country I had ever visited was on driving trips to Canada.

Q: Well, did you find yourself—was the Foreign Service at all on your radar?

LANGE: No. I knew virtually nothing about it. What was on my radar was the United Nations.

After my sophomore year, in 1969, I participated in the University of Wisconsin system's UN Summer Seminar, a six-credit, eight-week undergraduate course in New York. My application made the case that I had been working closely with the UW Model UN and had a long-term interest in the UN and international affairs. We lived within walking distance of the United Nations in a New York University medical school dormitory, and our classroom was across the street from UN Headquarters. It was a really enlightening experience. I learned a lot, and I loved the excitement of living in Manhattan. This was part of my evolution, gravitating toward international affairs.

Besides my involvement in the college-level Model UN, I also helped a high school teacher who organized the first Wisconsin High School Model UN. We held the first one in one of the ornate chambers of the State Capitol building.

I also ended up joining the Dane County Chapter of UNA-USA [United Nations Association of the USA], which was the leading center of policy research and public outreach on the United Nations and multilateral issues. You could call it enlightened internationalism without particular political values. It had probably around 35,000 members across the country. I officially joined the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization in 1972 and still am a member. And I ended up getting a part-time job for a few years with UNA's Wisconsin Division, which coordinated with the chapters in Milwaukee and Madison and six other cities on grassroots programming supportive of the UN. We polled members of Congress on foreign policy issues and got the results published in local newspapers, and we published a UN and international affairs curriculum guide for secondary schools.

So, when you asked me, Stu, if I had been thinking of the Foreign Service, I probably thought that being a diplomat was unreachable for me back then. I was really oriented toward the United Nations.

Q: What were the sort of issues facing the UN when you were involved at the university?

LANGE: Good question. A Model UN, of course, deals with the wide range of issues facing the UN General Assembly in that particular year. The role of the UN Association, on the other hand, was to inform the public, through conferences and publications and media appearances and the like, about particular international topics the UN was dealing with. Back then, the Security Council was often hamstrung by the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union and their veto power. In that period you had some controversial issues, such as the 1971 General Assembly vote to admit the People's Republic of China, replacing Taiwan; the 1974 vote to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization headed by Yasser Arafat as the representative of the Palestinian people; and the 1975 vote, revoked years later, that declared Zionism was a form of

racism. There had been a strong level of support for the United Nations from the Jewish community in the United States because the UN had recognized the State of Israel in 1949, but after the Zionism equals racism declaration was passed by the General Assembly, some of that support went away, and that affected UNA. We lost members and we lost contributions.

But you also saw some big successes on important global issues where only the UN can take the lead, and UNA would highlight those. You had the first UN Environment Conference in Stockholm in 1972, which led to the establishment of the UN Environment Program in Nairobi and really stimulated the global environmental movement. The first UN World Food Conference in 1974 resulted in a declaration on the eradication of hunger and malnutrition. And International Women's Year, 1975, was marked by the first World Conference on Women in Mexico City.

Q: Well, you were at Wisconsin—which was known as a radical university—during the height of the—

LANGE: Yep.

Q: —at the time of the Vietnam radicalization. What was going on there?

LANGE: That was really an important and unavoidable part of my experience at UW-Madison in the latter half of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s. America was fighting a war that proved unwinnable, and the military draft eventually loomed for the males on campus. You couldn't avoid discussions and protests about the war.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison, along with Columbia University in New York and the University of California-Berkeley, probably were the three most prominent universities in the protest movements—

Q: Those are the ones that come to mind for me.

LANGE: Yes, exactly. Shortly after I started college, in October 1967, students protested the on-campus recruiting by the Dow Chemical Company, which manufactured napalm that was used in Vietnam. City police officers with riot sticks forcibly removed students who were blocking the Dow interviews. That really catalyzed and emboldened the pacifists and propelled Madison to the forefront of the national antiwar movement. I think it was the first protest at a major university to turn violent, and it was the first time tear gas was used to disperse a crowd on the UW campus. There's even a documentary film, "The War at Home," showing the impact of the Vietnam War on Madison and the University of Wisconsin as a microcosm of the national antiwar movement.

My own views evolved when I got to campus, and I came to oppose the war in my freshman year. I attended a speech by former heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali, who was in the midst of appealing his conviction for draft evasion, and got to shake his hand afterward. It was a lot bigger than mine. (Laughs) But it was the kind of thing where I wasn't a radical, I wasn't out there on the frontlines leading the charge and getting

teargassed. I was generally supportive of the protests. I remember one evening when I left my dorm room to watch, from the margins, the National Guard trying to put down the protests. That was the first time I smelled tear gas.

As you well know, that was just an incredible period of division in the United States. I mean, right now, when I'm speaking to you in 2018, people are looking at America's divided politics and all the backbiting on all sides, but when I reflect on the situation back then, there were huge divisions in the United States because of the Vietnam War. I have long thought that 1968 was the world's most turbulent year of my lifetime, from the Tet Offensive in Vietnam and the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy to the chaotic Democratic Convention in Chicago, from the May social uprising in France to the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia crushing the Prague Spring, from the Mexican government's violent crackdown on student protesters in the Tlatelolco Massacre to U.S. gold medalists raising their fists during the U.S. national anthem at the Olympics in Mexico City a couple of weeks later. A tumultuous year around the globe.

Q: Yes, it certainly was.

LANGE: What put a damper on the student protests in Madison was the August 1970 bombing of Sterling Hall, which housed the army-funded think tank known as the Army Mathematics Research Center on campus. Four antiwar activists set off a van filled with explosives in the middle of the night. It ended up killing a physics researcher who had nothing to do with military research. For me, and I think for a lot of others, it showed that the antiwar protests weren't simply a game of cat and mouse against the security forces but were deadly serious and could result in killing someone who was totally innocent. Vietnam War protests on campus never seemed to be the same again.

Q: This brings up a question. You were on campus as an undergrad—when Kent State happened.

LANGE: Yes.

Q: How did that hit you and your fellow classmates, as for your impressions?

LANGE: Oh, vivid memories of that—wasn't there, like, a photo, a famous photo of a girl kneeling next to a dead protestor?

Q: Yes.

LANGE: That and other events caused great ferment on the campus. The one event, though, that was seminal for Wisconsin, I would argue, was the bombing of the Army Mathematics Research Center a few months later. That really hit home. It was on the campus.

And, as I said, the military draft loomed. I already knew I wanted to go to graduate school or law school after getting my bachelor's degree, but by then the government had eliminated graduate student deferments. I remember listening to the radio in late 1969

when the numbers for the first draft lottery were called, and all of my friends and I were just on pins and needles. I ended up at number one hundred. The army was certain to need so many new recruits that I knew I was inevitably going to be drafted after college graduation.

The draft was polarizing, particularly for college students. And, to be frank, some of the protests and that political pressure on the part of students dissipated or lessened once the draft was ended.

Q: Yeah, I mean, that was, to me, sort of the tipoff of where—

LANGE: What their real interest was.

Q: Yeah, well, up to a point. I mean, it was self-interest.

LANGE: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Well, you ended up in law school, didn't you?

LANGE: Yes. In June 1971 I got my bachelor's degree, graduating with distinction, as they called it. With a degree in political science, I zeroed in on two possible directions for my career: I could get a PhD in international relations, or I could go to law school. And I decided that a law degree would give me various options after graduation, whereas a PhD in international relations would be more limiting unless I wanted to be a college professor. I'm not quite sure what else you do with that PhD, you know, unless you happen to get into the Foreign Service, which you can never depend upon.

There was another reason for me to study law, though I'm not sure I realized it at the time. I don't think I had the internal discipline needed to write a dissertation over the course of a couple of years. Law school, on the other hand, had the advantage of being very structured over three years: You take a course for a semester, take the three-hour exam, and then await your grade. And I was very good at cramming just before the exam.

So I applied and was accepted by the University of Wisconsin Law School for the fall of 1971. But because of my draft number, I assumed I would get drafted. So, instead of going to law school and being yanked out of it, I asked the law school if I could postpone entry for two years. They were receiving a flood of applications and couldn't make that commitment, so I had to reapply later. Meanwhile, I had been working during the summers for the Wisconsin Division of Highways as an engineering aid, and they kept me employed into the fall as I waited to get drafted.

I passed the military physical exam and finally got my draft notice. My father had served in the U.S. Army in World War II, as I described earlier, and he was not thrilled by this. As he used to tell me, the army dulls the mind. In advance of my induction into the army, I said good-bye to my family, my girlfriend, and other friends.

And then—and this is really a pivotal day drilled into my memory, December 3, 1971—my father dropped me off at dawn at the army office in Waukesha, Wisconsin. The other draftees and I then went by bus to downtown Milwaukee for final processing before they sent us off for basic training in, I want to say, Kentucky. But during the physical checks, a military doctor determined that a medical condition I had told them about earlier warranted a one-year deferment from military service. The dynamics at the time were such that they had too many people set to go into the military while there was pressure from Congress to reduce the number of troops. This was December 1971, and I got the impression that they didn't need me. If this had been two years or five years earlier, I think they would have ignored my medical condition and I would have been sent to fight in Vietnam. I never was drafted again as the United States transitioned to an all-volunteer force.

As you could imagine, I was ecstatic. I had just been given two extra years to live my life as I wanted to. It was like, suddenly my life opened up. So, here I am in downtown Milwaukee going to the nearest pay phone on the street to call my father, who had just dropped me off maybe five hours earlier, to say I'm out, I'm not going in the army now, maybe in a year. I think it was my mother who actually drove into Milwaukee to pick me up. And I remember how my father and I celebrated over a beer at, like, 11:00 in the morning. (Laughs) Later that afternoon, I drove to Madison to reunite with my girlfriend at the time. So, it was really an unbelievable day for me.

I really didn't want to go off to Vietnam. But later on in life, when I had a lot of experience dealing with the military through my Foreign Service career and graduated from the National War College, I came to have such great respect for the military that I now assume that if I had lived through fighting in Vietnam, it would have been a really important experience to have. I have a different view of the military now than I did during the Vietnam War.

After that I ended up having to figure out what to do next. I did some work for the UN Association in the spring of 1972. And then I finally started law school in the fall of '72, after one year off between my undergraduate and law school studies.

Q: This is law school in Wisconsin?

LANGE: Yes, the University of Wisconsin Law School. A Big Ten university, really high-quality education, plus the advantage of in-state tuition. My father was so proud that his three children graduated from the Big U, as he used to call it, the dominant university in the state, University of Wisconsin.

In law school, I kept up my international interest. I worked part-time for the Wisconsin Division of the UN Association and was coordinator of its Wisconsin Program on Peacekeeping. And I was named to the UNA-USA national board of directors, which had, like, 135 people on it. I was kind of a token student. Wisconsin Governor Patrick Lucey, who later was U.S. ambassador to Mexico under Jimmy Carter, had a commission on the United Nations to coordinate annual UN Day observances and I was the only student

appointed to it. Right now, I kind of wonder why a governor would have a commission on the United Nations, but there was one in Wisconsin back then.

My two emphases in law school were international law and tax law. I was a member of the Wisconsin international law moot court team for the 1974 Jessup competition, arguing both sides of a hypothetical law of the sea problem.

Q: Well, this might be a good place to stop and pick it up later—finish you off in law school, and we'll talk next time about what you got out of law school.

Q: Today is the twenty-seventh of July 2018 with John Lange. When we last talked you were discussing law school.

LANGE: Yes. Besides my studies and work for the UN Association, I worked in a law firm in Milwaukee in the summer of 1974 and then part-time during my last year in law school. It was an opportunity to see if I really enjoyed practicing in a law firm, and it turned out I didn't. I didn't really like the environment. And I ended up—

Q: Excuse me. But what sort of turned you off on law?

LANGE: The law firm spent a lot of effort representing plaintiffs suing insurance companies in civil cases. But that seemed to include bringing up losing cases where an insurance company would settle out of court for the nuisance value of ending the case. And I thought that was unfair. Justice should prevail. I decided it was not the pursuit of law that I was interested in being part of. It wasn't very interesting to me. I was looking more and more at international law as possibly something I wanted to do.

I did well in my studies, ended up graduating *cum laude*, and got my Juris Doctor degree in May 1975. I was then admitted to the Wisconsin Bar through the diploma privilege, which allows graduates of Wisconsin and Marquette law schools to forgo the state bar exam.

Most of my fellow graduates were quickly entering the workforce in law firms or government. Instead of doing what was the norm, I decided to go to Europe, to backpack my way through Europe. I took a couple months off and spent a lot of that time at my family cabin in the Northwoods, and then in August of 1975 I flew to Paris. I'd never been to Europe before. I spent three and a half months backpacking through Europe.

Q: Let's talk about this. How'd you survive? Where'd you get your money from and where did you stay and all?

LANGE: When I look back on it, it was a riskier venture than I perceived at the time. I don't think I had health insurance. I didn't have a credit card. I just had a lot of travelers' checks and a return flight ticket. The American Express office near the downtown of

most major cities was a big hangout, because you'd go there and cash your American Express travelers' checks.

Q: And where you got mail.

LANGE: Exactly. I gave my itinerary to my parents, and I would alert them in letters if there were any changes. I would just look for my mail at the American Express offices in different cities all over Europe. This was '75 and I was born at the end of '48, so I was almost twenty-seven years old. I wasn't inclined to stay in the hostels with the undergraduate students who were backpacking through Europe. Instead, I stayed in cheap hotels. There hardly ever was a bathroom connected to my room, it was just down the hall. And I had a few pre-planned meetings with various friends who were already in Europe. I visited something like seventeen countries over three and a half months.

There was kind of an official purpose for my backpacking trip, to attend the Plenary Assembly of the World Federation of UN Associations [WFUNA] in Moscow. Because of my work with UNA that I mentioned earlier, I was named to be a member of the U.S. delegation, the UNA-USA delegation, to the WFUNA assembly in October 1975. This was at the height of the U.S.-Soviet détente during the Cold War, and the attendees were given VIP [very important person] treatment. Our delegation in some respects was part of track two diplomacy, hoping to help ease U.S.-Soviet tensions through this world gathering of country associations focused on cooperation through the United Nations. We had a meeting with higher-ups at the Soviet Institute for U.S. and Canada Studies, and one of the highlights for our delegation was a breakfast meeting at the U.S. embassy. After observing the Soviet delegation negotiate at the assembly, I concluded that Russians tend to push and push until they know you won't give in, and only then will they compromise.

It's the only time up to now when I've been to Russia. I still remember being driven to meetings around the city of Moscow and noticing how drab it was. I just didn't see much color or liveliness or excitement; no big billboards and lights and things found in the West. It kind of was proof to me of the failure of the Soviet economic model. After Moscow, I took a train to Leningrad and made my way around as a tourist. And then I took a train to Helsinki and still remember walking out of the Helsinki train station and seeing colorful billboards and lively street life, et cetera, that you find all over the West, in stark contrast to what I had seen in Moscow in particular.

Q: What about during this time when you were doing your backpacking around Europe, did you go to any embassies or consulates?

LANGE: I don't recall ever going to a U.S. embassy or a U.S. consulate. I had no need to do so.

Q: Were you at all interested in the Foreign Service?

LANGE: Not really. I wasn't yet oriented to the Foreign Service. I may have even thought that I wouldn't be qualified, since my language skills were meager. I had had two

years of high school Spanish classes and two years of college French and wasn't at all fluent in either one. I was still trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my career. I was very interested in getting involved in the international side of things, but I just didn't know how to do it. I met with an international lawyer based in London who was very gracious with his time describing work in private international law. I decided I wasn't very interested in dealing with multinational corporations and international contracting and things like that. I was more inclined toward public international law—treaties and the kind of work done in the State Department's Office of the Legal Adviser.

Q: What about companionship? I mean, this is still during the backpack era where young people not only from the United States but from other countries were all swarming over Europe. Did you meet other people from other countries and all?

LANGE: Yes, when opportunities arose. I would meet people in museums and bars and who knows where. But then, after a couple days, I had my schedule and was off with my Eurail Pass to visit another country and they were off in a different direction.

Q: Well then, out of this did you come across any feel about various countries? You've already mentioned that the Soviet Union was pretty unsparkling.

LANGE: Yes. I have photographs of so many museums and cathedrals and all those kinds of things, just trying to see as much as I could. I really loved Paris at the start of my trip, having no idea that someday I would have a tour of duty there. What I found was, and this may have been an influence on my career after I joined the Foreign Service, Southern Europe was more interesting to me because it was more unlike the United States than Northern Europe. It was wonderful to be in Helsinki and Stockholm and Oslo and Copenhagen and places like that, but those cities just didn't have the same feel as being in Rome or Barcelona or Southern France. I just kind of liked the liveliness of the different cultures. And when I think about it, that probably influenced me later on in terms of my tours in Mexico City and in Africa, where I spent much of my career.

Q: Well then, when you came back after three and a half months of eye-opening experience and all that, what did you—did you come up with any game plan?

LANGE: Sort of. Near the end of my trip I flew from Ireland to New York City to attend a meeting of the UNA-USA board of directors and then returned to Muskego, Wisconsin, where my parents were living, just before Thanksgiving of 1975. I ended up moving to Madison to look for a job. I must say, I don't envy anyone who is searching for a job. It's a very frustrating time because it's hard to fill an eight-hour day looking for jobs, and you don't feel fulfilled because you don't have employment. I finally got a job in Madison at what, as far as I know, was the only internationally oriented law firm in the city. It was a small firm that had contracts with NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] on legal issues related to international telecommunications. You could say, Well, John, you finally found what you wanted. You live in a city you love, Madison, you've got your law degree from the University of Wisconsin, you're a member of the bar in the state of Wisconsin, and here you've got this job in an internationally oriented law firm. But the work wasn't very compelling.

Fortuitously, after I'd been there for only two or three months, I got a totally unexpected job offer from Joe Byrns Sills, vice president of UNA-USA in New York. Joe knew me from my years of work with UNA and from our time on the UNA-USA delegation to the conference in Moscow. He was in charge of the association's field operation, the 175 chapters and divisions around the country, and wanted me to be his director of field services. He later became spokesperson for two UN Secretaries General.

It was at that point that I made a fateful career decision. Did I want to practice law in the state of Wisconsin, or did I want to jump into working on international relations at an NGO [nongovernmental organization] in New York? Even though the job was not in the United Nations itself, and it wasn't in the U.S. government, it still was in New York in offices across the street from the United Nations, on Forty-sixth Street and First Avenue. I opted to work in international affairs. I stayed at the Madison law firm for a total of probably three and a half months, and it turned out that was the only time in my life when I officially practiced law.

Q: All right. Let's talk about the New York job. You were doing it from when to when?

LANGE: I started in the UNA-USA national office in August of 1976 and ended at the end of February of 1981, when I joined the Foreign Service. So, I was there for four and a half years.

Q: What were you doing?

LANGE: My first title was director of field services, then director of membership and field development, and then deputy vice president. I worked with the chapters and divisions, which numbered around 175. We considered ourselves the preeminent citizens' organization in the United States dealing with the United Nations and global affairs.

This was a different era than we're in now in the year 2018; there were a lot of national membership organizations with local chapters, and the chapters would vary in membership and level of local programming. Some would be really strong; some would be weak. The basic idea was to organize events with a nonpartisan, international focus in cities like Milwaukee and Madison, Iowa City and Los Angeles, Dallas and all over the country. The chapters would bring in high-level speakers to talk about international issues and organize Model UN conferences so that students would get to see the world from the perspective of a country other than the United States while debating some of the big, global issues of the day.

I had all the relevant experience at the local level to be able to do the job at the national level. I created the Model UN and youth department in the national office, and we were able to reach out to 40,000 faculty and high school and college students to foster Model UNs around the country. I worked with chapters to organize numerous big conferences featuring high-level U.S. government and UN speakers. I also co-authored a manual of chapter operations and was in charge of national membership recruitment. At one point I spent three weeks driving around California in a rented car, meeting chapter after chapter

after chapter, from Northern California to Southern California, giving speeches and talking to chapter leaders.

Let me add that, as a single person, I loved living in Manhattan. I rented a studio apartment on Twenty-fourth Street between Second and Third Avenues and would walk up Second Avenue every day to go to the UNA-USA office. It was a time, looking back on it, when New York City was kind of in the doldrums due to its fiscal crisis. It's much safer and much livelier today than it was back then. But I didn't know the difference and found it to be a big, exciting city. For a young professional on a nonprofit organization salary, there were innumerable free things to do. I know a lot of people who wouldn't enjoy living in the city. I loved it. I ended up dating a woman who also was working at UNA-USA, in a different section, and we didn't hide our relationship. We're still in touch and my wife and I went to her wedding in London years later.

Q: By then had you given up on practicing law?

LANGE: Not at that point. I still didn't know what I wanted to do for a full career and hadn't given up on the possibility of practicing law. I decided to take the New York State bar exam, which is a tough exam, and took a course to prepare, as almost everybody did. I passed the bar exam in 1977 on my first try and was admitted to practice in New York.

The next summer, summer of '78, I went to The Hague Academy of International Law and studied public international law for three weeks. I learned a lot about the International Court of Justice, though I concluded that the state of the ICJ was generally grim.

So here I was, working with UNA-USA chapter and divisions but still thinking of myself as a lawyer and trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my career. My two main emphases in law school were international law and tax law, and New York University has one of the best tax law programs in the country. I wasn't yet ready to go for an LLM [master's in law], but I decided to take a course in international tax law that was offered in the evenings at NYU law school to see if I wanted to focus my career on that. I'm around thirty years old by then. I was busy with my fulltime duties at UNA and didn't really have much time to study. I still remember a key lesson during the course was to learn how a multinational corporation could avoid taxes by using the Cayman Islands as a tax shelter. (Laughs) And so, I thought, I'm working for a nonprofit organization, getting a salary as an NGO worker. I believe that the UN is key to international cooperation to bring peace and to help the world's poor people. And here I am, learning how to avoid corporate taxes by using the Cayman Islands. I decided no, I didn't want to practice international tax law.

It took me a really long time to completely give up on the idea of practicing law. Many years later, when I was still in the State Department and starting to contemplate retirement, I thought one possible post-Foreign-Service activity would be to take courses to brush up on tax law and then do domestic tax work. 'Twas not to be.

I initially found the UNA job to be very interesting and satisfying, especially my first three years in New York. But I gradually came to the realization that—even though I liked the work, I liked the people, I was traveling to different parts of the country, and I was close to the UN—the job wasn’t challenging enough for me. But I didn’t find law jobs, like being a tax lawyer or practicing private international law, appealing, either.

One of the things that I had always thought would hold me back, for purposes of working at the United Nations or joining the Foreign Service, was the fact that I didn’t speak another language fluently. The conventional wisdom at the time was that you really needed to speak two languages to get a job in the UN, so I never, to my recollection, even applied for a job in the United Nations. The Foreign Service, very thankfully, accepted applicants on the assumption that they could be trained in a foreign language as necessary.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: So I decided to apply for the Foreign Service. I took and passed the written exam in December 1978.

Q: When you took the exam, had you done any preparation, I mean, talking to people in the Foreign Service or studied up on the Foreign Service or anything like that?

LANGE: During my time in New York, I had many encounters with current and retired Foreign Service officers as well as international civil servants at the UN, though I can’t recall asking them about their careers.

Jim Leonard, a retired FSO [Foreign Service officer], was UNA-USA president when I first arrived in New York in August 1976. And then, when the Carter Administration came in, Jim left to become deputy permanent representative at USUN [U.S. Mission to the UN]. And there was Arthur Day, who’s known as Pete Day, who had been an FSO and came to UNA-USA as a vice president toward the end of my time there.

Q: He was consul general in Jerusalem, wasn’t he?

LANGE: Yes. He was an NEA [Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs] hand. Very nice guy. He ran our policy studies office, which I was not part of, but which was really like a Foreign Service role, overseeing high-level, prestigious panels that formulated policy recommendations on international issues. And I remember when I was admitted to the Foreign Service, I think this may have been at my going-away party, he told me that you can go to cushy posts in Europe and elsewhere, and you’ll find them very interesting. And you can go to hardship posts in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere, and you’ll find them fascinating. And I actually found that to be true in my career.

Q: Oh, yeah.

LANGE: That distinction between interesting and fascinating postings. Even though you love Paris or wherever, it’s the hardship posts that have such an impact on you.

Q: And the organization's smaller too.

LANGE: Yes.

Q: Which helps. I mean, Paris, you're talking about a huge embassy.

LANGE: Yes.

Q: Tell me, while you were doing this UN Association work, what was your impression of the UN and the people involved?

LANGE: Interesting question. Probably mixed, when I think back on it. The secretary general during my time in New York was Kurt Waldheim, and I attended various gatherings at the UN where he addressed different groups. He wasn't all that impressive as the UN's leader, I thought. Years later, of course, he was banned from entering the United States under suspicion of complicity with Nazi war crimes, which he denied and which historians cleared him of. But there were some outstanding people in the secretariat. I remember a gentleman named Brian Urquhart, who I believe was a British national.

Q: He ended up very much in peacekeeping.

LANGE: Yes, exactly, as an undersecretary general. He was so eloquent and impressive and effective. So, there were some very, very good people at UN headquarters. What I came to appreciate much later in my career was the work the UN agencies did on the ground, in-country. I still think the UN has a lot of highly motivated and highly competent people who are working to improve the world, whether it's through development or human rights or peacekeeping or whatever. At the same time, the UN, especially the secretary general and the secretariat, is a political institution buffeted by the whims of member states.

Q: Well, before we actually get into the Foreign Service, how did you find the Foreign Service oral exam, and do you recall any of the questions that were asked?

LANGE: I don't remember the specifics, but I thought the written and oral exams were objective and fair ways to assess candidates. I ended up passing both but then it took me over two years to get into the State Department from the time I took the written exam. That's in part because I didn't submit the required documents until just before the due date and also, I assume, because it took a little longer for me to get my security clearance since they had to check into my trip to Moscow as a member of the UNA-USA delegation.

ENTERED THE FOREIGN SERVICE

Q: Well, what was your A-100 course like, your beginning officers' course? When did you go in?

LANGE: I started the course on March 4, 1981. I got the job offer with only three weeks' notice, and even then it was uncertain because the State Department was asking for an exception to a federal civilian hiring freeze. So, my class was not your average A-100 class because they had to pull it together at fairly short notice.

Q: How was your class? Were there a significant number of women or blacks or Hispanics or—?

LANGE: There were not a lot, I would say, but a significant number, so it didn't seem that it was totally out of kilter. I think there were thirty-three people in the class, including at least one woman in the mid-level entry program because the Foreign Service historically had been so abominable in bringing women in. She came into the service after having worked in the Carter Administration, is my recollection. And watching her in action was just amazing. When you're in the A-100 class you're hearing these lectures from various people working on different issues in the Department as deputy assistant secretaries and the like, and she could ask these zinger questions because she had been an insider in the State Department in the late seventies. Meanwhile, the rest of us, who entered at the Foreign Service five and six level and didn't really have a lot of knowledge of the specifics and details and nuances of issues that you learn when you're in the Department, were at a stage where we were simply thinking golly, gee, we're in the Foreign Service, voilà, I'm a diplomat, you know. (Laughs)

Q: Yeah. (Laughs)

LANGE: And amazingly, there was a blind Foreign Service officer, who was very smart and personable, in my A-100 class. My recollection is the Department was under a legal requirement to let him enter the Foreign Service but then didn't give him an overseas assignment because it found him unavailable for worldwide service—a basic requirement for all entering FSOs.

Q: I was at one point involved with the board of examiners and there were these pressures to do something like that. I mean, if you hired a blind officer, you've got to hire another officer to read everything to him or her. That just doesn't work.

LANGE: Yeah, especially in emergency situations that we can encounter overseas. It was just—the Department was trying to make accommodations for someone with a disability, which is highly laudable, but stumbling through the process.

It was an interesting group and yet, I was under the impression that it wasn't an average A-100 class because of the way it was quickly put together. Several of us eventually became ambassadors, but it just seemed like some of the people didn't quite fit into the Foreign Service the way one would have expected.

Q: Well, when you came in, what were you thinking about, what did you want to do in the Foreign Service? Or were you just relaxed, and let them take over?

LANGE: I'm probably too calculating in my career to think that I just relaxed and let them take over, but I was still quite open to whatever came about. When I was living in New York, I remember making a trip to Mexico City and liking it very much, so I was open to going to Mexico. And of course, the advantage was the Department was willing to train me in whatever language was needed.

Embassy Mexico was huge and known as a visa mill. If you were willing to go to Mexico City or another post in Mexico, it was very likely they were going to send you there as a consular officer for your first tour. And that was fine with me. I ended up getting assigned to the embassy in Mexico City. Four others from my A-100 class also were assigned to posts in Mexico.

And there's one thing I have to say about my A-100 class before we talk about my first tour. There were three officers, new officers, who jokingly called themselves "personality assessors" and got together and came up with a listing of humorous "awards" that they gave to everyone at the end of the A-100 class. And I was voted by them to be the A-100 class member, quote, "Most likely to be taken hostage." (Laughs) I never got the whole story from them as to why, but I think it had to do with a certain naïveté and level of idealism I had from having worked at an NGO.

Q: (Laughs)

LANGE: I have to say, I think I quickly lost all that idealism on my first tour in Mexico City, which I will explain later.

AMERICAN EMBASSY MEXICO CITY

Q: So, you went to Mexico City, and you were there from when to when?

LANGE: Yeah, I got there at the end of November of '81 and left in June 1983. After the A-100 class, I took Spanish language training for twenty weeks and then Consulate General Rosslyn, the FSI [Foreign Service Institute] course to learn consular work.

When I got assigned to Mexico, and I don't know if the law's been changed since then, the Foreign Affairs Manual said that if you were assigned to a posting in Mexico or Canada and there was a hard-surfaced, all-weather road between your previous duty station, generally Washington, and that posting, you had to drive your vehicle to post. They wouldn't ship it.

Q: I never heard of that.

LANGE: They would not ship your vehicle. But if you requested an exception, for security reasons, for example—and a lot of single women didn't want to drive through northern Mexico to Mexico City on their own—you could get an exception to that rule.

Well, for me, as kind of an adventurer, having backpacked through Europe, I thought what a great opportunity to drive my vehicle to Mexico City. I had a 1974 Plymouth Duster, and Mexico had been very restrictive at that time on what vehicles you would even be allowed to bring into the country under diplomatic licenses, but for some reason my vehicle model was accepted because they had sold the same model in Mexico at the time, apparently. So, I drove from Washington to Mexico City. And rather than drive directly, I did a constructive route. In other words, the State Department paid for me to go the direct route, with stops along the way, but I travelled on a very indirect route. I drove with longtime friend Jeff Merritt from Washington, DC, to Milwaukee, and he then flew back to Washington. Then I drove with my father from Milwaukee to Dallas, Texas, where my sister Cindy lived. My father flew back to Milwaukee, and I then drove from Dallas to Mexico City with Cindy. When we drove through northern Mexico, the roads were quite good and we saw some fascinating contrasts, including burros pulling wooden carts along the side of the road while large semi tractor-trailers whizzed past on the wide, blacktop highway. We made it to Mexico City, and my sister flew back to Dallas. So, it was quite an adventure just to get to my first post. The trip totaled 4,200 miles.

Q: Yeah, my god.

LANGE: Times have changed. Back then, the junior officer serving as my sponsor to help acclimate me to working and living in Mexico City had advised me not to drive through Mexico after dark because of the possibility of encountering animals on the roadway that can cause accidents. Nowadays, the State Department's Mexico travel advisory says that violent crime—such as homicide, kidnapping, carjacking, and robbery—is widespread and common in Mexico, and U.S. government employees in most cases may not drive from the U.S.-Mexico border to or from the interior parts of Mexico.

Q: Well, did you see any parts of Mexico that you want to go back to or were you able to get back to?

LANGE: My sister and I stayed overnight in San Luis Potosí, which has colonial architecture in its historic center, as our last stop before arriving in Mexico City. I loved seeing the zócalos (public squares) in cities around the country, and I appreciated the beauty and modernity of Mexico City more after having seen some of the poorer villages, deserts, mountains, and farms elsewhere in the country. I still have this strong personal connection to Mexico from Alejandra, the Mexican woman I met and married, which I'll explain in a bit.

Q: Well, in the first place, who was your ambassador and who was the consul general and how did you find the supervision?

LANGE: The ambassador was John Gavin, an ex-actor appointed by President Ronald Reagan. They were friends from Hollywood.

Q: I mean, he was very controversial. How did you find him?

LANGE: I had some dealings with the ambassador, though not a lot. John Gavin was famous at that time in Mexico. He had appeared for several years on Mexican television in Bacardi rum commercials prior to his ambassadorial nomination in 1981. Even though he spoke Spanish, had graduated from Stanford with a degree in Latin American economic history, had served as a cultural adviser to the Organization of American States, and had easy access to President Reagan, his appointment sparked widespread criticism in Mexico. Newspaper editorials facetiously called for the appointment of Mexican comedian Cantinflas to be ambassador in Washington. During Gavin's tenure he was criticized in Mexico for staunchly defending President Reagan's hardline anti-communist Central American policies. And at one point, in a speech in Los Angeles, he lashed out at some "scurrilous" Mexican newspapers and Institutional Revolutionary Party [PRI] officials for suggesting there was anything improper when the U.S. consul in Hermosillo hosted a dinner with the local Catholic bishop and members of the political opposition.

I still remember a Mexican cartoon featuring a stern-looking Mexican man showing his dislike for Ambassador Gavin while next to him was his Mexican wife looking at Gavin as a heartthrob because he was so charming and handsome. He really used his Hollywood persona to his advantage.

Q: And he was of half Mexican ancestry, wasn't he?

LANGE: Yes, his mother had been born in Mexico. His wife was stage and television actress Constance Towers, though she didn't spend all that much time in Mexico, as I recall. And he was criticized for spending a lot of time in the United States.

The thing is, this was a huge embassy. There were about 650 people on the staff in Mexico City, 60 percent of whom were Mexican nationals. And there were about 600 more people on the staff of the consulates in nine other cities.

The ambassador didn't seem to care what was going on in many sections of the embassy except when something went wrong. He and his close politically appointed associates came across as very aloof. For those of us working in the consular section, they only seemed to care about being sure the lines of visa applicants didn't get too long because that detracted from the beauty of the embassy.

One of the ways the junior officers [JOs] were allowed to gain experience was to have one JO sit in on the country team meeting every week, in rotation. So, I attended a few country team meetings and got a sense of how extensive and complicated the U.S.-Mexican relationship was. We had DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration] officials stationed at the embassy, and there were narcotics trafficking issues that they were working on in cooperation with the Mexican government. And we had an INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] office. There were border issues and there was an International Boundary and Water Commission. We had something like 50 different U.S. government agencies present at the embassy.

There were so many different ways in which the United States, from border towns to the federal government in Washington, would relate to Mexico, and the U.S. government

would relate to the Mexican government, that I thought then and still think that Washington doesn't fully appreciate the importance and the complexities of the bilateral relationship.

I remember the times when I went to the embassy front office for one thing or another and saw how incredibly busy it was. There were three Foreign Service secretaries, as they then were called, working to support the ambassador and the DCM [deputy chief of mission]. I found them to be incredibly hard working, smart and efficient – more than some of the JOs I was working with. Because it was such a large embassy and because of Gavin's approach in general, he didn't really do much for the JOs. It was really the DCM who played a role in mentoring and developing the junior officers.

Q: How'd you find the supervision at the consular level?

LANGE: There were some good people leading the consular section. The consul general looked upon the post as a training ground for junior officers, emphasizing that each officer be given various opportunities during an eighteen-month tour. Unfortunately, the implementation of that effort occasionally resulted in perceived favoritism (to the benefit of those who then spent less time on the tedious task of issuing nonimmigrant visas, for example) and a lot of uncertainty (as JOs wondered where they would be working next). The supervisory consul general was in charge of all the consular work in the country: the consular section in the embassy and all of the consulates, such as Consulate General Guadalajara.

Q: Tijuana and—

LANGE: Yeah, and Mérida and Matamoros, et cetera. So, it was just a huge job. Under the supervisory consul general there was the chief of the consular section in charge of the embassy's consular section. This was really a big operation because it wasn't just the huge visa load, it was also the presence of so many Americans in the embassy's consular district covering central Mexico. Reporting to the consular chief were some quite experienced, fairly senior mid-level consular officers with whom I interacted most and who were deeply involved in the day-to-day operations.

Q: Well, let's talk about your work and your impressions of Mexico and your work.

LANGE: I entered the Foreign Service as an administrative officer and then had to do my first tour as a consular officer, which almost everyone had to do back then because of the large consular workload that could be handled by junior officers. But I was always interested in the politics, and I found it to be a fascinating time in Mexico and in U.S.-Mexican relations.

I started working on the visa line, issuing nonimmigrant visas [NIVs]. And this was such a visa mill back then that there were about twenty-five junior officers, now called entry-level officers, at the embassy. At any one time a majority of us were working in the visa section issuing both immigrant and nonimmigrant visas. I started out in NIVs, and it was just amazing what we had to do at that time, long before 9/11 [the September 11,

2001, terrorist attacks in the United States], long before the real security issues became known, in terms of letting people legally visit the United States. The basic concern was, would these visa applicants stay on in the United States? We had to make quick judgments on whether they were intending immigrants, as the law would say, or if they actually planned to visit the United States and then depart. We would get people coming into the embassy just to get visas so they could fly to Dallas to see the Cowboys play football. There were a lot of well-to-do Mexicans, and at that time, before the 1982 economic troubles of Mexico, the Mexican peso was strong versus the U.S. dollar, so some people wanted to get visas just so they could go to San Antonio, shop, and then return to Mexico. I think at one point our rejection rate, our refusal rate, was in the neighborhood of 6 percent.

Q: Good god.

LANGE: Very small, really. And so, most of the people in central Mexico who were applying for nonimmigrant visas at the U.S. embassy received them. At consulates closer to the border the numbers would be different, but in central Mexico, which was somewhat more well to do and where people were less inclined to try to move to the United States, it was a different story.

And there were a lot of good people on that visa line with me who ended up doing well in the Foreign Service, with some of them becoming ambassadors. We had a good group, but it really took a lot of effort to keep your morale up when you're interviewing hundreds of people a day. Every morning there'd be a long line outside of the embassy of people waiting to be interviewed for visas. And I was slower than most of the officers because I would interview maybe 200 or 250 people in a five-hour period. By today's standards you could never do that because you have to do extensive security checks and things, but back then you just had to make a quick judgment—in an interview lasting a minute or two—if the documents that the applicant showed you demonstrated that they had what we called in Spanish *lazos familiares*, family ties to Mexico, based on bank account records, pay stubs, deeds to show they owned a house, et cetera, so you really thought that they would not try to stay on in the United States.

That first job at the embassy, nonimmigrant visa interviews, was one of the worst jobs I had in the Foreign Service. It was the most repetitious and unfulfilling job in the embassy and had the worst working conditions. Junior officers conducted visa interviews in a run-down, temporary, ugly and embarrassing structure which we called the "Casita." Exhaust fumes from the embassy garage occasionally wafted into our work area. Vice consuls were looked on as fungible commodities, and the emphasis was on having a sufficient number of bodies "on the line" to keep the lines of visa applicants from getting too long. Despite the working conditions, I will say that working the visa line helped me improve my Spanish. And I thought of it as being on the front line in implementing U.S. immigration policy.

One of the most important things on a personal level in my entire life occurred on December 5 of 1981, after I was at post for one week. I was invited to a Mexican *posada*,

a Christmas party that was hosted by one of the FSNs [Foreign Service Nationals], a woman working in the consular section.

Q: Do they trace the footsteps of Christ or something?

LANGE: A *posada* is a Christmas festival that dramatizes Joseph and Mary's search for lodging. I remember at one point the door closed and there were people singing a Christmas carol in Spanish on one side of the door and people on the other side were singing in response, and then they opened the door.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: It was quite an elaborate thing. The father of the Mexican woman who organized the *posada* imported seafood, so we ate Alaskan king crabs, danced to a marimba band, and broke open a piñata. It was a wonderful welcome to Mexico.

And I met there another woman who was an FSN working in the immigrant visa section. Her name was Alejandra Macias Ochoa, and we ended up getting married 19 months later. So, I was at post for one week and met my future wife. We even have a photograph of us from that night. She still kids me about how I stumbled speaking Spanish when we met. I had had twenty weeks of Spanish study at FSI, and the grade I got at the end was a two-plus/two-plus on their zero-five scale of ability to speak and read a foreign language. One of the things the FSI language training had drilled into me was the need to get the grammar correct, so—rather than be like some people who just didn't mind speaking quickly in a foreign language even if the grammar was wrong—I would always be overthinking to make sure I had the subjunctive correct. I wanted to practice my Spanish, so when I met Alejandra that night, we first spoke in Spanish. Ale, as she is known, is very fluent in English as well as being a native speaker of Spanish. She had studied English at Mundelein College (now Loyola University) near Chicago from 1972–1973 and later was certified by the Mexican Foreign Ministry as an interpreter and translator of legal documents from English to Spanish. We were talking and I was speaking to her haltingly in Spanish, and she finally said let's just talk in English. She didn't have the patience for me to go on and on. It was a seminal life event that occurred at the beginning of my first tour in the Foreign Service. And she had encountered so many junior FSOs rotating through the embassy over the years, she knew more Foreign Service personnel than I did for my first four or five years in the State Department.

Q: Good for you. Did you get involved with any protection and welfare type program?

LANGE: Best job I ever had in the Foreign Service. Or no, not the best job, rather the most fascinating job I ever had in the Foreign Service. After one month doing NIVs, I was asked to work in the embassy's arrest and detention unit as part of the junior officer rotations. I did that for six months before returning to work in the nonimmigrant visa section.

I remember years later being in the elevator in the main State Department building and commenting to a colleague that probably the most fascinating job I ever had in the

Foreign Service was in the arrest and detention unit at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City. And a stranger behind me said, Me, too. In 1995, the *Foreign Service Journal* published an article by an FSO nicely describing the work as comforting Americans in Mexican jails.

The consular district for the U.S. embassy covered central Mexico, and that went from the Caribbean to the Pacific. We had a few part-time consular agents to cover certain areas within the consular district. In Veracruz, for example, there was an American consular agent whose business was to run a disco. Our small unit in the embassy dealt with Americans who were arrested anywhere in the entire consular district, often in an emergency situation, and those who were already incarcerated. I think there were, at the time, about thirty-five incarcerated Americans.

I'm sure you are familiar with this process. Our role was to meet with American citizens as soon as possible after we were notified of their arrest. We would determine the nature of the charges against them, advise them of their right to counsel, provide a list of attorneys they may want to hire, learn which relatives or friends they wanted us to notify, make available an information sheet describing the Mexican legal system and life in a Mexican prison, and do our best to assure they received fair and humane treatment. I would sometimes talk about the case to the Mexican authorities, but the role of the American consul—and I was a vice consul at that point, third secretary—wasn't to defend the American prisoners in legal proceedings. After the initial arrest, someone from our office visited them on a monthly basis to monitor their welfare and provide reading materials and other donated items. And we were in touch with their families, though I have to admit that sometimes it was harder to deal with some of the family members than with those prisoners who had adjusted well to prison.

I found there was something extraordinary about being a diplomat and a consular officer. For this job, you carry your diplomatic credentials, fly to a city in central Mexico where you've never been in your life, get off the plane, and maybe check into your hotel. Then you ask a cab driver, in Spanish, to take you to a particular prison. And you go into the prison and tell the officials, all in Spanish, "I'm John Lange, consular officer, and I'd like to see prisoners X, Y and Z." And the officials kind of say Oh, what is this about, but after a while they always let me in. I was able to see the incarcerated Americans because there's a right to that access under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. And it's just an amazing experience to be inside a prison in a foreign country. I assume I could have had a somewhat similar experience if, after law school, I had decided to go the route of defending criminals in criminal trials and meeting with them in U.S. jails to talk about trial preparations. But I never wanted to be a criminal defense lawyer, so, for me, it was fascinating to observe what the prison conditions were like.

Q: What kinds of situations did you encounter in the Mexican prisons?

LANGE: There were some very sad situations, very sad.

When I visited Americans, they sometimes would be more frank with me than they maybe would be with their family in terms of what really had happened. So, there were

times I would know that this person may not be innocent, even though it was not for me to make any judgment on that. There was one American who was charged with murder, and I remember his mother talking to me about her innocent son, my poor boy, my poor boy. He ended up getting tried and found guilty of murder.

One morning our office got a phone call about an American man arrested for allegedly murdering an American woman during an argument in a town in our consular district. I had to drop everything and fly there that afternoon. I don't want to describe details on this because that would be protected under the Privacy Act, but it was just a very complicated situation. Besides meeting with the detained American in jail, I had to deal with the woman's husband back in the United States, the Mexican undertaker, and a funeral home in the United States that was skeptical the body would be properly embalmed prior to shipment.

Mexico's economic policies had a direct impact on our work. Mexico at that time had an import substitution strategy so that, instead of allowing, for example, Sony televisions to be imported into the country, they insisted on building up their own television industry. That meant you didn't have a lot of variety of goods available in the stores because much of it was Mexican made and the quality wasn't all that good, in part because they didn't have competition from abroad. Well, some Americans found it lucrative to smuggle Sony TVs and other goods into Mexico. This was 1982, and there were a lot of former U.S. military pilots with Vietnam War experience who couldn't find good jobs as pilots. So, some of them would be hired to pilot private planes to fly from the United States and land illegally in Mexico to deliver smuggled goods, including televisions.

Today, it's kind of hard to think of someone getting arrested for smuggling televisions. But back then, some of the incarcerated Americans in our consular district had been found guilty of being *contrabandistas* (smugglers). One person labelled them prisoners of economic warfare. We once were notified by the Mexican authorities about the arrest of several Americans who were on a plane that had landed in eastern Mexico. I talked to them by phone and one gentleman told me, Well, we were flying over Mexico and had to make an emergency landing and as long as we landed, we thought we might as well offload the goods that were onboard. And I thought, okay, whatever you say. I later flew out to see them in prison. Years later, I got a call from one of those Americans. He tracked me down in the State Department after I'd moved back to Washington. He just wanted to thank me for how I'd been helpful to him after they were arrested, and he said, of course, we were guilty of smuggling. (Laughs)

Q: Huh.

LANGE: There was a very sad case, an American who was arrested upon arrival at the Mexico City airport from a country in South America. He was accused of smuggling cocaine. I met with him the day after he was arrested and witnessed his legally required declaration before a Mexican public ministry official, during which I was not allowed to intervene. He specifically complained that after his arrest he had been struck by a Mexican guard. He and I then spoke privately for ten minutes. He admitted to me he had possessed cocaine, which he said was solely for his personal use, and he showed me his

bruises. He said the only reason he had flown via Mexico City was that he had missed his direct flight to the United States.

The next morning, a Saturday, I received a call from the embassy's consular duty officer to say that the American was found dead in his prison cell. The duty officer and I went to the jail and I was the one who identified the body. The subsequent autopsy listed the cause of death as "asphyxiation by strangulation." Some of us assumed but were unable to prove that the guard or guards who had beaten him when he first arrived at the jail didn't want him to be around to identify them. I believe the embassy filed a protest regarding his death. And for me, when you have to call someone's wife to alert her that her husband has just been arrested in Mexico, and then the next day call the same woman to say her husband has just died in jail, it's really quite emotional and dramatic.

Q: Did you find your legal training did help? Helped with the attitude or the thought process?

LANGE: Yes, actually. As I explained earlier, I always kind of struggled to figure out exactly how I would take advantage of my legal training and never really did practice law. But when I look back on my Foreign Service career, I realize that there were many tours, including in Mexico City, when I found my legal training to be very helpful. It really did help me in visa adjudications to understand the legal complexities and to be able to read immigration law as a lawyer would. In dealing with arrested Americans, it was interesting to see the differences between Mexican law and U.S. law, much different legal systems. There was a fair amount of corruption in Mexico at that time, and we knew which Mexican attorneys somehow had the ability to get the Americans they were defending off and free, often amazingly soon compared to some others. I assumed that judges were being bribed, but I never saw any evidence to that effect. And there were other attorneys who seemed to run honest legal practices.

There was a prisoner transfer treaty between the United States and Mexico that went into effect in 1977 and allowed American citizens to return to the United States to complete their sentences. The idea was that if you were an American and had been sentenced to prison in Mexico, you could be transferred to your home country—just as there were Mexicans in prison in the United States who were allowed to go back to Mexico to finish their sentences. It gave the Americans some hope. So, some prisoners ended up eventually taking advantage of that, but it always took a lot of time.

Q: How were American women who got arrested, I'm thinking young women, treated in the jails? I mean, did they have particular problems?

LANGE: There were a few women who were arrested and detained compared to the much larger number of men out of the maybe thirty, thirty-five Americans, and I don't recall dealing with a situation where a woman was first arrested during my six-month stint there. So, when I visited the women they were already settled in, and I didn't hear of any problems in the women's prisons. One of the things I would do for all the prisoners was to give them old *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines that had been donated by American staff, and they always appreciated that.

Q: Did you bring a jar of peanut butter with you?

LANGE: (Laughs)

Q: I was in Greece, and I always had some jars of peanut butter.

LANGE: A good idea. I don't recall doing that, but you know how they just really appreciate these things from home.

There was an American woman I visited in a prison in Mexico City who had a maid to help clean her cell and cook some food for her. She hardly had any money by U.S. standards, but she could afford to hire an incarcerated Mexican woman, for whom a couple of bucks was huge.

Mexico, in quite a nice, family friendly way, would allow, in some instances, family members to live with the incarcerated person. So you could have a father who was incarcerated, and his wife and child would be in the prison together with him.

The movie *Missing* was released in February 1982 and had a very negative depiction of American Embassy Santiago consular officers. The character played by Jack Lemmon finds that the embassy is not as helpful as he thought they would be and suspects them of hiding information about his son, who had worked as a journalist and disappeared during the recent Chilean military coup. One U.S. diplomat is polite and friendly but constantly lies to him. I thought that was an unfair portrayal of the kind of work being done by those of us in the arrest and detention unit and by consular officers in general.

Near the end of my stint in the arrest and detention unit, I paid a regular visit to four Americans in a prison in a small city near the Gulf of Mexico. I told them there soon would be a rotation of junior officers and I would no longer be visiting them. They spontaneously applauded to thank me. I felt that I was a person who showed some empathy for them, even though some of the prisoners we visited—most of them, probably—were guilty of the crimes they were charged with.

And the consular work inevitably involved interesting and unexpected experiences. At one point I was the consular duty officer when this seemingly well-dressed and well-spoken American came to the embassy on a weekend and showed me his Social Security check but lamented he wasn't able to cash it until Monday. He was desperate for funds and asked if the embassy could advance him some money. He knew that the embassy could lend a modest amount of money to Americans in distress provided they signed a repayment agreement. So I'm filling out the forms because he's got a legitimate sounding story, and I do one last check of the consular book and on the last page find a list of Americans never to lend money to, with his name on the list. And so, I explained, Sorry, but I'm not going to be able to lend you the money. And he says, Yeah, I don't know what happened. They used to be able to give me money and now they don't do it anymore. (Both laugh) So, he was apparently a regular in making these claims.

And there are a fair number of Americans, I assume it still happens every year, who find it very easy to walk across the border into Mexico and get on a bus to central Mexico. Some of them don't have a lot of money and their mental state is a little off. There are a lot of wonderful Americans coming into Mexico as tourists, and you have to help them if they are in need. But I met people there who were absolutely convinced that the CIA had planted some kind of transmitter in their brain when they were just a few days old, and they explained to me how this affected their entire life.

Q: I dealt with their parents and grandparents in Frankfurt back in the mid-fifties. (Both laugh)

LANGE: It's amazing what the CIA will do with a two-day-old baby, you know. (Laughs)

Just amazing stories. In my observation, most Foreign Service officers who didn't grow up as a Foreign Service youth, with a parent in the Foreign Service, find their first tours of duty to be the most memorable. After growing up in a middle-class household and spending a lot of time at my parents' hardware store, it was such a kick to be a diplomat, living in a foreign country, and flying around central Mexico as needed to visit Americans in prison. Living in Mexico City itself was very much living in a foreign country. When you're on the U.S.-Mexico border, on either side of the border, it can be the worst of both countries in some respects, though I don't want to overstate that because obviously San Diego's a wonderful city as are others on the border. But I was really glad to be working in the capital city.

Q: Well, when you came back after your stint in prison work, what'd you do?

LANGE: When that ended, I went back to the NIV [nonimmigrant visa] line. And I think my girlfriend at the time, Alejandra, now my wife, would tell you that I found the transition kind of depressing, to go from this exciting job, which in a lot of respects was one of the most fascinating jobs I ever had in the Foreign Service, back to the visa line where you're behind a counter cranking out a couple hundred visa interviews a day and making quick adjudications on whether somebody qualifies for a tourist visa to the United States. After a couple of months there, though, I was transferred to the immigrant visa section, where Alejandra was working. Working in immigrant visas was more civil, shall we say, because you had a private office to interview people. The applicants had already gone through a lot of processing, and this was the final step before they got their immigrant visa to move to the United States and get a green card, so it was a happy time for them. That work was quite interesting, in a sense, but still not my cup of tea.

In August of 1982 there was a big financial crisis in Mexico. The spark for the crisis occurred when the Mexican finance minister informed the U.S. government and the International Monetary Fund that Mexico would no longer be able to service its debt, which at that point totaled something like \$80 billion. The Mexican government froze dollar bank accounts and converted them into Mexican pesos, resulting in an immediate loss in currency value. Ambassador Gavin got involved to try to help the country from collapsing economically, and the U.S. government extended short-term assistance. Other

countries quickly followed suit in what became the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s.

I went with friends to attend the traditional September 15 *El Grito* celebration marking the call for Mexican independence from Spain made back in 1810. Every year, the Mexican president re-enacts the cry from the balcony of the National Palace in the Zocalo, the huge main square in Mexico City, in an inspirational ritual with hundreds of thousands of people in attendance. With Mexico under great financial threat, I remember hearing President López Portillo, then in the last few months of his presidency, giving the usual cry, Long live the nation's independence, but adding phrases about national sovereignty and self-determination in response to criticism of his nationalization of the banks.

And the economic meltdown had a direct impact on our work in the consular section. The peso depreciated dramatically in value versus the dollar, so all those people who used to come to the NIV line to get a tourist visa—not all of them, of course, but a fair number of them—could no longer afford to fly to the United States as tourists or shoppers. The demand for visas, and the concomitant need for consular officers on the NIV line, went way, way down.

Later in September, there was a need for temporary assistance at the U.S. consulate in Mérida in the Yucatan Peninsula. They needed a junior officer to help out another junior officer who was running the place because the consul general was away from post for reasons I can't remember. I ended up going to Mérida to do other consular work.

There was the case of an elderly American who had moved to the Mérida consular district, living alone on an island. He died there, and the consulate had already taken care of immediate issues dealing with whether the body would be shipped back to the United States and things like that. But there remained the problem of how to deal with his household effects, his meager personal belongings. I spoke by phone to his family, and they said they didn't want any of it returned to the United States. If you can get any money for it, fine, you can send that to us. So, I ended up going on an official trip to this island off the Yucatán Peninsula, renting a boat and captain to get out to the island. The landlord who owned the hut that the American was living in had locked it away but accepted my credentials and opened it for me. A lot of the Mexicans who were living on the island appeared. I auctioned off blankets and an old mattress and all kinds of things for the best price I could get, because I didn't know what else to do. (Laughs) People gave me money for the items and I dutifully totaled it all up, brought it back to the consulate, and transferred the money through the usual U.S. government channels to the family in the United States, as I recall. It was really quite an adventure.

I mentioned earlier that I was a lifelong baseball fan and my father in his retirement was working as an usher for the Brewers. In 1982, they were a powerful team in the American League nicknamed "Harvey's Wallbangers." They made it to the World Series versus the St. Louis Cardinals. As a Brewers employee, my father was able to secure four tickets for each of the three home games. My TDY [temporary duty] stay in Mérida was cut short, at my request, and I took time off to fly to Milwaukee to attend the three games with other

family members. So, here I was in the middle of my first tour in the Foreign Service attending the World Series. It was a very memorable family occasion, just a real delight, and I don't think I ever saw my father so excited and happy.

Q: You have to say I'm not a great baseball fan, but what happened, I take it, the Brewers did not win.

LANGE: They won two out of the three games in Milwaukee but, alas, ended up losing in the seventh game of the series.



Milwaukee Brewers usher Edward Lange and family celebrate the 1982 World Series

Back in Mexico, I worked in the immigrant visa section through December 1982. For me, this was supposed to be an eighteen-month tour of duty in the consular section but, as I said earlier, the demand for visas had greatly decreased due to the financial crisis. The consular section had to make temporary adjustments, so they farmed out some of the junior officers to work in other parts of the embassy.

As a result, I ended up moving to the embassy's admin section, what we would now call the management section, for six months. My title was special assistant to the administrative counselor. I also did some projects for the DCM. I ended up getting exposure to administrative operations, which was very helpful because I was in the Foreign Service admin cone [career track] and my next tour was to be in the administrative section at the U.S. embassy in Paris. But in a sense what I observed was an administrative section that was underfunded, understaffed, and didn't work well. We went through an inspection of the embassy, and it was devastatingly critical of what was going on. So I learned an embassy administrative operation at a big, underfunded embassy, and it was learning how not to do some things.

Q: Well, which in many ways is a great ability. It's not much fun for the people who have to be supported by the administrative section, but—

LANGE: You're right.

Q: —but for the young officer there.

LANGE: Yeah.

There's one thing that I thought would be worth mentioning from February 1983.

There was a play reading performed for the embassy community that was directed by two people in the embassy. The play was *Major Barbara* by George Bernard Shaw, and I played the minor role of the brother of Major Barbara. We performed it once, with maybe fifty people in attendance at somebody's house, and the audience loved it. Just a lot of fun. A week or two later, the co-directors wanted to get together with a few of us over lunch in the embassy cafeteria. Their view was, this was such a success, how about if we do it again? And I thought it was a bad idea to produce the play again because I didn't think we could replicate the fun spirit a second time. So, we didn't do a second performance.

The interesting part of this story is the subsequent infamy of one of the co-directors, a guy named Aldrich Ames, known as Rick Ames. Years later, in March 1994, I see a photo of Rick Ames in handcuffs on the front page of international *Newsweek* with the headline, "Double Agent – The Inside Story of the CIA's Mole." He was charged by the Department of Justice with spying for the Soviet Union and Russia, and press reports said his betrayal resulted in the deaths of a number of CIA assets. He ended up pleading guilty and receiving a sentence of life imprisonment.

Q: You say he was a double agent working for the KGB?

LANGE: Yes, a double agent working for the KGB. He's considered to be the most damaging traitor in CIA history. *Newsweek* reported that in 1981 he had been sent to the American Embassy in Mexico City and in the mid-1980s had been chief of the Soviet counterintelligence branch of the Soviet/East Europe Division of the CIA, a position where he could do great harm. And, perhaps unsurprisingly, it also reported that he had been a thespian in high school. I had known nothing of his wrongdoings, of course, and was flabbergasted by the revelation.

Q: Yeah. Well, by the way, how did you find courting a Mexican lady?

LANGE: Alejandra and I dated for most of my time in Mexico. My parents visited me twice and they got to know her better when we all visited cities in central Mexico like San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato. I got to know her father Cacho, who had been the top civil engineer for the state of Mexico, which borders Mexico City. I really enjoyed his company, and we got along very well. Alejandra, one of seven children, also had a wonderful mother, Emma, and I got along well with her whole family.

I had prided myself when I joined the Foreign Service that I was a single guy and was going to stay single for a long time. In the A-100 course there was a one-hour class explaining the procedures required of those with security clearances who intended to marry foreign nationals, and I thought it didn't apply to me. Well, I arranged for Ale and me to have a picnic at a park over 11,000 feet in elevation on the side of one of the two volcanos, Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl, outside of Mexico City, where I proposed marriage and she agreed. On our return to the city, we drove to her family's house in southern Mexico City, near the historic area of Coyoacán, where, in the Mexican tradition, I asked her father for permission to marry his daughter. He, of course, agreed.

Q: Okay. Well, this probably is a good place to stop. The next time, we'll talk about getting married between a Mexican national and an American national and how that went, and then we'll talk about your next assignment, which was where?

LANGE: Paris.

Q: Paris. I've heard of it, yeah. Very good. Okay. Thank you.

Q: Today is the third of August 2018, interview with Ambassador John Lange. This is Charles Stuart Kennedy. And John, I'm going to turn it over to you.

LANGE: Thank you, Stu.

I mentioned in an earlier interview that I was informally given an award by three of my A-100 classmates as the Foreign Service officer most likely to be taken hostage because, I assume, I had displayed a certain level of naïveté, shall we say. Well, I lost that naïveté during my tour in Mexico City. You can become jaded and cynical when you experience the realities of life.

Q: Yes.

LANGE: Two things clearly brought me to reality on my first tour. One was working on the nonimmigrant visa line, where you knew that people were lying to you at times just to get the visa. And you had to figure out when that was the case by reviewing their documents and interviewing them.

And the other was working in the arrest and detention unit visiting Americans in prison charged with murder and drug trafficking and other crimes, knowing that some of them were guilty. Some wouldn't admit it to me then, even though a couple admitted it to me later, while others would not even try to claim their innocence. Since I was making sure their welfare was being taken care of, it wasn't my duty to defend them one way or the other. But when you observe, shall we say, the seamier side of life, it really changed me, and I really think I lost the naïveté that I had when I entered the Foreign Service.

Q: As a supervisor of consular officers throughout my career, one of the things that I found that you had to sort of talk the younger officers through was this line, you know. Generally, white, middle-class, upper-class, American youth don't get lied to by people. I mean, blatantly. I mean, it just doesn't occur as there's no particular reason to. And at first they get so horrified to realize that somebody's lying. I used to have to explain that, look, for many of these people their whole livelihood is on the line. We've got these funny laws, and it's your job to wrinkle it out and make the decision, but don't pass judgment on them.

LANGE: Yeah. Very true. One of my colleagues on the visa line pointed out to me there was another factor for those of us working in Mexico, which was that if you turned the applicants down for a nonimmigrant tourist visa, that didn't mean they wouldn't enter the United States. Some maybe would end up illegally crossing the border later. It was such a dynamic that it was almost a game, as you point out.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: As I explained in the last discussion we had, Alejandra Macias Ochoa, an FSN working in the visa section, and I agreed near the end of my tour that we would get married. In Mexico, most people have two separate weddings. There's a legal wedding that serves for legal, civil purposes, and then there's the religious wedding, which for us would be in the Catholic Church. There's a distinction between being married within a religious institution and being married under a country's laws. A lot of Americans, I think, don't realize that distinction because in the United States the clergy are given the power to legally marry people.

Our first inclination was, let's get married legally in Mexico and also have the church wedding there. But it turned out that the legal requirements were just incredible. I had to have my birth certificate translated into Spanish and notarized by the Mexican consul in Wisconsin in order to get legally married in Mexico, for example. And since I had waited until the last month of my tour in Mexico City before we got engaged, we didn't have a lot of time to figure this all out. We quickly determined it was just going to be too difficult to get legally married in Mexico. We decided to have a civil wedding before a judge in Milwaukee and later a religious wedding before a priest in Mexico City.

It soon came time for me to transition from Mexico City to home leave in Wisconsin to training in Washington before my next post at the U.S. embassy in Paris. On a cost-constructive basis, I was able to drive to Wisconsin in my 1974 Plymouth Duster along with longtime friend Nick Mimier, who ended up visiting me in all but one of my overseas postings. He flew to Mexico in June 1983, and we then drove to Wisconsin via the western route through Guadalajara and Mazatlán, north up to Nogales, on to Phoenix and the Grand Canyon, then Las Vegas and Salt Lake City.

Q: That sounds like a great road trip.

LANGE: Yes, and one that I wouldn't do today due to the crime threat in certain parts of Mexico. We had a wonderful time—all while my poor mother was doing the preparatory work for the wedding in Milwaukee.

Cacho, Emma, and Alejandra flew to Milwaukee for our wedding in the Milwaukee County Courthouse on July 1, 1983. They then flew back to Mexico while I drove to Washington for training at the Foreign Service Institute, especially budget and fiscal training since I was going to work on financial management in Paris.



Ed, Marion, John, Alejandra, Emma and Cacho at Milwaukee wedding (July 1, 1983)

Alejandra was fortunate to be able to arrange for our religious wedding to take place in a beautiful 400-year-old church in Coyoacán, Mexico City. Her father was very well-connected and arranged for a Catholic archbishop, his friend, to preside over our wedding on the third of September 1983. Alejandra has six siblings, two brothers and four sisters, and she was the first daughter in the family to get married, so her parents really went all-out to organize an elaborate wedding celebration.



*Alejandra and John are married in a 16th-century church
in Mexico City (September 3, 1983)*

AMERICAN EMBASSY PARIS

I had to return to training, so Ale and I a couple of days later flew to the United States with her immigrant visa in hand. She was able to get her green card right away. After several more weeks of training, we flew to Paris in October 1983.

Q: And you left when? I like to get this right at the beginning. It's 1983 to?

LANGE: I was in Paris from October 1983 until December 1985.

Q: Okay.

LANGE: I moved from one huge embassy, Mexico City, to another. Paris had over 460 American employees, over 600 FSN staff, and over 300 contract employees hired through the embassy commissary. The chancery, completed in 1932, was located on the famous Place de la Concorde, which is at the foot of the Avenue des Champs-Élysées.

Q. What was your position again?

LANGE: I was the number two budget and fiscal officer supervising the cashier unit and the voucher unit, seventeen employees. The accommodation exchange at that time was one of the largest State Department cashier operations in the world, with a monthly volume of a million dollars, because we could not persuade a bank to establish a branch in the embassy to cash checks for Americans.

And there were these great FSNs in the voucher unit, when systems were not as computerized as today, who would pore over complicated, lengthy travel vouchers to analyze how much the traveler spent for food and lodging each day on, say, a six-month trip from their previous post to home leave to training in Washington to Paris. I ended up receiving a stack of vouchers at the end of each day, about 100 vouchers, that I had to certify. One of the things that is drilled into you in training to be a certifying officer is that your liability is that of an insurer; you are personally responsible for any mistakes in every voucher you sign if you're signing away U.S. government money. And I remember asking my boss at the time, Do you have to look through each voucher in detail? Do you trust the staff that the vouchers they prepared are correct? And he responded, Well, you just kind of get a sense for it after a while. And it was very true. I signed those vouchers very quickly.

At Embassy Paris, in contrast to what I had encountered in the admin section in Mexico City, there was, with an exception or two, quite a good, strong group of American employees in the section. And there were a lot of highly competent FSNs. The top FSN in the budget and fiscal section was named FSN of the year for Europe and Canada a few years after I left Paris, and years later she attended my ambassadorial swearing-in ceremony. The supervisory GSO [general services officer] in my first year was Patrick Kennedy, who years later was the under secretary for management, and I learned so much from him. When I retired, Pat graciously agreed to preside over my ambassadorial flag ceremony in the State Department.

I spent two weeks of temporary duty at the U.S. embassy in Madrid starting in late August 1985, to fill in for an absence in their financial management section. Alejandra came along, her first time in Spain, and her sister Salma flew from Mexico to join us. The two sisters traveled around Spain while I was working.

Paris was a large embassy in part because we had to host so many visitors. Ambassador Evan Galbraith sent a cable to the State Department, leaked to the press, in which he complained that there were over 13,000 official American visitors hosted by the embassy in 1983. The biggest culprits were senior administration officials.

But the high-level visitors actually made my work quite interesting. President Ronald Reagan came twice, and I worked on his visits. Vice President Bush, Secretary of State Shultz, et cetera. I had a nice time and worked hard and did a good job, I thought, in the budget and fiscal section, but the VIP visits were really memorable.

Q: What work did you do on the VIP visits?

LANGE: Regarding the most memorable visit, President Reagan came to Normandy to mark the fortieth anniversary of allied forces invading occupied France on June 6, 1944. That's the day remembered as the turning point for the allies against Nazi Germany in World War II. Many thought that the June 6, 1984, anniversary would be the last opportunity for a lot of the aging D-Day leaders and veterans to get together to commemorate the historic event, and many events took place in Normandy in addition to those involving the U.S. president.

I spent two weeks in Normandy as part of the complex planning for the president's visit and traveled several times to all three sites the president would visit. I was the embassy's motorcade officer, and, as a contingency, also its bad weather officer. If there had been inclement weather on June 6, the contingency plan was for the president to fly from England to the Cherbourg airport and then travel via motorcade between three distant sites, rather than fly by Marine One helicopter the whole way. At the daily meetings led by the White House advance team, people got tired of me piping up to say, "But if it rains...." (Laughs) And the weather on June 6 turned out to be beautiful.

I remember at one point being on Utah Beach, one of the sites where President Reagan was planning to visit, and there was a telephone on the beach wrapped in a plastic bag. You could see a long cord going from the phone off into the distance on the sandy beach. This was still in the middle of the Cold War, and the president always had to have the capability of being in touch instantly with the White House for any kind of emergency no matter where he was in the world. If you dialed three digits on that phone you got the White House switchboard. And the people who were on the White House advance team complained, because in their experience normally they only had to dial one digit to reach the White House.

There was one quite humorous incident during the visit preparations. Leaders on the White House advance team were flying via U.S. military helicopter from Normandy for a meeting with French officials in Paris, and it got so foggy they had to make an emergency landing. They landed on a French farm. (Laughs) They talked to the farmer and his wife and ended up eating breakfast with them before the clouds cleared. Back then – and I haven't been there in many years – there was such a warm feeling toward Americans in all of Normandy because of President Eisenhower and the U.S. military as well as the British and the other militaries' involvement in D-Day, and their recognition of how many lost their lives in Normandy trying to drive back the Germans and liberate France.

The president first gave a speech at Pointe du Hoc. Many of the American Rangers who had scaled the 130-foot-high cliff to take out enemy guns returned for the anniversary. It was clear that the president's aides crafted his visit to Normandy, part of a ten-day trip to Europe, to strengthen Reagan's public image in advance of the November election. As others have said, President Reagan excelled in the theater and stagecraft of the American presidency. His speech, now considered one of his most memorable, effectively launched his "Morning Again in America" 1984 re-election campaign. It was timed to coincide with the morning TV programs on the U.S. East Coast.

After a helicopter ride, President and Mrs. Reagan toured the Normandy American Cemetery on top of a cliff overlooking Omaha Beach. They walked among the tombstones of over 9,000 American war dead and were supposed to visit the chapel for silent prayer. I was told right afterward that the Secret Service in the morning had swept the chapel for explosives and locked the door to ensure security, but the door was still locked when the president and first lady arrived and they could not enter. Despite that glitch, the photos of the two of them walking among the tombstones were very impressive. He and French President François Mitterrand gave speeches at the United States-France ceremony.

Then they took another helicopter ride to the big event at Utah Beach, the culmination of the visit. That's where I was stationed as motorcade officer, kind of in the background. This was a huge, and hugely expensive, ceremony involving two presidents, two queens, two kings, an archduke and a prime minister from the United States, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Canada. Imagine all of the security on land and sea required to protect such a gathering of leaders from World War II Allied partners. President Mitterrand's remarks stressed reconciliation with Germany, though West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl had not been invited to the ceremony. The day's events and speeches and the group photo at Utah Beach buttressed the NATO alliance at a time when there had been widespread protests in Europe over the installation of U.S. missiles. I was very pleased to have played my own small part in a highly successful and memorable event, even though I was a nonpartisan FSO who wasn't part of any election campaign.

Another memorable visit was when Vice President George H.W. Bush came to Paris in June 1985 as part of a European tour to promote President Reagan's foreign policy, including trade and the space defense plan known as Star Wars. He was scheduled to arrive in Paris on June 29, but the world's attention was focused on the June 14 hijacking of TWA Flight 847 by brutal terrorists who demanded that Israel release hundreds of Lebanese prisoners. Over the course of 17 days, the plane was forced to crisscross the Mediterranean with over 150 passengers and crew members on board. A U.S. Navy diver was murdered. Vice President Bush put his European tour on hold for a time in hopes of greeting the American hostages once they were released.

Meanwhile, Alejandra and I had tickets to see Bruce Springsteen in concert at a park near Paris on June 30. Well, the vice president ended up arriving in Paris on June 30, a day late. We still hoped to attend the concert, but I had to wait because I was the motorcade officer for the vice president's movements and his schedule was uncertain. In the end, we never saw the performance. The hostages finally were freed, and Vice President Bush was there to greet them at Rhein-Main Air Base in Germany on July 1. Ale and I have seen Springsteen and the E Street Band many times since then, but I think I still have those unused concert tickets somewhere in my files.

On one of the vice president's visits to Paris, I can't remember which one, I was the motorcade officer and had this bad experience at the end of the visit. Bush gave a speech to embassy staff at the end of his stay, and I was in one of the vehicles waiting for him in

the courtyard. The vice president came out and got into his vehicle, but one of his media officers, an integral part of the White House team, was delayed and came out late. Well, the White House advance person in charge of the motorcade, who was sitting in the vehicle with me, was anxious to get to Orly Airport and gave the go-ahead for the motorcade to start moving slowly. What I should have told the guy from the advance team was, Stop, we need to wait till the media officer gets into his vehicle. But we had the French security police in front of us, and the whole motorcade except for that one vehicle just kept going. Now, you may think, All right, well, the media officer is coming just a couple of minutes behind the official motorcade. Not a big deal. But what happened was, the French had blocked off the streets of Paris that we were driving on, so our motorcade zoomed through and then, as soon as the motorcade had passed by, the police opened up the streets to cross traffic. So there was this huge traffic jam from central Paris to the airport. The poor guy who began less than a minute behind our motorcade got stuck in all this traffic. His embassy driver knew that he couldn't follow the same route, so the driver took another route to go a roundabout way to get to Orly and finally arrived, I don't know, maybe twenty or thirty or forty minutes late.

Meanwhile, the vice president's sitting on Air Force Two, one of the two planes. This White House was very attuned to how things looked, as I said, and the idea was that the second plane with the media and others would land first so they could disembark and photograph the vice president as he arrived at a London airport. Well, in the end, Air Force Two took off but did the slow route, so to speak, waiting for the second plane to come and land first. That delayed things for Bush's London visit, and hundreds of people were inconvenienced—all because the media officer had been maybe thirty seconds late in joining the motorcade in Paris. And afterward all of my co-workers in the admin section at the embassy were kind of looking at me as the motorcade officer, like, John, how did you let this happen? It hadn't been my decision for the motorcade to start moving, but it was not a high point of my existence as a motorcade officer.

Q: I have a motorcade story about Cairo when I think Nixon came to some event there, and the motorcade officer, all the cars were lined up, and he was telling somebody about it, he said, "And here we have—here's the lead car," and he put his thumbs on the lead car just to say this is the lead car. Well, the driver thought this meant go, and off he went, and half the people weren't loaded in. (Both laugh)

LANGE: You know, after having this kind of experience and others later in my career, in different roles, you realize that logistics can kill you. It'll kill you in the sense of adversely affecting plans when things have to be timed so tightly. And it's just really incredible how the U.S. government is able to pull together some very complicated official visits.

Q. Yes. Paris must have been a wonderful posting, of course, but while you were there the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait was bombed. Was security a big concern in Paris?

LANGE: Absolutely. A couple of years before our arrival at post, the chargé d'affaires had survived an assassination attempt upon leaving his home to go to work. The attack was claimed by the Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Faction, which also claimed

responsibility for the January 1982 killing of the U.S. Army military attaché outside his Paris apartment building. And in August 1982, terrorists attempted to attach a bomb to the commercial counselor's car parked on a Paris street. It fell off, but two members of the French bomb squad were killed trying to disarm it. So when we arrived in Paris, embassy security measures required us to have two sets of vehicle license plates: black plates that indicated we were living in the Paris area just like any resident, to keep a lower profile; and diplomatic CD [Corps Diplomatique] plates for when we traveled outside of the city and crossed borders. So, even way back then, long before terrorism really became such a huge issue through Osama bin Laden, security was a major concern in Paris.

After the December 1983 bombing in Kuwait that you mentioned, which took place only eight months after the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, the State Department sent a message to all posts ordering them to set up barricades and take other measures to try to prevent truck bomb explosions. A side street ran between the embassy building and the famous Hotel de Crillon on the Place de la Concorde. And my office, the budget and fiscal section, was located on the ground floor next to the side street, one of the most vulnerable parts of the embassy. So embassy security installed huge metal plates to cover up the windows in an attempt to protect us from a truck bomb. The FSN staff were understandably fearful, and one of them wrote a memorandum to the administrative counselor describing the staff's, quote, "quiet panic" and calling for our office to be moved away from the street side of the "menaced building" for improved physical and emotional security.

In March 1984 FSO Robert Homme, consul general in Strasbourg, was superficially wounded by a gunman when he got into his car outside his home. I remember attending, as a junior officer observer, the embassy's country team meeting when Bob described how the gunman shot bullets through his car windows and then escaped on a motorcycle. The Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Faction claimed responsibility for that attack, too.

It was great to be living in Paris, but security was a constant concern. While we were there, syndicated columnist Jack Anderson wrote an article headlined, "Fear of Attacks Casts Pall over Paris Embassy."

There was another security issue of a different sort, though I was unaware of it while at post. In the administrative section of the embassy there was a woman, Maria Lamant, working in the Travel and Visitors Unit. Maria was quite gregarious and flamboyant, and everybody knew her. The unit dealt with the huge number of official U.S. government visitors who came to Paris and had the complete list of all the visitors and the hotels where they were staying.

Well, several years after I left post, media reported that she was accused of being a French spy. She allegedly was taking those visitor lists with her out of the embassy, sticking them in her *Le Monde* newspaper, and handing them over to the French secret services for what the newspapers called "economic espionage"—so that French officials could try to go into hotel rooms where particular U.S. government visitors were staying and review the sensitive documents in briefcases left in the hotel rooms. Maria denied

being a spy, and I don't know if those newspaper reports were accurate, but it's certainly plausible because a Foreign Service National in that kind of position has access to all the information on the visitors and their hotels. It's not classified information, it's sensitive but unclassified, what back then was labelled limited official use. The alleged spying caused a big brouhaha, shall we say.

Q: Did you have any impression of the ambassador or was he too far removed?

LANGE: I infrequently saw Ambassador Evan Galbraith, who left post in July 1985. The second ambassador I worked under was Joe Rodgers, who had been a construction entrepreneur from Nashville who was finance chairman for the 1984 Reagan-Bush campaign. Both were political appointees.

When I first got to Paris, Ambassador Galbraith was an outspoken supporter of President Reagan and critic of the French Communist Party, which for a while was a coalition partner in President François Mitterand's Socialist-led government. His opinionated public comments on internal affairs were shocking to the French back then, and he drew several formal protests from the French foreign ministry. He ended up writing a book, in French, *Ambassadeur de choc* (shock ambassador), which defended his blunt and controversial style.

I remember participating in a tense meeting with Ambassador Galbraith organized by the embassy's American Foreign Service Association [AFSA] chapter in February 1985. Arguing that political appointees were superior ambassadors to career officers, Galbraith had told a *New York Times* reporter that the Foreign Service takes the guts out of people, and their tendency is to avoid confronting an issue. He cited an earlier interview with Lawrence Eagleburger in the *Foreign Service Journal*, but Eagleburger responded that Galbraith misinterpreted his statements. There was an uproar, and Secretary George Shultz went so far as to say that Galbraith should have his tongue tied for him. At the AFSA meeting, the ambassador told us that the "system" has an adverse effect on people speaking out and he did not want to give the impression that individuals working for him at the embassy were in any way deficient. That same day he sent a first-person cable to Secretary Shultz and National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane saying the *New York Times* had badly distorted his views and he found most career officials to be highly dedicated, competent and often courageous.

In reviewing my files while preparing for this interview, I ran across a copy of the April 1985 *Foreign Service Journal* that had several pieces on this subject and the transcript of a July 1985 interview taped for "Firing Line" in which William F. Buckley Jr. moderated a discussion involving Galbraith and Eagleburger. They debated the need for more guts in the Foreign Service, the role of the State Department and the Foreign Service in reminding the president of historical U.S. foreign policy commitments made by previous administrations, whether the Foreign Service is dominated by liberals, and whether all ambassadors to principal posts abroad should be political appointees because they are better positioned than career officers to plead the president's case. In the midst of the controversy, the ambassador's wife, Marie Galbraith, wrote a letter to the editor of the *International Herald Tribune* describing her "unending admiration" for the men and

women of the Foreign Service and their families. There were other articles in leading U.S. publications arguing one side or the other of this fascinating debate, much of which remains relevant today. But I wonder if the stature of the Foreign Service has declined over recent decades and if such a controversy would generate the same level of media interest today.

Near the end of her time in Paris, Mrs. Galbraith, who was very nice to work with, conceived and edited a book highlighting the ambassador's residence, a beautiful, historic building on the fashionable Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré that had once been a Rothschild mansion. It was called *The American Ambassador's Residence in Paris*. It wasn't hardcover, but it was still a classy publication, lots of photographs, very stylishly done. But it very much highlighted the current ambassador and his wife, which meant that the next ambassador and his wife were probably not going to want to prominently display the book. My only role was to try to figure out how we were going to pay for it through a combination of U.S. government funds and private contributions.

Well, there was a very unfortunate error in the publication. In a photo collage, one photo showed the waiters bringing in cooked turkeys for Thanksgiving dinner at the residence. And on the same page was a photo of President Reagan and several of his top aides at the residence discussing the Versailles Summit. But the editors mixed up the captions, so here you had this photograph of President Reagan and his advisers with the caption "Arrival of the turkeys for Thanksgiving Dinner for one hundred French guests." The mistake even made the *Washington Post* in a tongue-in-cheek article complete with the two photos. I still have that article, headlined, "Of Turkeys and Typos." And understandably, Mrs. Galbraith was appalled. I don't know who, and maybe even she, had had the final sign-off before printing. So then we had to figure out how to find the money to print a corrected version. I helped Mrs. Galbraith on this, and she very nicely gave me an autographed copy of the new version, thanking me for my help over the years.

Ambassador Joe Rodgers was a very nice man. He and his wife were very nice to invite all of the staff to the American ambassador's residence for a reception, which, of course, he had to pay for himself because it was just internal to the U.S. government. He did this in three groups because there were so many of us. And so, when I went through the receiving line at the reception when I was invited, I introduced myself as working in the budget and fiscal section. He said to me, John, come on over here. True to his roots as a construction company executive, he pointed to a crack in the wall and said, quote, "You know, I think that's going to cost about \$40,000 to fix, but I hope we can do that." And so, that was my place in the embassy. My boss and I in the budget and fiscal section were thought of as the funders.

Several years later, in January 1989, I sat in on Joe Rodgers' farewell call on Under Secretary for Management Ron Spiers. He had a lot of insights on the role of FSOs and told Spiers that he never would have believed that a person professionally could work as hard for President Reagan as they had for President Carter, but that proved to be the case.

Q: Well, outside of the embassy, where did you live?

LANGE: While many Americans at the embassy lived in fashionable *arrondissements* (districts), we were living in Boulogne-Billancourt right outside of Paris near the end of the Métro line. I would drive to the embassy when I worked on a Saturday. The embassy is located on the Place de la Concorde near the foot of the Champs-Élysées, and I remember many times when Alejandra and I would drive around the square and I'd look to the right to see the Arc de Triomphe in the distance and say, "This is the most beautiful view in the world."

Q: Well, sometimes with a large post the morale is not great because at smaller posts, as you know, I mean, you really form a unit. But at a big post you're sort of on your own. How about a social life?

LANGE: Yeah. I actually felt sorry for some of the single people at the embassy, especially those who were coming from a smaller post, especially a hardship post, where there is such close camaraderie among the American families. Some of the single people would come to Embassy Paris kind of waiting for these embassy get-togethers, but the basic attitude of most American staff was, this is Paris. If you can't figure out how to have fun, you've got a problem, you know.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: Most of us who were married or who developed friends would go out and enjoy Paris and travel around the country and really take advantage of it. And the single people, of course, did too after a while, but that camaraderie in the embassy community was not there. It wasn't that it was an unfriendly embassy though.

Q: No, no, but just—

LANGE: There were a few organized events that I remember participating in, such as a French wine tasting complete with buckets to spit out the wine. But nobody spit it out, of course, and by the end of the wine tasting the room was a lot louder and quite a lot of fun. We also took a tour of the Champagne country on a chartered bus organized by the spouse of an American staff member, an amateur expert on wine. You'd run into people you had never met because it was such a large embassy with so many different U.S. government agencies present there. But it just was nothing like the solidarity you find in smaller embassies.

Q: How about family life?

LANGE: While I was working in financial management, my wife Alejandra was working at the State Department's Regional Administrative Management Center in Paris, which served as the regional accounting and disbursing center for posts in Europe and Africa. Most of her coworkers were French, and she learned the French language more quickly than I did.

One of the advantages we had during the tour was the strength of the U.S. dollar, which reached record highs versus the French Franc, so we could afford to eat at truly excellent Michelin-starred restaurants. My parents came to visit twice, and Alejandra's parents came to visit and stayed in Europe for three weeks. And, this being Paris, numerous other friends and relatives also visited.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: I mentioned earlier that my father had landed on Utah Beach some three months after the Normandy invasion and had worked in hospital administration in Cherbourg. On one of my parents' visits I arranged with the office of the American Battle Monuments Commission, which operated the U.S. military cemeteries in France, for my father to help take down and fold the American flag at the end of the day at one of the cemeteries in Normandy. Which was very nice for my father, a veteran of World War II.

Q: Very nice.



Visiting Utah Beach, where Edward Lange landed during World War II and son John worked on President Ronald Reagan's visit forty years later (1984)

LANGE: When Alejandra's parents came to Paris, the four of us drove in our Peugeot 305, not a big car, all the way to Rome, going through Montreux, Switzerland, over the Alps, and into northern Italy. On the return trip we drove along the French Riviera all the way to Marseilles. Her parents went on from there to visit Spain, Greece and Israel. Just a magnificent trip for all of us.

A terrible situation for us took place on September 19, 1985, when there was a devastating earthquake in Mexico City that killed over 5,000 people. Alejandra's family,

so many of her family members, were living in Mexico City at the time. We anxiously tried to find out what happened to them, and we tried using our former contacts at the U.S. embassy. My recollection is that, after two or three days, we received a telegram from Alejandra's mother that had only three words, *todos bien, saludos* (everybody's fine, regards). And that was all we needed to hear.

Q: Yeah. I can remember, I was consul general in Naples when they had a major earthquake and about 4,000 people in Naples died. It's not fun.

LANGE: No, no. Tragic situations.



*Alejandra and John on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées
before departing Paris (December 1985)*

So, my tour in Paris was coming to an end. I then was supposed to take the mid-level course. It was a five- or six-month course that was created by the Foreign Service Institute because there was considered to be inadequate training for mid-level Foreign Service officers. I had to extend my time in Paris to match the timing of the start of the course. Then they suddenly canceled it entirely because of complaints that it was so long it disrupted the usual summer cycle of tour rotations. So I suddenly had to find something else and decided that, after two tours abroad, it was time for me to work in Washington. And even though I'd been comfortable as a management officer, I also always had an interest in political, economic, social, and cultural issues in a country. I therefore sought experience outside of the admin cone. Having served at Embassy Mexico City, I was able to get a multifunctional job as staff assistant in what is now called WHA [Bureau of

Western Hemisphere Affairs] and was then called Inter-American Affairs, known as ARA.

BUREAU OF INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

Q: Today is the twenty-fourth of August 2018 with John Lange. And John, I'll let you pick it up.

LANGE: Thanks, Stu.

When we last spoke, Alejandra and I were about to leave Paris. We departed for Washington a few days before Christmas 1985, and I immediately began working for a year as a staff assistant to the assistant secretary in the front office of ARA.

I was really pleased to be a staff assistant because I wanted to understand the Department. I know there are a lot of people who seek seventh-floor jobs in the executive secretariat to try to enhance their reputation and gain contacts for future advancement. It seems that for some FSOs their fundamental goal from the day they joined the Foreign Service was to work in the operations center and then on what is called "the line" coordinating policy and briefing memos. But I wanted to understand how the Department worked from the bureau level to the top, and I wasn't interested in doing shift work in the 24-hour Ops Center [Operations Center].

Q: This is one of the things that so many people comment on, and that is getting a job in the Department, even though they may be overseas oriented, to understand how this really very complicated system works. I mean, where the influence is not spelled out. You almost have to get there and feel it and sniff it to understand how policy is made.

LANGE: Exactly. The other Foreign Service staff assistant and I would work on alternate weeks either the early-morning-to-mid-afternoon shift or the late-morning-to-evening shift, with each shift lasting ten to twelve hours. One of my basic functions when I had the morning shift was to sort through the paper, the printed cables that had come in overnight from ARA and other posts, to determine which ones needed to be seen by the assistant secretary or the deputy assistant secretaries in the front office. And then I'd put together the agenda and attend the assistant secretary's daily staff meeting with the deputy assistant secretaries and a special assistant or two. That gave me a very good overview of the issues facing the U.S. government in the entire region.

I have to say, I've been retired since 2009, but when I am back in the main State building, I still can walk out of just about any room, any office, and know exactly where I am in the building. Back in 1985 and 1986, things weren't done electronically to the extent that they are today, and there was still a lot of physical paper movement. If a memo or cable required clearance by the front office of another bureau or needed to be delivered to the

executive secretariat, I'd walk the paper down the hallway or to a different floor or wherever. So, I really got to know the building physically as well as getting the feel of it that you described.

But to me, one of the really fascinating parts of that job was that the assistant secretary for whom I was working was Elliott Abrams.

Q: Oh, yes.

LANGE: Elliott, as I'm sure you know, was prominent as the point person for the Reagan Administration's policy on the Nicaraguan Contras, the militants in Nicaragua opposed to the Marxist-oriented Sandinistas. This was the time, quite controversially, when President Reagan was supporting the right-wing rebels based on the fear that the Sandinista government would serve as a launchpad for the spread of communist insurgency elsewhere in Central America. Elliott frequently was cited in newspaper headlines and in sometimes combative television interviews.

I found it fascinating and enlightening to see a high-powered, politically appointed assistant secretary in action. And I have to say, at those morning staff meetings there was a lot of mention of the deputy director for political-military affairs on the National Security Council staff, Marine Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North. There'd be talk of Ollie this and Ollie that, Ollie said this, et cetera. There was just a lot of direct contact between the front office and the NSC [National Security Council] at that time. And, of course, Ollie North later was disclosed as having worked to provide assistance to the Contras in contravention of U.S. law.

Q: Well, I mean, part of this was being done, maybe not at this time, but part of this was being done in a way secretly because Congress didn't want us to do it.

LANGE: Yes. That's what came out later in the press and in congressional testimony and trials.

Q: Well, were you familiar, I mean, was this common knowledge that you were going against the will of Congress?

LANGE: Not by the staff assistants. In fact, I personally disagreed with support for the Contras, though no one in the bureau ever asked me or cared about my views on the subject. My job was to push paper, and it turned out that when there were really sensitive things that they had to talk about, I wasn't in the room. The morning front office staff meeting discussed the whole range of issues in Latin America and the Caribbean. Canada wasn't part of the bureau at that time. Clearly, subjects that were of great sensitivity, in terms of support for the Contras, including activities that were later found to be illegal, were kept from me and others not directly involved.

There was a time I remember, and my recollection is it was October 5 of 1986, when I was leaving the office in the late afternoon and I remember the deputy assistant secretary

for Central America alerting me, We've got a problem in the region and it's going to be a big day tomorrow. I made a mental note to make sure I got to work early the next day.

What the news media quickly reported was that a Contra weapons supply plane had been shot down by the Sandinista government and there was, I believe, one survivor. The Democratic-led Congress earlier had passed legislation banning U.S. military aid to the Contras. So the media wanted to know if there was a connection between this supply plane being shot down and U.S. government support. The plane later was revealed to be CIA-controlled.

I'm embarrassed to say that the next morning, as I was driving my vehicle to the Department via I-66 in Virginia, I'm pressing on the accelerator, it's not working, and I realize I'm out of gas. (Laughs) I managed to coast down an exit, park the car on the side of the road, and walk to a nearby Metro station to take the train into DC. I was able to make it into the Department about a half-hour late to open up the office while Elliott was already on the phone. Secretary of State Shultz's office was calling me demanding a briefing memorandum, which Elliott quickly put together—I don't think I ever saw the text of it—and I then delivered the envelope directly to the executive secretary shortly after 8:00 that morning. I breathed a sigh of relief and felt I had already put in a full day's work, with the intensity of the situation—and after having run out of gas along the way. (Laughs)

Q: I have to ask, what happened with the car? (Both laugh)

LANGE: I went back that afternoon by Metro and borrowed a gasoline can from a nearby gas station, so I was able to drive home. But I learned a lesson from that.

Q: Always—

LANGE: In November things really hit the fan. On November 25, I believe it was, President Reagan and Attorney General Edwin Meese disclosed that an internal government review had discovered that money from arms sales to Iran had been diverted to fund the Contras. That was when the Iran-Contra scandal broke into public view.

The administration's publicly stated policy had been to refuse to bargain with terrorists or to aid Iran in its war with Iraq, based on the belief that Iran was a sponsor of international terrorism. But the NSC managed to sell antitank missiles to Iran in the mistaken belief that the sale would secure the release of American hostages held by Iranian terrorists in Lebanon. And a portion of the millions of dollars that Iran had paid in the arms-for-hostages deal was diverted by the NSC and given to the Contras despite the U.S. legal ban on such assistance.

So Ollie North, who had been so close to the ARA bureau in terms of working on these issues, was fired. National Security Advisor Vice Admiral John Poindexter resigned. This was just huge news. And I remember walking into the office of the PDAS [principal deputy assistant secretary], a very honorable person, and basically seeing his jaw drop. I could tell by his reaction, as we were watching on television what I think was the

attorney general's press conference, that he did not know anything about what was going on and was just flabbergasted.

So back to your question on whether it was common knowledge that funds were being diverted from the arms sales to Iran to help the Contras, it wasn't even known, as far as I could tell, by the bureau's principal deputy assistant secretary of state. The operation was just really kept close hold.

When I look back at my year as staff assistant, I find it remarkable to think that activities taking place at that time at the NSC, in the ARA front office, and elsewhere would lead the president to appoint a special review board called the Tower Commission and House and Senate committees to hold joint hearings known as the Iran-Contra hearings, where Elliott testified. Back then, I was very happy not to be involved in this scandal because that could have ruined my career. But at the same time, to be a close observer of a key player in one of the biggest scandals of the 1980s, even in the tangential role of a staff assistant, was quite fascinating.

Years later, Elliott entered into a plea bargain agreement in which he pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor counts of withholding information from Congress on how the Contras were being funded and armed, in lieu of felony charges of perjury over his congressional testimony. And at the end of his presidential term, George H.W. Bush pardoned Elliott and several others involved in the Iran-Contra affair. But there's a feeling among Elliott and his allies that he was unjustly persecuted, that this was unfair. He ended up writing a book describing how political differences can be turned into crimes and arguing that his crimes were more technical than willful.

Q: Well, the president was talking about threats to Brownsville, Texas, if I recall, coming from Central America. You know, most of us really didn't know the full extent of things but certainly were extremely dubious about this.

LANGE: I must say, after I left the bureau for my next assignment, several Foreign Service colleagues finally told me what they really thought of what the bureau was doing in Central America, including what the assistant secretary was doing. A lot of people within the building were very uneasy about what was going on.

Q: It was a peculiar time. I mean, Washington can get very byzantine at times, and you were there at a byzantine time.

LANGE: Yeah, you're very right.

Talking about Byzantine ways, there was an ongoing dispute between Elliott Abrams and his views of what was going on in Central America versus the views of the State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Frank McNeil, senior deputy in INR, later ended up writing a book on Central America and an excerpt was published in the March 1989 *Foreign Service Journal*. He wrote that certain career officers who were leaders in policy positions in Latin America during the Carter administration were blacklisted for ambassadorships under the Reagan Administration, that Elliott Abrams engaged in

McCarthyism when he objected to potential ambassadorial appointments on ideological grounds, and that Elliott had complained that INR sought to undercut the president's policy. The issue included Elliott's written response in which he denied the accusations, provided other explanations, and described McNeil's book as, quote, "hate mail between hard covers," unquote. So, this was pretty nasty as to how one even looked upon the perceived threat from the Sandinistas and whether the United States should support the Contras and all that. A very, very difficult time. And Elliott seemed to revel in the intellectual combat.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: On a positive note, at one point during my time as staff assistant I suggested to Elliott that we have a monthly meeting in the ARA conference room with the assistant secretary, deputy assistant secretary, and office directors featuring an outside speaker, just to explore long-range issues affecting the region. You could call it a seminar. The idea was to take advantage of Elliott's position as a high-powered, influential person, known for his neo-conservative views, with so many prominent contacts in town. Elliott approved the idea and proceeded to invite the speakers, who would agree in principle to speak. Then I would work with their assistants on scheduling and logistics. Our monthly discussions included Paul Volcker, chairman of the Federal Reserve at the time; Jeane Kirkpatrick, former ambassador to the UN in New York; Ted Koppel, famous journalist; General John Galvin, then head of the United States Southern Command; and others. We limited attendance to those top ARA officials, and Elliott once said our biggest problem was keeping other people out because so many folks outside of ARA asked to attend. It was really a high-powered group of speakers, though I wouldn't say it was politically balanced.

Q: Oh, yes. By the way, I like to put this in—you were in the bureau from when to when?

LANGE: December 1985 to December 1986, a one-year tour. You wouldn't want to spend more time as a staff assistant. But it really served the purpose that I wanted, which was to learn the Department, how policy worked, how a regional bureau worked, how to deal with the seventh floor, the executive secretariat in particular. And in the end, I received a superior honor award from Assistant Secretary Abrams.

I ended up spending about half my career overseas and half in the Department. My observation is that most Foreign Service officer generalists spend more time one way or the other, depending on whether they're geared toward Washington and the power base or whether they're geared toward getting something done in-country at an overseas post. My career, on the other hand, was about half and half. This was my first tour in the Department, but it was one of my best tours in Washington in the sense of really learning so much.

Q: And also, you were there at a time when you were in a bureau that was the center of foreign policy, which is not usually the case.

LANGE: I'm always bemused when a new administration comes in, it seems like they always say, Well, now we're going to really place an emphasis on the importance of the U.S. relationship with Latin America and the Caribbean, it was neglected in the past but we're going to make it important. And then something else comes along in another region that becomes top priority, and they never fulfill their promise.

I never again served in the Western Hemisphere Affairs bureau or in the region. It's a shame because my daughter Julia, whose mother is from Mexico City and father from Milwaukee, never had the opportunity to live in a Spanish-speaking country. I still have an affinity toward Latin America in part because I visit my in-laws in Mexico City on a regular basis.

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

Q: Yeah. What was your next tour, from when to when?

LANGE: I was able to get a job as a management analyst in what was then called the Office of Management Operations [M/MO]. I started in January 1987 and left in July 1988. As an admin officer, I knew I couldn't keep doing tours that were outside of my Foreign Service cone. But I wasn't your traditional admin officer and was really more interested in the management side than in the administrative side, if I can make that distinction. In M/MO I worked with and for some really good people, including Ambassador George Moose, for whom I later worked when he was the assistant secretary for African affairs.

M/MO took on special projects, often involving thorny issues facing the Department, for the under secretary for management. And the office spent a lot of time on overseas staffing issues, including potential post closures, due to the Department's resource constraints. M/MO also led the State Department's work on governmentwide efforts to try to privatize some government functions.

One of the office's duties was to monitor and support the central role that the State Department plays abroad in preserving the authority of the chief of mission. That emanated from the president's letter to newly arrived chiefs of mission, with the initial draft being written, as I recall, in M/MO. The office also monitored the process to determine overseas staffing levels called NSDD-38, which was the National Security Decision Directive giving authority to ambassadors to determine whether or not to allow another agency to increase or reduce its staffing at post. At that time, it wasn't up to Washington, but rather up to the ambassador, to say yes, I'll allow another agency to increase its staffing. And the ambassador could place conditions on an increase because of the concomitant need for additional administrative support that would have to be provided by State at post.

But M/MO wasn't always a fun place to work because the people in the Department who had the real responsibility to make sure the administrative operations went smoothly—particularly in the regional bureaus supporting, through their executive directors' offices, the embassies abroad—didn't really like some central management

office trying to second guess them and, in their minds, wasting time and resources in the process. The executive directors and their assistant secretaries, understandably, rebelled in particular against the potential closing of embassies or consulates in their regions. Our work was important but not always appreciated.

There were two big projects that I ended up working on that had long-term interest. One was what was initially called the Small Embassy Program and later became the Special Embassy Program. There was an ambassador named Barrington King who came back from Brunei to work in M/MO, and I worked with him to try to rejuvenate this concept that had just begun and wasn't going anywhere. We had thirty-three small embassies in the program at that time. The only reason we changed the name from Small Embassy Program was that no ambassadors wanted to think that they were running a small, insignificant embassy, while "special" embassy was a more neutral term.

But the fundamental premise of this, which turned out to be flawed in some ways, was that Washington was imposing a lot of workload on embassies all over the world without regard to the resources available at the embassies. Big embassies, like the ones I'd been stationed at for my first two tours, Mexico City and Paris, had the wherewithal to meet whatever reporting requirements or take whatever actions Washington asked of them. But the embassies with a small number of Americans, or maybe those in some parts of the developing world with not very well-trained local employees, were just not in a position to respond to all of these requests and were just totally overburdened by them. That was the basic premise. So, what we tried to do was to have a policy whereby if you were in Washington and planned to impose a requirement on all embassies, you had to justify why you would place that requirement on the smaller embassies, those thirty-three embassies in the Special Embassy Program.

Q: So why do you think the Special Embassy Program was flawed?

LANGE: We learned that there are so many justified demands put on embassies by so many different agencies, not just the State Department, in terms of reporting needs, that it was almost impossible to try to achieve a significant reduction in workload. We tried and tried and weren't getting anywhere, and all we got were complaints. You couldn't have gaps in worldwide data. For example, you couldn't publish the State Department's annual human rights report without information on thirty-three countries because we had reduced the workload at those thirty-three embassies. You had to have the complete, global human rights report. And in fact, when later I had my first tour in Africa, in Lomé, Togo, which was in the Special Embassy Program, I felt that a lot of these work requirements weren't as difficult as I had imagined they were when I was back in Management Operations. The FSN responsible for the first draft would use the previous year's report as the basis for this year's update, and we would then edit, approve, and submit it to Washington. That usually wasn't such a huge workload. So, it was just very hard to try to reduce Washington-imposed work requirements. The under secretary for management ended up terminating the program years later, in 2005.

In 1987-1988, the dominant management issue in the Department was the fiscal crisis. State faced an \$84 million budget shortfall compared to the minimum needed to continue

functioning at existing levels due to new requirements, a fall in the value of the dollar versus other currencies, and other reasons. Budgetary limitations at the time made it imperative that the Department eliminate or reduce lower-priority activities, but the difficulty was in determining what those low priorities were and then eliminating them in the face of strong bureaucratic resistance. The goal of having, quote, “healthier soup in smaller bowls” was laudatory under the circumstances but very difficult to implement.

Secretary Shultz in September 1987 announced that the Department planned to eliminate over 1,200 employees out of some 24,000 stationed in the United States and at nearly 260 posts abroad. Deputy Secretary John Whitehead chaired a small steering group with the under secretaries for political affairs and management and the executive secretary to deal with the problem. Brandon Grove, former U.S. ambassador to what had been called Zaire, was asked to coordinate implementation of the budget cuts. But a close look at the Steering Group proposals, which also included closing some embassies and consulates and eliminating entire bureaus, made it clear that the ramifications of many of them had not been thoroughly analyzed and implementation could do serious damage to U.S. foreign policy interests.

Employees were up in arms, of course. I remember a *Washington Post* headline saying the rallying cry at State was, “Cut Things, Not People.” A *State* magazine cover story in November lamented “The Budget Blues.”

Q. Those were difficult times.

LANGE: Definitely. Mercifully, a congressional continuing resolution that resulted from a budget summit in November 1987 restored much of the anticipated budget shortfall, and our Fiscal Year 1988 budget was passed in recognition of both the gravity of the budget crisis and the serious effort the Department was making to achieve economies and streamline operations. By January, the focus of the Steering Group had shifted to making gradual and structural changes. Nevertheless, its major initiatives were met with concern by many in the Department, including decisions to eliminate ten percent of the deputy assistant secretary and equivalent positions and to eliminate what were seen to be duplicative economic and public affairs functions across bureaus.

To make recommendations on administrative services, Brandon brought together a working group of mid-level admin personnel from different bureaus of the Department. I served on the working group, the other big project I worked on while in M/MO.

Our working group searched for a mechanism to reconcile the Department’s requirement for centralized direction with the desire to give greater authority and responsibility to line managers. The goal was to improve quality, efficiency, and economy while dealing with two diametrically opposed views on administrative services: to centralize or to decentralize. We used a process—I think it was called nominal group technique—to do a bottom-up analysis. Over three hundred employees participated at all levels in a highly structured effort to identify and prioritize problems and possible solutions in the delivery of administrative services. I have to say that it became clear there was a lot of frustration over how things had been working in the Department, and many of the participants were

glad to learn they were not alone in their pet peeves. Our working group then analyzed over seven hundred areas of concern that had been identified and produced a report in June 1988, *Administrative Functions for the 1990s*, containing thirty-eight detailed recommendations for the Management family of bureaus. It was known as the Grove Report.

Q: So, what administrative changes did your group recommend?

LANGE: I won't go into all the specifics, but the fundamental approach was to ensure there were clear lines of authority, accountability, and responsibility in the administrative functions. Too often in a big bureaucracy like the U.S. government, including the State Department, you may be accountable for something, and you may be responsible for something, but you don't have the authority to do what you've been assigned to do for various reasons, possibly because the budget you've been given isn't sufficient to accomplish the task. So the idea was that the Department would be more effective and efficient if those who had responsibility and accountability for programs also had decision-making authority over those programs.

Those of us on the working group were very proud of the report, and I believe the deputy secretary liked it. Under Secretary for Management Ronald Spiers took the report very seriously, broadly soliciting comments on it, hosting a day-and-a-half conference (which I organized) with his Management Council and our working group, and accepting, with some improvements, thirty-one of the recommendations. Barry King was then tasked to implement those that were adopted.

Q: Yeah. It's really hard to say okay, you've got accountability and authority, but if the authority is not on the budget side of things, I mean, that can be a fundamental problem.

LANGE: Exactly. Exactly. And I find that the concept of linking authority, accountability, and responsibility is something that is relevant to the work I'm doing today, which involves global health issues. I find that some people are making recommendations for what the World Health Organization [WHO] should do in a public health emergency by placing accountability, or blame, on the WHO secretariat without realizing that it doesn't have the authority to do what should be done, since that authority really lies with a country's government, where the health emergency occurs. It's a concept that I still think is not fully understood in many discussions, whether it's at the national level or the global level.

There was another big thing in my life that occurred while I was in Management Operations. Our daughter Julia was born on July 5, 1987.

Q: What's happened with Julia?

LANGE: She was born in Fairfax County [Virginia]. At two years old she moved to Lomé. At four years old she moved to Geneva. At eight years old she moved back to Northern Virginia. Two and a half years later she moved to Dar es Salaam. Two years after that she moved to Gaborone. She then moved back to Virginia for high school. Later

she graduated from the University of Mary Washington and still lives in Virginia. That's quite a wide-ranging upbringing—and quite normal for a Foreign Service youth.

Q: I have three kids who moved around with me and all. How did she find coming back to the States? I saw that my kids found going to a school in the States, having been at international schools where they blended in and had a wonderful time, they felt like strangers in a strange land.

LANGE: That's frequently the case. They're often called third culture kids or global nomads. The Foreign Service Youth Foundation organizes activities to help the children of U.S. Foreign Service personnel acclimate to being back in the United States, and in the past I served on its board of directors.

Julia attended a public high school in Vienna [Virginia], and yes, she was a bit of a stranger in a strange land because the freshmen cliques were already formed from middle school. I remember in her first year she was a technician for a school play, and it turned out the head of the technical team had been with his family in Namibia when we were in neighboring Botswana. He told me that when he first met Julia, he asked where she was from. She said, quote, "That depends." And he responded, "You must be Foreign Service." (Both laugh) Julia could have said it's a long story—my mother is from Mexico, I was born in Fairfax County, and I've lived in Togo and Switzerland and Tanzania and Botswana. And he immediately sensed, having been a Foreign Service youth himself, how she had grown up.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: The best story I ever heard about being a Foreign Service youth, and it's probably apocryphal, was about this young guy who had lived abroad with his parents while growing up, and the first time he lived full-time in the United States was when he went to college. He went to a fraternity rush party at the start of his freshman year, and even though it may not have been legal, they were serving a lot of alcohol and asked him, What do you want to drink? Basically, their question was, Do you want Budweiser or Miller? And his response was, I'll take a Campari and soda. (Both laugh) I don't know if that's true, but it's a great story because it just kind of epitomizes what life back in the United States can be like after growing up abroad in the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, my kids were cookie pushers or basically peanut passers at cocktail parties.

LANGE: Yeah. You can argue it's a bit of a risk to take your kids abroad in terms of their normal development, but living overseas was an incredibly broadening experience that instilled a global view that sticks with Julia even though she prefers living in Virginia rather than living abroad. And I'm not sure it would have been any more normal or any better if she had lived in Fairfax County her whole life.

Q: I find kids take a much broader view.

LANGE: Yes, exactly.

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR MANAGEMENT

Q: What did you do after Management Operations?

LANGE: I left M/MO early. It was scheduled to be a two-year tour, but I was there for a year and a half before becoming a special assistant in M [Office of the Under Secretary for Management] working for Under Secretary Ronald Spiers. He was just a really top-notch person.

Q: Oh, yes. We've interviewed him. He's first rate, I mean, he has tremendous authority.

LANGE: Agreed.

Q: When did you start working for the under secretary for management, and how long were you there?

LANGE: I arrived in July 1988 and departed in June 1989.

In M, I worked as liaison and advisor to Implementation Coordinator Barry King following up on the report, *Administrative Functions for the 1990s*, and Ron Spiers was able to certify substantial completion of the complex recommendations in January 1989.

Q: Did your report on administrative functions end up making a difference?

LANGE: I really can't say that it achieved the goal of substantially changing the Department's delivery of administrative services. Too many State Department management reports over the years have not really made a big difference and just ended up sitting on a shelf. In this case, the timing was not good, at the end of the Reagan Administration, so that bureaus could try to wait things out to avoid making changes they didn't like. But I was stationed abroad for several years afterward and don't know whether the report's impact was truly long-lasting.

While in M, I found, not surprisingly, that one of the advantages of sitting in a seventh-floor office was that others, such as lawyers in the Office of the Legal Adviser, responded much more quickly to requests for information than had been my experience when I worked in lower-level offices. And interesting issues frequently arose. At one point I discovered and corrected an error in the final draft of the president's speech on UN funding at the General Assembly, preventing him from an embarrassing misstatement.

Ron Spiers had established a Management Council to serve as his senior advisory body on management issues related to things like personnel, training, financial management, communications, reciprocity, security, foreign buildings management, you name it. As executive secretary of the council, I planned, attended, and followed up on the meetings and really learned a lot observing the under secretary and those assistant secretaries in action.

I also drafted for Under Secretary Spiers his monthly management issues cable, which he thought was probably the most widely read cable in the Foreign Service because it went to everyone in the field and in Washington. It provided updates on significant management issues that affected Department staff. Before he left his position in May 1989, I took the lead in drafting a five-year retrospective on developments in the management area that had occurred on his watch. He refined it and sent it out as his last management issues cable. He then sent a hard copy to former Secretary Shultz, who wrote a letter from the Hoover Institution thanking Ron for his fine work and describing it as “a good report of good developments by a good man.” Nice.

During that period I wrote a tongue-in-cheek article, “Conventional Wisdom – The key to Foreign Service happiness is a ‘good job,’” published in the June 1989 issue of the *Foreign Service Journal*. I described the fictitious journey of a Foreign Service officer who successively considered taking positions in all Foreign Service cones, all regions, and Washington, only to be discouraged by colleagues because none of them was a “good job” since it wasn’t considered important, wouldn’t be enjoyable, or wouldn’t help in getting the next job. It was a spoof on the tendency of too many in the Foreign Service to focus excessively on career advancement. In the end I argued that all Foreign Service positions are good jobs, by definition, and we FSOs do ourselves a disservice when we concentrate on the next job rather than on the one we are in. To emphasize the idea that this was meant to apply to all Foreign Service generalists, I wrote under the pseudonym Ephraim (“Eph”) S. Oh. The name, pronounced FSO, was a bit too clever. But I think the article still rings true.

The tricky part of the job in M was the fact that I started in the summer of 1988, Ron Spiers had been there since 1983, and everybody knew the Reagan Administration was coming to an end. Some people who are rather naïve, myself included, were thinking that if the vice president wins the election and George H.W. Bush is the next president, well, it’s just a matter of continuity from Reagan to Bush, and there won’t be that many changes. But it turned out that the people who worked for Reagan and the people who worked for Bush didn’t really like each other.

Q: It was one of the more contentious—

LANGE: Transitions.

Q: —takeovers—

LANGE: Yeah.

Q: —in government history. (Both laugh)

LANGE: I think you’re right, although recent ones have not been so good either. This was just really surprising to a lot of us, the differences between the Reagan folks and the Bush folks. And M turned out to be a rather unpleasant place to work because the new people under Secretary of State James Baker didn’t really want to deal with the old

people. They had asked Ron Spiers to stay on as the under secretary for management until his successor was confirmed, and he was a good soldier and agreed to do so. Meanwhile, President Reagan nominated Ivan Selin, who was an outsider—as opposed to Spiers, a career ambassador—to be the next under secretary for management. Ivan had a lot of good ideas but also some that weren't going to fly. He was very active in terms of setting the directions in which he wanted to go, and he made a lot of requests for information from officials on the Management Council even though he couldn't make official decisions because he still wasn't confirmed. It was really an untenable situation for Ron, who as far as I could tell was frozen out of the secretary's decision-making process.

Ron asked me to serve as the transition coordinator for M, so I took on the task of assisting Ivan in the preparation of speeches and extensive briefing books for his Senate confirmation. Given M's broad span of control, many bureaus contributed to the briefing books on issues ranging from the Function 150 budget and selection out in the Foreign Service (it was called the "Cohort Grievance") to security at the embassy in Moscow and even something about an embassy parking lot swap in San José, getting down into the weeds. Lots and lots of issues that Senators conceivably could ask about. In the weeks after his confirmation, when I still worked in M, I drafted a cable describing Selin's management objectives and another that served as his first message on management issues. But he ended up being a controversial under secretary for management before leaving the position after two years in the job. I recently reread a *Foreign Service Journal* article from July 1991, after he had given a departing speech proposing huge reforms that included creating a single Foreign Service encompassing five foreign affairs agencies and reducing the number of State Department bureaus. Fittingly, the article was entitled, "Radical Selin."

AMERICAN EMBASSY LOME

Q. Where did you go for your next tour?

LANGE: I knew I needed to go abroad again and was due for a hardship post. Nobody was going to feel sorry for me for having been posted to Mexico City and Paris for my first two tours. And I wanted to be able to select the hardship post as best I could. Because I had been working in management rather than in administration while in M/MO and then M, what I sought was to be an administrative officer in Sub-Saharan Africa. I had never stepped foot on the continent, but I'd always been interested in the young countries of Africa and their development challenges since my college studies in political science and my work on United Nations issues. I checked around and it just seemed like the right mix for my family and me was to become the head of the joint administrative office at the embassy in Lomé, Togo, in West Africa.

Q: When were you in Lomé?

LANGE: We arrived in September 1989 and left post in July 1991.

My reputation for having worked on the Special Embassy Program and in Department management, and never having worked in Africa, preceded my arrival in Togo. The embassy sent a cable in advance suggesting I take an FSI training course in personnel issues and added, and I'll quote here, "Mr. Lange would also benefit from a course on cultural sensitivity in this work environment and translating textbook Western management theory into Third World reality." Ouch. The first ambassador I worked for there didn't like the fact that Embassy Lomé was part of the Special Embassy Program, because he thought it was too important to be lumped together with those other embassies that were small and considered by some to be less important. So, I kind of started out on the wrong side of the ambassador from that previous work, though I think I overcame that as time went on.

In my first month at post I got a firsthand glimpse of the Ambassador's Self-Help Program, which funded short-term, small-scale development projects that included significant community involvement. Ambassadors tended to really like that program because the U.S. government was providing tangible and much-needed assistance to communities at a cost of, if I recall correctly, less than \$25,000 per project. I represented the ambassador at the opening of a new three-room primary school that had been constructed with money from the Self-Help Program and with a Peace Corps volunteer as project manager. The school was a basic, but very nice, concrete building with open windows and doors. I remember going up-country in an embassy vehicle with the embassy's Peace Corps director and his driver to attend the festive opening of the school in a village. As I got out of the vehicle, the village leaders sacrificed a chicken at my feet to bring prosperity and good luck. At the ceremony I delivered the ambassador's speech in French and afterward we ate a multi-course meal. The Peace Corps volunteer was the star of the show. It was quite a welcome to West Africa and its cultural traditions.

Togoland was a German protectorate and then a colony from 1884 until World War I, and afterward the eastern sector became a French colony until independence in 1960. So Lomé had French and German supermarkets and restaurants in addition to its long, white beaches with coconut palm trees, a few nice hotels, and other conveniences. Americans at U.S. embassies in nearby landlocked countries would come to visit for a bit of rest and recuperation.

But per capita income in Togo was \$370. One of the saddest situations I ever saw was the used bottle market on Saturdays next to the embassy, where impoverished women would try to sell used glass bottles for the equivalent of five cents apiece. And next to our residence was an abandoned house where neighborhood women would come to fill up water containers and then carry them home on top of their heads. Life was difficult for many Togolese. In my evaluation rating, the deputy chief of mission described the situation we faced: the infrastructure was primitive, the climate was debilitating, the personnel were poorly skilled, the health conditions were abysmal, and the supplies and services were inadequate. Sadly, that still can be the case in certain postings in West Africa in particular.

There was one other American in our admin section, a junior officer serving as the GSO [general services officer]. I must say, I concluded after that tour and after subsequent

tours in East Africa and Southern Africa that—separate from specific situations where you may have a security concern, such as these days in Kabul and Baghdad—the hardest generic job in the Foreign Service is to be a GSO in West or Central Africa. It's one of the least developed parts of the world, even though it has some neat cities, such as Dakar and Abidjan and Accra; the people are wonderful and friendly; and it's so colorful and lively with the clothing and music and food. But the difficult conditions made work and day-to-day life difficult. Electricity was unreliable and the roads were bad and often unpaved, which was very hard on vehicles. There was a phrase that was going around the American community at that time called WAWA: West Africa Wins Again. The concept was, no matter how hard you tried, no matter how much you did to make sure that everything would go smoothly in your endeavor, something unanticipated invariably would go wrong.

We had a change of ambassadors after my first year, and I remember the time when the new ambassador and his wife were very pleased to take a visiting U.S. ambassador and his wife on a day trip up-country to Kpalimé in the hills, a nice area with a fresher climate than the heat and humidity of Lomé on the Gulf of Guinea. The embassy had a brand-new vehicle for the ambassador, but in retrospect, the GSO and I, both new to Africa, should have sent a backup car with them. On their trip, the new vehicle broke down because, we learned later, the engine hadn't been adjusted to function in Togo's climate. So the four of them had to take a small taxicab without air conditioning to get back to Lomé. And of course, who do you look to for answers when something like that goes wrong? Well, it's the administrative section. That was an example of WAWA: we have a brand-new car for you, sir, and wish you well on your trip, and then something unbeknownst to us goes wrong.

Q: Yeah. What about cultural activities?

LANGE: During my Foreign Service career, I always enjoyed visits by American musical groups sponsored by the U.S. Information Agency [USIA] and its successor at the State Department. They served as musical ambassadors for America. While stationed in Paris I had met famous jazz pianist Dave Brubeck at a USIA event. In Lomé, USIA Director Dudley Sims organized a wonderful musical event featuring Queen Ida and the Bon Temps Zydeco Band. Louisiana Creole accordionist Queen Ida led her band and rocked the auditorium, which was filled with over three thousand people. It was a wonderful evening. As Dudley put it, the Togolese had never seen or heard anything like it, and their thunderous applause sealed the deal. I served again with Dudley in Dar es Salaam, where he was a hero, and he is one of the great human beings I worked with in the Foreign Service.

As you may know, Voodoo, known as the traditional religion *Vodun* in West Africa, originated in Benin and Togo. I would take visitors to Lomé's Voodoo market where you could buy fetishes, charms, animal skulls, bird and bat carcasses, and whatever else you needed for a Voodoo ritual. It was a smelly market and we didn't want to buy that stuff, but it was fascinating to visit.

I came to realize that in Togo you could have a seemingly normal conversation with someone, yet that person may be a follower of *Vodun* with a different sense of reality than you did. During one of my weekly admin section meetings with the American GSO and the top FSNs, the senior FSN personnel specialist once asked if I had heard the big news that happened over the weekend. I said no, and he then explained that two boys had been walking along when they saw a bird up in a tree and started throwing rocks at it. The rocks hit the bird and it fell from the tree, opened its wings, and turned into an old witch. Having grown up in the United States, I was, as I'm sure you understand, quite skeptical of this story. I asked if it was possible that the boys actually were caught throwing rocks at an old woman and then made up the story about the bird to keep from getting into trouble. He responded no, the story about the bird was undoubtedly true: this was witchcraft, the boys were throwing rocks at the bird, and the bird turned into a witch. At that point I realized that I was dealing with a senior FSN who had been working under Americans at the U.S. embassy for maybe fifteen years, and yet he had a different concept of reality than Americans did.

Q: Well, did you have things like, say, opening a new garage or anything like that, did you bring in a Voodoo priest who blessed it?

LANGE: I don't recall that. There was one memo that I read in the files from a few years before I arrived in Lomé. There had been a discovery that tires had been stolen from the embassy warehouse, and it appeared to be an inside job. The most likely culprits were four locally employed warehouse staff. So they brought in a Voodoo priest who had them kneel on the ground and put nooses around their necks with the ropes touching the ground. If they were not able to lift up their heads to break the connection between the rope and the ground, that meant they were guilty. And sure enough, one of them confessed. It was clearly, from an American way of thinking, a mind game. The suspect knew he was guilty and when the Voodoo priest was there, he just froze and couldn't lift his head up, so he admitted he was the one who had stolen the tires.

Q: Well, from Shakespeare's play Hamlet, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

LANGE: Very apt. It was amazing to me as a Westerner to think that you could use Voodoo to identify a criminal because the person believes in Voodoo and ends up self-identifying.

On the subject of crime, I remember telling the general services officer that I know we're getting ripped off, I just don't know where. The problem was, you just kind of knew that there was something wrong despite all of your efforts to try to keep the administrative operation functioning honestly and effectively in providing all of those services, such as motor pool support, maintaining the government-leased residences, servicing the electrical generators to make sure houses had electricity when the regular electricity went out, managing the budget, et cetera, et cetera. Trying to keep all that going, and not get ripped off in the process, was a challenge in that environment.

Well, six years after I left Togo, the cashier during my time at the embassy was fired just months before he was scheduled to retire. The AF [African Affairs] bureau's financial management expert who investigated the discovery told me, as best I can recall, that the cashier had stolen at least \$500,000 worth of local currency over at least three years using fake or unauthorized invoices, paid through petty cash, for such things as miscellaneous purchases, liquor, and Peugeot vehicle parts—even though there were no Peugeots in the embassy fleet. When confronted by the police, he offered to reimburse up-front the equivalent of \$100,000, saying it was obvious he had taken much more!

Q. Wow.

LANGE: I don't know if any of his thefts occurred on my watch. The cashier was somebody I had thought to be not very smart, but well-meaning. Turns out, he was clever and not well-meaning. As the American in charge of the budget and fiscal section, I would do the required monthly surprise cash counts to tally all the cash, receipts, et cetera, to make sure that it all balanced. He occasionally would be off by small amounts and seemed to be dumbfounded by it. I officially reported the problem whenever it was anything significant, but nothing ever rose to the level where we suspected wrongdoing.

Interestingly, that cashier had a lead role in his tribe. I attended a festival in Togo's lake district celebrating a three-hundred-year-old tradition: tribal leaders would go off into the nearby bush and return with a sacred stone forecasting the tribe's fortunes for the coming year. Government ministers were in attendance, and it was a joyous occasion. Suddenly the American embassy cashier, bare-chested, emerged from the bush holding a white stone high in the air. People were cheering and drums were beating, and there was great excitement because the white stone presaged good fortune for the coming year. It was an extraordinary setting, and it was very sad to learn years later that he was stealing large sums from the U.S. government.

Q: What was the political and economic situation in Togo?

LANGE: Our embassy had on display a large photograph of Togolese President Gnassingbé Eyadéma shaking hands with President Ronald Reagan at the White House in 1983. During my first year in Lomé, the ambassador pushed Washington to agree to a meeting between Eyadéma and President George H.W. Bush, and that took place in the White House in July 1990.

To be frank, I thought that was a mistake. I was not a fan of President Eyadéma at all. He was an authoritarian and his power base was in the north because much of the politics in Togo was tribal and ethnic based. He was accused of ruthlessly crushing opposition forces, nurturing a cult of personality, clinging to power decade after decade, and growing rich as the country stayed poor. All true.

Years earlier, Eyadéma had played a lead role in the first coup d'état in the former French and British colonies of Africa that had achieved independence in the 1950s and 1960s. The 1963 military coup leaders took over government buildings, arrested most of the

cabinet, and assassinated Togo's first president, Sylvanus Olympio, outside the American embassy.

Q: He died on the steps of the embassy.

LANGE: Yes. Olympio's house was adjacent to the embassy. He had been trying to seek refuge in the embassy, but they ended up capturing and killing him just outside of the building. The U.S. ambassador found the body three feet from the embassy door before dawn. Eyadéma for years claimed that he was the one who shot him, and it's been reported that embassy cables from 1963 support that account.

And four years later, Eyadéma led a second military coup and installed himself as president. Quite an unsavory character.

Q: What about the presence of the Soviet embassy? What was happening in Togo related to the Cold War?

LANGE: There was a Soviet embassy in Lomé, though it was really the French who held the greatest sway. Cold War geopolitics were such that the U.S. government was supportive of Eyadéma. Neighboring countries, Benin on one side and Ghana on the other, supported socialism. And here you had an anti-communist government and president siding with the United States in the competition versus the Soviet Union. It was part of the way the Soviets and the United States battled over support in Africa, which was really quite sad, actually, because the people of Africa, in my mind, suffered for that: he's "our" authoritarian, we'll work with him.

But then change swept through Sub-Saharan Africa. I arrived in Lomé in September '89, and the Berlin Wall fell two months later. Western leaders and international aid donors no longer had as much use for authoritarian anti-communist regimes in the Third World. Even though we were thousands of miles away from Berlin and Moscow, the winds of change from the fall of the Berlin Wall hit us and the rest of Africa within months. In 1990, rulers in over a dozen one-party states in Sub-Saharan Africa said they now accepted, at least in principle, the need to introduce multiparty democracy. It was an amazing time to be living on the continent.

In Lomé, the trial of students who had handed out antigovernment tracts sparked rioting on October 5, 1990. These were the worst disturbances over twenty years of one-party rule under Eyadéma, and you can argue that Togo's rocky journey toward democracy began that day. In response, half-way through his third consecutive seven-year presidential term, Eyadéma set up a constitutional commission to develop a text that would move the country to multi-party rule after certain standards were met—but which he apparently presumed he could control.

Anti-government unrest continued for months. Then, on April 11, 1991, over two dozen bodies were dredged from a lagoon in the city. They were mostly young adults who had been beaten to death and included a woman with an infant strapped to her back. It was a pivotal moment. Thousands of angry demonstrators accused security forces of having

carried out the killings and they wanted the world to know. They put some of the cadavers on the back of a truck and drove to the most prominent embassy in town, the French embassy, and then to the street in front of the American embassy. They wanted to show Americans and the world what had gone on.

Well, the government's security forces came and threw tear gas canisters to disperse the crowd in front of our embassy. I suppose they were trying to protect us. The administrative office where I worked had its own building on one side of the internal embassy courtyard, and on the other side was the embassy chancery building itself. Some of the protestors climbed the tall perimeter wall and waited in our courtyard. I remember being in my office and smelling tear gas because the air conditioners had pulled in gas from outside. And I thought, This is the first time I've smelled tear gas since my time as an undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, when I was observing anti-war protests that were going on and the National Guard threw tear gas canisters to scatter the crowd.

The local security guards called me, and I went to the guardhouse where a protester had put a grenade, or possibly a tear gas canister, on the guardhouse desk to show us what weapons the security forces were using. I had studied French for a month or so before going to Togo, but I must say, there's one phrase that the Foreign Service Institute never teaches in their French language classes, which is how to ask, Has the pin been pulled on the grenade? (Both laugh) So, I just told the guy to take his grenade and go. I wasn't going to keep it at the embassy.



*Togolese security forces outside of U.S. embassy
and nearby American Cultural Center (1991)*

The demonstrators succeeded in their goal to show the world: Agence France-Presse covered the story, and I still have the newspaper clippings from the *International Herald*

Tribune reporting on the incident and its aftermath. The political opposition called for a two-day general strike the next month to keep pushing for democratic change.

Q: Did those anti-government protests make a difference?

LANGE: To a limited extent. It was a big deal when nine hundred representatives of political parties and civic and professional organizations held a national conference in Lomé that declared itself sovereign and worked to choose a transitional government. The conference opened on July 8, a few weeks before I left post, and closed at the end of August. It shifted much of the president's power to the reformist prime minister, but Eyadéma remained president and still controlled the army, packed with loyalists from his own northern ethnic group. He eventually was able to force negotiations that restored much of his power. There were disputed elections and political machinations over the years, and Gnassingbé Eyadéma continued as president until his death in 2005. Not too long afterward, his son Faure Gnassingbé maneuvered to become president and remains president as we speak.

I was in Lomé during an exhilarating period for the many Togolese who had high hopes that truly democratic institutions would be established and President Eyadéma would be voted out of power. I remember the excitement among our FSN staff, most of whom were from southern ethnic groups opposed to the president. I still have, as a souvenir, a T-shirt they gave me imprinted *Vive La Conférence Nationale Souveraine* (long live the sovereign national conference). But history has not been kind to Togo.

Q: How was morale at the embassy?

LANGE: During my second year at post, DCM Nancy Powell, who went on to have several ambassadorships and serve as the director general of the Foreign Service, did her best to try to keep up morale in this difficult hardship post. She regularly would invite the American embassy community over to her house to enjoy the swimming pool and "Sundaes on Sunday," ice cream sundaes on a Sunday afternoon. Both kids and adults loved it. We also had an embassy recreation center with a swimming pool and tennis court.

But living conditions were challenging. The best medical facility in town was run by the French military, but we didn't have access to that. The second best, to my mind, was the Peace Corps clinic, run by an American doctor and a couple of topnotch expatriate nurses, that served Peace Corps volunteers and the families of all official Americans through an administrative support agreement. The clinic was pretty basic, but we didn't trust any of the local medical facilities. A couple of times while I was there the State Department had to pay for air ambulance services due to medical emergencies. A plane would fly from Europe to Lomé, pick up the patient, and then fly to a designated facility such as a U.S. military hospital in Germany. Very expensive—something like \$75,000—but necessary.

Q: What about your family?

LANGE: We made driving trips to explore the region. In Ghana, we visited a slave castle with the “door of no return”—just before slaves boarded the ship and crossed the Atlantic—that brought home the connection between African history and American history. In Benin, Alejandra’s visiting sister Salma and I rented a *pirogue* (canoe) and guide to see Ganvie, a famous village with houses on stilts in the middle of a lake. And in northern Togo, Ale, Julia and I visited a rather small game park—nothing compared to those in East and Southern Africa—featuring elephants and other wild animals. It was the first time we went to a game park in the African wild and we loved it. I also visited northern Togo with friends from Wisconsin.



Alejandra, Julia, and household staff while traveling in Togo (1990)

But it was not an easy time for us. Julia endured frequent ear, nose, and throat infections in tropical Togo, and it seemed that half of the time she was taking antibiotics. And my work was challenging. There were many demands placed on the admin section, and we really didn’t have the qualified staff and developed infrastructure needed to meet those demands. I would say that Lomé was my least favorite overseas post.

Still, I achieved what I wanted to during this tour: two years of experience as an administrative officer in a difficult hardship post. My goal when I first got there had been to run the best administrative operation in Africa, though I can’t argue in any way that I met that goal. An admin officer overseas plays a critical role building and maintaining the mission’s platform and making life better for the staff, particularly the American staff. But I didn’t have the kind of entrepreneurial approach that the job required. You really have to be almost a wheeler-dealer to make things work in those tough situations, and that wasn’t my style. I think I somewhat overcame that as time went on, and I think I generally did well in the job, but I didn’t excel in it the way some admin officers do.

At that point, I was inclined to stay abroad but do something that was multifunctional, out of the administrative cone, to demonstrate broader capabilities. Since I had that earlier

experience working for the UN Association of the USA in New York before joining the Foreign Service, a position as refugee and migration affairs officer at the U.S. mission to the UN in Geneva seemed to be a good fit. I got the job and we moved from Lomé, Togo, to Geneva, Switzerland, spending some time in Washington and on home leave in-between.

I remember talking to the Swiss consul general in Lomé about my onward assignment to Geneva. At that time Togo was promoting itself as the Switzerland of Africa, even though that was inherently ridiculous. I joked that I was moving from the Switzerland of Africa to the Togo of Europe. She was, shall I say, not amused. (Laughs)

U.S. MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN GENEVA

Q: Today is the thirty-first of August 2018, with John Lange and I'm Stu Kennedy. John, you were about to describe your tour in Geneva. When were you there?

LANGE: We arrived in Geneva in September 1991 and departed in July 1995. It was the only tour I had that was four years long. It originally was a three-year tour as refugee and migration officer in the Office of Refugee and Migration Affairs [RMA], which I think is now called Humanitarian Affairs, and later was extended by a year when I moved up to become head of the office with the title counselor. It turned out, when you look back on my career, that the last time I served in a truly administrative role that didn't have broader responsibilities was in Lomé.

USUN Geneva also met another personal goal, to work in UN affairs and engage in multilateral diplomacy, the behind-the-scenes lobbying and negotiating to obtain approval on agreements supporting U.S. interests. One of my favorite situations in the Foreign Service was to sit as the lead U.S. representative behind the placard saying United States of America in a multilateral forum. The role of multilateral organizations to tackle challenging global problems is still of great interest to me.

My position was actually funded by Refugee Programs, which later became a bureau with its own assistant secretary of state, even though IO [Bureau of International Organization Affairs] supported the mission as a whole. For most of my time, the RMA office consisted of about four American FSOs and one Civil Service officer from the refugee bureau on detail to the Foreign Service. For a time, we also had a USAID officer stationed there.

Our office managed U.S. government policy, programs, and strategic engagement with Geneva-based organizations for refugee, migration, and humanitarian assistance. We were the liaison – the fulcrum, really – between the State Department, USAID, and other U.S. government agencies in Washington and the humanitarian organizations, voluntary agencies, and permanent missions in Geneva.

A month after I arrived, I was promoted to the FS-01 level as a multifunctional promotion. In theory, I therefore was overqualified for my FS-02 position, but I wasn't about to leave Geneva. I really loved the tour, as did my family, I think I really blossomed in a lot of ways in terms of dealing with high-profile and often life-saving humanitarian crises, administering contributions to UN agencies, engaging in multilateral diplomacy, working on political issues, and doing a lot of reporting and analysis—often under great time pressure. Email was not in such prevalent use as it is today. Cables were really the coin of the realm. During my tour, the world was in the midst of a multitude of humanitarian crises, from the breakup of Yugoslavia to the Rwanda genocide.

Q. Yes, those years after the end of the Cold War were quite turbulent in particular parts of the world.

LANGE: Our role in program management was to allocate, administer, and monitor contributions of some \$450 million a year to international organizations based in Geneva for their humanitarian and health work. Over half of that went to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] and some of it went to the International Organization for Migration [IOM], the International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], and what is now called the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies [IFRC], as well as smaller amounts to the World Health Organization and others.

I thought back then, and still think, that Geneva is the humanitarian and health center of the universe. By that I mean that most of the leading global organizations working on health, humanitarian, and human rights matters are based there. There's a great difference, in my observation, between the way the U.S. mission to the UN in New York deals with these issues and the way the U.S. mission to the UN in Geneva deals with these issues. Even though I never worked at USUN New York, I had a lot of interaction with it.

Q: Was this a matter of being at the UN in New York, sort of being at the summit where they're dealing with words, really, and all of you in Geneva are dealing more with practical problems?

LANGE: Yes. Good observation. The discussions at UN forums and at missions to the UN in New York, even though big organizations like UNICEF and the UN Development Program are based there, tend to be more focused on political issues which, as you point out, sometimes can be a lot of words. Countries' lead ambassadors in New York spend time on the high-profile issues facing the UN General Assembly and the Security Council's work on international peace and security. Meanwhile, the ambassadors in Geneva know they do not have the lead on those political and security issues and instead focus on the humanitarian, refugee, human rights, and health side because that's where they and their staffs have the lead and the expertise and can make a difference. They're monitoring Geneva agencies that are just closer to the ground, in a sense. The international organizations have field offices in much of the developing world, and much of the impact they make is really in-country, whether it's providing assistance during

refugee outflows or protecting civilians in conflicts or providing vaccinations for children. Of course, there are other UN agencies in Geneva dealing with international trade, telecommunications, labor, et cetera. But for what I was working on, I thought there was a basic difference in perspective and role between UN missions in New York and those in Geneva.

Q. Who was the ambassador when you were in Geneva?

LANGE: The first ambassador I worked under was Morris Abram, a political appointee who had been prominent as a lawyer and human rights activist in the United States. He had been a member of the prosecution staff at the Nuremberg trials after World War II and was involved in the drafting of the Fourth Geneva Convention dealing with humanitarian protections for civilians in a war zone. Later, after President Clinton was elected and nominated a new ambassador, I worked for another political appointee, Daniel Spiegel, a prominent international lawyer who was very active as ambassador.

Because Geneva was considered a neutral site for summits and negotiations, we had a lot of high-level U.S. government visitors. I was a site officer for Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger when he came to the UN for meetings on the breakup of the former Yugoslavia in December of 1992. I remember how we were at the Palais des Nations waiting for his live feed for the *Today Show* shortly after 7:00 a.m. East Coast time, which was 1:00 p.m. Geneva time. He decided about five or ten minutes before he was to go on the air that he would sit outside where the interview, with a picturesque background, was to take place, even though this was December in Geneva and it was very cold. He was kind of a gruff, straight-talking fellow at times. And he was from Milwaukee, which is where I was born. When I mentioned to him that I was from Milwaukee, as we're both standing out there in the cold waiting for the interview to begin, he offered the Secretary of State's official description of Wisconsin's climate: "Nine months of winter and three months of damn poor sledding." (Both laugh) He was quite a character. I really liked him, and people really had a lot of respect for him as the secretary who had been a career Foreign Service officer.

Q. Yes. We've interviewed him and his wife for this program. Famous in the history of the Foreign Service.

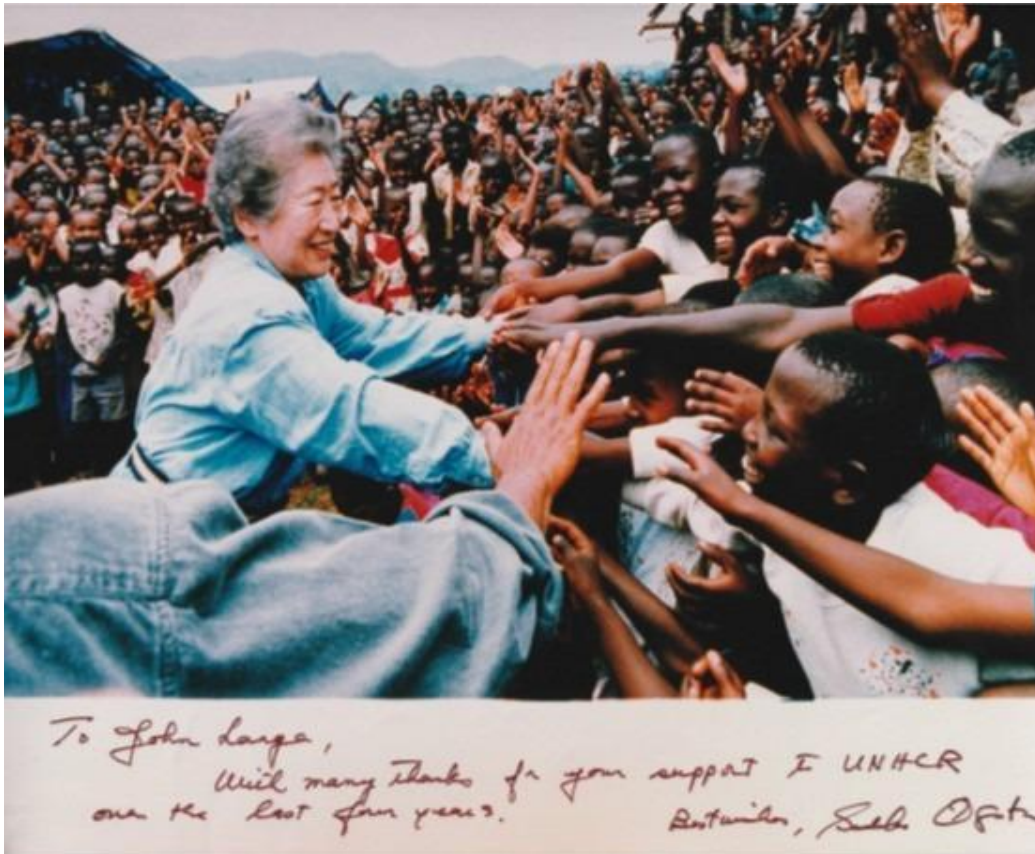
LANGE: Our office dealt with humanitarian emergencies that arose following the end of the Cold War, and they were front page news. The breakup of the former Yugoslavia, a civil war that included the horrors of ethnic cleansing, occupied a lot of our time, though others in my office had the lead on that issue. It was a geopolitical concern, of course, but also a humanitarian crisis of huge proportions. UNHCR was the lead humanitarian agency. There was a multinational UN airlift providing food, medicine, and other relief supplies to Sarajevo and other areas throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina that was directed by an Airlift Operations Cell based at UNHCR. It began in July 1992 and ended in January 1996, the longest running humanitarian air bridge in history, three times longer than the 1948-1949 Berlin Airlift.

The High Commissioner for Refugees during my time in Geneva was Sadako Ogata, and I got to know her and had great respect for her. She came to UNHCR in 1991 when it didn't seem like the organization was really prepared to deal with the new wave of humanitarian emergencies that were cropping up around the world, and she reformed UNHCR's emergency response system and really did quite an impressive job.

Q: She's from Japan.

LANGE: Yes, she's Japanese. She was a strong proponent of humanitarian action, which she believed had moved to the "heart of wars," but also didn't want relief efforts to become a humanitarian fig leaf or a substitute for meaningful political action.

She later ended up heading JICA [Japan International Cooperation Agency], the Japanese international aid agency, and she was really top-notch. I really liked Mrs. Ogata, as did everyone.



UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata thanks John for support to UNHCR (1995)

In my first three years I was RMA's Africa and Latin America watcher, monitoring refugee, migration, and humanitarian situations in those regions because I had served in Latin America and had just come from West Africa.

Q. Did you ever travel to those regions or did you stay in Geneva?

LANGE: Because I hadn't worked earlier as an embassy refugee coordinator dealing with refugee issues in-country, I traveled to several countries in Africa, first to get an introduction to refugee operations and later to monitor the performance of UNHCR and other relief organizations that received U.S. government funding.

In May 1992 I traveled to Ethiopia, Kenya, and Malawi, where there was a huge refugee program for Mozambican refugees housed in southern Malawi. The refugee coordinator at the Embassy Lilongwe was on home leave, so I filled in to get my own exposure to the refugee situation.

Q: I don't know the history of Africa that well. Mozambique had a big war with the Portuguese, but that was around '74 or so when the Portuguese pulled out. What was going on, this was '92? Were the refugees fleeing an internal conflict, not an anti-colonial uprising?

LANGE: Yes. The civil war was fought between the ruling Marxist Mozambique Liberation Front [FRELIMO] and the anti-communist insurgent forces of the Mozambican National Resistance [RENAMO], plus some smaller factions. The yearslong conflict resulted in nearly a million Mozambican refugees in Malawi and another half million in neighboring countries. This was another example of the negative impact of the Cold War on Africa I talked about earlier. It took the collapse of Soviet support for FRELIMO and South African support for RENAMO to bring the warring parties together for peace accords in October 1992 that formally ended hostilities. UNHCR then was able to organize over a few years a massive repatriation of the refugees back to Mozambique, which I monitored from the headquarters level back in Geneva.

During my stay in Lilongwe, the political capital, I went with an embassy driver to Blantyre, the commercial capital. On May 6, during a meeting with the head of the UNHCR office there, we heard shots fired in the distance in what was one of the first demonstrations against President Hastings Banda, who had been president since independence in the 1960s. Police fired with live ammunition, and some protesters were killed. The driver and I were able to avoid the protests and drive south to look at the refugee camps. One or two days later, we came back to Blantyre. And I remember when we were approaching the city from the south we drove over the crest of a hill when we encountered a big rock in the middle of the road and a group of angry young men with rocks in their hands blocking the road. They saw that I had *corps diplomatique* (diplomatic corps) license plates from the American embassy. One youth tried to enter the vehicle and another stood next to the vehicle ready to throw a rock. The embassy driver was very adept and immediately put the vehicle into reverse backing up as fast as he could. They threw rocks at us and hit the vehicle, but there was no real damage and we were able to escape. The driver knew the city well enough to find a back route so we could proceed on to our destination. It was kind of scary to be caught unexpectedly in the middle of this violent protest on the outskirts of Blantyre.

Q: Was their beef against America?

LANGE: Not as far as I know. This was really one of the first, if not the first, protests against President Banda's rule. I didn't understand a lot about the politics of Malawi, but I told the ambassador back in Lilongwe that, based on my earlier experience in Togo, my prediction was this was the first but not the last demonstration you're going to see. And, as I understand it, five months later Banda announced that a referendum would be held regarding multiparty politics. He ran in the country's first truly democratic presidential election in 1994 and was roundly defeated. This was, again, part of the way Africa was opening up after the Cold War and traditional allies and traditional alliances were under threat because people no longer accepted living under autocrats.

It turned out that just a couple of years ago I happened to be taking a flight from New York to Washington, and sitting across the aisle from me was Joyce Banda, no relation to Hastings Banda. She was Malawian president from 2012–2014. I mentioned that I had been in Blantyre on May 6, 1992, and she said she was in the city that same day and talked about the importance of those demonstrations. It was really a significant incident in the history of Malawi. And I happened to be there, by chance.

Q: Could you explain what the UN was doing in these cases?

LANGE: In the UN System, UNHCR's core functions are to protect and assist refugees. That is based on the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. The 1951 treaty primarily focused on protection of European refugees displaced by World War II, and the 1967 protocol removed time limits and geographical limitations. Given the politics and complexities of today's world, with economic and environmental migrants and some anti-refugee sentiment, I doubt that the same treaty could now be adopted and broadly accepted.

Regarding UNHCR's roles in the legal protection of refugees, there's a core principle you may have heard of called *non-refoulement* (refugees should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom).

And there are two basic situations where UNHCR assists refugees. One is to provide lifesaving assistance—food, shelter, water, sanitation, et cetera—to refugees in urgent, humanitarian emergencies. The other is to provide such assistance in long-term, protracted refugee operations. Sometimes you have refugees living outside their country of origin for years or even decades who can't return home safely. They're in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. The often-elusive goal is to assist governments in finding durable solutions: voluntary return to their country of origin; local integration in their country of asylum; or resettlement in a third country, sometimes the United States.

One of my pet peeves is that a lot of people confuse migrants with refugees, because it makes a big difference legally, including for undocumented aliens in the United States. A refugee is someone outside their country due to carefully defined reasons: a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion and who is unwilling or unable to return to their country of origin. Meanwhile, migrants include economic migrants who don't have a

well-founded fear of persecution but may be pursuing opportunities for a better life, and they don't have the same protections under international law that refugees do.

But responsibilities among international organizations can get complicated. People who don't meet the definition of a refugee can be in vulnerable situations and need assistance, and UNHCR and other agencies may help them, too: victims of conflict; internally displaced persons [IDPs] forced to leave their homes who remain within their own country; stateless persons; et cetera. And I should mention that ten years after I left Geneva, an international norm was established called the Responsibility to Protect in order to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.

Q: And what was the U.S. government doing, as you did trips and all?

LANGE: I think American taxpayers should be proud of the fact that the United States has been a longstanding contributor to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and UNHCR's assistance to refugees.

Generally, the State Department has the lead on aid to refugees, and USAID has the lead on humanitarian assistance outside of refugee situations. State's Office of Refugee Programs transitioned under the Clinton Administration to become the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration [PRM], adding population issues to its portfolio, while I was in Geneva.

Back then, the U.S. government was UNHCR's lead, and in my view most influential, donor, contributing maybe 22, 25, 28 percent of the budget. Separately, countries of asylum that were hosting refugees made in-kind contributions by providing land and many other resources for UNHCR's refugee camps.

One of PRM's roles was to monitor the work of UNHCR, other agencies, and PRM-funded NGOs to ensure U.S. taxpayer funds were well-spent. Contributing funds to a multilateral organization like UNHCR isn't the same as funding an NGO for a specific project, where it seems Congress wants you to monitor how every penny is spent. UN agencies have their own auditing mechanisms. But the refugee bureau really did keep close tabs on how UNHCR was responding to refugee situations. That's why I visited the Mozambican refugee camps in Malawi and the Somali refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia and reported my observations to Washington. Those trips to the field really gave me a much better understanding of the refugee programs that we were monitoring at the headquarters level in Geneva.

Besides PRM's role in bringing refugees to the United States for resettlement and in supporting UNHCR's work protecting and assisting refugees abroad, the bureau helped conflict victims, who often were beneficiaries of assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], and other IDPs who were assisted by various agencies.

Q, Did you deal much with the Red Cross?

LANGE: Yes. In fact, I was the main liaison to ICRC at the U.S. mission. ICRC has the central role in international humanitarian law, aiming to minimize human suffering and protect civilians during wartime. It's independent and neutral, and I found the staff to be highly professional and very discreet. They help people affected by conflict and armed violence and promote laws that protect victims of war. Their mandate essentially stems from the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and additional protocols. They protect people who do not take part in the fighting (civilians, medics, aid workers) and those who can no longer fight (wounded, sick and shipwrecked troops, prisoners of war). Now, the Pentagon will call that the law of war, and there's great overlap between the law of war and international humanitarian law.

I actually took a course, I think it was three or five days long, that ICRC organized with leading experts on that subject, as well as a weeklong UNHCR course on international refugee law. I found that it was helpful that I had a law degree and had studied international law in order to understand both international humanitarian law and international refugee law. I could talk in detail to the lawyers in ICRC and UNHCR and other organizations, even though they knew I wasn't a practicing lawyer. I was fluent enough in international law to really have an impact, I thought, in terms of explaining U.S. government policy in particular situations.

Q. What other humanitarian emergencies did you deal with in Geneva during this tumultuous period after the Cold War?

LANGE: The rise in ethnic conflict in many parts of the globe led to the increase in humanitarian emergencies, and Geneva institutions got a lot of high-level attention in Washington.

One of those emergencies was in Somalia. Following the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991, it became a classic failed state without a central government able to exert control over the country's entire territory. The political situation degenerated into rivalries among the many clans and factions. By 1992, drought conditions combined with clan warfare and banditry brought about widespread famine. Over half a million Somalis perished and a million more were threatened. You may remember how, in late-July 1992, pictures of skeletal children jolted the American public and President George H. W. Bush decided that the United States should play a leading, visible role. That meant accelerating deliveries of food and medicine, promoting reconciliation among clans and warlords, and funding the deployment of UN food guards. In mid-August, the president announced an emergency food airlift called Operation Provide Relief.

Q: Well, at one point humanitarian aid going to various camps in Somalia was being attacked by tribal groups, which are really just out to lift the food and sell it later on. I mean, it was banditry.

LANGE: Exactly, exactly. It was clan warfare that was just so tragic because so many innocent people were dying who were caught in the middle of it. U.S. military and other aircraft were bringing food to distribution points in Somalia, and NGO relief

organizations were shipping in supplies, but looters and armed thugs then seized the food. It became clear that starvation would continue unless anarchy and banditry were quelled.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: I remember one interesting point on how complicated the situation was. ICRC was providing assistance under the most difficult of situations. It had been flying in food, but it was strapped for resources because it was dealing with this burgeoning situation and really couldn't keep increasing its efforts. U.S. help then arrived. But I remember a meeting at the ICRC headquarters, after Operation Provide Relief began to operate, when a senior ICRC official told me they were concerned because the reality meant that less food, rather than more food, was going into Somalia. The U.S. military was taking over some of what had been done when ICRC was flying cargo planes into Somalia absolutely stuffed with food. But the U.S. military had regulations in which you couldn't overfill a cargo plane because that could be dangerous to the plane and the crew. So following U.S. military regulations for each flight meant there actually was less food onboard than there had been when ICRC was flying in cargo planes.

Q: That's quite surprising.

LANGE: Yes, one of those unexpected consequences of a well-intended intervention. It soon became apparent that truck convoys rather than airlifts were needed to distribute and deliver enough tonnage.

In the last months of 1992, the situation got worse. Factions splintered into smaller factions. Agreements for food distribution with one party were worthless when the food had to be shipped through the territory of another party. Troops were shot at, aid ships were attacked and prevented from docking, cargo aircraft were fired upon, and aid agencies were subject to threats, extortion, and looting.

After other means failed, President Bush resorted to the use of military force to achieve his humanitarian policy objectives. In the waning days of his presidency, he announced in early December 1992 that the United States would lead and provide military forces to a multinational coalition authorized by the UN Security Council. For the United States, this was newly christened as Operation Restore Hope. The coalition operation was called UNITAF [Unified Task Force]. The military operations were intended to secure food distribution points and airports and seaports, guard relief convoys and relief organization operations, and assist those organizations in providing humanitarian relief under UN auspices.

Q: That was really a big effort to help Somalia by President Bush.

LANGE: Yes. I think it's really important to recognize that he initiated this as a humanitarian intervention, not to try to do nation building in Somalia but really for the humanitarian needs to prevent people from starving.

UNITAF lasted from December 1992 to May 1993, and, if I recall correctly, it involved nearly 40,000 troops from twenty-one coalition nations, including 28,000 Americans. UNITAF demonstrated impressive leadership, coherence, and dramatic success. The security situation stabilized, permitting relief supplies to be distributed throughout the country, but the political situation remained chaotic.

We in Geneva, of course, didn't have the U.S. lead on the military aspects of UNITAF and the later UN effort called UNOSOM II [United Nations Operation in Somalia II], but the humanitarian side was of prime importance and included the work not only of UN agencies but the ICRC.

I still remember meeting with the ICRC director of operations, one of their top officials, who had just come back from Somalia. He was upset and appalled after visiting their office that had an American flag flying next to the Red Cross flag, because the U.S. military was providing security for the ICRC office. ICRC had long prided itself as an impartial, neutral, and independent organization, and it believed that the only way to achieve its humanitarian mission in armed conflict situations was to always demonstrate neutrality and protect the red cross as a symbol of neutrality. When he saw the U.S. flag and U.S. military presence co-located with the ICRC office, he was apoplectic.

It was a time when, if you talked to the people at ICRC, there was great concern that their vision of their neutrality was no longer respected by belligerents in certain conflicts, even though it had been respected in the past during the Cold War. That red cross, the symbol of neutrality that used to be so welcomed in emergency situations, was looked upon by some belligerents in some of these internal conflicts as providing support to the enemy.

In March of '93, during the Clinton Administration, the UN Security Council approved the mandate for the operation UNOSOM II. I followed the situation in Somalia closely during my years in Geneva and ended up writing a course paper on Somalia when I later was a student at the National War College. My paper focused on the mission creep from the U.S.-led UNITAF to UNOSOM II. The operation went from the limited goal of establishing a secure environment for uninterrupted relief operations to include disarming the Somali clans and rehabilitating the Somali political institutions and economy. In my view, this critical change in the policy was not accompanied by a concomitant increase in the military means to achieve it. UNOSOM II not only had a vast mandate but had twice the area to cover—all of Somalia, not just the south—with about the same number of troops. In my paper I argued that the UN secretary general and UN Security Council members demonstrated a fundamental failure in judgment in establishing the operation.

That failure was borne out in the Battle of Mogadishu, October 3-4, 1993. Eighteen American military personnel were killed and many more were wounded in what is known as the Black Hawk Down incident. American humanitarian instincts had led to public support for the initial UNITAF objective, to stop the suffering. But public support evaporated once American troops were dying in an operation intended to save Somali lives, highlighted by those television pictures of a dead American being dragged through Mogadishu's streets. And that led to President Clinton's announcement, three days later,

that an orderly withdrawal of U.S. combat troops would be completed by March 31, 1994. What a tumultuous period.

Q. Did your field trips ever take you to Somalia?

LANGE: During that May 1992 trip to Africa I mentioned, I made it to the Somalia border both in Kenya and in Ethiopia to visit the refugee camps.

I flew to northeastern Kenya and walked a few steps across the border into Somalia. Right inside the border in Kenya there was a tent that had been set up by UNHCR as a reception center for the refugees. They said the average Somali who made it to the reception center actually had walked about 300 or 350 kilometers over seventeen to eighteen days to get to the Kenya border, just to escape the clan fighting. And I remember this very weak and thin Somali woman with children walking up to the reception tent, where UNHCR staff determined if they needed immediate medical help or if they were in good enough shape to go directly to the refugee camp. This clearly was lifesaving assistance.



John observes Somali refugees registering with UNHCR at the Kenya border (1992)

When I went to Ethiopia, I flew into Jijiga, capital city of the Somali Region in the eastern part of the country, in a UN plane, maybe a ten-seater, if I recall correctly. The pilot had to make one pass over the airstrip to make sure that animals scattered and got off the runway before we landed. A small group of us then traveled on to the Hartisheik refugee camp, sixty kilometers away, with an armed security escort provided by EPRDF [Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front] soldiers. Hartisheik had nearly a quarter million Somali refugees and may have been the world's largest refugee camp at that time. The first refugees had arrived in appalling conditions, and many died of exhaustion, hunger, and lack of water. UNHCR mobilized emergency assistance in this

remote region, setting up camps, digging wells, and offering medical services. Again, lifesaving assistance.

Q: Was there any attempt to permanently resettle any of these refugees in any of these programs or was this all the idea that these people would go back eventually?

LANGE: The basic assumption of the refugee program is the hope that the situation is temporary and people will be able to return voluntarily to their country of origin when it's safe and things settle down. But as I mentioned earlier, there are some protracted refugee operations that just go on and on for years. It took until 2004 for all of the refugees at Hartisheik to be repatriated and for the camp to close, for example.

The United States has a resettlement program in which it carefully vets refugees and brings some to the United States. And the numbers on that vary and have been reduced under the current administration. The United States and other countries such as Canada have generously accepted refugees in need of resettlement. But at that time, when I was in Geneva, there were maybe seventeen, eighteen million refugees in the world and there was no way Western governments were going to accept more than a relatively small portion of them. So it really was a situation where the world had to continue providing assistance to the refugees on-site in these camps,

As the humanitarian crises multiplied, Geneva was frequently the site of pledging conferences. When there was a need for additional funds for an emergency response, there would often be a big conference where the United Nations would invite the affected countries and donor governments to attend to secure pledges of money. And I still remember, early in my tenure, the Eritrea pledging conference after Eritrea had become independent of Ethiopia. This wasn't a very well-prepared conference. It was almost a hope or a wish on the part of UN agencies that donor money would quickly be forthcoming, but they didn't do the groundwork to make sure governments were prepared to pledge funds. Washington wasn't interested in sending anyone to Geneva and asked the chargé d'affaires to deliver the U.S. government's statement, which pledged little to no new money while describing contributions already in the pipeline. It wasn't that we tried to hide the fact that there was nothing new, but there was always a tendency on the part of donors to extol their generosity even if it was in the past. The chargé d'affaires read the statement and had to leave after the morning session, while I stayed for the rest of the conference.

About 3:00, 3:30 in the afternoon, as the meeting is nearing an end, I get this notice that the president of Eritrea, Isaias Afwerki, would like to meet with the head of the U.S. delegation and a few other donors in a small conference room at the Palais des Nations. Our chargé couldn't make it at short notice, so I ended up attending as the lead U.S. representative along with several other donor government representatives. Here I am, a mid-level officer in the Foreign Service, thinking wow, I'm going to meet with the president. And so, the Eritrean president at the start of the meeting looks me straight in the eye and says, quote, "You have failed me." He was really upset because he knew damn well that the U.S. government was not giving him any new money at this pledging conference, and he was upset that the conference hadn't demonstrated much support for

his new government. Obviously, he wasn't saying this about me personally, he was speaking to me as the representative of the U.S. government. But at that point in my career it was really quite striking to be told by the president of a country that I had failed him. It was one of those important learning experiences.

Q. Oh, yes. Who headed the refugee bureau in the State Department while you were in Geneva?

LANGE: There were three of them during my four-year tour, and they all visited Geneva fairly often.

Through 1992, the director of Refugee Programs was Ambassador Princeton Lyman, who cared deeply about refugees and humanitarian assistance. He just died and it's a real loss.

At that time, there was an ambassador-at-large who was coordinator for refugee affairs working on the seventh floor of the Department and reporting to the secretary of state. I still remember Princeton telling me, Well, she has the title, but he has the money. For U.S. assistance to refugees, the money – where the U.S. government channeled its funds – was what made the difference. As I said, over \$400 million a year was going to the multilateral agencies in Geneva, administered out of the RMA office I was working in. It was a lesson I learned that also applied in other contexts.

Later on, Warren Zimmermann came to work as the director of Refugee Programs for two years. He had been the last U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia, experience directly relevant to the humanitarian crisis there, and was a strong refugee advocate.

The last person I worked with was Phyllis Oakley, the first assistant secretary for the newly created PRM bureau, who was fun to work with. She sent me a really nice thank you message as I was leaving post, telling me I deserved the opportunity at the National War College to pause and reflect on the changes in the world I had witnessed over the previous four years when worldwide humanitarian emergencies were at an all-time high.

Q: There are interviews in this program with Princeton Lyman, Warren Zimmermann, and Phyllis Oakley, for means of researching this.

LANGE: Very good. They're great people.

Given our portfolio of humanitarian emergencies, the RMA office was an intense, crisis-oriented environment that required strong diplomatic and representational skills.

As I said earlier, I was a refugee and migration officer for my first three years in Geneva. Just about everybody in our office was scheduled to depart post in the summer of 1994. Meanwhile, the office needed continuity. I was really enjoying what I was doing, and my family loved living in Geneva, so I agreed to stay on for a fourth year if I was promoted to be counselor for refugee and migration affairs, an FO-1 position. Ambassador Spiegel and the PRM bureau agreed.

Q. It's not surprising that your family enjoyed Geneva.

LANGE: It's a great family post, especially for those who like to ski in the winters or sail on Lac Léman (Lake Geneva) or hike in the mountains in the summers. I would go cross-country skiing in the French Jura Mountains, only a 35-minute drive from our house. Geneva's not the world's most exciting city, but it was very nice from a family perspective, a really nice place to raise a kid. Our daughter Julia was very happy studying at the nearby Geneva English School, which had a British curriculum. She even developed a bit of a British accent.

I had a seven-minute drive to work at the U.S. mission. We were living in the village of Genthod, right outside of Geneva, and would be woken up by cowbells in the morning because there was a small dairy farm a couple hundred feet away from our rented house. And even though it was a small dairy farm, the farmers drove two Mercedes-Benz vehicles. Swiss laws really support and protect their dairy farmers.

Several friends and Alejandra's brother Khalil visited us, but her parents were unable to do so. It turned out that both of them died while we were in Geneva, Cacho Macias in September 1993 and Emma Macias in May 1995. Alejandra was able to visit them before they died but was not in Mexico City for their deaths and funerals, one of the sad parts of the Foreign Service experience.

My parents visited twice, bringing a different one of my nieces each time, and we explored Switzerland, Italy, and Germany. Their July '94 visit took place shortly before I took over the job as RMA counselor. A few days before they were to depart, I remember getting a call from my office that there was an emergency situation involving Rwandan refugees and there would be a special meeting on the fifteenth of July of what was called the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group [HLWG]. I was asked—even though I was on vacation—if I could attend because it was urgent, I had been the office's Africa watcher, and I was about to take over the section.

Q. Was this a few months after the Rwanda genocide began?

LANGE: Yes. And it was an amazing meeting featuring High Commissioner Ogata, for whom I had such great respect. She had really beefed up UNHCR's emergency response capacity. But now UNHCR, with global responsibility to protect and assist refugees, had to cope with an extraordinary influx over four days of something like one million refugees into Goma, Zaire. The environment there was adverse, almost unmanageable. My interpretation of her presentation to the HLWG, which consisted of twenty-four ambassadors from donor governments plus the European Commission, was one word. She basically said, "Help!"

The refugees were mostly Hutus driven out of or escaping Rwanda. Some of them had been extremists responsible for the genocide while others feared reprisals by the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front that had seized power in Kigali in early July. They went into what was then called Zaire in such huge numbers it was way beyond the capacity of what the UNHCR could handle.

I'll talk a little bit more about that shortly, but first I should mention that this was after the genocide had effectively ended.

During the genocide, to the frustration of some of us, including myself, the U.S. government called the systematic ethnic murder in Rwanda "acts of genocide" rather than "genocide" to duck the obligation in the Genocide Convention, ratified by the United States, to prevent and punish genocide. Critics said the United States was haunted by the ghost of Somalia and the Black Hawk Down incident. Under intense pressure from outsiders, the U.S. government waited until mid-June to admit publicly that a genocide was actually happening.

Q. Did you have any role in Geneva while the genocide was taking place?

LANGE: I was one of those in the U.S. government reporting on what was actually going on. We had evacuated our embassy in Kigali, but I was close to the ICRC in Geneva. In the month of April, after the genocide had begun, I ended up sending over a dozen cables to the State Department based on information I was getting from ICRC on a confidential basis. They had some horrific stories from their people in Rwanda. Some of their expatriate staff had witnessed people being killed in front of them. And they knew what was going on, they knew the names of people leading the genocide, et cetera, and I was reporting on that. The situation was really critical, but the world didn't intervene. In fact, as is well-known, when the Belgian peacekeepers were attacked and some killed, the UN left and the genocide kept going. The genocide was just horrific, one of the horrendous events of the twentieth century.

I think it is important to understand why the world responded to this Rwandan refugee outflow into Zaire. There was, on some people's part, I think, and in some of the media reporting, a sense of oh, these poor Rwandans—we must help them. The problem, of course, was that a lot of the Rwandans fleeing the country were the *genocidaires* (those who had committed genocide), including Hutu extremists in the Interahamwe militia and members of the previous government's Rwandan Armed Forces, and they weren't about to go back into Rwanda once it was taken over by the Tutsis led by Paul Kagame. As one observer put it, the world ended up sending blankets, beans, and bandages to camps just over the border in Zaire that were controlled by the *genocidaires*.

It's worth noting that President Clinton, in remarks honoring genocide survivors during his visit to Kigali in March 1998, said the international community and the nations of Africa must bear their share of responsibility for the tragedy because they did not act quickly enough after the killing began and did not immediately call the crimes by their rightful name, genocide. And he said we should have prevented the refugee camps from becoming safe havens for the killers.

And so you had this complicated situation politically, but from a humanitarian perspective the refugee outflow was just a disaster. There are estimates that there were 1.2 million refugees who went into Goma and the eastern Zaire area, and deaths peaked at around 3,000 to 5,000 per day. People were dying at incredible levels because they

went into camps situated on volcanic terrain, making it difficult to build latrines, and water supplies weren't there. It was hard to set up anything, and cholera started spreading.

Q. How did the United States respond to Ogata's request for help?

LANGE. If I recall correctly, Ambassador Spiegel and I met with Mrs. Ogata almost every day in the immediate aftermath of that July 15 HLWG meeting to discuss U.S. assistance. On July 20 UNHCR asked donors to provide specific assistance in the form of so-called service packages. And here's where you can really be proud of how the U.S. government responds in humanitarian emergencies. By July 22, only seven days after that initial cry for help, President Clinton announced at the White House that he was going to step up and provide assistance. He said at his news conference in the White House, and I'll quote here, "The flow of refugees across Rwanda's border has now created what could be the world's worst humanitarian crisis in a generation. It is a disaster born of brutal violence and according to experts now on-site it is now claiming one life every minute. Today I have ordered an immediate massive increase of our efforts in the region in support of an appeal from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees."

Well, who was the U.S. government's liaison to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees? As the incoming RMA counselor, I was the full-time lead working on this, with Ambassador Spiegel and Deputy Chief of Mission Leslie Gerson engaging frequently as needed. So I was in the middle of this and worked eighty-hour weeks for several weeks. At one point, I received a midnight phone call from the deputy high commissioner for refugees requesting immediate assistance to prevent a country in the region from closing its border to those seeking asylum. I alerted the Department about the UNHCR request for a U.S. demarche, and that generated a niact [night action] immediate cable to the embassy and the re-opening of the country's border in less than twelve hours.

It was just an incredibly intense time because the U.S. government decided to provide a lot of assistance to UNHCR through those service packages—for logistics, et cetera. Fortunately, that Airlift Operations Cell at UNHCR headquarters that had been coordinating the airlift of relief supplies to Sarajevo was still there. Within days, the multinational cell, which included a U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel, was able to also coordinate and assist UNHCR relief efforts to Rwanda by allotting landing and takeoff times to humanitarian flights using the limited airport infrastructure in the region.

Now, you could look back or look forward and just say, Well, why doesn't UNHCR have the capability to do this itself? Why ask for help from donors? But nobody was going to give the High Commissioner for Refugees her own air force. She didn't have a single plane at her disposal in terms of her control, though UNHCR could make use of some UN planes. A disaster of this magnitude required military assistance as a major part of the response because only the military, particularly the United States as the world's best, had the logistical capability to deliver desperately needed assistance. And it was the kind of thing where you could sit around in 1994, you can sit around today, and say that UN agencies need to have a more robust capability for emergency response, but it all comes down to a matter of resources. And in my view, in the long term they're never going to

have that robust capability. There will be situations, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014 being an example, where you just have to have military assistance.

Q: No one can match the logistical capabilities of the U.S. military.

LANGE: Agreed. They were dealing with this, called Operation Support Hope, as something that was not their regular mission. And the fact that the U.S. had left Somalia a few months earlier, in March, after the rather rapid withdrawal following the Black Hawk Down episode in October 1993, was in the back of a lot of people's minds.

There was support from the president, from Tony Lake, the national security advisor who later became the executive director of UNICEF, from Brian Atwood, USAID administrator, and from the State Department, with the Defense Department doing its part as instructed. But it turned out that the U.S. military was quite anxious to fulfill its mission as quickly as possible and get out.

There were specific goals. You needed to have *X* amount of liters of water per day per refugee, according to an international standard. So the U.S. military meets that goal. Well, but maybe it's not widely distributed. Well, the military's response was that we met the goal, we exceeded the goal, we've done our job. The military wanted to figure out a way to leave, and part of it was pressure from some in Congress. This initially got support from people in the military, and there was a sense in Congress that supplemental appropriations should be approved, but the Senate Appropriations Committee under Senator Robert Byrd approved less than had been requested by the administration. The feeling was that this was really a task inappropriate for the U.S. military, especially beyond the initial crisis phase. Some key Pentagon supporters in Congress started expressing concerns about the mission, including Senator Strom Thurmond at the end of August of '94.

While the military wanted to finish the job, avoid mission creep, and get out, the civilians had a different view. If you look at it from a civilian perspective, your job is to help meet the humanitarian needs of the refugee population. Those humanitarian needs are water, shelter, clothing, food, healthcare, et cetera. And if all the humanitarian needs are not met and sustainable, you need to continue providing assistance. The military looked on the civilian approach as not what they were there to do and not what they were created for; they were doing this only on a temporary basis because it was beyond civilian capabilities. They wanted the Rwandan refugee operation to be a success without any Somalia-style mission creep. In fact, on September 1 the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave a speech in which he said, and I'll quote here, "My fear is we're becoming mesmerized by operations other than war and we'll take our mind off what we're all about: to fight and win our nation's wars."

Q. Were the civilian and military perspectives ever reconciled?

LANGE: Not really. It became apparent that the difference between the U.S. military perspective and the U.S. civilian perspective was getting more and more pronounced. A *Washington Post* writer, R. Jeffrey Smith, asked for an interview with the U.S. mission. I

got permission from the ambassador to do it, all on background. I remember having a breakfast meeting with him in a very nice setting in a hotel right across the street from the lake in Geneva. This was like the end of August of 1994. He kind of grilled me on what was going on, and he knew a lot. He'd been talking to UNHCR. He knew that the Pentagon was trying to finish its assigned task and end U.S. military involvement as quickly as possible to let the civilians take over. And the civilians, particularly in the State Department, USAID, and UNHCR, wanted the U.S. military to stay until humanitarian needs were met. I tried to defend what was going on, but it was a very tricky situation because he knew so much. I came back to the mission after the interview and reported this to the ambassador, who was quite concerned about it and ended up explaining to top levels in Washington that the *Washington Post* was about to publish a critical article. Smith's article was published in early September—I believe it was September 5—with the headline, quote, “U.S. Mission to Rwanda Criticized, Relief Officials Say Pentagon Has Avoided Some Commitments.” I wasn't quoted because I'd given my interview off the record or on background, I can't remember which.

So U.S. military support for the Rwandan refugees, which had seemed such a positive thing back on July 22 when the president announced that he was responding to the UN High Commissioner's request for assistance, became controversial within a month and a half. It left a bad taste in a lot of people's mouths. My recollection is that I was told that basically there was never really a clear White House decision that the U.S. military should begin to leave—Smith reported that senior military officials who ordinarily would have closely monitored the military's performance were distracted by crises in Cuba and Haiti—so the Pentagon just announced within the U.S. government that they'd met their commitments and were gradually getting out. Operation Support Hope completed redeployment by the end of September. The military operation was hugely important and accomplished a lot, but its departure so soon was quite frustrating to the civilian side.

I attended the Support Hope After-Action Review at the U.S. Army War College in October 1994, which concluded that the JTF [Joint Task Force] operation showed the value of military forces as enablers, not as replacements for the relief agencies of the U.S. government and the UN. I remember how Lieutenant General Daniel Schroeder, Commander of JTF Support Hope, talked about expectation dissonance, trying to meet requirements found in a series of U.S. policy statements. He said that under no circumstances can there be unity of command for both military and humanitarian organizations, but he stressed the importance of unity of purpose in such an operation.

In Zaire, the humanitarian needs persisted and I was still working on that and other refugee concerns from the perspective of USUN Geneva. The *International Herald Tribune* had published an article, “UN Swamped by a World Awash with Refugees,” back in August. It was a time when humanitarian and refugee crises were huge, frontpage news. We at the U.S. mission felt that we were in the center of this, all these humanitarian emergencies, and it was really quite an exciting period, exciting in the sense that the work was just so captivating and important and lifesaving. And at the same time, the normal situations that we would be dealing with in that office, such as longstanding refugee operations, continued and we still had to follow those kinds of things.

Q: What countries played important roles providing humanitarian assistance besides the United States?

LANGE: The Nordic countries were big, especially Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. In fact, I've always thought of them, both in health and humanitarian circles, as global superpowers. The United Kingdom is a major donor. Canada. Germany. To some extent France. Japan was active and, as you would expect, very interested in the work of UNHCR because Mrs. Ogata was the high commissioner for refugees.

In October 1994, Dan Spiegel became chairman of the donor group, the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group. I wouldn't say it was sleepy, but it really wasn't a major player in Geneva. I worked with him to make the HLWG into a robust forum to inform ambassadors about humanitarian issues, with the hope it would help guide donor funding and resource allocation. And we succeeded, I have to say. Dan led the ambassadorial-level discussions, and I advised him on issues to discuss, made the contacts, organized the meetings. After each session, I wrote a summary that we would send to all the ambassadors on the assumption that they would send it to their capitals, so this wasn't just a group of talking heads in Geneva. I also chaired occasional working-level HLWG meetings with my counterparts at donor government missions to discuss programmatic issues.

The HLWG met about once a month, usually at the U.S. mission in the big conference room, and we were able to attract some amazing, top-level speakers. Not only High Commissioner for Refugees Ogata, but also the UN high commissioner for human rights, UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy, the prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, et cetera. We'd usually feature two or three speakers. Even UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met with the group to discuss the relationship between humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping operations.

Q. That's an impressive list of speakers.

LANGE: It became an influential forum for global humanitarian policy discussions, and it attracted great attention. During a meeting I had in Washington with World Food Program Executive Director Catherine Bertini, she told me she wanted to address the group, and we were able to arrange that. And the Russian ambassador wanted in. The Russian Federation applied for membership, and the decision, after Dan talked it over with his fellow ambassadors in a closed-door meeting, was no, the HLWG is a group of like-minded governments and we didn't think the Russian Federation in 1994, early 1995, was a like-minded government. For particular issues, non-members could be invited to participate on an ad-hoc basis. The HLWG for donor ambassadors in New York subsequently adopted a similar policy.

After the U.S. military and other countries' militaries provided support to assist in the Rwandan refugee crisis, the role of militaries in humanitarian operations was a controversial topic in Geneva. As I said earlier, my own view is that there will be rare occasions when you just have to bring in the military to support under-resourced civilian

operations. But many who worked on the humanitarian side strongly opposed what they called the militarization of humanitarian assistance. Though justified to save lives, they feared that in the long run it endangered the moral credibility and long-term effectiveness of the humanitarian movement. We had an HLWG meeting on that issue and brought in Lieutenant General Schroeder and others to discuss it. Some senior people in UNHCR were very inclined to think of the U.S. military assistance for Operation Support Hope as an exception that should not be repeated. Their view was, We don't want to employ military assistance.

Q: You know, it so often boils down to the logistics and the ability to deliver. And who else could they turn to?

LANGE: I tend to approach things as a pragmatist, and that's exactly my view. There isn't another organization they could turn to. That's not to say that it's a simple decision. Some humanitarians argue that having the military deliver humanitarian assistance in conflict situations can be regarded by opponents as an act of war, and if the assistance is seen as partisan, then aid and aid workers may be denied access to those in need.

It's fine to be a purist about this—as long as it doesn't interfere with the delivery of vital humanitarian assistance. The most important thing is to save lives, even if that requires logistical and other support from militaries because the magnitude of the needs is such that the humanitarian and health agencies and NGOs just don't have the capabilities to meet those needs. The issue still resonates today, and the difference in cultures between the military and the humanitarian worlds persists.

Our work on the Rwandan refugee outflow ended up being the hallmark of my time in Geneva. It turned out, during my subsequent tour at the National War College, that I got a much better understanding of the military mindset and the military perspective. I wrote a course paper on the difference between the civilian and military perspectives in humanitarian emergencies.

Q: Did you enjoy multilateral diplomacy as much as you hoped?

LANGE: Yes. I got to understand multilateral diplomacy and the Geneva mindset, which ended up helping me in my post-Foreign Service work on global health at the Gates Foundation and now at the UN Foundation. Some diplomats don't find multilateral diplomacy to be interesting and prefer to work bilaterally, while others just want to do multilateral work their whole career. I did a combination of both. I enjoy the multilateral environment, even though it's not always easy when you're trying to convince a large group of people, representing governments all over the world, to get on the same wavelength.

Sometimes I found that dealing with the European Union [EU] was difficult. They'd have their own internal meetings to come up with a consensus, and then when it came to dealing with me, representing the United States on a humanitarian issue, they were kind of exhausted from the negotiations that they'd already undertaken and weren't in the mood to compromise. And meanwhile, I could be quite forceful, as I had to be,

representing U.S. interests and sometimes insisting they make revisions or changes in whatever their consensus was. In frustration, I once talked to a counterpart who had the lead on humanitarian and refugee assistance at the Swiss mission to the UN, and I said, You know, maybe we should create some kind of a bloc of the non-EU donor countries that could challenge the EU in these negotiations. And he kind of looked at me, laughed, and said, John, you're representing the United States of America, and you don't need us. (Laughs)

Q: Well, this is one of the things, as I've done well over 1,000 of these oral histories of people dealing with various aspects. For the United States, there's something in our DNA or something that makes us get out and want to get something done. And we're big and we're powerful—but it's more than that. It's the impulse—don't stand there, do something—I think. Where other countries, with lots of exceptions and all, tend to, you know, talk around the subject or something whereas we sort of go charge, sometimes in the wrong direction, but anyway, we want to get in there and do something.

LANGE: Yeah. I think I agree with you on our inclination as Americans. I like to think that we're focused on making a real difference, not just on the negotiations over words, but making a difference on the ground in whatever country we're talking about. If it doesn't make a difference in a particular situation, why are we doing it? It's an attitude that I've tried to maintain.

In the latter part of my career, I've been involved in a lot of discussions of global health in Geneva, Seattle, Washington, and elsewhere, and sometimes they seem very esoteric with questionable impact in-country. And I've told people, no matter what we conclude in these big global health negotiations, unless the woman in rural Tanzania gets the bed net to prevent malaria for her kids, or the child in Togo gets the drops of oral polio vaccine to prevent paralysis, or the AIDS victim in Botswana gets the antiretroviral therapy to stay alive, whatever we do doesn't matter. It doesn't matter unless the health programs and policies we're talking about really reach people. So yes, that's the way I look on the impulse to act that you described.

Q: You want to make a difference.

LANGE: Yes, and I feel like our office really did make a difference. Now, you could say, Well, John, you're sitting in comfortable Geneva and looking at the mountains on your way to work every day rather than being the one to deliver aid to those in need. True. But even though we were a great distance from the refugee situations in eastern Zaire and elsewhere, I thought we saved lives by maintaining a highly productive working relationship with UNHCR leadership and by expediting U.S. assistance to the international agencies, especially in urgent situations when twenty-four or forty-eight hours makes a difference. When you're dealing with life and death, when you're supporting an effort that actually is saving lives, it's quite satisfying and fulfilling work that really takes hold of you. The United States as a force for good. My four years at USUN Geneva still resonate with me.

Q: Vitally important work. What did you do after Geneva?

LANGE: When it was time for me to start looking for another job, I wanted to go back to Washington. I was thinking of maybe doing a tour in the IO bureau, but then I was selected to go to the National War College [NWC]. And I was wondering, Well, is this a good career move? And just about everybody who had known how hard I'd been working, especially with the Rwandan refugee crisis, said, John, you need a break. I went to the War College.

Q: Yeah. Well, that's a good place to stop, I think. And next we'll pick this up at the National War College and talk about that and then further on.

NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

Q: Today is the twenty-first of September 2018, with John Lange. And John, I'm going to turn you loose.

LANGE: Thank you very much, Stu. When we ended our discussion last time, I was about to move from Geneva. Following home leave, my next tour was as a student at the National War College in Washington.

Q: You studied at the National War College from when to when?

LANGE: I started there in August 1995 and graduated in June 1996.

I'd like to note that my father was very ill when my family and I were on home leave. He died shortly after I started my NWC studies.

Q: Could you explain what the War College was at the time, why was it there, and why we were involved?

LANGE: The National War College started right after World War II and is based at Fort McNair in Southwest DC. It's part of the National Defense University. It's considered a prestigious institution, educating rising military and civilian U.S. government officials for future high-level positions. I found it to have an interesting mix of people, more military than civilian, of course, but with a good cohort of State Department Foreign Service officers and a couple of Civil Service officers as well as people from USAID and other government agencies involved in international affairs. The military were at the lieutenant colonel and colonel rank and the FSOs were all new to the FO-1 rank. And there were military officers from other countries, U.S. allies, though they were excluded from any classified discussions.

Over the course of ten months, we studied all elements of national security—not just the military side but diplomatic, political, economic, et cetera, aspects. It's an accredited

institution, and at the end we all received a Master of Science degree in national security strategy. In addition to classroom studies, we paid visits to government agencies. I participated in optional weekend visits to military installations around the country, which were quite enlightening for me as a civilian. We would, for example, see how the Air Force operated by flying to Colorado Springs in a military plane and spending the weekend visiting the Air Force Academy, NORAD [North American Aerospace Defense Command], et cetera.



John on National War College tour of U.S. Air Force bases (1996)

And we heard lectures from topnotch speakers. That, of course, included the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili, in a larger session that also included the students at what was then called the Industrial College of the Armed Forces [now the Dwight D. Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy]. We also heard from retired General Colin Powell before he became secretary of state, and he actually got bigger applause. I've got the list of who came to speak to us, it's just an incredible array of speakers representing a fairly wide range of views. Dick Cheney came from Haliburton. Paul Wolfowitz before he was deputy secretary of defense and World Bank president. General Anthony Zinni, who'd had such extensive experience with the Middle East. James Woolsey, former director of the CIA. Rich Armitage, who later became the deputy secretary of state under Secretary Powell. Famous ambassadors who were in or used to be in the State Department, like Roz Ridgway, Chas Freeman, and Bob Gallucci. U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor. Senator John McCain. Even the Russian ambassador to the United States. National Security Advisor Anthony Lake spoke at our graduation. When Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia came to speak, I asked him a question that seemed to baffle him for a few seconds: If you believe in originalism and rely on the text of the Constitution, why do you believe the Supreme Court has the right to review legislation passed by Congress? Judicial review isn't mentioned in the

Constitution and later was created by the Supreme Court, in *Marbury v. Madison* in 1803. A Foreign Service friend commended me for stumping a Supreme Court Justice.

A key element of the program was to write an essay for most courses. For the course on the foundations of military strategy, I wrote an essay, as I described earlier, applying the teachings of Carl von Clausewitz, the famous military strategist, to the transition from the 1992 U.S.-led military operation to feed people starving from famine to the inadequate UN operation which led to the Black Hawk Down incident in October '93.

For the course on the national security policy process, I wrote the paper that I mentioned earlier on civilian-military cooperation in humanitarian assistance during the July 1994 Rwandan refugee outflow. I was able to bring in not only my civilian hands-on experience in Geneva, but also the military perspective. I later expanded that paper and at graduation received what was called the Higgins Memorial Award for excellence in writing. After graduating, I modified it a bit and got it published as a journal article [“Civilian-Military Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance: Lessons from Rwanda”] in *Parameters*, the U.S. Army War College quarterly, in summer 1998.

And there's one other paper worth mentioning. I co-wrote it with two others, and we won the award for the best paper in the course on the geostrategic context [“The Beckoning Giant: National Security Strategy Toward South Asia in the Twenty-First Century”]. One of the co-writers was Susanne Schafer from the Associated Press and the other was a U.S. Army colonel named Marty Dempsey. And Martin Dempsey later became chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, General Dempsey. A good guy and a strategic thinker.

I really enjoyed being there the entire time, but my personal impression was that the military people gained more from the studies than the civilians—at least the State Department civilians—because we already had a pretty broad understanding of the levers of power, just by the nature of the work of the State Department coordinating the implementation of U.S. international policy and the role of ambassadors in charge of all the people under civilian authority in each country. We already had experience in synthesizing all the different interests and resources that the U.S. government has at its disposal to formulate a coherent foreign policy. Whereas for a lot of the military officers, this was their first time, really, to get this broadening experience after making their way up the career ladder as fighter pilots or whatever.

Q: Did you find that the military mindset was different from your mindset? In other words, was there sort of an awakening of different perspectives on national security matters?

LANGE: Actually, very much so. If I had written an article for publication about the Rwandan refugee outflow upon leaving USUN Geneva, I would have written it in a certain way, unaware that my understanding was somewhat limited because I was looking at things from the perspective of a civilian working on humanitarian assistance. But once I got to the National War College, I started to understand the military perspective—with their fundamental goal to fight and win the nation's wars—and I developed a much better

understanding of why they wanted to get out of the Rwandan refugee assistance effort and hand it over to the civilian agencies as soon as they could.

It was really interesting to try to understand that military versus civilian perspective. Based on my time at the National War College and experiences since then, I've actually come to conclude that those in the military, no matter what country's military, tend to feel a greater camaraderie with other military people from whatever other country than they feel with their own country's civilian diplomats. And similarly, diplomats feel comfortable talking to each other, no matter what country they're from (unless it's a sworn enemy where you have to avoid them) and often don't feel as much at home when they're talking to their own military. When I went on a two-week regional study overseas seminar to Southeast Asia, I remember the military officers just kind of immediately feeling comfortable talking to the other countries' militaries in a way that they didn't display when talking to fellow students who were State Department diplomats. (Laughs) And the same is true for us diplomats. All you have to do is go to a gathering of diplomats from different countries, whether it's a meeting or a cocktail reception or a dinner, and they talk easily among themselves. In other words, military like to talk to military and civilians like to talk to civilians and diplomats like to talk to diplomats.

Q: Well, the vocabulary's different.

LANGE: The vocabulary, the mindset, the culture are different, you know.

Q: Yeah. How did that study trip to Southeast Asia go?

LANGE: At the War College I wanted to expand my horizons through study and travel, which is why I sought to travel to an area where I had never been and never expected to work in. I originally signed up for the Southeast Asia trip because Vietnam was on the itinerary. But the relationship between the United States and Vietnam was still quite sensitive. Normalization of relations began in 1994, diplomatic relations were established in July 1995, and it wasn't until May 1996 that President Clinton terminated the combat zone designation for Vietnam and nominated the first U.S. ambassador to Vietnam since the April 1975 airlift. As our trip to Vietnam approached, the U.S. government view, and I don't know if this was the State Department or DOD [Department of Defense] making the decision, was that a National War College visit with military counterparts in Vietnam would have constituted mil-to-mil [military-to-military] relations, even though NWC has a certain level of independence. The U.S. government wasn't quite ready for that in May of '96. So we were unable to go to Vietnam. I ended up going there years later when I was working on pandemic influenza, and by then we'd opened up our embassy in Hanoi. So my regional studies trip was to the Philippines, Laos, and Cambodia, with a short stop in Hong Kong at the very end.

Q: What were you learning, particularly in that area you were going to?

LANGE: The trip was led by an NWC faculty member who was an expert on the region, and we studied each country's security issues, U.S. security interests, and U.S. policy toward the country.

We met with U.S. ambassadors and other high-level embassy officials and with each country's military officers. In Laos, the U.S. military had a joint task force working with the Laotian government to account for prisoners of war and American military personnel missing in action from the Vietnam War era.

Cambodia, of course, had gone through the genocide under the Khmer Rouge, and I remember we went to the museum in Phnom Penh, a former Khmer Rouge security prison, where there was a map of Cambodia formed by skulls of people who had been killed. I believe they dismantled it in the early 2000s, but seeing the "skull map" on the wall left a strong impression. We went on some side trips, and at one point we were in a rural area with huts around and people busy with their daily routines. There was one hut on stilts, maybe eight or ten feet above the ground. A Cambodian suggested I look inside, so I climbed the ladder and opened the door to a horrific sight, a large mound of skulls piled probably three, four, five feet high. Having earlier worked in Geneva on issues related to the Rwanda genocide, and then going to Cambodia and seeing this, a grim reminder of the "Killing Fields," made a strong impact on me. We also visited, at our own expense, the twelfth-century temple ruins of Angkor Wat in Siem Reap, one of the great archeological wonders in the world.

Q: I assume that many of the military students had served in Vietnam-related assignments and all, and how did they kind of view the Vietnam War?

LANGE: I don't think many of the military officers—I don't think any of them, actually—had served in Vietnam because this was 1995 to '96, so it's twenty years after the Vietnam War ended. Maybe a few of them.

Q: Just an aside, how did you find connections to the War College served you later on?

LANGE: I met some very good people there, people I stayed in touch with over the years, and several of the Foreign Service officers became ambassadors. There was one fellow who was in my NWC committee room and later became an Air Force general. I remember, when I was at Embassy Dar es Salaam, he and I had a brief conversation on the airport tarmac during a high-level U.S. military visit when he was a top military aide. He told me that when the Clinton Administration was considering getting involved to stop the killing in Kosovo, before NATO launched air strikes against Yugoslavia in March 1999 and before the NATO-led peacekeeping force entered Kosovo in June, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff passed around copies of my article on the Rwandan refugee outflow to the joint chiefs. The chairman apparently wanted the U.S. military to understand how their perspective on such a humanitarian intervention would be different from the U.S. civilian perspective. So, I was quite pleased that my article had legs, in a sense.

What I liked about NWC was the—discipline may be too strong a word—but structure. It wasn't just like oh, let's go and learn a lot of different things and isn't this a great experience. Instead, there was a real educational and training effort that had been thought through, a series of very well-conceived required and elective courses discussing the

geostrategic issues of the day and getting into some of the specifics, whether it was military strategy or diplomatic strategy or economic strategy. It's not like we came away as economists, but I thought it was a very positive learning experience.

I had a couple of complaints about the curriculum.

Q: What didn't you like about the curriculum?

LANGE: I thought it needed more of a global mindset, and more could have been done in terms of studying additional global issues. In response to the NWC commandant's request for feedback at the end of the school year, I submitted a critique that argued for studying peacetime engagement as part of "full-spectrum dominance," as they were calling it back then, and suggested studying the rudiments of treaties and international law, given the prominent policy discussions on the ABM [Anti-Ballistic Missile] Treaty and other legal issues back then.

I ended up being named a distinguished graduate, in the top 10 percent of the class. My mother, wife, and daughter attended the NWC graduation ceremony, which included all National Defense University graduates. It was held outdoors and very nicely done. A happy occasion.

OFFICE OF EAST AFRICAN AFFAIRS

Q: Where did you go after the War College?

LANGE: I pursued a couple of deputy office director positions in regional bureaus, and the first office to recruit me was East African Affairs [AF/E]. I accepted. Given what later happened when I moved from there to Dar es Salaam, that proved to be quite a fateful, life-changing decision. I started there in June 1996 and departed in December 1997.

Q: What did your area include? What was the situation there when you arrived?

LANGE: We had a great group of Foreign Service officers in the office, one of the best groups I've ever worked with, I have to say. It turned out that three of the desk officers in the office later became ambassadors.

There were twelve countries in the AF/E region, which had some sources of stability, such as Kenya and Uganda and Ethiopia back then, but it also had Somalia, a failed state, and Sudan, in the middle of a civil war with the south rebelling against the north. South Sudan had not yet become independent. How to deal with Sudan was a quite controversial issue within the U.S. government, which I'll talk a bit more about. The AF/E region included the Indian Ocean island nations off the east coast of Africa.

We had no embassy in Somalia. At one point, officials from the breakaway region of Somaliland called on me in my office because, in the absence of the officer director, I was the highest level official that State Department policy would permit them to meet. Somaliland was hoping to become independent, and we weren't about to recognize that.

Q: An issue—it wouldn't be quite northern, would it be in the eastern part of Somalia?

LANGE: It's in the northwest, on the Gulf of Aden.

Q: On the Red Sea almost, yeah.

LANGE: Yes. And they wanted to be independent and recognized as such. And even though Somalia was a failed state, we weren't about to start recognizing smaller breakaway entities, especially without support from the old Organization of African Unity [OAU]. Somaliland basically operates as an autonomous region within Somalia.

Q: Yeah, it had been British Somalia—

LANGE: Yes, a British protectorate.

Q: —and the Italians have had the other part of it.

LANGE: Yes, when the Italians ruled Somalia. And the thing about it, when I arrived in the office, this was June of '96, the memory of Black Hawk Down from October '93 was still there.

Q: You might mention again what Black Hawk Down was.

LANGE: That incident occurred in the Battle of Mogadishu, when U.S. military helicopters employed to prevent attacks on UN relief operations by followers of warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid were shot down and eighteen Americans died. Just a very traumatic situation.

Q: And we also, as I recall it, killed hundreds, several hundred people, I mean, when we came in, we just sprayed the place with—

LANGE: Yes, hundreds of Somali militiamen and civilians were killed. The Congress was up in arms about the American deaths, like, What are we doing in Mogadishu? And the Clinton Administration didn't really have a good answer. They'd been kind of letting this understaffed, inadequate military operation under UN auspices go on. To his credit, the president resisted pressure for an immediate, disruptive withdrawal and announced the United States would withdraw all forces by the end of March 1994. But it really turned out to be kind of a shock to the system and led to what some called the Somalia Syndrome, American reluctance to be directly engaged in Somalia, the 1994 Rwandan genocide, and other crises in Africa. The hangover was still around almost three years later when I got to AF/E. We weren't about to spend a lot of effort on Somalia to try to get deeply engaged to broker peace. It was just a failed state, and we were going to have to monitor it, but that was about it.

In November 1996, Ethiopian Airlines flight 961 was hijacked after departure from Addis Ababa and ended up crashing into the Indian Ocean off the Comoros Islands. Foreign

Service officer Leslieanne Shedd was killed. She had been based at the U.S. embassy in Addis. A private American citizen was killed, as were some others who had relatives in the U.S. government. The U.S. consul general in Mumbai and his wife were among the survivors. U.S. embassies in the region immediately responded in the best tradition of the Foreign Service. It turned out that the AF/E office director was out of the country at the time, if I recall correctly, so I helped coordinate the Africa bureau's role in the rescue efforts and the return of the bodies of Americans. Television news showed video of the hijacked plane—I believe it was running out of fuel and the pilot was hoping to land at the Comoros airport—in which one wing hit the water and then the plane flipped. A really tragic situation. I remember going to Andrews Air Force Base on Thanksgiving morning when the acting under secretary for management, Pat Kennedy, the assistant secretary of state for African affairs, George Moose, and others came to greet the plane carrying the bodies. George called me a one-man AF task force during the first twenty-four hours after the hijacked plane crashed. This was one of those cases where you had to combine operational skills with humanitarian concerns, because I was dealing with the family members of those whose bodies were being brought back. You just never know what's going to happen in the Foreign Service.

An important issue for which I was State's focal point was what was then called the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative [GHAI], with USAID as the lead agency. GHAI included the traditional Horn of Africa countries plus the African Great Lakes countries. It was intended to address food security and conflict prevention through the new leaders in the region—Isaias Afwerki, Meles Zenawi, Yoweri Museveni, Paul Kagame—with a vision to create stronger regional integration.

Q. Was GHAI a presidential initiative?

LANGE: Yes. And USAID Administrator Brian Atwood was a big proponent of it, along with others in Washington. I inherited that responsibility when I arrived in AF/E, though I and some others in the AF bureau had a lot of doubts about it. There were some GHAI proponents who I'm sure thought that I didn't do enough to support it. Following such terrible situations as the authoritarian Derg regime in Ethiopia and the genocide in Rwanda, GHAI was a well-meaning and optimistic attempt to move things forward in an unsettled region, and the proponents had faith that the new leaders would bring more democratic and accountable governance. Museveni, Kagame and Meles were considered the poster boys for the new hope for progressive politics in Africa.

But I personally thought that was naïve. I was skeptical about the democratic bona fides of these new leaders. An early indicator was President Isaias' refusal to hold national elections and implement other elements of the Eritrean constitution that had been ratified in May 1997. And all you have to do is look at Uganda today, where President Museveni is still in power. Yes, he once was a good, new leader, or seemed to be promising, back in the 1990s, but if you don't abide by term limits and age limits and you just stay in power and steal elections, it's not really beneficial for the people or the countries. Meles died while in power in 2012. Isaias and Kagame are also still in power. I believe time has proved me right.

I remember one of the big proponents of GHAI at the time was Gayle Smith, who later became the administrator of USAID under the Obama Administration. Gayle was based at the U.S. embassy in Addis Ababa, but she was the senior regional advisor to the chief of staff of USAID in Washington, who worked for the administrator. So, she had this separate reporting line directly to the front office of USAID while she was sitting in the U.S. embassy and in theory working under the auspices of the U.S. ambassador. She was involved early-on as a liaison between the USG [U.S. government] and key African leaders in developing GHAI concepts.

Gayle and I had our differences on the role of the State Department in GHAI. USAID was driving the initiative and I remember there was a time when they put together about a fifty-page document describing next steps for GHAI. Then they said, Well, we need your clearance on it in the next few days because this is moving forward. There was no way that I could clear on behalf of the State Department a fifty-page document that had all kinds of issues in it that we had concerns about. And so, it ended up becoming just a USAID document. State and USAID agreed on the broad, strategic GHAI framework but developed separate strategies, and we disagreed on how to implement conflict prevention.

Later, in March 1998, I briefly chatted with Brian Atwood during President Clinton's visit to Kampala, and he described GHAI as, quote, sort of dead but said that elements such as food security were proceeding. And years after that, I saw Gayle at a meeting in Washington and she suggested that the GHAI vision had been unrealistic. In the end, while the initiative had some positive impact on improving food security, I think you can argue that for many reasons it failed as a conflict mitigation effort—especially in light of conflicts such as the senseless, and deadly, 1998–2000 Ethiopia-Eritrea border war.

I did some traveling in the region, including to such places as Antananarivo, Madagascar. At the end of May 1997, I flew to Ethiopia to meet with the ambassador and others, and then flew to Axum in the Tigray region. Axum had been capital of the Kingdom of Axum in the first millennium and is famous for its stelae monuments, the traditional site of the Ark of the Covenant, and the legend of the Queen of Sheba. Quite historic.

Q: Yeah.



John visiting a farm in Ethiopia (1997)

LANGE: And then I was driven overland in a USAID vehicle with a USAID driver to Eritrea. I must say, I didn't have my camera ready—long before the days of smartphones with cameras—but there were just some beautiful scenes in northern Ethiopia, where it was quite hilly, almost mountainous, in some of the areas. But then, when you got to the border, it was kind of desolate. It was really fortunate that I was able to do this a year before Eritrea and Ethiopia went to war and the border was closed. For almost two decades you couldn't make the same trip that I did in 1997. Some people estimate that the casualties in that war could have been 100,000 or many more, all because of a dispute over the delineation of the border for what I had seen, firsthand, as a useless piece of land.

Q: Yeah. I mean, it is really, of all ridiculous wars, that was it.

LANGE: And there's now a new opening, peace opening, between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Q: Just in the last couple weeks.

LANGE: Exactly. I don't know if the border is open yet but assume it will be soon.

As we drove into Eritrea and got to the outskirts of Asmara, I remember stopping at a little stall that a woman was running so we could buy some canned soda or water. She had fought in the war of independence when Eritrea was fighting Ethiopia under the Derg regime, and I talked to her about her experiences fighting in the war and now selling food and drink. I asked, Do you miss it? She smiled and said, Yes. It was the kind of thing where you could just see how someone gets so inspired, you know, fighting for the independence of their country where everyone is working together, men and women, to reach that goal. And she missed it.

In Asmara I met with a fellow graduate of my National War College class who was then serving as chargé d'affaires.

But I have to say, the one country that got the highest level of attention in our office was Sudan. The office director had the lead on Sudan because it was a very high-profile issue in Washington. I had the AF/E lead on Somalia because, to be frank, nobody really cared about the failed state.

Q: What were the concerns about Sudan?

LANGE: Three reasons: the war in the south that was going on, a civil war that, years later, led to the separation of South Sudan from Sudan; alleged human rights violations in Sudan itself; and the idea that it was a host of terrorism and exported international terrorism. And for a while, Osama bin Laden had been based there. So, it was quite controversial for U.S. policy.

One of the fundamental choices for U.S. policy toward Sudan was, basically, isolation or engagement. Is it better to try to isolate and punish the country and maybe impose sanctions in hopes of getting it to change its ways, or instead to try to engage with the country and cajole its leaders, not because you support their policies, but to try to figure out ways in which you can influence those policies to ameliorate the situation, if not change it completely? Most in the State Department, including the U.S. ambassador to Sudan, Tim Carney—who was not based in Sudan, he was based at that time in Nairobi—had a view that engagement was better than isolation. But that was not the view of the National Security Council or, it was said, the Department of Defense.

AF/E Office Director Barbara Bodine had some strong views on this, which often differed from those of the senior director for African affairs at the National Security Council, Susan Rice. Barbara left the office a couple of months before Susan replaced George Moose as assistant secretary of state for African affairs in October of '97, and April Glaspie came to run AF/E.

We had removed our diplomats for a questionable security reason in early 1996. The State Department's public announcement said that our diplomats were vulnerable to terrorist attack and the Khartoum government had refused to guarantee their safety. But later there were news articles saying the CIA had withdrawn its intel reports dealing with the terrorist threats against Americans in Sudan because the source was a fabricator. Nevertheless, we had no diplomats in Khartoum at the time.

So, there was a fundamental question, should we send our diplomats back to Sudan? The biweekly newsletter called *Africa Confidential* even had an article in July 1997 about the hardliners at the NSC and DOD and the Congress, who didn't like what was going on in Sudan, versus those in the State Department. There was an article out of Sudan in August of '97 about support for the IGAD [Intergovernmental Authority on Development] peace initiative saying, quote, "Carney's wing" thought was worth pursuing and the hardliners in the U.S. government didn't want to support it. A lot of things were going on in terms of those policy differences, and they were making it into the press.

April—who worked well with the under secretary for political affairs, Tom Pickering—was trying to figure out ways to engage with Sudan to try to influence their policies, and the hardliners didn't want that engagement. One of those hardliners was Susan Rice, who really knew how to flex her bureaucratic muscles and was obviously in a very powerful position, having the lead on Africa at the NSC.

We in the State Department wanted to send diplomats back to Sudan, and there was the question of how to formalize the decision. Should it be done in an action memorandum so that the secretary of state explicitly approved, or an information memorandum just informing the secretary, on the theory that there had been a review and the State Department had authority on its own to send some mid-level diplomats back to Khartoum? Well, the AF bureau sent an information memorandum to the seventh floor and didn't get any pushback, so we planned to go ahead and send in the mid-level officers. But that kind of passive clearance didn't pass muster within the rest of the U.S. government, who believed that it should have been decided in a broad interagency process. And this blew up into a really big issue that hit the *Washington Post*.

Q: You know, this argument over do we send our people back or isolate Sudan is so typical of sort of the Washington thing, where the State Department basically goes along with the idea you got to talk to people, you've got to be there and try to do something, whereas, at least I get this from people I've talked to, when you get to the National Security Council the political thing is let's be tough and let's just isolate them, and somehow or another that's going to take care of the problem.

LANGE: I totally agree. That is the fundamental difference in approach.

To cite separate examples: I think you can argue that the one U.S. government policy that has demonstrably failed ever since 1961, at least until some policy changes under the Obama Administration, is U.S. policy toward Cuba. The idea was to isolate Cuba to compel it to become a democracy. That isolation over many decades did not significantly change the Castro government, under either Fidel or his brother. It was a demonstrable failure in reaching its stated goals. On the other hand, having an embassy in Moscow during the Cold War provided that window on what was going on in the Soviet Union through various information gathering techniques we use in a situation like that, where we are present on the ground, and such engagement was highly beneficial to the United States. Now, you and I don't need to go into detail here on those Cold War histories, but I agree with you.

Q: You know, I think there's also, I hate to say it, often a policy of isolating a small country where who gives a damn, you know, we can show we're tough. Whereas something like the Soviet Union is too big. We've got to do something there. But for hardliners it's easy—it's easy to get tough on Sudan.

LANGE: Yeah. Now, Sudan was a nasty government. I don't deny that they were.

Q: Oh, yeah.

LANGE: It's just a question of how can you be more effective in changing that.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: I've got here a September 24, 1997, *Washington Post* article headlined, "U.S. Diplomats Return to Sudan." I'll quote it: "The United States is sending diplomats back to Sudan, nineteen months after pulling all American employees out of the U.S. embassy there for security reasons, the State Department announced yesterday. The move does not reflect an improvement in relations with the vast African country, officials said, but instead signals the start of an upgraded diplomatic campaign to increase pressure on the militant Islamic regime." That story was leaked by someone, not me, in the State Department.

The article described exactly what we were just talking about. The idea was to send diplomats in to engage with, rather than ostracize, Sudan in order to ratchet up pressure to respond to the demands of the international community on terrorism, human rights and its civil war.

Well, lo and behold, six days later, here's another *Washington Post* article by the same writer, "Retreat from Sudan Announcement Reveals Confusion at State." That's the headline. (Both laugh) It said the State Department was embarrassed by the previous announcement and had issued a rare retraction saying no decision had been made on restaffing the embassy. A senior Department official was quoted saying that we got ahead of ourselves based on the belief that an administration policy review had authorized sending U.S. diplomats back to Sudan. But the article also said that other administration officials and some congressional staff attributed the premature announcement to a disagreement within the foreign policy apparatus about how to deal with Sudan.

And that was absolutely correct—it was a disagreement within the foreign policy apparatus. Susan Rice at the NSC went ballistic when the first article came out and insisted that the plan to send diplomats back to Khartoum be stopped. And it was.

Q: Well, looking at this, I mean, obviously Susan Rice by herself at that particular time was just a government official, but where was all the opposition coming from?

LANGE: I assume Susan had support from the national security advisor, though I don't know that for a fact. Two influential congressmen, Democrat Donald Payne, famous at that time for his close monitoring of what was going on in Africa, and Republican Frank Wolf, who really followed Sudan issues very closely, wrote separate letters to President Clinton expressing their disappointment with the decision. Payne asked why we were rewarding the National Islamic Front government by reopening the embassy without any tangible evidence of reform. And there was a guy at the Congressional Research Service, a prominent analyst of the situation in East Africa, who described the dispute as a petty turf conflict. He was quoted in the second article as saying that the president's stated policy objectives were deliberately misinterpreted by mid-level officials at State. I guess I

was one of them, in the sense that I agreed with the policy to return the diplomats and had been part of the memo drafting process, though I wasn't the lead on it.

There's one last thing about my tour in AF/E that I think is worth mentioning, for the humor. A friend of mine was the deputy chief of mission at the U.S. embassy in Kampala at the time. He sent me an email in February 1997 with the subject, Lange Fan Club Denied Visas. He described how the embassy's consular officer had told him that a political figure, a maverick opposition activist, had arrived at the embassy with a large group of young people who said they wanted to go to America, quote, "to meet John Lange." (Laughs) Meanwhile, I don't think at that point I'd ever in my life been in Uganda. (Both laugh) The politician had, however, once called the AF bureau because he lost his luggage in Los Angeles and I took the call. The DCM speculated that maybe they had heard that I was supposed to be an advocate for freedom and democracy. But it turned out, as he wrote in his email, quote, "Unfortunately, during their visa interviews, the kids appeared to have no idea why they needed to meet John Lange, who he is, how they would pay for the expedition, or when they would return." (Both laugh) So, they were denied visas. (Laughs)

Q: What did you do after you were deputy office director in the Africa bureau?

LANGE: My two-year tour in AF/E ended early. It was curtailed so I could fill an immediate opening as deputy chief of mission in Dar es Salaam. Based on my experiences working on both policy and management issues and my work in and on Africa, I thought it was a good fit for me, and the AF bureau thought so, too.

AF/E Director April Glaspie had had her policy differences over Sudan with Susan Rice, the incoming assistant secretary for African affairs, and was not going to stick around. She arranged for an onward assignment beginning in January 1998 as the consul general in Cape Town, a wonderful place to be. Meanwhile, the DCM in Dar es Salaam was returning to Washington to run AF/E. And Ambassador Brady Anderson, who later became administrator of USAID, left Dar in October 1997 at the conclusion of his three-year tour. So the top two positions at the embassy were going to be vacant.

I wanted to allow my daughter to finish her semester of schooling in Vienna, Virginia, that ended just before Christmas. So the timing worked out for April Glaspie to go to Dar and serve as the chargé d'affaires for almost three months to fill the leadership gap before I arrived. Alejandra, Julia, and I left DC the day after Christmas, spent a couple of nights in Zurich, and arrived in Dar the morning of December 30. April left Dar for Cape Town on January 3, and I became the chargé d'affaires at that point. So that was how I segued from AF/E to fill a sudden opening in Dar es Salaam.

Q: This probably is a good place to stop.

AMERICAN EMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

Q: Today is the fifth of October 2018 with John Lange.

And John, we've got quite a story to tell and I'm turning it over to you. You want to give us dates, you know, for what we're talking about.

LANGE: Thank you, Stu. When we left our last discussion, my family and I had arrived in Dar es Salaam five days after Christmas 1997.

Q: What does that mean, es Salaam?

LANGE: Dar es Salaam, ironically, means haven of peace.

Q: Because I know salaam alaikum is peace be onto you.

LANGE: Yes. And it turned out not to be a haven of peace on August 7, 1998, as we'll be discussing later.

So, we got to Dar es Salaam, immediately moved into the DCM residence, and really loved the place. Julia called it a mansion because it was so big compared to our house in Northern Virginia. Once home to famous American diplomat Thomas Pickering early in his career, it was right across the road from the Indian Ocean and only a five-minute drive from the embassy. We inherited an excellent cook, a Tanzanian who, sadly, was HIV positive and died a few years after we departed post.

April Glaspie and I overlapped for a few days before she moved to Cape Town. I still remember in January of 1998, a week after I became the chargé d'affaires, there was a New Year's sherry offered by the Tanzanian president, Benjamin Mkapa, for the diplomatic corps at State House, his official residence. I attended and was near the end of the receiving line along with the other acting ambassadors. Here I am, kind of brand-new, still a mid-level Foreign Service officer at the FSO-1 level, meeting the president of Tanzania and proud to be representing the United States. I shook Mkapa's hand and he was gracious, but his basic statement to me, when I introduced myself as the chargé d'affaires at the American embassy, was, You know, we really need a U.S. ambassador here. (Laughs) That kind of burst my bubble. He'd met April a few months earlier when she was the chargé, I'm sure, and then here I come, yet another American chargé, and his message was, you know, hey, nice to meet you—but we need an ambassador. It turned out that I was chargé d'affaires, except for short periods when I was outside of the country, until the arrival of the new ambassador in the middle of September 1998.

Q: Yeah, I wonder if you could explain how our relations stood, what was the sort of situation, you know, when you got there.

LANGE: Sure. U.S.-Tanzanian relations were very much affected by Tanzania's history since independence. Tanganyika had become independent from Britain in 1961, and in 1964 it joined with Zanzibar to form the United Republic of Tanzania led by founding

President Julius Nyerere and the Tanganyika African National Union. Nyerere famously promoted *ujamaa*, which literally means familyhood or fraternity in Swahili. It was a concept of self-reliance built on creating a common identity for the country's 120 tribes through nationalist economic policies and Kiswahili as the shared language. But the ideology of African socialism for economic and social development was pretty hostile to markets. Nyerere's foreign policy was ideologically grounded against colonialism, racism, imperialism, and great power politics. I got to know foreign minister Jakaya Kikwete, who later became president, and I remember him telling me at one point in a candid conversation how Nyerere had ruined the economy of Tanzania before leaving office in 1985, but he was still beloved by the people for what he did to lead a united country on the global stage.

Q: That's sort of the impression I've had of Nyerere.

LANGE: Exactly. When I arrived, there still was this socialist mindset, kind of a distrust of the private sector, in Tanzanian leadership. It was almost a generational thing, that anybody who was of Nyerere's generation or close to it was very skeptical of the private sector, thought it needed to be controlled, and wanted the government to be doing most of the important tasks in the country, even if the government didn't have the money to do so. And at the same time, they were happy to receive assistance from the Western world. There were some very important development assistance programs in Tanzania, with some of the European governments, such as the Nordic countries, having the biggest, as they'd been a little more supportive of the socialism that Nyerere had supported—

Q: Nyerere was a real darling of the socialists, particularly in Sweden and Denmark.

LANGE: Exactly. Back in the day, he had really been one of the leaders of the nonaligned movement, which was—in theory—not aligned with the Soviet Union or the United States, though it was really quite a left-leaning, socialist movement.

Q: Were we taking a stand about Nyerere's form of government, or did we just keep quiet about it? Didn't Nyerere sponsor special villages? I mean, this resettlement—it was a disaster. But by then was it water over the dam?

LANGE: In many respects it was in the past.

Under *Ujamaa*, Tanzania had paternalistically planned villages to promote community and economic self-reliance. But the forced collectivization program failed to spur economic development, and when Nyerere resigned in the mid-1980s, Tanzania was still one of the world's poorest countries.

Nevertheless, it was clear to me that he was still highly respected, not only within Tanzania, as I mentioned, but also in Africa as one of their historical leaders with moral authority. He had played a leading role in the debate over North-South economic inequalities and had been a strong supporter of liberation movements in South Africa, Rhodesia, and elsewhere. And it's easy for those in the West to minimize the staggering challenges that Nyerere and other first-generation African leaders faced at the time of

independence. But by the time I got to Dar, we in the U.S. government weren't going to fight that old battle over his African socialism.

I thought Nyerere was quite engaging and charismatic. Henry Kissinger once called him an austere believer in socialism who was both brilliant and charming. And he was still active and influential politically. But we weren't at odds with him.

Q: Was Nyerere still active on the international scene?

LANGE: Yes. I remember going to a meeting of donors with Nyerere as the main speaker. As president he had wanted to make Tanzania self-reliant and free from indebtedness to former colonial powers and other Western countries. At the meeting he discussed the need for debt relief under what was called the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative [HIPC] that had been launched by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in 1996. The idea of HIPC was to ensure that no poor country faced an unmanageable debt burden. And the ambassador from a Scandinavian country, I think it was Sweden, was quite angry when Nyerere said they needed this debt relief because Tanzania and other countries simply could not pay back the debt from their development assistance loans. The ambassador got very angry about this, because, you know, this was a debt, you owe it. And Nyerere shrugs his shoulders and says with his charismatic smile, What can we do? We don't have the money. (Laughs) He was pushing debt relief for Tanzania and other poor countries because—and he was right on this—there was no way they could ever afford to pay the money back.

And we cooperated with him in his role as the regional facilitator for Burundi peace negotiations. In January 1998, U.S. special envoy for the African Great Lakes Region, Howard Wolpe, former member of Congress and famous supporter of Africa, came to Tanzania. Howard and I met with Nyerere to talk about his ongoing work trying to facilitate an end to the civil conflict in Burundi. This, of course, was something considered quite important when you looked at the history of Rwanda and Burundi and the conflicts within those countries, often between Tutsis and Hutus, including the tragic Rwanda genocide several years earlier. It was really a U.S. priority to support these negotiations. Nyerere had visited Kenneth Kaunda a month earlier, after Zambian authorities had imprisoned the former president for alleged coup plotting. I remember Nyerere telling Howard and me rather loudly how, when he met Kaunda in the prison, he said, "Ken, what are you doing here?" Those leaders of the Front-Line States against apartheid stuck together.

Later I'll talk about giving Nyerere a tour of the bombed-out embassy grounds, days after the August 7, 1998, bombing.

He was father of the nation and affectionately called Mwalimu—the Swahili word for teacher, his first profession. Many in the West thought him to be idealistic and principled but naively misguided. But during his tenure literacy rose dramatically through huge investments in education. And the one thing, I have to say, that I heard many times in Tanzania were compliments for his work in uniting the country—although I would argue Zanzibar was the exception—by uniting people on the mainland who came from some

120 different ethnic groups, tribes. Many consider the sense of national identity to be his most enduring achievement.

I remember hosting a dinner at our residence in Dar with very senior officials and judges, and in the conversation they were surprised to learn the tribes that each of them was from. My guess is that this lack of tribal identity would never occur in, say, neighboring Kenya, where fewer than half a dozen ethnic groups are often rivals and constitute a large portion of the population.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the ways he dismantled tribalism and united the country was through the national language of Kiswahili, and the Swahili language was really used by everyone in Tanzania. The problem is, and this is still the case today, it can hold them back in the international and global marketplace because many Tanzanians aren't quite as fluent in English as is sometimes needed for international commerce these days. I'm not talking about everybody, but there was a debate going on when I was there over when they should start teaching English in elementary school. Teaching was basically conducted in Swahili in public primary schools, and there was, as I recall, a debate about whether fifth grade was too soon to start teaching classes in English. And that's a drawback if you really want to work beyond the Swahili-speaking countries. Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya are the three main ones. So, you can argue that a key factor that Nyerere had used to unite Tanzanians back in the 1960s and '70s, one national language superseding all those tribal languages, hurts them in some respects today.

One note about Nyerere. I was invited to attend a diplomatic reception in April 1998 at the apostolic nuncio's residence and was right behind Nyerere in the line to sign the guestbook at the entrance. He signed with a flourish and an exceptionally large signature. He led a modest lifestyle and was considered humble and unpretentious, and I don't want to read too much into this, but the grandiose signature made me think he was not without ego.

Q. So what was the situation in Tanzania when you got there, in the post-Nyerere era?

LANGE: I have to say that Tanzania faced daunting challenges: Poor infrastructure, corruption, political stalemate in Zanzibar, a high disease burden, et cetera, et cetera. It was once the standard-bearer of African socialism but was going through an overdue transformation. It had to overcome the legacy of the failed policies of the early post-independence years—nationalizations that had frightened off investors, badly planned regrouping of peasant families into villages which reduced agricultural output, State projects that sapped the budget.

We at the embassy were working with the Tanzanian government to strengthen democratic institutions and anti-corruption efforts, spur economic growth through policy reform and improved natural resource management, improve health and education, promote regional stability, and inform public opinion. But I thought that some Tanzanians harbored a fair amount of suspicion of the U.S. government for historical reasons.

As I mentioned, Tanganyika united with Zanzibar to form the United Republic of Tanzania. But decades later, it was just kind of amazing to be talking to government officials in Dar about their electoral processes and democratic governance, and they would say they abided by human rights and a free press and democratic elections. Meanwhile, things were going very badly in the Zanzibar islands because the populace was split between the Civic United Front, which was the opposition party that dominated the island of Pemba, and the CCM [Chama Cha Mapinduzi], which controlled the island of Unguja and also controlled the national government in Dar es Salaam. And the way the government officials in Dar would talk was as if Zanzibar—which was semiautonomous and required mainlanders to show identification when they traveled there—wasn't even part of Tanzania, and they couldn't be blamed for what went on there. Yes, it was true that the devolved government of Zanzibar had autonomy for non-union matters. But at the top there was one president leading Tanzania.

We had an outstanding political-economic counselor, Christopher McMullen, who later became the U.S. ambassador to Angola and had a distinguished career. He would visit Zanzibar, as I did upon arrival at post, to try to figure out ways to encourage a peaceful resolution of some of the disputes that were going on there, to keep things from exploding. On Zanzibar, I attended meetings with the head of the political opposition and with the Commonwealth's envoy mediating the impasse there. Our role was to press the case for looking forward to the next elections in 2000 rather than looking backward at the 1995 election of Zanzibar President Salmin Amour, which was flawed and still controversial several years later. Just about all international donors had suspended their direct assistance to Zanzibar in response to the authorities' human rights abuses. Now, it was really in everyone's interest to look forward, in a spirit of compromise and political dialogue, we thought.

Q: What other areas did you focus on in the embassy's bilateral work?

LANGE: I developed a good relationship with Foreign Minister Kikwete and had numerous small meetings with him. I also paid courtesy calls on the vice president, the speaker of the assembly, and numerous others.

In February of '98, we hosted a very successful two-day international conference promoting the rule of law and an independent judiciary. This was back in the days of the U.S. Information Agency, and USIA sponsored it. We even had a taped message of greetings from U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. I hosted a reception at my residence for five chief justices from African countries, as well as the president of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and other judicial officials from ten African countries. President Mkapa came and expressed his gratitude in a subsequent meeting with the American judges and mediators who were there.

I developed a good relationship with Tanzanian Chief Justice Francis Nyalali. We were doing a lot to promote independence of the judiciary and the efficient administration of justice by providing equipment, training, and materials. I once presented him a U.S. government gift of transcription machines, and when I gave him the tape recorders in front of local TV cameras, I highlighted the importance of improving the efficiency of the

judicial system. His response underscored the importance of having an accurate court record to help stamp out corruption on the part of judges, which is kind of candid on his part, wouldn't you say?

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: Thanks for the tape recorders, now we can try to eliminate corrupt judges from having—

Q: You couldn't mention that, of course.

LANGE: No, no, exactly. (Laughs) But he had a good reputation, and we wanted to support his efforts. That's one of the kinds of things that you really feel good about when you're representing the United States abroad in a young country such as Tanzania, which was then less than, well, forty years old, and we could play a part in supporting the development of its institutions.

And we were dealing with a lot of other bilateral concerns. Tanzania, which at that time I thought was one of the poorest countries in the world, at one point suffered from really terrible floods. This was January and February of '98. I took the initiative to urge USAID to prepare plans for a disaster declaration, which would result in extra funds coming. And I remember when I flew with over a dozen donor government ambassadors and Tanzania government officials on a two-hour nonstop helicopter ride to view the extensive damage to the central railway line caused by the flooding. It was just an incredible sight, because we were in a government helicopter—I think it was provided and operated by the South African military—and, even though the rains had stopped by then, we were flying over railway lines that were totally flooded, with water pouring down the river and maybe a meter or two of water flowing over the railway next to it. The Swedish ambassador called the sight shocking.

The next day we all met with President Mkapa at the State House to hear his plea for assistance. It was like, okay, you got your free helicopter ride, now here's the bill. The government looked to the donor government ambassadors, including me, chargé d'affaires, to provide funding toward the estimated \$45 million needed for road and rail repair, which Mkapa described as colossal damage. I sent a cable to Washington with details of the funding request. In the end, something like \$1 million of emergency relief came from OFDA [USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance], and USAID reprogrammed a similar amount from its bilateral program to help on emergency road repair. It was a quite critical period because it could have been really devastating for the economy. After the helicopter ride, I had thought it would take forever to repair the damage, but it turned out, once things dried out and assistance arrived, they were able to recover much more quickly than I anticipated.

We did our best to promote American business interests, of course, but there weren't all that many opportunities. There was one American security company that was not granted a license to operate in the country on what seemed to be dubious grounds. They had not shown that there were no local companies that could provide the same security service. I

called on the inspector general of police to press the case for the American company to get a fair shake, but it was a difficult sell.

And our USIS [United States Information Service] office was very active, with many exchange programs—Fulbright, International Visitors, et cetera. There was a time when the Africa bureau asked posts to promote the new Steven Spielberg film *Amistad* about a nineteenth-century revolt by slaves and the subsequent international legal battle. I was actually quite proud of what we were able to do for the Tanzanian premier screening of the film, held at the end of March. It was really an outstanding cultural event, which I co-hosted with the minister of education and culture in a theater that, by the way, was not air-conditioned in the tropical climate of Dar es Salaam. Top-level people from government, diplomatic, cultural, and education communities, and all of the embassy Foreign Service Nationals, were invited. It really demonstrated the historical connection between the United States and Africa at the same time that President Clinton was visiting Africa. Immediately after the movie, Alejandra and I hosted a reception for 150 people at our residence. As a public diplomacy event, the movie showing allowed me to give a short speech before the film emphasizing the closeness between the United States and Tanzania, including the recent meeting between the two presidents, Clinton and Mkapa, that had occurred at the summit in Entebbe, Uganda.

As I mentioned when we discussed my tour in Lomé, I'm a huge supporter of the Ambassador's Self-Help Program, a grass-roots assistance program that responded to local requests for small, community-based development projects using funds appropriated to USAID. I still remember going partway up Mount Kilimanjaro to visit a facility that was basically what we would call a leper colony, people suffering from leprosy. It was quite sad to see that.

Q: Oh, yes.

LANGE: There were said to be over a hundred leprosy victims in Arusha, not far away, who could not obtain employment because of their disability and who lived under trees on the riverbank by begging and scavenging. The local Rotary Club had decided to establish what was called the Upendo home—that means “cared for with love”—for leprosy victims as a permanent home in the foothills of the mountain where these social outcasts could live among themselves and become self-reliant. I visited it with a woman from Rotary who helped manage the home.

The embassy had given them a maize milling machine through the Self-Help Program. And so, farmers from the area would bring corn in to be milled. When we arrived, my driver refused to get out of the car. He was very concerned about being among lepers. I'm no expert on this, but I understand one cannot get leprosy from casual contact such as shaking hands, and it's curable through antibiotics—though that doesn't reverse pre-existing damage. I just figured, I'm the chargé d'affaires, I need to step up and shake hands with the people I meet, though some chose not to shake hands with me. It was really sad to see how they were ostracized, but at the same time, they had this successful milling operation to try to get some income and live a better life. And it really made me

feel good about what the United States can do to help the world's poorest, even if it's with only a small amount of money.

There were nearly one hundred Peace Corps volunteers in-country serving as secondary school teachers and working in natural resource management. Although the Peace Corps strives to be apolitical—and, it seems to me, to keep a certain distance from U.S. government policies—I presided over one of their swearing-in ceremonies at our residence. It was quite a happy gathering as almost fifty PCVs were excited to enter their two years of service.

There was a large presence of refugees from the Great Lakes region in western Tanzania. Because I'd spent four years working on refugee issues in Geneva, this was right up my alley. Tanzania had abided by the UN and OAU refugee conventions by allowing in refugees from Burundi and other countries, and it provided land for their camps. President Mkapa appealed for international assistance, since there were limits as to how much support Tanzania could provide. I remember talking to the permanent secretary at the foreign ministry, who basically told me, We don't have responsibility for these refugees, that's your problem, the international community. So, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Program were in charge of the camps—and they were running low on food and dealing with inadequate infrastructure. The two UN agencies organized a special trip in March with donor government ambassadors, and I went along as the chargé, via a UN plane for a two-day visit to the camps in the Kigoma region. All of us on the trip ended up committing to working with our capitals to provide additional assistance.

I also traveled to the regional center of Arusha several times.

Q: Did the U.S. government work with the regional institutions based in Arusha? Isn't the East African Community based there?

LANGE: Yes. There were several international and regional organizations based in Arusha, including the EAC [East African Community]. During my time in Tanzania, it was called the East African Co-operation with three member states: Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. A new treaty entered into force in the year 2000, after I had left post, reverting to the old name East African Community, and since then it has expanded to include, as of today, Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan. [Addendum: The Democratic Republic of the Congo was admitted into the EAC in 2022 and Somalia in 2023.]

I met with the EAC executive secretary in his office in Arusha, and I had excellent and longstanding working relationships with the U.S. ambassadors in the other two EAC countries, Ambassador Prudence Bushnell in Kenya and Ambassador Nancy Powell in Uganda. We worked to generate regionwide interest in a ministerial-level EAC delegation that visited Washington and other donor capitals in February. At the embassy we were really following what the EAC was doing, since it was quite relevant to what was going on in East Africa. Today, it's clear that the EAC has become more and more active and robust as time has gone on.

Back to your question on working with organizations in Arusha, the city also was home to headquarters of other regional institutions, including, back then, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda [ICTR]. The UN Security Council had established the court in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide due to the violations of international humanitarian law. The work of ICTR was really quite important for the U.S. interest in the rule of law. I got to know the American lawyer who served as a war crimes prosecutor and was lead trial attorney in the successful prosecution of the first-ever case of genocide under the 1948 convention. The IO bureau [Bureau of International Organization Affairs] and the Office of the Legal Adviser, rather than the AF bureau, were primarily interested in the work of the ICTR because it was a UN entity dealing with international law. The embassy didn't have a lot of direct dealings with the ICTR, but we tried to monitor developments there.

Q: You mentioned President Clinton's trip to Africa in March 1998. Were you involved in that in any way?

LANGE: Yes. I went to Entebbe for the summit.

In advance of that historic trip, there was a thought in Washington that there would be a new initiative to fight corruption that would possibly be announced during the president's visit. And it was done in a very quick manner. The idea was to aid African countries that were singled out as potential supporters, including Tanzania. So, I was instructed to get President Mkapa's approval of this at very short notice, and I ended up raising it in a meeting with him that was actually set up to talk with Howard Wolpe, special envoy for the Great Lakes. Howard and I met with Mkapa on a Saturday morning, and I laid the groundwork and delivered the demarche asking for support for the possible anti-corruption convention. He agreed on the spot to be cited by President Clinton as one of the supporters of the U.S. initiative. It turned out that not many other countries were immediately onboard for it, and I don't believe it was ever pursued further by Washington because they couldn't get enough support. But I was pleased that I was able to get the support from Mkapa right away.

Then, in March and April, President Clinton, along with the first lady, three cabinet secretaries, business leaders, members of Congress, the media, and many others, visited six countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was a really historic and exciting trip for those of us engaged in Africa. I believe it was the longest and most extensive trip ever by a U.S. president to Africa up to that point. The whole goal was to help build U.S.-Africa partnership—really, to reflect a sea change in the U.S. relationship with the continent. The president praised what he called the beginning of a new Africa renaissance, though subsequent unrest and terrorism on the continent called that into doubt. And you probably remember how Clinton, on a day trip from Kampala to Kigali and back, apologized for the failure of the international community to intervene in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Q. Yes, that was a historic moment in U.S.-Africa relations. What was your role in Entebbe?

LANGE: The Summit for Peace and Prosperity took place there on March 25 with the leaders of Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I heard that Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki's refusal to attend was a source of frustration in Washington.

As the chargé in Tanzania, I was asked to be there to greet President Mkapa when he arrived and attend U.S.-EAC meetings that took place concurrently. Before the meetings commenced, Reverend Jesse Jackson, who was then special envoy for democracy and human rights in Africa, spoke to the assembled American staff about the slave trade and connections between the United States and Africa, "from Selma to Entebbe," as he put it. I was the notetaker at a meeting involving the U.S. cabinet secretaries of Commerce, Transportation, and Labor and their EAC counterparts.

And I attended the concluding press conference and ceremony where the leaders signed a rather lofty communiqué describing the gathering as a new beginning launching a process that was supposed to define and build a U.S.-Africa partnership for the next century. In his closing speech, President Museveni called Assistant Secretary of State Susan Rice his "senior daughter," since he had just learned that Susan was the same age as his oldest daughter.

There was one kerfuffle on the U.S. side. Regional sanctions on Burundi had been a controversial issue at the summit. At that final press conference, [National Security Advisor] Sandy Berger passed a note to President Clinton saying we supported sanctions, and Clinton then announced strong support for the regional leaders' decision on sanctions. I recall how Howard Wolpe appeared dumbstruck and Susan Rice tried to get the president's attention, to no avail. The Tanzanian permanent secretary told me afterward that the Tanzanians joked that Dr. Wolpe may not be happy, but they appreciated the president's comment even though they regarded it as nothing more than a political statement.

Right after the summit ended, I heard President Clinton tell one of the African ministers how, quote, "It changes everything" seeing things first-hand. From the perspective of an Africanist, I thought the summit was quite positive, and I think everybody on the U.S. side was very pleased by it all. A Ugandan motor pool driver told me the visit was a miracle that would bring the U.S. and Uganda much closer together. Personally, I felt privileged to have been able to attend some of the sessions, and I even shook hands with President Clinton when we both were craft shopping in the Kampala hotel that served as U.S. headquarters. Though I have to say that throughout the visit I thought the president looked tired, jet-lagged, and, for understandable reasons, under stress.

One anecdote. There was a short presentation at the Sheraton Hotel in Kampala where President Clinton honored a USAID-funded nonprofit group called the Heifer Project. I was told that they had wanted to do the presentation at the project's farm, but it turned out that one of the heifers was, for some reason, named Monica. Since news of the relationship between Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky had broken just a couple of months earlier, the White House advance team decided that would not have played well

in the U.S. press. The group offered to change the cow's name, but news of that would have made for an even worse story. (Laughs)

Q: What were your impressions of your staff when you arrived in Dar es Salaam?

LANGE: It was an active group, about fifty Americans total, including six marine guards. Dar es Salaam was not an easy posting, being in the tropics with all the medical issues that can arise. But at the same time, it was a very interesting and beautiful country. The port city of Dar es Salaam is a thriving metropolis. It's got the Serengeti National Park and other game parks. It's got Mount Kilimanjaro and the regional center of Arusha. And the Zanzibar islands have their own culture, which Alejandra and I found exotic. We had a visit by the regional psychiatrist during my time as chargé, and he took quite a complete survey of post morale and conditions. He concluded that morale was good, interoffice relations and teamwork were good, and the staff felt that the absence of an ambassador had not affected the functioning of the post significantly.

I decided not to appoint an acting deputy chief of mission. If I had to do it over again and knew that I was going to be chargé d'affaires for a long time, I think I would designate an acting DCM for purposes of efficiently running the embassy. But back then, I thought the new ambassador would be confirmed and come to post within a few months. And I did not move into the ambassador's office—I didn't want to have to go through the hassle of changing offices.

Our general services officer had brought his Corvette, a 1960s red and white Corvette, to Dar es Salaam. Now, I would never recommend doing that under any circumstances, just because it's so valuable and you never know what will happen in shipping and in driving on roads that back then were in terrible shape. The only time he would drive the Corvette was on a Sunday morning, when there wasn't much traffic and he could drive slowly to avoid all the potholes. I was so taken by this vehicle, representing American technology and culture and cachet, that when we organized the big July 4 reception at my residence for leaders in the Tanzanian and international community, we parked it next to the entrance door so everybody would see it walking in. It was quite a hit for the guests.

That said, things didn't always work well. In my residence, when the electricity went out, as happened regularly, we got accustomed to waiting ten seconds till the generator kicked in and the lights went back on. We once noticed that the water in our house had a bad odor that kept getting worse over several days. Finally, GSO staff found that the cover of the water tank on the roof had come ajar, and a rat had crawled in and drowned—floating in the tank that provided water for our showers.

Q. Oh. Was this a difficult posting for your family?

LANGE: Actually, if you don't include the terrible, terrible day of August 7, 1998, and the immediate aftermath, we really enjoyed our life there. We visited Stone Town in Zanzibar, went to the Ngorongoro Crater along with Ale's brother Khalil, and saw several other game parks. Alejandra developed a circle of friends. And I remember the time when Julia came back from a three-day school field trip to a game park and complained that

their bus tour was delayed for 45 minutes when a herd of elephants blocked the road and wouldn't move. (Laughs)

Q: How long were you the chargé?

LANGE: Much longer than I anticipated, over eight months. I had met with Charles Stith, who was early in the pipeline to become the next ambassador, before I left Washington. Charles was a political appointee, a United Methodist minister who was founder of the Organization for a New Equality focusing on expanding economic opportunities for minorities and women. For just about my entire period as chargé, I kept telling the staff, Well, we expect the ambassador to arrive here in two or three or four months, because I just figured his confirmation process would proceed with dispatch. It turned out the president finally announced his intent to nominate Charles in March, and he was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in June. By that time, he decided to keep on the schedule that he'd already set for his summer plans, so he was sworn in on September 8 and arrived in Dar es Salaam around the twelfth of September. Of course, that was five weeks after the August 7 bombing.

Although the traditional role of a deputy chief of mission is to focus on internal embassy management while the ambassador serves as the external face of the embassy, as chargé I needed to be active outside of the embassy. We were moving forward and advancing U.S. interests, yet we were in a bit of a holding pattern because the ambassador had not yet arrived.

Q: Having been in both roles for extended periods, how do you compare being a DCM to being chargé d'affaires?

LANGE: I've done a lot of thinking about that situation and even given speeches on it in terms of the role of a deputy chief of mission. When you're a DCM—and I'm not talking about a permanent DCM who is the principal officer, where we just don't post an ambassador, such as used to be the case at the U.S. interests section in Havana—but when you're a deputy chief of mission serving as chargé d'affaires ad interim and a new ambassador's coming at some point in the future, you're in charge. There's no question about it. But if you spoke to the staff and said, Here's my three-year strategic plan for U.S.-Tanzanian relations, they'd laugh you out of the room because that's not your role. You're waiting for the ambassador who's going to come with the three-year strategic plan, having worked it out with Washington, of course. So you're a caretaker in some ways, while at the same time you're fully in charge. It can be a difficult role to play, as you make what you intend to be final decisions even though a few people, inside and outside of the embassy, may try to wait you out in hopes the new ambassador will make a different decision. And given the time it can take for a nominee to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate, which seems to get longer and longer, many DCMs will serve as chargés d'affaires for lengthy periods.

Q: During this period did you think embassy security was much of a concern?

LANGE: Throughout my time as chargé, we were cognizant of security, I have to say, and one of the reasons that we were, maybe even more than normal, was because there were riots in Dar es Salaam. In February 1998, riots broke out outside the Mwembechai mosque in Dar. Police attempted to disperse a crowd of Muslims protesting the arrest of a popular leader and opened fire on the protesters, killing at least three of them. Government-Muslim tensions, which had both political and religious roots, were accompanied by weekly protests for months, as best I can recall. We knew that they weren't directed at us, but there was a lot of anger, and we were worried that someday the protestors could be walking past our embassy and spontaneously turn to try to do something against Americans. And we knew that the State Department had ordered the departure of certain American staff in Tanzania, as in several other countries, during the first couple of months of the Gulf War in 1991 due to security concerns.

There was an emergency drill in June when those of us whose offices were on the upper floors of the embassy donned emergency descent devices. The building was about three stories tall, and the DCM office, the ambassador's office, and some others were on the third floor. Since I was in charge, I really had to show staff the importance that I placed on emergency preparedness, and so for the exercise I ended up going up to the roof to get into a kind of a vest that was connected to a cable that was connected to a hoist or beam that was leaning out over the side of the building. I got into this and then slowly went down all the way to the ground. That was a little bit scary for those of us participating, because we had to just step off the edge of the three-story building and trust that the cable would slowly bring us down. Of course, it did.

And then, there was the time when I left my office for home at the end of the workday and saw the marines shredding old newsletters as a practice drill for the possibility they would have to do mass shredding in an emergency. It turned out this was only days before the bomb went off and they actually were shredding classified materials.

Regarding our awareness of possible security threats, one of the things I'm really quite proud of, Stu, is the chief of mission statement that I wrote for the annual Mission Performance Plan [MPP]. I have in front of me what I wrote in the plan dated June 4, 1998, as part of the section on national security, quote, "Although there have been no terrorist incidents in the recent past, circumstances call for vigilance; elements of political Islam exist among the substantial Muslim population and the GOT (meaning government of Tanzania) has accused them of fomenting recent riots in Dar es Salaam; Tanzania maintains relations with, and hosts embassies of, most of the state sponsors of terrorism; and porous border crossings, corrupt officials, and a poor internal security infrastructure would allow hostile groups to operate relatively freely should they choose to do so." So, we at the embassy were very cognizant of potential threats.

What we didn't know was that such a threat was about to happen, about to come to fruition on August 7. It was the kind of thing where we prepared as best we could, but the embassy was clearly not up to what was called Inman security standards, based on a 1985 report on overseas security named for the panel chairman, retired Admiral Bobby Ray Inman. We had about a thirty-foot setback instead of a hundred-foot setback between the perimeter wall and the embassy building. And Laibon Road, the one-way street next to

the embassy, was a busy side road that went into a main boulevard, Ali Hassan Mwinyi Road.

While recognizing the security vulnerabilities, we all knew that the Department of State was very underfunded and had been ever since it hadn't dramatically increased its budget while opening up numerous new embassies in the former Soviet Union. The money just wasn't there. But we were very aware of security concerns and the potential threats, as I wrote in the MPP in what I would call a prescient chief of mission statement.

In the infinite wisdom of the State Department, and Stu you may get a kick out of this, I'd been chargé d'affaires from days after my arrival at the end of December of 1997 but then, in July, after six months of being the acting ambassador, the Department of State insisted I return to FSI to learn how to be number two. In other words, to take the deputy chief of mission course, which was only offered during the summer. As I explained earlier, I was assigned to be deputy chief of mission because of a sudden vacancy in the fall of 1997. So, I was unable to take the DCM course before going to post and ended up going back to Washington for that training and consultations and a meeting with Ambassador-Designate Stith.

Here's the other irony. While I was taking the DCM course, I had dental and medical appointments for parts of two days. I still got credit for taking the course, but I missed two sessions: One on crisis management and one on media training. And it turned out that two weeks after I took the course, I was dealing with one of the worst crises that any embassy will ever have, being blown up by terrorists, and I was holding press conferences in my living room. On-the-job training in crisis management and dealing with the media.

I got back to Dar es Salaam on August 2 and went back to my normal duties as the chargé d'affaires. And that got me to the point of going to work on Friday morning, August 7, 1998, a fateful day. That was the low point of my Foreign Service career—eleven people died on my watch—but I'm proud of how the staff responded to the tragedy. Let's start talking about that next time.

Q: Today is the twelfth of October—Columbus Day, actually—2018 with John Lange. And I'll turn it over to you to talk about the bombing of the embassy in Dar es Salaam.

LANGE: Thanks, Stu.

Today we're going to talk about August 7, 1998. I would argue, and I'd be happy to get your thoughts on this, that was the most tragic day in the history of the Foreign Service. Two United States embassies bombed simultaneously. Two hundred and twenty-four people were killed, including a dozen Americans.

Q: Yes, tragic.

LANGE: And it really was the wake-up call to the Foreign Service about the threat of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, three years before all of America realized the threat on September 11, 2001.

I'd just gotten back to Dar on Sunday, the second of August, and things appeared normal. We had our usual security practices in place with a newly arrived RSO, regional security officer John DiCarlo, reviewing all our security procedures.

On the morning of August 7, I went to work on my usual route. I came out of the DCM residence to see the Indian Ocean on the short drive to work. A beautiful sight. Another beautiful day in Dar es Salaam. And at 10:00 a.m., I had a meeting in the DCM office with the political-economic section, seven Americans and FSNs. At the very start of the meeting, we heard the normal Friday 10:00 a.m. drill that the marines would run, just to test our alarm systems over the loudspeakers. There were a fire signal and a bomb threat signal and a terrorist attack signal, just part of our normal security procedures. I remember we were talking about the usual issues affecting U.S. relations with Tanzania, and one of the American staff members described how things were going in Uganda, where she had just visited. I was sitting on a sofa with my back to the outside wall, with the other staff sitting to my side and in front of me.

All of a sudden, at what we estimate to be 10:39 in the morning, I heard a low rumbling sound for about a second or two, and then the glass blew in over my head and landed on the people in front of me. It was a massive explosion.

One of the security advantages of that antiquated embassy was that it had been built by the Israelis as their embassy in 1960. It became our embassy in 1980. And none of us liked it as a place to work. There were narrow staircases, big, thick concrete walls, windows high above the floor, et cetera. The FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] lead for the bombing investigation told me it was built like a bunker.

And all of that ended up saving lots and lots of lives. So, rather than hit me in the back of the head when the window blew in, the glass from the high window flew in over me. The people in front of me were injured—there was blood, and they were hurt—but they were not badly injured because the glass came out in sheets rather than in shards. Like other U.S. embassies, our windows had a coating of shatter-resistant window film, and that really prevented a lot of deaths and serious injuries. At the same time, it's far from perfect: The Accountability Review Board for Nairobi later determined that every person at the embassy standing close to a window facing the bomb blast was killed. I could have been one of those if I had been standing up when the bomb went off.

Q. So were you sitting in the DCM office and not the ambassador's office at the time of the explosion?

LANGE: Yes. Sometimes we make decisions that turn out to be fateful, and my decision not to have an acting DCM and to stay in the DCM office turned out to be very fortunate for me and the other meeting attendees.

The ambassador's office was on the side of the embassy where the bomb went off and was badly damaged. The regional security officer told me if I'd been sitting at the ambassador's desk when the bomb went off, I would have been killed. I don't know if I'd have been killed, but I certainly would have been injured along with others in the room. The DCM office was around the corner from where the bomb went off.



*U.S. ambassador's desk, where John could have been sitting
at time of bombing on August 7, 1998*

I have to say, one of the things that I find about the Foreign Service is that it's an exciting profession because things can change in an instant. You can have a coup d'état, you can have an earthquake, you can have so many things that happen that affect your work, and suddenly you have to change your priorities. Never did I think I was going to go through a bombing like this. And I guess I have to say, for the first few seconds I was, like, trying to understand, wait a minute, we're talking about this woman's trip to Uganda and what is happening?

My initial reaction was to stand up and look out the window, a stupid thing to do because you never know if there's going to be another bomb or gunshots. And in fact, in Nairobi, a stun grenade went off seconds before the actual bomb, and people all around downtown Nairobi went to the windows to look at what was happening. When the real bomb went off, many ended up being hurt, even blinded, by window glass. Fortunately for us, that was not the case in Dar es Salaam. We didn't have such a warning that could have resulted in more casualties. Chris McMullen, to his credit, urged us all to stay down.

As I later testified in one of the trials in New York against the perpetrators, I was in charge, and I had to find out what the hell happened.

It turned out that eleven people, plus the terrorist, were killed and over eighty-five were injured.

I said in an earlier interview that I was pleased we had submitted our Mission Performance Plan describing how we were cognizant of the threats we faced. But we never envisioned a massive bombing. Our security procedures were in place, but there was nothing we could do about the inadequate setback between the street and the building—other than move to a new secure embassy or convince the Tanzanians to close Laibon Road, which I was told had occurred during the 1991 Gulf War when the staff had been reduced to essential personnel. Now, why didn't we ask the government back then to keep the street closed? Well, the Department foolishly determined that we were a low-threat post.

For us, the bombing was totally unexpected. We had no advance warning whatsoever. And in fact, you could look at a memo that State's inspector general sent to the deputy secretary in March 1997 on recent inspections of African posts to see an obliviousness to the threats that existed on the continent. I still have a copy of it. As State, USAID, and USIA were cutting back on their presence in Africa, the inspector general wrote that U.S. interests in most AF countries—with the exception of humanitarian crises—were limited. The lone paragraph on security focused entirely on the serious problem of crime. No mention of terrorism.

From my perspective, there is no such thing as a low-threat post, as Dar es Salaam supposedly was before the bomb went off. All overseas missions need to be housed in secure facilities.

Pardon me, but I'm going to go into a lot of detail describing what followed. I remember the events minute-by-minute, imprinted on my mind. And I'll name a lot of people, though I won't be able to name everyone—even though we had a multitude of heroes as we responded to the bombing.

Q: Go ahead.

LANGE: So I bent down and walked out of my office, past the desk of the office management specialist who, if I recall correctly, was hiding under her desk. I went down one flight of stairs to the second floor and was called over by the RSO to help out Lizzie Slater, who had arrived at post two days earlier to begin a new phase of her career in information management. Her husband and son were scheduled to arrive shortly in Nairobi. They were a tandem couple but had not been able to get assignments together and instead got postings in neighboring countries. One of the sacrifices of Foreign Service life. Lizzie was in the office of Cynthia Kimble, our CLO.

Q: CLO being?

LANGE: The community liaison office coordinator, who supports employees and family members and organizes activities to build community spirit and enhance morale at post.

The CLO office was located on the side of the embassy closest to Laibon Road, where the bomb exploded and blew in the walls and concrete. Cynthia had a very bad eye injury and escaped from the office. Our political secretary accompanied her to the hospital and stayed with her until she was medically evacuated to London that evening.

Lizzie was sitting in a chair buried in concrete chest-high, unable to move. So I went over there, and Jon Edensword, a retired consular officer on TDY [temporary duty], the RSO, and I removed the rubble. She had an injury that later—several weeks later—required medical evacuation, but she initially actually kept working, a real trouper.

Well, at that point I knew I had to let Washington know. This was not in the days of text messaging and Facebook and other social media where it would have already been informed, so I had to call Washington. I went over to Marine Post One, which was the marine security guard post, the most secure room in the entire embassy, and it had shifted about three inches. But amazingly, the phones were still working. And I remember calling State's Operations Center, this was about ten minutes after the bomb went off, introducing myself, and saying, We've just had a huge explosion here at the U.S. embassy in Dar es Salaam. I don't know the nature of it. We'll get back to you. But I just wanted to make sure you're aware.

It turned out that the current editor of the *Foreign Service Journal*, Shawn Dorman, was in the Ops Center at that time in training as a watch officer. She produced a wonderful, poignant issue in July-August of 2018 with remembrances from those who went through the bombings in both Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, and she wrote how the watch received my call and moments later received a call from the U.S. embassy in Nairobi. At that point, you can just imagine, you're sitting in the State Department around 3:40 in the morning, 3:50 in the morning, and you get calls from Dar es Salaam and Nairobi saying the embassies have been bombed. Just shocking. I get emotional thinking about it. And of course, Washington quickly mustered its forces. Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Susan Rice went to the Ops Center very early in the morning, the president was alerted, Secretary of State Albright, in Rome at the time, was alerted, et cetera.

After that call, I made my way out of the building. The stairwell that was next to the CLO office was almost impassable, with chunks of concrete on the stairs, but you could tell people had used it to escape because there were blood-stained hand marks on the wall from people walking down over the rubble.

The two worst damaged rooms in the building were the CLO office and the administrative officer's office.

Q. Was the administrative officer injured?

LANGE: Admin officer Harlow Carpenter, who was known as Chips, was supposed to have a meeting in his office at that time, and if you looked at the rubble from the concrete walls blown into the building, he could have been killed or badly injured. But "Chips," as he is known, decided at the last minute to hold the meeting in the other person's office instead, so he was not injured in the blast.

Across the street from the embassy was the residence of consular Calvin Konner. Normally, on a Friday morning, and this was Friday morning, there was a playgroup of kids playing in the front yard. Thankfully, he and his family were on R&R at the time, out of the country, so there was no playgroup that day. That saved the lives of numerous children, since the explosion badly damaged the home. Here's how Calvin's house was really badly damaged, and—

Q: You're showing me pictures from State magazine.

LANGE: Yes, the October 1998 issue, which includes photos showing the devastation of the consular officer's residence across the street from the embassy. Because the bomb went off on the street between the embassy and the consular officer's residence.

I left the building through a back staircase. As I came out of the embassy, I remember seeing one of the local employees, his body and clothing charred and blackened, gasping for life, in the last throes of life. I had no medical training whatsoever and knew I couldn't help him. And in fact, there were body parts on the street and elsewhere. It was just really terrible to witness.

Q: This might be, as they say, where the bomb was set off.

LANGE: Yes, near where the explosion occurred. For several minutes after the bombing, fires raged outside and tires and gas tanks exploded in vehicles parked along the street and on the embassy compound, due to the intense heat. Hearing those explosions every five or ten seconds was quite scary, since we thought it could be gunfire. The photographs that were taken of the vehicles along that way are just devastating. They're all just blackened shells because it was just so hot. A total of twenty-two vehicles were damaged, most of them destroyed.

Those marines who were not on duty quickly came from their house, half a block from the embassy, to secure the outer perimeter even though much of the outside wall of the embassy facing the bomb site had been blown away. Their immediate fear was that underground fuel storage tanks would explode. After they secured the compound, they recovered two injured employees and placed them on stretchers, but both died later.

I still remember when RSO DiCarlo came up to me to say, quote, "Sir, the marines have secured the building." That was truly reassuring, and I later quoted that line when giving speeches at annual Marine Balls celebrating the birthday of the U.S. Marine Corps. They have my deepest respect.

I walked around the back of the embassy to get to the front of the building facing Ali Hassan Mwinyi Road. We had a very tall perimeter wall along the boulevard. By then, our staff had evacuated via that route by placing two ladders so people could go up one side of the wall and down the other side. And when I got to the wall the French ambassador, whose embassy was across the road, was on the other side of the wall and

we shook hands through the grate. His building was damaged, but they were still able to operate, and he offered his assistance.

The blast also affected other buildings within several blocks. One of them was the U.S. ambassador's residence, a thousand yards away, which suffered roof damage and collapsed ceilings. We had just spent a lot of effort getting it all ready for the new ambassador's arrival, and then it took a couple of months to get it into livable shape again.

The Algerian embassy and the Nigerian High Commission, which was next to the embassy but on the other side from where the bomb went off, also were badly damaged. Two Nigerian diplomats and four of their Tanzanian staff were injured. The Russian ambassador's residence was located half a block from the embassy. His home had a lot of glass windows that were broken, and the ambassador told me his granddaughter had been injured.

Q: Did medical help arrive quickly?

LANGE: Our medical unit was not located on the embassy compound. Neither was the USAID office nor the Peace Corps office. But our local physician, Dr. Soter DaSilva, who was one of the heroes here, and our other medical staff quickly arrived and used the ladders to climb over the perimeter wall to get onto the compound and care for the injured. Tanzanian ambulances and fire engines also arrived, in record time.

A TPDF [Tanzania Peoples Defence Forces] general came to the embassy about twenty minutes after the bomb went off. I knew him and we spoke briefly. Within thirty minutes or so, Foreign Minister Kikwete came to express condolences and full cooperation, including increased security at all of our facilities.

At one point the RSO said to me, John, our primary evacuation point is the USAID mission director's residence, next to the embassy, which is irreparably damaged, so we can't go there and have to go to our secondary evacuation point, your residence. I said, Okay. The mission director was on R&R at the time, so no one was injured in that building.

Q: How long did you stay at the embassy?

LANGE: My initial actions were in and around the embassy. I was there for probably an hour. Meanwhile, the RSO made sure that staff who were able and willing congregated at my residence.

Alejandra and Julia were at home at the time. Our house was about a mile from the embassy, yet the bomb was so loud they thought maybe a gas tank next to the house had blown up. The house was shaken a bit in the blast, and there were even some paint chips from the ceiling that fell onto the floor in a hallway. They quickly learned that the embassy had been bombed from the local guard at our residence, since the security guards were communicating with each other using the two-way radio system. Ale called

the office management specialist then working for me, who answered the phone while hiding under her desk and assured Ale that I was all right. Alejandra and Julia still tell me how the doorbell rang, they opened the door, and they unexpectedly encountered a large group of embassy staff waiting to enter our house.

After about sixty or ninety minutes, I left the bombed-out embassy to go to my residence. Our ambassador's vehicle was destroyed, as well as most of our motor pool. The Canadian high commissioner to Tanzania came to the embassy and offered me use of his vehicle. So, I got in the Canadian ambassador's car, and I still remember how that driver just stepped on the accelerator as hard as he could and got me out of there as quickly as possible. By then, a lot of people had already congregated at the residence, which became the functioning U.S. embassy in Dar es Salaam for seventy-two hours, from Friday until Monday morning.

I entered by the back door and walked through the kitchen when the phone rang. This was before we started using that phone as a dedicated landline to the Operations Center. And it was the Voice of America calling. They said they wanted to interview me. I had so many things to worry about, deaths, injuries, resurrecting our operations, and I wasn't in a position to talk to the VOA. So I said, Sorry, let's talk later. They said, well, promise you'll call us back. Yeah, okay. Well, I never called them back.

I saw Alejandra and just hugged her, an emotional moment as we both thought, what's going on here? But we had no time to talk about it.

At one point a friend of mine called the Department to inquire about my family's welfare and was told, less than reassuringly, that none of us, quote, "had shown up on any death lists yet." One of the first things we had to do was account for, and take care of, all of our staff. I remember telling our TDY consular officer that we needed to track down all of the Americans, get their contact information for a relative back in the States, and then ask the Operations Center to alert those family members in the United States. Very few of us had cellphones at that point and we didn't have the time or the capability to contact each of our families. He came back to me after talking to the Ops Center and said they didn't want to call all those people. And I said, You tell them that the chargé d'affaires says they have to do this, period. It's not a matter of if. They have to do it.

They ended up making the calls. My mother, who was getting on in years, got a call from the Ops Center about 6:30 in the morning Milwaukee time and was told that her son was all right, even though the embassy in Dar es Salaam had been bombed. You'll know more information later, but we want to assure you he is all right.

Well, if instead there had been no call and my mother had woken up at 7:00 in the morning and turned on the *Today Show*, with the lead item being two U.S. embassies bombed and hundreds killed in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, she could have had a heart attack. And there also was an incorrect press report that I had been cut on the forehead.

Q: I find it incredible that they wouldn't do that. I mean, automatically. Maybe it was just some, I hate to say flunky, but somebody of low ranking at the bottom who just didn't, you know, pass on—

LANGE: I'm sure they were totally inundated at the time, getting calls from all over.

Q: Well, they also had to deal with another embassy where really a lot more were killed.

LANGE: Yes, of course. They had so many things to do, but I'm actually proud that I insisted that the Ops Center make those calls for our American staff.

Q: Oh, you're absolutely right.

LANGE: Later that afternoon, the consular section also tried to contact all consular wardens to counsel American citizens in-country to maintain a low profile and stay alert. There were seventy-seven Peace Corps volunteers in Tanzania, most in remote areas, and Peace Corps staff performed quite a feat by contacting every volunteer by Saturday evening.

On the FSN side, two of our lead FSNs, one working in the administrative section for the admin officer and another one running the personnel section, took the names of all the local staff and tried to track them down to find out their condition. Many of them didn't have home phones, so tracking them down took time.

So, we were trying to track down and take care of all our people. Staff members were injured, and some were hospitalized.

The French embassy's doctor, who I think may have been injured himself, came to our residence to work with Dr. DaSilva and other medical staff to set up an emergency clinic for people who were injured but not so badly that they had to be immediately hospitalized. And so, our spare bedroom on the ground floor of the two-story house became an emergency health clinic. Everyone pitched in. My wife Alejandra helped remove pieces of broken glass from the hair of Laurel McMullen, who was working in the consular section. And she worked with our cook to make sure everybody had plenty to eat and drink.

I called together the members of the country team and said, All right, we'll have an emergency action committee [EAC] meeting to determine next steps. We held the first of many EAC meetings that afternoon in the master bedroom of the DCM residence. Our top priority was to ask the Tanzanian government to follow through immediately on its promise to increase security at key USG facilities.

Q: After your first phone call to the Operations Center, what were your communications with Washington?

LANGE: We set up a makeshift control center and used our only landline phone to set up a connection to the Operations Center. The Department didn't want to lose that

connection because phones in Tanzania were unreliable, so we kept the dedicated line and staffed it twenty-four hours a day for several days, maybe even a week.

That day I got phone calls from the AF bureau—Assistant Secretary Susan Rice, Principal Deputy Johnnie Carson, and Ambassador-Designate Charles Stith—and from Under Secretary of State Tom Pickering and Secretary of State Albright.

And all of our American staff stationed in Dar ended up receiving an incredible outpouring of support from their respective home agencies.

Late on Friday afternoon we got word via the Ops Center that President Clinton wanted to talk to me. He was in the Situation Room in the White House. I believe he had already talked to Ambassador Bushnell in Nairobi. The White House gave me the number to call back. I couldn't use our dedicated phone line because it had to stay connected to the Operations Center, so I borrowed someone's cellphone and called the president of the United States. You can say, John, that's not the secure way of communicating with the president. That didn't matter. You gotta do what you gotta do.

Q: Yes.

LANGE: And when the president wants to talk to you, you don't say, Well, I don't have a landline phone available, talk to you later. And I didn't have time to spend an hour going to the Peace Corps office and back to use one of their landlines. So I had no alternative. Just call.

When I returned the call, I believe a general answered the phone. I introduced myself, he said, Okay, let me hand you over to the president, and President Clinton immediately spoke to me. That's a good phone number to know if you ever need to talk to the president. (Laughs) And the president had a message for me expressing condolences and grief and sympathy. He said he would be calling President Mkapa. But I have to say, I think the main purpose of his call could be boiled down to one thing: preserve the evidence. Cordon off the bomb site and don't let people trample on it. It was really a strong message that he was clearly getting from his counterterrorism people.

Now, to be frank, after I got the president's call, I didn't tell people that it seemed as if he was more worried about preserving the evidence than expressing sympathy. I told everyone how the president expressed his condolences to all of us, that that was the main point of the call.

That afternoon I returned to the embassy, and I remember seeing the rubble all over the street, like maybe half an inch of broken glass and concrete, and all the parked cars scorched black. The investigators later told me the blast radius extended out one and a half kilometers. I tend not to show a lot of emotions, but I really kind of choked up seeing the big, gaping holes in a couple of rooms of the embassy and the black, charred building—just destruction all over.

We had an advantage in Dar es Salaam, unlike in Nairobi, because the Tanzanian government immediately blocked off the side street, Laibon Road, where the bomb exploded. The bomb crater was about ten feet deep, and the worst of the devastation and body parts and destroyed vehicles and bicycles and other damage was on that street. So, we were able to do what the president requested, preserve the evidence. I was happy to hear praise from the FBI lead investigator, a week after the bombing, for the, quote, “excellent, outstanding” preservation of the evidence site. He also praised the cooperation with Tanzania’s Criminal Investigation Department. And, by the way, he said there was no information, nothing, to indicate that any of our employees were involved in the bombing.

We needed to have a lot of additional phone lines installed at my residence to be able to function as our emergency center. Again, this was in the days before cellphones were ubiquitous. Normally, it wasn’t easy working with the Tanzanian telephone company, but they managed to install lots of new lines faster than probably ever in their history.

Our official communications with Washington were on what the Department calls minimize, when cable traffic is kept to a minimum, and that was very beneficial. But that didn’t prevent one post, which I won’t name, from overwhelming our makeshift communications center with their totally unnecessary 103-paragraph unclassified country commercial guide. (Laughs)

Pol-econ [political-economic] officer Chris McMullen and his staff worked night and day to draft our situation reports [sitreps], sending the first less than two hours after the bombing. The first six of them, which were unclassified, had to be faxed to AF for Washington distribution. Later, information program officers Vella Wells and Lizzie Slater were able to restore secure communications, and we sent the sitreps by official State Department cable.

On Saturday morning I received a bit of an odd call from AF/EX, on behalf of Assistant Secretary Rice and the State Department Coordinator for Counterterrorism. The message was, I was in charge, and that included having ultimate authority over the FBI investigators and an interagency Foreign Emergency Support Team [FEST], some fifty people who were scheduled to arrive in Dar on Sunday to assist us in responding to the attack. I already knew I was in charge—I was the chargé d'affaires in the absence of an ambassador, after all. But there clearly was concern at State, which I think emanated from the FBI in Nairobi, that the investigators would act independently. I was later told that the president’s national security adviser agreed that State was in charge.

That day I also received a call from EUCOM, I think it was General Wesley Clark, saying that fifty marines were coming to seal off access to the area around the old embassy and provide security at our new location. It was called a Fleet Anti-terrorism Security Team, or FAST. We only had a marine security guard detachment of six people stationed in Dar, so that additional security was necessary and welcomed.

Q: Talk about casualties. Who were they?

LANGE: Of the eleven people who died, five were contract security guards. And everybody, I think, who worked in the embassy remembered one of them, a wonderful woman in her early twenties, married with a couple of children, and always with a wonderful smile to greet you as you entered the building. She was one of those killed. And these were security guards who were paid about \$100 a month, local wages, to guard the U.S. embassy. There were a contract gardener and a contract cleaner, who I believe were working at the consular officer's residence across the street. There was the FSN driver and his FSN assistant in the water tank truck that was trying to enter the embassy complex and blocked much of the blast. There was a Somali visa applicant who was waiting outside in the courtyard of the embassy.

And there was a Kenyan, Abdurahman Abdalla, who was the husband of American Fulbright scholar Susan Hirsch. That was such a sad story. Susan and "Jamal," as he was known, were about to move to the United States, where she was a college professor. When the bomb went off, she was cashing a check at the embassy cashier's office while he waited outside and was killed. A day or two later, she talked to me about the need for the body of her husband, a Muslim, to be released immediately so it could be shipped to Kenya for burial. She said Tanzania's Criminal Investigation Department said they couldn't release the body because the U.S. government needed it for evidence. I don't know who said that, but I told her that President Clinton, whom I had spoken to on Friday, had asked us to preserve the evidence and the body would be released as soon as we could allow it. A tough conversation. Five days after the bombing, Jamal's body was released.

On Sunday, I visited several of our injured Tanzanian staff in the hospital. Nobody inside the embassy was killed because, as I said, the embassy was so solidly built. But there was just incredible devastation, and some of the people inside the building were very badly injured. Computers were blown off tables, thick concrete walls were blown into stairwells, there was dust all over, et cetera. By our count, over eighty-five people total were injured—a lot of them in the embassy—and there was devastation all over. We had an embassy that was destroyed, and I thought, and I even wrote this in a cable to the State Department at one point, the best thing to do with that building was to just tear it down. Instead, the Tanzanian government used money they got from the United States to somehow fix it up, and it's actually still in use after major repairs.

At the same time, I have to say, I don't want to imply that this came even close to the catastrophe in Nairobi, where you had around 213 people killed. The devastation and death there were unimaginable, in part because of the stun grenade fired seconds before the bomb blast that caused a lot of injuries in downtown Nairobi, as I mentioned. The bomb devastated the embassy, the shock wave went back and forth between high-rise buildings, and Ufundi House, next to the embassy, collapsed. It was just such an enormous tragedy.

Q: How about families who were there? How did they respond, the children and the spouses?

LANGE: Yes. There was an incredible sense of unity among us. We just knew we had to take care of the wounded, grieve for those who had died, and help each other. And, again, one of the most important lessons of this tragedy for me was the need to be decisive in an emergency. Our community liaison officer, who would deal with the families in normal situations, had to be medically evacuated that evening, as I said. So, as staff gathered at my residence, within an hour or two after the bomb went off, Cindy Murphree, the wife of acting Peace Corps Director Terry Murphree, joined us. When we recently commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the bombings, Cindy reminded me of that gathering. Before the EAC meeting began, she came up to me to say, John, I know Cynthia Kimble's badly injured, and I just wanted to let you know that, before you arrived at post, I was the community liaison officer, so I know the CLO operation and I'd be happy to be helpful. I told her, and she recalled it, Okay, you're our new CLO. We're having an emergency action committee meeting in ten minutes. Please come. And so, we then had a CLO, and she was happy to do this. She performed a critical role at a critical time.

Now, as I said, I'm proud to have been decisive. We had to have a CLO to help out—to deal with the families—and she was perfectly fit for the job. But later on, we needed to regularize the fact that she was officially a community liaison officer beginning the afternoon of August 7, had put in many working hours, and needed to be paid for it. Well, that did not work well with the bureaucracy of the State Department because we hadn't advertised the job to other potential applicants. (Laughs) And it took a long time, weeks if not months, for Cindy to finally get paid what was owed to her because the HR bureaucracy was insisting that you're supposed to advertise a job before you fill it. Well, I'm sorry. This was an emergency, and I give huge credit to Cindy Murphree for volunteering to do it.

Q: Did you have to deal with any people, male or female, who were associated with the embassy who sort of went ballistic or hysteric or not?

LANGE: I would say on the day of the bombing, no. Clearly there are psychological issues that came up, but at the time that was not apparent. Now, I was dealing with the American embassy community and our local FSN staff, not the Tanzanian public at large. We had lost several of our own, Tanzanians and a spouse who was a Kenyan. We were dealing with death and with bad injuries, and many people probably were, for want of a better term, shellshocked.

With help from MED [State Department Office of Medical Services], which sent in a regional psychiatrist, and the Marine Corps, which sent in two excellent counselors, we held several counseling sessions for the staff and American family members a week after the bombing. It was very important to give people a chance to air their emotions, which were bottled-up while we were besieged and working 15-20 hours per day. I insisted that everyone attend, even though a few people thought they didn't need to go and didn't seem to take it seriously. It turned out that a couple of them ended up having problems later on. Many attendees felt that the American staff—particularly State Americans, who were in the chancery at the time of the blast—seemed fragile. At the session I attended,

an American man who was under great stress started crying. As I recall, we also organized a separate Tanzanian-led counseling session for the FSNs.

We had the children meet with an American psychiatrist to see how they were doing. I can only speak about my eleven-year-old daughter Julia. She wrote about her feelings in her diary in a section entitled, “The Worst Day of My Life.” But she actually coped pretty well.

It was only one-off counseling, but still very helpful.

But—and this was made very clear in the July-August 2018 special edition of the *Foreign Service Journal* on the twentieth anniversary—several people who were in Dar es Salaam and others in Nairobi have since suffered from PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] and have written about it. As I mentioned earlier, the consular officer’s residence across the street from the embassy was very badly damaged. We were very fortunate that the normal Friday morning kids’ playgroup in the front yard was cancelled that day because the officer was away on R&R. USAID officer Monica Stein-Olson wrote in that *Foreign Service Journal* issue how that ended up saving the lives of children, since the explosion sent a huge fireball into the home and incinerated everything in its path. And, I should add, she explained how that memory later made her overly protective of her own children, leading to her anxiety and depression. She wrote that she received the proper mental health care and urged others not to be afraid to seek help. Good for her.

I think it’s worth mentioning that Washington authorized an extra R&R [rest and recuperation travel] for all Americans, which was an excellent move and very helpful in alleviating the stress we had experienced. My family waited until January, during Julia’s break from school, to go to Israel and Egypt. It was a wonderful and very memorable trip. I have to say that I was surprised to find we had four Egyptian security officers escorting us at each stop during our Nile cruise. At one point, when the cruise ship was stationary in a lock on the river, security was particularly nervous. I don’t speak Arabic but remember hearing the words “Ambassador Lange” on their loudspeakers. It turned out that, unbeknownst to me, the Egyptian ambassador in Tanzania had alerted authorities about my trip in light of security concerns following the terrorist attack on tourists in Luxor in 1997.

Q: Did you find ways to honor employees by giving them awards?

LANGE: Yes, but that proved to be a complicated endeavor.

It was important to recognize that the American and Tanzanian staff, and many American family members, were central to our response and performed heroically. Some of our people got individual awards, and the Department presented me with a distinguished honor award for my leadership, but it was very hard to differentiate among staff members. Some did better than others in terms of the crisis response, but you didn’t want to breed anger and resentment among the staff. Secretary Albright gave us all a group award for heroism, and individual copies of that were eventually given to everyone who was in Dar during the bombing. As I recall, there was some resentment among the marine

detachment because they didn't get the level of awards from their headquarters that had been given to the marines in Nairobi, even though the bomb in Dar was about as big and the psychological impact was about as big, though we didn't have the same number of deaths.

Q. What did you later learn about the nature of the bombing?

LANGE: I was really impressed by how thoroughly and quickly the FBI determined what had happened. The investigators were looking all over town, sometimes wearing a hat that said FBI, which impressed a lot of the local populace. We tried to be as helpful as we could. Pat Wagner, wife of a Peace Corps staff member, spoke Swahili and helped them with the investigation, including a survey of all the nearby buildings to determine the extent of the bomb damage and to seek clues as to who had perpetrated it. She had some harrowing stories of encountering body parts.

I remember going to a huge room in a hotel the FBI had rented where they briefed me on their findings. They'd written on the walls the names of those they had figured out were involved and their connections to each other as part of the conspiracy, all leading back to Osama bin Laden.

The FBI investigation, which came out in the trials in New York, determined that a Tanzanian named Khalfan Kamis Mohammed, who is currently serving a life sentence without parole in a U.S. prison, rented a house away from the city center on the way to the airport. They said the property was surrounded by high walls to block the view of passersby and had a garage large enough to accommodate a truck. That's where the bomb was assembled. They were, of course, coordinating their efforts with the terrorists in Kenya.

On the day of the bombing, "Ahmed the German," the alias used by an Egyptian named Hamden Khalif Allah Awad, drove the delivery vehicle to the embassy. When I recall how potholed the streets were in Dar es Salaam at that time, with just about every street having all kinds of potholes, I just kind of imagine this guy driving with this huge quantity of explosives in the back of the Nissan Atlas refrigeration truck, worried that a really bad pothole could set off the whole thing off prematurely. He came up to the embassy via Laibon Road, the side street, and tried to enter the compound at the entrance where trucks and cars would come in and out. There was another entrance where cars could come in, but this one was where the trucks and cars would come to park at the administrative section of the embassy. And from what we can gather, the guards who were there would not let him in.

At the same time, a water tank truck of the embassy was trying to leave the compound. Now, why would an embassy have a water tank truck? Well, as you may know from experience living in some developing countries, the water supplies in Dar es Salaam were very erratic. So the U.S. embassy, usually once a week, would deliver water to fill the water tanks located at each embassy residence so that the American staff had constant availability of water. That water tank truck, full of water, was driven by an FSN driver

with his assistant next to him. They were departing and blocking the bomb truck's path into the embassy compound.

The perimeter wall was only about thirty or thirty-five feet from the building itself, not the hundred-foot setback called for by Inman security standards, as I said earlier. Security experts can tell you how important that hundred-foot setback is, because every ten feet of setback dissipates more of the bomb itself. So the bomb truck, stopped on the street, was still way too close to the building. I am certain that the fact that the water tank truck was there saved many, many lives. The bomb was so powerful that it blew the heavy truck into the air as high as the embassy's third floor, according to Lynn Kimble, the gunny sergeant in charge of the MSG [marine security guard] detachment who was enroute back to the embassy at the time of the blast. But even though that truck took the brunt of the blast, the embassy itself, on the side where the bomb went off, was devastated, with, like, twelve-to-fifteen-foot holes blown through the big, thick concrete walls.

One of the photographs in that *State* magazine article shows the truck where it landed right in front of the building. Obviously, the driver was killed. The assistant was missing for a long time until the FBI was able to use DNA records to verify that the assistant was also killed. They tragically lost their lives while saving many others.

I should mention that the role played by the water tank truck was a source of controversy in the media, which speculated that the bomb was on board the truck. I will discuss that later.

Q: Did the driver of the bombing vehicle escape or had he gotten out or—

LANGE: No, no.

Q: —he blew himself up?

LANGE: Yes, he died instantly. When I say that eleven people were killed, I never include the suicide bomber. Other terrorists were involved in the preparations but not killed at the embassy site. The FBI told me during the investigation they estimated the truck carried the equivalent of 1,500 to 2,000 pounds of TNT. At one of the trials in New York the explosives were described as TNT, PETN, and over twenty large, industrial gas cylinders containing pressurized oxygen and acetylene gases. The prosecutors said the mix of gases was intended to increase the firebomb, shrapnel, and body count. Gruesome.

Q: Well, as the person in charge of the embassy, what was your sorting of priorities—how did you prioritize? How did you see your role as the leader?

LANGE: Excellent question. So, how do you set priorities in that kind of situation? There were an infinite number of things to be done. Most immediately, we had to care for the dead and injured and establish emergency embassy operations in a place that was secure.

When you talk about being a leader, and I've said this in some speeches and in writing, I can tell you the exact minute when I transformed from being a manager to being a leader.

It was 10:39 in the morning local time on Friday, August 7, 1998, in Dar es Salaam. Because before that, yes, I was the leader of the embassy, I was the chargé d'affaires, the acting ambassador, making all the necessary short-term decisions. But when you're the chargé you don't develop a three-year plan for U.S. relations with the government of Tanzania. I'd have been laughed out of the room if I had tried to do that, because we all knew the new ambassador was coming sometime soon, we just didn't know when he would be confirmed by the U.S. Senate and sworn in. I wasn't about to make long-term, strategic decisions that would hinder his flexibility once he arrived. I knew I was the leader, but I also knew that I wasn't the president's personal representative to Tanzania as the U.S. ambassador is.

But once that bomb went off, there was nobody to lead the entire operation in our recovery effort except me. It wasn't going to be the mayor of Dar es Salaam or the president of Tanzania; it was me. And so, I was the leader. And one of the things that I had to be was decisive. During the several days after the blast, it seemed like I was making a decision every minute, as staff came up to me with question after question. I just had to decide one way or the other and give it my best shot, and I did. You just cannot be indecisive in that situation. People are depending on you for leadership, for answers. And it was critical to delegate authority to those who reported to me.

I saw my leadership role as threefold.

One was grieving, being compassionate, and expressing sympathy in the face of death and destruction. People were killed. People were injured. We were all devastated.

Secondly, I had to motivate and lift the morale of staff members, who were quite distraught. They were the bedrock of our recovery. There were Tanzanians, some of our best staff members, who were under great pressure from their families to quit the American embassy because it was a dangerous place to work. It was clear the staff remained greatly affected, Americans and Tanzanians, and I really had to motivate them while being sympathetic and sincere.

And thirdly, we needed to establish a way forward. That's where I just had to make decisions. U.S. government operations in-country had to be reestablished, and the bombing investigation had to proceed. We could not be in a situation where the terrorists win and drive the United States out of Dar es Salaam and Nairobi.

So, those were the three elements in my role: Grieving and being compassionate, motivating and lifting staff morale, and establishing a way forward. It's tricky to strike the balance. It really is.

Q: Very difficult.

LANGE: But you have no choice but to do it. It's very easy to just look backward, focusing on the people who died, the people who were injured, but then you can't move forward, and Washington's expecting you to reestablish operations and be a functioning embassy. And if you are focusing solely on that sad past and not trying to motivate staff

to continue working, then your staff will not be able to be as supportive as required to resurrect the embassy. And yet, if you just focus on the future without focusing on the tragedy and the sadness that we went through, your staff will think you're heartless. I have to say, it's not an easy role.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: There's one other aspect of my leadership that I'd like to mention. In August 1998 I was still a mid-level Foreign Service officer at the FO-1 level, though I was promoted to the Senior Foreign Service the next month. It would have been easy for the AF bureau to say, Listen, John, we need to get a senior officer in there, and we will be sending some retired ambassador or current ambassador who's in the Senior Foreign Service to Dar to take charge until Ambassador Stith arrives. And they didn't. They trusted me in this extraordinarily intense period, and I had full responsibility for that embassy as chargé d'affaires until Charles arrived at post five weeks later. Secretary of State Albright, at my ambassadorial swearing-in ceremony in December 1999, described how she and I talked by phone a few hours after the attack, when so much had to be done and there were few people to do it. She said true leadership was required, but she knew immediately from the quote, "calm and determined tone" of my voice and clear perception of priorities that the necessary leadership was already there. Very kind of her to say that.

Q: Yes. Well, let me ask a question. It all seems superfluous at the time, but what about classified documents?

LANGE: I mentioned that the marines had secured the bombed-out building. And I can't remember how soon, but within about an hour or two they started shredding classified documents and destroying hard drives. After a few hours I was asked, Do the marines need to keep doing this? And I just said, Yes, because we didn't have secure facilities anymore and we didn't know if there would be another attack. So, they shredded everything. That included a seminal analysis of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda that was written by intern Dante Paradiso, who later became an FSO. It was still going through the clearance process. Lost forever.

Q: Now, what was the initial reaction of the Tanzanian government?

LANGE: I must say, prior to the bombing we had reasonably good relations with the Tanzanian government, but as we had talked about in an earlier session, you had the historical legacy of Julius Nyerere and this tilt toward socialism and the non-aligned movement. Once the bomb went off, they were incredibly helpful. Foreign Minister Kikwete came from his home to the embassy shortly after the bombing, as I mentioned, and he was as helpful as possible. President Mkapa was very helpful, and later I'll talk a bit about a meeting the FBI lead and I had with him about the investigation.

The permanent secretary at the foreign ministry, the top civil servant in the ministry, held a meeting for all of the ambassadors in mid-afternoon on the day of the bombing. This came at short notice: Drop everything and go to the meeting. That was my role as the

chargé d'affaires, not able to plan my own schedule. The permanent secretary expressed sympathy to those in the American, Nigerian, French, Algerian, and other damaged embassies, but his central message was that this was totally unexpected and shocking to the government, it had never happened in the history of Tanzania's independence, the whole government system has been mobilized, and the other embassies should not consider themselves to be vulnerable; this was an isolated incident really targeted at the Americans, and there was no reason to discourage people from visiting Tanzania. And that was kind of the mindset there. Again, they were extremely helpful and supportive, especially on the investigation, but they had this mindset that terrorism was not directed against non-aligned Tanzania. Several of the other ambassadors described damage to their embassies or residences and asked for extra security.

And the government parked an armored personnel carrier in front of the DCM residence for several days to protect us from further attacks.

Q: How long did you all work out of the DCM residence?

LANGE: From Friday afternoon till Monday morning. Everyone pitched in, whether it was dealing with the medevac [medical evacuation] and medical needs, working the phones, preparing for the arrival of TDY personnel, bringing in cooked meals for those of us on duty, handling inquiries from the press, whatever needed to be done. PAO [public affairs officer] Dudley Sims prepared an August 8 press statement for local distribution expressing President Clinton's condolences, thanking Tanzania for its support, and citing the Department's new travel advisory. The State Department task force approved it after changing one word.

And it was still quite scary. There were a couple of security incidents in which suspicious-looking vehicles drove slowly past my residence and then took evasive action when spotted. We feared another attack, and I knew we had to move our operations to someplace that was more permanent and secure than my residence. Well, it turned out that USAID was supposed to have an auction of some old furniture on Saturday, August 8. They cancelled the auction, so therefore we had furniture we could use for our new embassy, our temporary embassy.

What is amazing to me, when I look back on this, is how the staff members and the family members, American and Tanzanian, were just willing to do things that they never had been trained to do and never probably thought in a million years they would be doing. For example, we had to have an airport operation. As the days went on, we were receiving tons of equipment on military and civilian planes, some of it for the FBI investigation, some of it for various elements of the embassy. And we had high-level U.S. government officials and many other government employees arriving. Well, who's going to run a major airport operation? Several USAID staff took that over, including the husband of a USAID employee who was not even a U.S. government employee, and they worked long hours at the airport. I remember one of them telling me there was a huge plane that came in with all this FBI equipment. Workers emptied the plane full of all this stuff. The Tanzanian customs official at the airport asks the USAID staff member in charge, Do you have anything to declare? No, no, nothing to declare on this flight. (Both

laugh) You asked me about Tanzanian government support. The Tanzanians knew that we needed all this material and were very supportive. They let the entire shipment enter the country.

Another example of someone pitching in to perform unexpected but necessary work was in our support of the multitude of TDYers [temporary duty personnel] who arrived. We had to help people find hotel rooms. Well, Diana Putman from USAID ended up tracking down available hotel rooms and slotting in people using a big spreadsheet. The staff of the Embassy, which normally consisted of some 40 American and 235 Tanzanian employees, was augmented by over 350 American military, security and investigative TDY personnel occupying what seemed like just about every hotel room in town.

At one point, the RSO and the admin officer came up to me together and said, John, we've surveyed where we can set up our temporary embassy, and we think the public affairs officer's residence is the best place to go. That residence had a large setback from the street and was on the crest of a hill, which gives you a bit of security because trucks—a truck bomb—would have a hard time getting up speed to crash into the compound. So it had certain security benefits. And it was, importantly, not occupied yet because Dudley Sims had recently arrived at post and had not yet moved into his residence.

Now, normally, I'm a real hands-on kind of manager. If somebody had made that suggestion to me under any other circumstances, I'd have said, Fine, I appreciate the recommendation, let's go look at the PAO residence and talk it through. But I didn't have time for that. My time was no longer my own. I just said yes. I delegated authority as never before, actually, and I just agreed okay, that's it. The decision was made.

On Sunday morning the building was the furnished residence of the PAO, and by Monday morning it had been transformed into a functioning temporary embassy complete with USAID's old desks, operating telephones, and several working computers. It was just this incredible, resurrected operation, due to what I consider Herculean efforts by Chips Carpenter, Vella Wells, Lizzie Slater, newly arrived GSO "Blue" Blais, FSN Munir Karimjee, and the rest of the highly capable and motivated FSN staff working tirelessly around the clock to establish our new base of operations. Again, people rising to the occasion.

I mentioned earlier that fifty marines in a FAST team came to provide additional security. They put barbed wire around the PAO residence. Upon arriving for work at the temporary embassy, staff were greeted by marines with machine guns, protected by sandbags. Not your average workplace.

Q. How did you manage things once you moved into the temporary embassy?

LANGE: We tried to instill a bit of a sense of normalcy, and that included the marines performing a flag-raising ceremony four days after we moved in.

The way I operated was to have two one-hour meetings a day, back-to-back. One focusing on reestablishing embassy operations, an unclassified meeting. The FSNs would be part of it because at that point the FSNs in the admin section, as you can imagine, played critical roles along with many others. And the other one was a classified meeting for Americans only.

Again, back to the theme of you gotta do what you gotta do in an emergency situation: It's not like we had any particular way to do a security sweep of the room that we were using for classified conversations. The conference room in our temporary embassy was the master bedroom of the PAO residence. And the adjoining chargé d'affaires office, which I later turned over to Charles Stith when he arrived at post, was a large walk-in closet.

I still remember when I was able to see Ambassador Stith before he came to post. When I went back to Washington four weeks after the bombing, I told Charles, just be prepared. Your office is a walk-in closet. But let me assure you, it's a large walk-in closet. (Both laugh) And it really was. It was not bad under the circumstances. We did whatever we had to do.

I remember at one of the meetings, the FBI lead said, John, we have a certain number of people right now in-country—I think it was around 200—but we really need twenty-five more. Is that okay with you? As the chargé, I had to approve that. And I was not going to second guess how many people the FBI needed—

Q: No.

LANGE: —to do an investigation. I'd been told by the president of the United States that it was important to preserve the evidence so we could follow all the leads, which ended up leading back to Osama bin Laden, and I wasn't going to second guess how many investigators were needed, so I just said, Sure. The one condition that I made for anybody sending people in was, don't expect any administrative support from the embassy. We'll help with finding hotel rooms, but otherwise you're on your own. We had lost most of our motor pool vehicles. We had lost some of our staff. We were totally preoccupied with trying to resurrect embassy operations and we couldn't help these TDYers from other agencies coming in. And they accepted that, rented their own vehicles, and did whatever else they had to do. The FBI ended up peaking at about 225 temporary duty personnel. I once read that the number of agents and experts they sent to both Nairobi and Dar amounted to what was then their largest overseas investigation ever.

Q: You spoke earlier about having emergency drills. Did those help you in responding to the actual emergency?

LANGE: Anybody working in the State Department and probably in other foreign affairs agencies will hear about the importance of emergency planning, having a solid emergency action plan, et cetera. All of that's important, all of those things that you do when you are in the Foreign Service, that I did throughout my career, planning and being

prepared, reviewing emergency action plans, going through drills, knowing escape routes, that kind of thing. That's all for the good. That training is important.

But when that bomb goes off, you're not searching for the emergency action plan to read the section under the tab "vehicle-borne improvised explosive device." You don't look at that plan at all. You have no time for that. Maybe after a few days the RSO was able to look at it, but I doubt it. I never looked at it during this entire time. I knew what we had before us.

Q: How important was your prior experience at Foreign Service posts?

LANGE: I had considerable experience in the Foreign Service by then, on my fifth tour abroad after entering the State Department in 1981. Basically, I and the rest of the staff reacted by instinct. We just knew what to do. We'd all had so much previous experience at embassies and elsewhere that we knew how to react. Instinctively we knew how to organize a medevac, how to regroup to quickly hold an emergency action committee meeting, how to keep Washington informed and establish a continuing relationship with the Operations Center, how to put together a semblance of operations, et cetera, et cetera.

I am absolutely convinced that U.S. embassies need to have in top leadership an ambassador and/or a DCM who has years of experience working at U.S. embassies, so that in an emergency you have that ability to react by instinct based on years of relevant experience. Leaders with experience, smarts, and common sense.

Accepting the fact that a substantial number of ambassadors are political appointees without prior embassy experience, I firmly believe the ambassador and the State Department need to select a deputy chief of mission who has substantial training and experience at posts abroad. Experienced DCMs going out to post need to be well-trained and fully aware that the unexpected may happen.

Q: Oh, yes. How did you deal with the press?

LANGE: When we had these meetings—as I said, two meetings a day, one classified and one unclassified, that continued for about ten days or so after the bombing—we had kind of an unofficial bet going on, how soon after the meeting began would Dudley Sims get a phone call on his cellphone? The media were just inundating us, and the PAO invariably would get a phone call from somebody wanting information and interviews and have to walk out of the meeting. I think the longest it ever took was five or ten minutes. He was really masterful in handling the myriad of media inquiries.

We organized a press conference on the Sunday after the bomb went off, and the only place to hold it was the living room of my residence. We had some twenty journalists from local media and CBS News, ABC, CNN, Reuters, AP, a lot of international press. Clearly, news organizations were focused on Nairobi more than on Dar, but there were some well-known journalists from U.S. outlets who attended our press conference.

The AF task force at that point refused to let me be on camera for this, for any kind of press conference, and insisted that I speak on background on a non-attribution basis to the international press. Now, I can't blame them, in a sense. The folks in public affairs at State really didn't know me. Who is John Lange to be talking to the international press? I hadn't gone through the vetting process that an ambassador does before they're nominated by the president. Pru Bushnell, Ambassador in Nairobi, had gone through that, of course. But I was a mid-level Foreign Service officer at the FO-1 level.

Q: Sort of at the colonel level.

LANGE: Yes. And they didn't want me spouting off to the media. So, I ended up talking on background to the press, and it was clear that CNN, CBS and the others were unhappy by the lack of information. Plus, the ground rules didn't work very well because it was a combination of American and Tanzanian press, and the Tanzanians didn't abide by the announced rule that my comments were on background. They weren't quite accustomed to those ground rules. A year later, when I attended the ambassadorial seminar prior to going to Botswana, we were told in media training to treat a press conference as on the record since it's so hard to maintain it being on background. I learned the hard way.

Well, my press conference, on background, caused a minor brouhaha. I said what would be expected—condemning the attacks, describing the extensive damage from the blast, expressing sympathy for the victims, thanking the government of Tanzania for its support, things like that—and the PAO later escorted the press around the perimeter of the embassy. But one of the journalists asked if we had a tape recording from the security video cameras, the closed-circuit video cameras, that were set up on the roof and around the embassy. Well, I knew—from the investigators and the diplomatic security people—that we did not have a tape recording. The only people who could ever view what those surveillance cameras were seeing was the marine security guard at Post One on a real-time basis, and there was no recording capability. So the correct answer to the question was that we had no video recordings of the bomber and the bombing. But I had been told by our security people that we didn't want the perpetrators who were part of the bombing conspiracy to know that fact. We wanted to keep that information from them, while we tried to figure out who they were, so they would fear that we had a recording of the bomber and the bomb vehicle. So I said to the reporters who were there, and there were maybe forty or fifty people in my living room from international and Tanzanian media, I said something like, There may have been, or there may not have been. I was clumsily trying to be noncommittal about whether or not there was a video recording.

Well, the next day, August 10, an article by Jane Perlez was on the front page of the *International Herald Tribune*, then the dominant international newspaper, with the headline, quote, "Was Blast Videotaped?" Her article also appeared in the *New York Times*, and CNN carried a similar story. All because I had said maybe, or maybe not, the bombing was videotaped. That was equivocating.

So then, at the next press conference we held at my residence, it was Monday evening, I emphasized that the day before I had made a noncommittal statement and that we would neither confirm nor deny the existence of evidence in the criminal inquiry. If I recall

correctly, a senior Foreign Service officer, a DS [Diplomatic Security] officer who had flown in to help us, spoke on background at that press conference saying no, there wasn't any videotape, to make the correction. And then, the people in Washington got upset with him for having made the correction because that showed the terrorists that there wasn't a video recording. All in all, it was a complicated media message.

We decided that we wanted to highlight the human-interest side of the Foreign Service, and Dudley was able to convince Washington—after lots of pushing—to agree to that. So CNN and other media were invited into my living room, I can't remember which day, to interview on the record two Americans who had been injured: Lizzie Slater, who was still courageously working hard, and Laurel McMullen, who was working in the consular section when the explosion occurred. And the human-interest interviews proved to be so successful that Washington proceeded to ask for more.

By the way, I think that the State Department's approach to public affairs still does not fully understand and appreciate how this—the human-interest side of a terrorist bombing—is an important public message on what happens when the State Department and other agencies send their people abroad, in harm's way, to represent the United States of America.

And there was another controversy in the press. In that August 10 article in the *International Herald Tribune* and the *New York Times*, Perlez said that speculation focused on a water tank truck that was at the back entrance of the embassy when the bomb went off, and it quoted an American official saying that a possible scenario was that the bomb had been carried by the water truck. Since the truck driver and his assistant were FSN employees, that would have been a very damning verdict—an inside job. What I do recall is that after a few days, the investigators knew that the bomb had been carried by a separate vehicle unrelated to the embassy.

I still have some unhappiness with the idea that public affairs in the State Department and others kind of muzzled us in terms of what we could say to the press. And one example of that was the misconception that persisted that the water tank truck, the embassy-owned water tank truck, contained the bomb, and therefore it would have been an inside job, that some employees of the embassy—it couldn't have been done by just one—would have been part of this bombing, an egregious security lapse. That was just not true. As I described earlier, the two Tanzanian FSNs in the truck, both of whom died, were attempting to leave the compound and took the brunt of the blast when the bomb went off in a separate truck on the street at the gate to the compound. The water truck was blown up three or four stories in the air and then landed right next to the embassy. I hate to think how many more people inside and outside that embassy would have died if the water tank truck had not been there to greatly mitigate the damage.

But the myth of the bomb on the water tank truck persisted, and I really resented the idea that people could think we had traitors on our staff who would have bombed our embassy. Nine days after the bombing, the BBC carried a story saying the bomb appeared to have gone off inside the water tank. And it was the seventh of September 1998 when the *Washington Post* ran an article talking about the water tank truck as the possible place

where the bomb could have been put in and therefore, as I said, it would have been an inside job. So, this was a case in which I was muzzled, not only by the State Department public affairs, who didn't want me speaking to the press except on background and, even then, only occasionally, but also by the FBI investigators, who didn't want the investigation to be disrupted and didn't want the terrorists, who it turned out were part of the al-Qaeda network, to know how much they really knew. But it was still upsetting to me personally, the idea that a month after the bombing there was still this theme in the press that it could have been an inside job.

Q: Well, do you think that you might say that the people from the outside who were sort of public affairs type people were getting a little bit too close mouthed about what happened? I mean, it was pretty obvious to those of you who saw the water tank truck go up in the air, as you say, I mean, it was spectacular, but if it had had the bomb in it, it wouldn't be going up in the air, it would be all over the place.

LANGE: Yes. Something as basic as that, exactly. And all you had to do was look at it as it was sitting next to the embassy in the first days after the bombing, before it was moved, to see that it hadn't exploded from within.

Q: No.

LANGE: But the idea persisted. It took until the middle of October for the FBI to issue a press statement in Dar es Salaam requesting information from the public on sightings of the Nissan Atlas refrigeration truck, which was the one carrying the bomb, and another vehicle, thereby implicitly acknowledging that the water tank truck was not connected to the attack on the embassy. I drafted a cable to the Department and made my point in the subject line, quote, "FBI and Tanzanians seek info on suspect vehicles (no, it was not the water tank truck)."

For public affairs was—there was a great tendency to control this out of Washington without full regard for our situation on the ground. As you know, there were some controversies on some statements that Ambassador Bushnell made in Nairobi.

Q: She was very critical of—

LANGE: She had been pushing for a new embassy for months and months and wasn't able to get serious consideration in Washington for the security concerns she had about the embassy in Nairobi. And so, there very much was this idea in Washington that they wanted to control the messaging.

I was told not to make any comments on the record, but in that regard I think it's worth mentioning what happened when the former Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere, wanted to see the bombed-out embassy, which by then was in a roped-off area patrolled by Tanzanian security officials. I remember being told at about 2:40 in the afternoon, it was either on Sunday or Monday, Oh, Julius Nyerere is going to come to the embassy, wants a tour, he'll be there at 3:00. Okay. Drop everything. Had to do that. We were getting good support from the government, and I wasn't going to refuse to do that. And we wouldn't

let visitors enter the building, since it was full of debris and was actually dangerous. The Foreign Buildings Office of the State Department was concerned it would collapse because it was so wobbly. But I took certain visitors on a tour of the outside of the building. And I remember that I was talking to Nyerere and giving descriptions, well, that's the room I was in, here's where our other staff were, here's where the bomb went off, that kind of thing.

After that tour, Nyerere spoke to the press who were waiting outside of the secure area, but I did not. And one or two days later, I got all these compliments from the AF bureau on what a good job I had done on television, because it turned out that those journalists had strong microphones that were maybe fifty feet away but had picked up what I was saying during the tour. So, even though I wasn't given permission to go on the record with the press, when I inadvertently went on the record, the feedback was, Oh, you did a great job.

Just the whole attitude in Washington was kind of bothersome to me, because my central message here was the tragedy that we had gone through: The eleven people who had died, including the husband of a Fulbright scholar, the Kenyan husband of an American woman; the many dozens who were injured; and the heroism of those who stayed on their posts and resurrected embassy operations. And so, I thought that there were missed media opportunities to talk about the valor of the Foreign Service and U.S. civilian personnel stationed abroad.

Q: I had the feeling that maybe the public affairs people were playing a very defensive game, particularly because of Bushnell's condemnation of the response of the Department of State to her request for a new embassy meeting security standards, you know, the change of venue and all that. And you sort of had what amounted to a bureaucracy closing down, trying to cut out criticism or hostility. Is this correct or do you—?

LANGE: Well, there certainly were those issues out there, and clearly Washington and the Department did not appreciate some of the comments that Pru made even though she was, of course, absolutely right that the existing embassy in Nairobi was dangerously insecure and a new embassy was needed. In Dar, I was the chargé d'affaires, and in theory I suppose I had the authority to insist on our need for security measures to protect our vulnerable embassy, but my views would have carried little weight because we were always expecting the new ambassador to arrive in a few months, even though it kept being delayed. I wasn't about to send a zinger of a cable to the Department demanding a new embassy building. And, having had a lot of experience in State Department management, I also was aware of the budget shortfalls that limited construction of new embassies around the world.

In terms of dealing with the media, at one point, I went to see the inspector general of police. I think this was the Tuesday after the bombing. We agreed to announce what was called a Joint U.S.-Tanzanian Investigative Task Force, and he assured us he would expand police presence for additional security. As we came out of that meeting, there was a phalanx of about thirty or forty media, Tanzanian journalists, wanting to hear what had

gone on in the meeting and wanting me to say something as I came out. I walked past them without saying anything.

There was one other thing in the media of personal interest. I mentioned earlier the article about the Dar bombing on the front page of the August 10 issue of the *International Herald Tribune*. Now, in Dar es Salaam—again, this was 1998, not today where you can read so much news on the web—we would get the newspapers two weeks late because they were shipped from Paris. So I didn't know until about two weeks after the bombing, when the *International Herald Tribune* showed up in the in-box on my desk, that my photo was on the front page on August 10. I'm sure it's the only time in my life I'll ever be on the front page of a global periodical.

Let me explain how this happened. In the days after the bombing, I would go back to the embassy at different times for various reasons, sometimes to give VIPs from the Tanzanian government tours of the outside of the embassy and sometimes for other reasons, as others such as the RSO and administrative staff also would do. I don't know which day it was, either Saturday or Sunday, I ended up going into the embassy for whatever reason and then went to my office to recover a couple of items and my suitcoat, which had been hanging there since Friday. When I left the office in the minutes after the bombing, I wasn't going to put my suit coat on.

Well, this was the only time in my Foreign Service career when I occupied an office that had what they call a gentleman's valet, one of those structures—

Q: Sort of a hanger.

LANGE: Yes, exactly.

Q: That stands on its own, usually a wooden thing, that you could put your coat over.

LANGE: Exactly.

Q: —you could even put your pants hanging there. I mean, it's very nice. I don't have one.

LANGE: I recommend it, actually. Still have it, I must say.

So I decided, Well, I've never had a gentleman's valet before, why don't I rescue that as well as my suitcoat. And so, I picked them both up and left the embassy. I walked on Laibon Road, which was then blocked off by the Tanzanian government, on the way toward the Marine House. I got about fifty or a hundred feet outside of the embassy compound, and in the middle of the street there was this makeshift marine guard post, guarded by several of the fifty marines who had come to support us, with sandbags and machine guns at the ready guarding the embassy. So, I stood there in the middle of the road, set down the gentleman's valet with the coat on it, and talked to the marines. We had a nice chat, and then I went on to where my car and driver were waiting, one of the few cars in the motor pool fleet that was still working. I never thought of it again until two weeks later when the newspaper shows up, and not only is there the frontpage article

saying the Dar es Salaam bombing may have been videotaped, but also an Agence France-Presse photograph of me standing in the middle of the road, leaning on the gentleman's valet, and talking to the marines next to the sandbags.

And I've always wondered if any reader of the *International Herald Tribune* looked at that and said, Why on earth would this man, who's in charge of the American embassy in Dar es Salaam that was just bombed, be leaning on a gentleman's valet in the middle of the road? (Both laugh) A piece of furniture is in the middle of the road. I just wonder if anybody actually ever figured it out.

There's another story about dealing with the press, and that involves my mother. Five days after the bombing, she complained to me that she was being hounded by local television and newspaper reporters because of my Wisconsin connection, since I had grown up in the Milwaukee area and gone to the University of Wisconsin. She agreed to do a television interview in silhouette, with her face obscured, and to be identified by the Milwaukee media only as "the mother of John Lange" to preserve her anonymity. I found that quite humorous. It's as if she needed to protect herself from an attack by Osama bin Laden. (Laughs) But terrorists weren't going to go after my mother, who was seventy-six-years-old and living in a Milwaukee suburb.

Q. Besides Nyerere and Kikwete, did anyone else from the Tanzanian government come to look at the embassy in the days after the bombing?

LANGE: On Saturday, the day after the bombing, I led a tour of the area outside of the chancery building for the Tanzanian vice president and did the same for the prime minister on Sunday. The VP told me the government was embarrassed by what had happened. President Mkapa returned from his travels outside of the country and I also gave him a tour on Sunday. Afterward, he appealed for a unified international war against terrorism. And a few days later I gave a tour to the secretary general of what was then called the Organization for African Unity, Salim Salim, a Tanzanian. All of them wanted a tour of the embassy grounds in the days after the bombing, and I provided it.



John gives Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa a tour outside of bombed embassy as U.S. Marine stands guard (August 9, 1998)

In terms of the reactions of the Tanzanian people, the permanent secretary at the foreign ministry told me several days after the bombing that everybody was so angry, the terrorists' actions were counterproductive for their cause.

I think it's also worth mentioning that normal diplomatic matters with the Tanzanian government had to continue, even though we were so focused on our recovery. Six days after the bombing, the defense minister asked to speak to me and all he wanted to talk about was Tanzania's view on the new armed rebellion against President Kabila in the Democratic Republic of the Congo—Tanzania wanted peace and security and wasn't taking sides—and asked what the U.S. knew. I must admit that I hadn't had the time to follow that issue very closely over the previous week.

Q: Did you find, not just at the time, but at the time and later, there was any sort of feeling of competition or resentment of the fact that Nairobi was getting far more attention than you were? I mean, I'm talking about all of you from Dar es Salaam.

LANGE: That's a good question. I would say the answer is no. I think at the time we weren't able to focus on what was going on in Nairobi. We knew it was terrible there. In fact, I learned about the bombing in Nairobi probably within twenty or thirty minutes after the bombs went off almost simultaneously because one of our officers had somehow heard from Nairobi. He came up to me and said, Rumor, Embassy Nairobi bombed. So, we knew about that very early on, but we were focused on our own issues. And the Department was incredibly helpful.

There wasn't the record at Embassy Dar es Salaam the way Ambassador Bushnell had had a record of complaining about how insecure the U.S. embassy in Nairobi was, how it didn't come anywhere close to meeting security standards, and how it needed to be immediately replaced. We were in a quiet neighborhood, we knew that budgets were limited, and we were accepting of our fate, I guess you could say, not realizing what we were accepting, not realizing the threat we were actually under. And then, as soon as the bomb went off, Washington really kicked in and provided us such strong support. I had numerous conversations with AF over several days when they kept asking me to describe whatever help we needed, and on August 16 I was able to send a comprehensive cable to the Department describing our immediate personnel, building, and budgetary needs. AF sent a lot of TDY personnel to Dar to assist us, and we were pleased by that support. It wasn't, I think, until a couple of days after August 7 that I got a better sense of how Nairobi, with far more casualties, was for good reason getting much more assistance and focus than we were. We were focused on the local situation, not so much on global media and whether the public stopped looking at what was going on in Dar es Salaam and instead focused on Nairobi.

And I must say, when I went to Nairobi much later, I made it a point to visit the August 7 Memorial Park where the embassy had been located, and you just got a sense of how devastating that bombing was—far, far worse than what we encountered. What we encountered in Dar es Salaam could have been much more severe for several reasons that I mentioned earlier. The building had been originally constructed like a fortress. We didn't experience a stun grenade going off seconds before the bomb itself, which would

have caused people to go to the windows to see what was happening. We were located in a suburban setting rather than in crowded downtown Dar es Salaam. No building was taller than three or four stories, so instead of having the shockwave go back and forth like it did between the high-rise buildings in Nairobi, the shock really spread out. Even though the bombs in Nairobi and Dar could have been close to the same size—I think they were estimated by the investigators to be 1,500 to 2,000 pounds of TNT equivalent in both cases—the one in Dar just did not result in the same level of damage.

But for us, I guess what I would really point out to anyone is, do not under any circumstances think, Oh, well, the Dar bombing was minor, therefore oh, you didn't have it so bad. This was death and destruction. This was a catastrophic, tragic event that lives with the survivors forever. When you look at the post-traumatic stress disorder that has been suffered by people who went through the bombings in Dar and in Nairobi, probably in very similar ways, you realize these were just huge, huge, impactful bombs. It's not like, Oh, this one was small. It wasn't small at all. It was just really, really devastating.

Q: Oh, I know.

I've got here the sitrep we sent on Sunday afternoon, and I think it's worth reading the comment I added at the end. Quote, "In our initial meetings with our TDY visitors, we have been struck by the apparent view of some in Washington that this was not a devastating blast and perhaps that part of the chancery is still usable. We feel deepest sympathy for our colleagues in Nairobi, where the casualty figures were many times what they were here. The bomb explosion here was nevertheless huge, and buildings kilometers away from the chancery suffered damage. The nature of the area (with low-rise buildings fairly spread out) and the strong embassy structure (formerly the Israeli embassy) served to keep the casualty count much lower than it could have been. At this point, our best recommendation for the entire embassy building complex is a good bulldozer." Unquote.

Q: In looking at it, in retrospect, did you see that there were warning signs about the bin Laden group, you know, testing you or not, or were there no advance indications that you know of?

LANGE: If there had been any kind of warning, I probably wouldn't have been in my office in the embassy when the bomb went off and we'd have closed the embassy for a day.

At the same time, as I have written and noted in an earlier session, our mission performance plan recognized that there were threats out there: porous borders, the Mwembechai Mosque riots in Dar es Salaam in February of 1998, et cetera. And we didn't have an embassy compound that met State Department security standards. But the attack on our embassy wasn't led by a local indigenous group from Tanzania, although there were Tanzanians involved. This was really part of an al-Qaeda conspiracy.

I think it's worth pointing out that August 7, 1998, was the eighth anniversary of the first American military units' arrival in Saudi Arabia as part of Operation Desert Shield in

response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Osama bin Laden's goal was to get U.S. troops out of the Arabian Peninsula, and his operatives pulled off the two embassy bombings exactly eight years later. I assume that's not a coincidence. But we had no clue at all that two embassy bombings were about to take place in East Africa.

Q: What about VIP visitors? The secretary of state, others? Were you able to cope with them?

LANGE: Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called me again on August 10. She thanked us for doing what she described as, quote, "Unbelievable work," and asked me to pass on her gratitude. She said she would like to come to Dar when it wasn't a burden on us, which I thought was a thoughtful approach. She also said she would be speaking at a State Department town hall meeting later that day.

On August 17, we held a memorial service on the lawn at my residence for all staff and families. The marine security guard detachment provided a color guard. The home affairs minister, acting CLO Cindy Murphree, one of our FSNs, the head of the embassy security contractor, and I all spoke. It was a very emotional event, but very important for us all as we recognized the loss of life and the many injuries.

The secretary ended up visiting on August 18, and it was really a welcome, positive thing for us all, I think. We were very pleased by the support we were getting from Washington. I believe there was some concern at Embassy Nairobi about Secretary Albright's visit, but I'll defer to those people regarding the idea that such a high-level visit could take them away from critical work they were doing in terms of their grieving and recovery. The Secretary's delegation included two assistant secretaries of state, Susan Rice of African Affairs and Mary Ryan of Consular Affairs, as well as many others. They arrived in Dar in the morning and departed for Nairobi in the afternoon. They didn't stay overnight in Nairobi in order to lessen the burden on the staff. They were flying in this old Boeing 747 provided by the U.S. military.

Now, you had experience in the Foreign Service, I had experience in the Foreign Service, and one of the things that is hard to avoid in a Foreign Service career is to take part in welcoming a visiting VIP. Sometimes it's the president of the United States or the vice president or the secretary of state, as well as others. And you go to the airport, you have permission to go onto the tarmac, and in comes their plane. The plane is taxiing toward you and then it turns, and there you see the words "United States of America" on the side of the plane. And out steps the president or the vice president or the secretary of state or whomever. And I just get this stirring of patriotism when it happens.

You know, there can be this cynicism and concern that some people inside the Washington Beltway have about so-called globalists and those who are focused on the international scene, but I must say, we're all American patriots.

Q: Oh, yeah.

LANGE: And so, Madeleine Albright flew in on a military plane with the words United States of America in large letters on the side. And really, when you look back at the tragic events we had experienced eleven days earlier, those patriotic feelings were even more pronounced.

We gave her a tour of the bombed-out embassy. Media footage of the exterior of the building had given the misleading impression that much of the building was not seriously damaged, and she, like everyone else who had seen it, was shocked at the extent of the devastation. She met with the FBI investigators and, along with a senior DS officer who had come to help us, put up a poster announcing a reward of \$2 million for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the terrorists.



*John guides Secretary of State Madeleine Albright
on tour of bombed embassy (August 18, 1998)*

The secretary then met with the American country team and FSN leadership in the living room of my residence, and she addressed the entire staff in our garden. She expressed condolences on the part of the president and the U.S. government, and she stressed America's resolve in bringing the perpetrators to justice. She shook hands with many staff members and gave us all a Department of State group award for heroism, which was unexpected and welcomed by all.



Secretary Madeleine Albright addresses embassy staff in garden of DCM residence

Then the secretary went to Muhimbili Hospital to visit injured Tanzanian FSNs.

The final stop was State House, where the Secretary met with Tanzania's Vice President in the absence of President Mkapa—he was outside of the country at the time—and Foreign Minister Kikwete. To be there, Kikwete had flown from Kinshasa to Nairobi and then traveled by road to Dar es Salaam, normally a twelve-hour drive. The two foreign ministers then gave a press conference emphasizing U.S.-Tanzanian cooperation.

It was a quick visit—originally scheduled for less than five hours—but very productive and very positive. Everything went well until we took the secretary back to the airport and the military plane broke down. She was on a very tight schedule—she was with us in the morning and had to make it to Nairobi for afternoon events—and it was a great burden on both posts to put this all together. It was urgent for her to get to Nairobi. At that time, there were some small U.S. government jets based in the region, and three smaller planes flew from Nairobi to Dar to pick up the secretary and her entourage—if I can use that word, and I don't mean it in a negative way—and fly to Nairobi while the old 747 sat on the tarmac. Days later, there were still articles in the Tanzanian press about the U.S. secretary of state's plane: here it is, broken down and still sitting at the Dar es Salaam airport.

I'll just mention two more things, and then I think we probably should call it a day here. It turned out that Madeleine Albright wasn't the only VIP who came to town around that period. FBI director Louis Freeh came to Dar on August 20, two days after Secretary Albright came. It was very important to him that the bombing investigation go well. When he met with the country team, he told us that the Washington take on our response

was that we all had displayed, quote, “splendid professionalism,” which we appreciated. He also said there was a need for a U.S.-supported law enforcement academy for Africa to professionalize the police. Ironically, that came to fruition in Botswana a couple of years later, when I was ambassador there.

Freeh met with the attorney general, minister of home affairs, and inspector general of police. I ended up hosting a lunch at my residence for him and his counterpart in the Tanzanian government so they could establish good relations. The FBI was very generous to the Tanzanian government, providing them with equipment and training, including in the United States, both to support the bombing investigation and to help the Tanzanians in the long run. The Tanzanian intelligence and security agency was very pleased by that and fully cooperated with the FBI. So, there was a close connection there, and it was my role as chargé to help foster that. And I should add that, over the course of the next year or so, the State Department’s Anti-Terrorism Assistance program, the Defense Department, and other USG programs also sponsored training and assistance to the Tanzanians on things like crisis management and security and crime investigations.

Separately, we held an important town hall meeting on August 20 for private American citizens living in Tanzania, and several of us addressed the crowd.

But I must point out that another thing happened on August 20, following a decision made by President Clinton. The U.S. Navy launched cruise missiles that destroyed a pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum and damaged an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan. The United States said the attacks were in response to the embassy bombings, and the bombing of the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory was necessary to prevent bin Laden from acquiring deadly nerve gas precursors that were said to be produced there. But the Sudanese government denied that chemical weapons were ever produced there or anywhere else in the country, for that matter. And later, the U.S. evidence and rationale were publicly criticized as faulty, with many in and out of government believing that the plant was not involved in the production of any chemical weapons. A lot of news articles were written about this, but I didn’t have access to all the classified information and couldn’t tell you one way or the other.

Q: Did the U.S. bombing of that pharmaceutical factory have any impact on your work with the Tanzanians?

LANGE: To some extent. This is where the tenor of the relationship changed a bit with the Tanzanians, as well as in U.S. relations with some other Arab, Muslim, and African states. Once we started going after, attacking, a country in Africa, even though we said the aim was to destroy their ability to make chemical weapons, many Tanzanians didn’t accept our justification and weren’t happy. We still managed to work well with the government, but it was a concern. We actually had an EAC meeting the next day where we determined the threats, especially from small-scale attacks, were greater than before and staff needed to avoid certain potentially unsafe areas in Dar.

Q: Well, John, I thank you very much.

And next time, we'll pick up, what did you do afterwards? I mean, after the initial thing, putting it back together again and all that.

LANGE: Exactly. Okay. Thank you.

Q: Today is the eighteenth of October 2019 with John Lange. And you have been on hiatus, but we're back in shape now, and John, I'll turn it over to you.

LANGE: Thanks, Stu.

When we last talked, I was in the midst of discussing some of the notable events in the weeks following the bombing of the U.S. embassy in Dar es Salaam on August 7, 1998. One such event occurred on Saturday, August 29, when we briefed President Mkapa on the FBI's preliminary findings.

The first team of FBI investigators stayed in Dar for about three and a half, maybe four, weeks, and then was replaced by another team. The FBI changed its leadership every two to four weeks, which Tanzania's Criminal Investigation Department found disconcerting. Toward the end of that first period, we requested a meeting with President Mkapa to give the lead FBI investigator the opportunity to brief him.

I still remember how Mkapa was kind of listening intently, though I'm sure he was thinking this was really an attack by outsiders on Americans, and Tanzania just happened to be their target of opportunity. But his ears really pricked up when the FBI lead pointed out that a couple of the suspected perpetrators, who later were indicted, were from Zanzibar. At that point Mkapa realized this wasn't just some foreign conspiracy directed at Americans, it was a problem that existed inside Tanzania also. And it was really something to see his reaction. The Tanzanian mindset, even though they were so supportive of the investigation and our recovery efforts, was really, well, terrorism is something that happens over there, outside of Tanzania. We're nonaligned, we're a leader in the nonaligned movement. Look at our former president, Julius Nyerere. We're different. Well, terrorism came to Dar es Salaam, and Tanzanians were involved.

That same day, the British high commissioner hosted all the American staff for a barbecue at the British high commission's club, complete with swimming pool. That was just something that we really needed, to get a break from what had been such an intense period of recovery, not only dealing with our own individual situations, in terms of how people were coping after going through the bombing but also having to resurrect embassy operations. This was the first time in weeks when no American in our group was responsible for putting together an event. It was quite a gracious thing for our British friends to do this for us, particularly considering how the residences of both the high commissioner and his deputy had been so damaged by the blast they had had to move into hotels.

Q: You know, I can't remember exactly what we covered before, there's been such a time lapse, but I know that Pru in Kenya had real problems with the government. The president felt, the president of Kenya felt, that the bombing was an outside thing. Lots of Kenyans were killed and you know, it was supposedly our fault the way we attracted the terrorists. Did you have any of that?

LANGE: Thankfully, no. The dynamic in Tanzania was just so different. Some of the stories that came out of Nairobi, particularly about the lack of goodwill from the Kenyan people and their anger directed at the Americans, were perplexing. Of course, over 200 people were killed and some 5,000 injured there, whereas we had eleven people killed and around eighty-five injured in Dar es Salaam. The situations were different. Still, there was such intense and unwarranted resentment on the part of so many Kenyans, whereas we just didn't encounter that in Dar, to my knowledge.

In fact, I think the bombing drew us closer to the Tanzanian government. The FBI investigation was portrayed as a joint Tanzanian-U.S. investigation, even though it was clearly driven by the FBI. The FBI provided equipment and training to the Tanzanian security services. There was just a lot more attention and assistance from the United States that went to the Tanzanian government following the bombing. It was actually a quite positive atmosphere with the Tanzanian government, and the Tanzanian people really didn't blame us. I'm sure there were a few out there, but nothing like the dynamic that existed in Nairobi. And I felt sorry for Ambassador Bushnell and her staff to have to deal with that criticism while they were dealing with their own dead and wounded. I mean, this obviously was not something that the U.S. government ever wanted to happen. We shouldn't be blamed for being a target of Osama bin Laden, blamed by the whole country even though they wanted us to be present there. We had diplomatic relations, we had an embassy, we had a presence, and we had a lot of development assistance programs. It just was grossly unfair criticism, I thought.

I think it's worth mentioning that we still had concerns about our own security. The RSO told the emergency action committee in early September that we were under daily surveillance, and the FBI said it would be foolish to drop our guard against potential threats despite fatigue and complacency setting in.

For decades, there was a tendency in Washington to concentrate regionally based U.S. government employees in a small number of hubs, from which they served nearby posts. I sent a cable to the Department in early September describing the crises and dislocations that some of those hubs, in places like Nairobi, Kinshasa, and Monrovia, had encountered over the years. I wrote that one of the lessons learned was not to put too many eggs in one basket and urged Washington agencies to disperse regional offices rather than concentrate them in a few cities. But I don't think my view had any impact.

Q: Did you go back to Washington at some point?

LANGE: Yes. The State Department arranged for Pru Bushnell and me, along with our families, to fly back to Washington for a memorial service for the victims of the bombings. I arrived in the Department in time to attend the AF Bureau's expanded staff

meeting on September 8. I had been working long, long hours, as did everybody at post, and my entire mindset at that point was on the recovery in Dar es Salaam. I still remember how, just before the staff meeting began, I ran into one of the AF deputy assistant secretaries who said to me, Oh, John, congratulations. We've put your name forward for an ambassadorship, but I just can't remember where. (Laughs) I'm, like, astounded. I had recently learned that I was promoted to the Senior Foreign Service for my performance through April 1998, and I hadn't been thinking at all about my next posting because my three-year tour of duty was scheduled to end in December 2000. So it was just kind of shocking to hear about becoming an ambassador. Pru and I both spoke at the meeting. I thanked everyone for their support but noted we were limited in our abilities to operate as a normal embassy. But I'm sitting there the whole time wondering, Wow, what's happening to me? Where will I be going next?

It turned out, after deliberations in the State Department, Secretary Albright in early November sent to the White House a list of proposed ambassadorial nominees that included me as the nominee for Botswana. That had been my preference among the possibilities that were offered to me, all of them in the AF region. The White House concurred in early December. I found that to be a very happy moment—even though I didn't fully realize then how cumbersome the nomination and confirmation process would be.

Those of us who were based in Dar es Salaam knew everything that had gone on related to the bombing and its aftermath, but on that trip to Washington I learned that we didn't have a full realization of the impact this had had on the Foreign Service worldwide. At one point in the State Department main building, I was walking down a stairwell and ran into somebody who had been in my A-100 class when I was a junior officer. He spontaneously hugged me, so happy to see me alive. The outpouring of emotion was just kind of amazing.

I ended up having a lot of meetings with some very high-level people: Secretary of State Albright, USAID Administrator Atwood, the Peace Corps director, assistant secretaries, and retired Admiral William Crowe. Admiral Crowe chaired the State Department Accountability Review Boards appointed to examine the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam security procedures, and he came to Dar in November. I'll talk about that later.

I also attended the September 8 swearing-in ceremony of Ambassador Charles Stith. He had been in the pipeline for many, many months, as I mentioned earlier. In fact, he'd even given his unofficial approval of me as his DCM back when I was still in Washington in the fall of '97. He first arrived in Dar es Salaam on September 12, while I was still in the United States.

But the primary reason that Pru and I were called back to Washington was to attend a memorial service at Washington National Cathedral honoring the victims of the bombings. And that took place with the highest levels of the U.S. government there. Pru and I each read from scripture, from the bible. I insisted, and I believe I had an impact on this, that there also be a Muslim State Department employee there to read from the Quran, because most of those who died in Dar es Salaam were Muslims, and Tanzania is

a country where about half of the population is Muslim. There were tributes delivered by Secretary of Defense William Cohen, Secretary of State Albright, Vice President Al Gore, and President Clinton. And then the sermon was given by Reverend Jesse Jackson. Hillary Clinton attended as the first lady.

And the date of the memorial service was 9/11—9/11/1998. Exactly three years before what Americans now call 9/11. And there's just something about that date that is unnerving to me. Here we had this big memorial service for those who had died in an attack by Osama bin Laden, and it took place exactly three years before bin Laden's 9/11/2001 attacks on American soil.

Alejandra, Julia, and I then ended up going to Wisconsin to visit my family before we returned to Dar.

Q: Were there any congressional hearings and all about this?

LANGE: To my knowledge, no, which is quite sad.

Q: As I recall, Pru made the point, this was part of her general unhappiness with the response, because rather than have, you know, congressional hearings to explore why this happened and what we could understand about the nature of the terrorist threat and embassy security, which may have been high-profile, congressional-wise there wasn't any particular impetus to hold hearings.

LANGE: Yes. It's terribly damning because, in retrospect, we all—including the Congress—should have recognized the true threat that al-Qaeda presented so that we may have been able to prevent the 9/11 attacks. But my impression is that there were other things occupying Washington, which tends to focus on big headlines and the crisis of the day. For example, the bombs went off in August of '98 in an election year, and in November we had the midterm elections. Even at that memorial service on September 11, that morning, my recollection is, there was an article, front page article, in the *Washington Post* describing the independent counsel's impeachment report to the House claiming the president lied and obstructed justice to hide an affair with Monica Lewinsky. And I can tell you, just sitting in the pew across the aisle from the president and the first lady, they weren't, like, exchanging friendly glances, they were like, quite serious.

Q: Well. Oh, yeah.

LANGE: So, in other words, it's as if other things were considered more important inside the Beltway, even though you can argue in retrospect it was far more important to be concerned about the threat that al-Qaeda presented. So, yes, very, very distressing not to hold congressional hearings.

My family and I returned to Dar es Salaam on September 20. Charles Stith had arrived on September 12 and presented his credentials on September 17, so I got back to work but in my new role as the deputy chief of mission to a sitting ambassador. There were, to be frank, people among the staff who were not at all pleased that we had a politically

appointed ambassador with his own goals and agenda for U.S. policy toward Tanzania but who hadn't gone through what we had experienced. We were still struggling to recover. There were people in Washington who were aware of those staff concerns, but Ambassador Stith decided, I'm not changing my schedule, I'm coming to Dar as planned.

Q: Would you talk a bit about Ambassador Stith's coming and how he dealt with things?

LANGE: Charles was a United Methodist minister, and Reverend Stith, as others called him, was actually quite good at showing empathy, at understanding people and the concerns that the staff and families had.

The ambassador's residence had been almost completely ready for his arrival when the bomb went off, but it was only a block from the embassy and was badly damaged. He and his family ended up having to live in a hotel for several weeks after his arrival. He was good about it. When we finally were able to finish the repairs and he was able to move out of the hotel and into his residence, he very nicely said, Let's have a party there, a gathering of all embassy staff toward the end of a workday. So we all were able to get together, looking forward, with everybody attending the morale-boosting event.

And I think I was the one responsible for the idea that we should give the FSN employees, the locally engaged staff, as well as the Americans, the opportunity to visit the bombed-out building before the party began. By then, the FBI had said they no longer needed the building for evidentiary purposes. I had gone back there frequently, but for many of the staff it was the first time they were allowed to go back into the building to see their desks, to see where they had been at the time of the blast, to look at all the damage, et cetera. I thought it was really telling in terms of how people reacted to the bombing. About half of them took us up on the offer, and as we walked through the building they were commenting on their whereabouts when the explosion occurred. Meanwhile, the other half of the staff never wanted to go inside that building again. They didn't even want to think about it. They wanted to put it all behind them. It really tells you something about people's reactions. For me, it has been cathartic over the years to talk publicly about the bombing, whereas for some others they never want to talk about it and some never want to participate in commemorative ceremonies.

But back to your point about Ambassador Stith, he was very sympathetic about what we had gone through, while at the same time he established a way forward for the embassy in pursuing his goals for U.S.-Tanzania relations. I think that his arrival helped to move us forward. He developed good relations around the country, good relations with the leadership of the country. He did stick with his agenda, which was very much focused on U.S.-Tanzania trade and trying to help Tanzania to develop. I found that I couldn't really spend time supporting that agenda while also spending the time I needed on our recovery operations, so we created a group of staff members whose roles involved business and economic issues who would meet with the ambassador at least once a week, I believe it was. I didn't participate very often because I just didn't have the time for that, and in any event I didn't have a lot of expertise in economics and trade.

I must say, however, I found it was not an easy transition to go from being the longtime acting ambassador to number two. In the first weeks it was clear that people both inside and outside the embassy were still looking to me. The entire diplomatic corps, all the ambassadors, knew me, knew my leadership. As chargé d'affaires, I'd been going to meetings of the diplomatic corps for over eight months. They were kind of looking to me, and yet I was no longer the leader, I was by then in my role as deputy chief of mission. Ambassador Stith and I had a candid discussion at one point to just talk this over, about how we were going to work things out, and after that we worked well together.

Q: Did you all have to look for another building for embassy operations, or did you just stay at the former PAO residence?

LANGE: We couldn't really remain at the PAO residence for years while a new, permanent embassy was being built. The building wasn't secure enough, and we were using several shipping containers to provide additional office space. So we needed rather quickly to find an existing building in Dar es Salaam that could serve as the interim office building [IOB] while a permanent structure meeting security standards could be built. We ended up staying at the temporary office building, the PAO residence, for six months.

We found a building complex that seemed to meet our needs (though it was located right next to a river and we later experienced some flooding). We had to get lots of security waivers from the Department, too many to make it suitable for our permanent embassy. For security reasons, we needed the Tanzanians to agree to close a street that was behind the Russian embassy, and that required negotiations with the Russians to get their approval.

The Russian ambassador was no stranger to violence. A few years earlier he was head of the Chechen Republic and survived an assassination attempt while riding in a convoy. As I mentioned, his residence in Dar had been damaged in the embassy bombing because it was only a half a block from the U.S. embassy. I ended up negotiating directly with him on the street closing. He enjoyed these negotiations, which he always scheduled for late in the afternoon. I still remember going to his embassy with a fellow from State's Foreign Buildings Office. We all sit in the embassy's meeting room, negotiating via an interpreter for about ten minutes, and then he says, Okay, that's enough. I think we've accomplished what we can today. Let's bring out the vodka. This is 5:00 in the afternoon and he's bringing out the vodka. So, I thought, Well, we've got to be diplomatic and cordial, so we're sitting there and his aide fills our shot glasses with Russian vodka. Boris Yeltsin was the Russian president at that time and, of course, Bill Clinton was the American president. And the ambassador then says, through the interpreter, quote, "To our two presidents." And then he knocks down his entire shot of vodka. Well, I took a sip of mine and he looks at it and says, "Which of the two presidents were you not toasting to?" (Laughs) Just a pretty clever line. So, I felt obligated to finish my vodka. I was supposed to have a meeting early that evening with Ambassador Stith, but at the end of the meeting with the Russian ambassador I asked Charles to postpone our meeting because the ambassador was a little too generous in providing us vodka.

Q: I know I was in Yugoslavia, and we'd make these field trips, and everywhere we had to have three shots, big shots of Slivovitz, and that really would knock you out.

LANGE: I'd never served in the Soviet Union or Russia or that part of the world, so for me it was an eye-opening experience.

In the end, the Russians agreed to the closing of the street behind their embassy, but at a price. As I recall, FBO [Foreign Buildings Office] ended up paying to build them a new tennis court and some other things, just so we could get the required security for our IOB. That may seem ridiculous, but as I said earlier, you gotta do what you gotta do.

With that, we were able to lease the interim office building and make the required structural changes so that a compound of eight new residential villas could be converted into secure, functional, and attractive office space serving as the U.S. embassy for several years. I have to say that the renovation proved to be a really huge task. FBO first had to deconstruct much of some of the buildings, particularly in the controlled access areas, and install numerous communications and security systems. However daunting the task, they managed to complete the project in less than five months. Kudos to them.

Meanwhile, we also worked on finding a location to build a permanent office building. And that initially turned out to be kind of a bad experience. We found a place that seemed to be a perfect location. We agreed to buy it and sent a diplomatic note to the foreign ministry informing them that we were going to be moving to this place, so it was official. Well, it took them about a month and then they realized, Oh, no, we don't want the American embassy there because, I believe, it was next to an intelligence facility or some kind of Tanzanian government facility that they didn't want us located next to. By then we had been moving forward to secure that site, but this notice put a stop to that. The permanent secretary, the top civil servant in the foreign ministry, apologized to me saying well, he hadn't really focused enough on the diplomatic note that we had sent, it wasn't his decision to disapprove it, he had just learned—obviously from other elements of the Tanzanian government—that it couldn't be located there. So, we had to find another location, which we did at a place that used to be a drive-in, a movie theater drive-in, and that's where the permanent embassy was eventually built.

Q: Did things calm down in the ensuing months?

LANGE: Just a bit. During this period security remained a big concern for us, as you would expect. After a while, the U.S. marines departed and TPDF [Tanzania Peoples Defence Forces] soldiers were stationed at the machine gun nest in front of the temporary embassy. But it was very unnerving, almost three months after the bombing, when gunshots were fired on the embassy compound late one afternoon. This occurred during what the marine detachment called a "react" drill. What happened was a young TPDF serviceman, apparently drunk, fired two shots of an AK-47 toward local contract guards and then was quickly subdued by his fellow soldiers. No one was hit, but this was truly a scary incident that caused a moment of panic and commotion and evoked lots of bad memories.

And we kept getting lots of VIP visitors, folks like the secretary of commerce, the surgeon general, the DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency] director, the Peace Corps director, and the director general of the Foreign Service.

And Admiral William Crowe and the Accountability Review Board for Dar came in November to do their interviews with lots of us.

Q: Can you explain what an Accountability Review Board is?

LANGE: The ARBs are convened by the secretary of state to do independent reviews of the circumstances surrounding security-related incidents, and they determine accountability and promote improved security for U.S. missions and personnel abroad. So they don't investigate terrorism—they look at embassy security. In the cases of Nairobi and Dar, the members were selected by the secretary of state and the director of central intelligence. Retired Admiral Crowe was perfect for the role: He had chaired the Joint Chiefs of Staff and had been the U.S. Ambassador to the UK. He chaired both the Nairobi and Dar boards, and they issued their reports in January 1999.

Q: What did the review board conclude?

LANGE: I was a little nervous when they interviewed me, wondering if they had come up with something I had done wrong, but they assured me I was in no way to be blamed. In the cover letter to Secretary Albright, Crowe commended, I'll quote here, "the remarkable personal courage of the staffs in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam for their response to the attacks, including countless hours spent in locating and rescuing victims, providing for emergency assistance, and managing to restore embassy operations under conditions of extreme crisis." That was a really nice tribute to the two embassy staffs.

Their discussion and findings for Dar concluded that no USG employees breached their duty and all should be commended for their professionalism. And they specifically applauded my leadership and the great work of the six marines in the MSG detachment, RSO John DiCarlo, and PAO Dudley Sims. They said Dudley's handling of the press and public affairs was textbook quality—quite a compliment. And they even talked about that infamous filled water tank truck apparently blocking the bomb vehicle and then being propelled over three stories into the air, absorbing some of the blast's shock wave that otherwise would have hit the chancery with even greater force.

We were pleased that the ARB found that our security systems and procedures were in accord with, and in some ways exceeded, the Department's standards for low-threat posts. But they zeroed in on our lack of a one-hundred-foot setback and even quoted a 1993 OIG [Office of Inspector General] report saying, believe it or not, that the chancery's setback of twenty-five to seventy-five feet from the roadway was considered to be adequate given the terrorist threat level. And a 1994 OIG follow-up review said there were organizations with terrorist ties present in Dar es Salaam, but they hadn't been targeting American interests, so the low threat rating appeared reasonable. Gimme a break. The ARB rightfully concluded that the Department's standards were simply inadequate and needed immediate review. The head of crisis management at the Foreign

Service Institute called the report a “mini-Inman,” a reference to the seminal 1985 report on overseas security.

So I have to say that the real impact of the two ARBs was in their overall conclusions and recommendations. Even today, that should be required reading for anyone working on embassy security. They lamented that many of the problems cited in the landmark 1985 Inman report persisted, and they were particularly disturbed by the collective failure of the U.S. government, including several administrations and Congress, to provide adequate resources to reduce the vulnerability of our diplomatic missions in most countries. Shortly after the bombings, Congress passed an emergency supplemental appropriation of over a billion dollars, but the ARBs termed that as just a first step and said \$1.4 billion per year was needed for ten years. They said, first and foremost, the secretary of state needed to take a personal and active role in ensuring security of diplomatic personnel abroad. To her credit, Secretary Albright wrote in the Department’s April 1999 report to Congress that she agreed with all of the recommendations, with slight differences in tactics for implementing a few of them. And Admiral Crowe wrote a compelling op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* that May with the ominous headline, “Two Embassies Down...More U.S. ambassadors than generals and admirals have been killed in service since World War II.”

Q: Yes, that’s a really striking statement, and all too true. Since that time, a lot of new embassies and consulates have been constructed.

LANGE: Correct. I haven’t followed how much Congress has appropriated since that period to build new, secure missions, but it’s clear that great progress has been made.

Q: Do you feel that the East Africa embassy bombings—sort of 9/11 for the Foreign Service—precipitated a security response that should have been around much before?

LANGE: Yes. I mean, I think you could go back to the April 1983 suicide bombing of the U.S. embassy in Beirut and the December 1983 suicide bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait City to say we should have been more prepared, we should have had more secure embassies around the world. Yes, those bombings led to a comprehensive review of overseas security chaired by retired Admiral Inman and the establishment of State’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security. But the U.S. embassy in Nairobi never should have remained where it was because it was inherently in an insecure area in downtown Nairobi. I had visited that embassy about a month and a half before the bombs went off and remember looking out the window to see the busy traffic on the boulevard right in front of the building.

So I think that wake-up calls on the need for greater embassy security came back in the 1980s, resulting in the Inman report and all of the requirements for one-hundred-foot setbacks and other security measures. And the required security improvements should have been fully funded but weren’t. Then the next wake-up call, and maybe I’m missing one along the way, but the next big wake-up call—on the need for greater embassy security and on the threat posed by Osama bin Laden—came on August 7, 1998. And we

shouldn't have had to wait until 9/11 in 2001 to understand that al-Qaeda was a grave threat to the United States.

Q: No.

LANGE: After 9/11, the U.S. government transformed itself, created the Department of Homeland Security and all that. But I'm sorry, it has been a dangerous world for decades. Foreign Service personnel put themselves at risk. The idea in the 1980s and 1990s that, well, we're going to underfund embassy security programs because we're putting our money into more DOD programs without concomitant increases in the State Department budget that were called for in the Inman report is just appalling.

Q: Well, I know that about two years ago my daughters and I were on a river cruise on the Danube, and we went to our embassy where we spent five years in Belgrade, and the embassy is an empty building now. It's an apartment thing. It was on a main boulevard and our apartments where we lived were attached to the embassy right next to a busy street. But it's moved out somewhere.

LANGE: And I'm sure the new building is a lot more secure than the old one. Since leaving Dar, I have visited the two new embassies built in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, and it's obvious that they're just so much more secure.

Q: When did you move into the interim building?

LANGE: In early February. We held a ceremony for the move from the PAO residence to the interim office building, which ended up being used for several years while the permanent building was constructed. And then we held the official opening on March 2 featuring Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Tom Pickering and Foreign Minister Kikwete. The diplomatic corps was there, and it was a very nice, outdoor ceremony. Even though by then it was seven months after the bombing, it was really inspiring to hear messages from President Clinton and Secretary Albright and to have the under secretary present to show support for all that we were doing.

Ambassador Pickering, who thirty years earlier had served as consul in Zanzibar and then as DCM in Dar es Salaam, spoke to the press in Swahili. That was very impressive. We surprised him during his visit by naming the new USIS information resource center in his honor. I wrote an article about the opening for the May issue of *State* magazine entitled, "Dar es Salaam: Back in Business and Here to Stay," to emphasize how the United States will not be cowed by terrorists, will stick by its friends, and will maintain its presence in the world.

My family and I departed Dar es Salaam around the end of June, almost exactly eighteen months after arriving. It was supposed to be a three-year tour, but because of my nomination to be the U.S. ambassador to Botswana, which I'll talk about later, I ended up leaving post early. And I told everybody in the diplomatic corps, as we were saying our goodbyes, how I had experienced a three-year tour over the previous eighteen months. Because it was the most intense period of my life. For one, I was the *chargé d'affaires*

basically from day one for a total of about eight and a half months. Had a lot of things going on. We had a very active embassy of about fifty Americans and a couple hundred Tanzanian employees. Then the bomb went off, and that began this incredibly demanding period. It just felt like it was a three-year tour, even though it lasted eighteen months.

Q: How often have you returned to Dar es Salaam?

LANGE: A few times. When I was ambassador to Botswana and special representative to the Southern African Development Community [SADC], I returned to Dar in April 2000 for SADC business and to attend a wedding. By coincidence, Cynthia Kimble also was in Dar for the first time since she was medevaced the evening of the bombing. We had a very emotional reunion.

And on August 7, 19—sorry, August 7, 2008—I was back in Dar for the ten-year anniversary. The ambassador at the time, Mark Green, who is now the USAID administrator, was very gracious and I was one of the speakers at the commemorative ceremony. It was held in the courtyard, the big, broad courtyard of the new U.S. embassy building, and it's a very secure space. I know that some distinguished U.S. diplomats have argued that the rise of risk aversion at the State Department undermines our ability to work effectively, and that may be the case in some instances. And I read, as you often do, outsiders criticizing new U.S. embassies for being built like fortresses, with tall walls and cumbersome security procedures that mean outsiders can't get in without jumping through a lot of hoops. My response is you've never presided over a memorial service, as I did, for people who were killed at your embassy. I'm sorry, but I strongly believe we need to have our diplomats and all the other personnel at an embassy working in secure facilities. The security of our people is paramount.

By the way, if you want to get an indication of how the date August 7, 1998, is imprinted on my mind: When I was in Dar es Salaam for the August 7, 2008, event, I cashed a check at the embassy cashier and dated it August 7, 1998. I didn't even realize my mistake until much later. They still cashed it.

I also returned to Dar on a Gates Foundation business trip a few years later. Other than that horrible, fateful day of the bombing, I loved being in Tanzania.

Q. In addition to that ten-year anniversary event in Tanzania, I assume that over the years you've attended other events to honor the victims.

LANGE: Yes. Every year, at 10:30 a.m. on August 7, survivors and family members living in the Washington area who can make it gather at the memorial plaque for the Nairobi and Dar bombing victims at Arlington. We commiserate and catch up with each other and have a moment of silence for the victims. In a way it's like a family reunion memorializing the tragic passing of family members.

And there have been other, more formal East Africa embassy bombing commemorations over the years. They took place just about every year for the first ten years, and now every five years. I have attended the ones in Washington whenever possible.

On May 7, 1999, Foreign Service Day, two memorial plaques to the victims were unveiled in a dedication in the State Department featuring Secretary of State Albright and National Security Adviser Sandy Berger. Pru Bushnell and I flew to Washington for the ceremony. The Secretary said, quote, “The era of safe diplomatic posts is over for America,” unquote, and that we must minimize the risk of terrorism every day.

By the time of the one-year anniversary on August 7, I was temporarily living back in Washington as I waited for my Senate confirmation hearing. There was a commemorative ceremony in the Department with Secretary Albright that included a moving video presentation remembering our late colleagues. And in May 2000 the secretary presided over a ceremony to dedicate the permanent memorial at Arlington National Cemetery to those who lost their lives, though Pru and I were at our overseas posts and unable to attend.

For the twentieth anniversary commemoration in 2018, there were events on August 6-7 organized by the U.S. Diplomacy Center as well as by the State Department, and then our annual gathering and moment of silence on August 7 at Arlington National Cemetery. [The U.S. Diplomacy Center was renamed the National Museum of American Diplomacy in 2019.] The Diplomacy Center set up a display of bombing artifacts, and Pru Bushnell and I narrated a tour of the exhibit that was shown on American History TV on C-SPAN3. The center also put on an event in the Department where many of us who had been through the bombing spoke, both from the Dar es Salaam and the Nairobi sides.

The next day, Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan, Pru, others, and I spoke at the official Department commemoration. In my speech, I talked about the heroes. Each and every employee was a hero, each and every family member was a hero. Americans mattered, Tanzanians mattered. It was incredible how, despite the deaths and injuries, we all rose together to meet the challenge. It was just incredible what people were able to accomplish.

It was poignant for the group of us to get together, almost two dozen Dar es Salaam survivors and family members. Dr. Soter DaSilva, the embassy’s local doctor, flew in from Dar es Salaam and others flew in from Cairo, Seattle, and elsewhere. We just felt the bonds of friendship. Others couldn’t make it, couldn’t travel long distances, but there’s really a closeness among all of us. And personally, I’m just forever grateful about how those people—heroes, really—rose to the occasion in one of the most devastating things that can ever happen, an embassy destroyed at the same time that another embassy was destroyed in a neighboring country, on what I think is probably the most tragic day in the history of the Foreign Service.

Q: Yes, that was a terrible day the Foreign Service will never forget.

LANGE: Earlier I mentioned the July-August 2018 special issue of the *Foreign Service Journal* marking the twentieth anniversary. It included forty articles by Americans, Kenyans, and Tanzanians with our reflections on what we went through the day of the bombing and subsequently. It was really quite serious and engrossing but also very

gripping and sad. It's really tough reading, and I know a lot of people couldn't read the whole issue at once.

And then, just this year [September 2019], Elizabeth Slater was the inaugural honoree of the State Department's "Heroes of U.S. Diplomacy" initiative. The ceremony included introductory remarks by Secretary of State Michael Pompeo. As I said earlier, Lizzie had arrived in Dar es Salaam shortly before the bomb went off and was one of the heroes in our response. She herself was injured in the bombing but kept working.

Regarding the staff and family members, I would like to pay homage to all of them. A little over two weeks after the bombing, I wrote an article that appeared in *State* magazine in October with the headline, "Dar es Salaam: Confronting the Crisis." I tried to mention as many of the Americans and key FSNs, who had performed so admirably in the emergency, as I could—though the editors shortened the article and deleted some of the names, unfortunately. And I wrote an article in the March 2001 *Foreign Service Journal* emphasizing the human factor in crisis response: all employees matter, experience matters, staffing gaps matter, Foreign Service generalists and specialists matter, family members matter, FSNs matter. It's been said that the Foreign Service is composed of cool heads in hot spots, and in Dar they proved to be heroes. I just regret that I haven't been able to mention all of those Americans and Tanzanians by name in this interview.

From my perspective, I really feel an obligation to keep in touch with them. I maintain a mailing list of over fifty Americans and Tanzanians who were in Dar es Salaam when the bomb went off, and every year beginning shortly before August 7 many of us send emails to the entire group, just to commiserate with each other, keep in touch, and update the others on our careers and families. It's kind of a thinking-of-you email to mark the anniversary. And it really can get quite poignant in terms of the responses from people when they're reminded of what we all went through. We still feel a camaraderie and a closeness.

Q: How would you describe the emotional state of the people you are in touch with?

LANGE: I'm not a trained psychiatrist, but in my interactions over the years with the bombing survivors there's one thing that I've become convinced about: don't expect people who go through an experience as traumatic as this bombing, whether the employees or family members, to come to psychological "closure." Some may be able to do so, but for others it will live with them for the rest of their lives, seared into their memories in a way that cannot be forgotten. As I mentioned earlier, a fair number of people who were in Dar es Salaam on August 7 have suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. Some of them have written about it, while others, I'm sure, are hiding it.

I still remember sitting in my office in the State Department, about five years after the bombing, and hearing a low, rumbling sound from a nearby helicopter. That immediately triggered memories of the rumbling sound I had heard for a second or two before the bomb blew in the windows in my office at the embassy in Dar. Thankfully, I haven't experienced such recollections in recent years. A doctor once told me that I probably have a mild case of PTSD.

After I returned to Dar and met with embassy staff in April 2000, I came away feeling sorry for the Americans who had survived the bombing and were still stationed there. The bombed-out building was still standing in its highly visible location, so none of them could avoid seeing that grim reminder. Around that time, I spoke to several people who went through the bombings in Nairobi and Dar, and we all thought the Department should have rotated every American out in the following six to twelve months. The Americans should move on physically to help them move on psychologically. And while the Tanzanian FSNs were unable to leave, it would be better for them to be working for a new group of Americans who had arrived post-bombing.

Eventually, of course, the Americans moved on to other postings or retirement. Of the Tanzanians that I've been able to stay in touch with, some have retired, and others still work at the embassy. Some actually moved to the United States after they were able to get visas for having served the U.S. government for many years.

Q: You know, when we're finished with this whole thing, you'll certainly have another document to send out to those people.

LANGE: Yes, very much so.

Q: Over the years have you ever run into any of the others, Tanzanian officials and the like, you dealt with at the time of the bombing?

LANGE: Yes. I've never met anyone who was in Dar es Salaam on August 7, 1998, who could not say exactly where they were the second the bomb went off. Because it was so loud, people who were miles away heard it. People who were far from the embassy told me that somebody would say, Oh, that must be an electrical transformer blowing up, because that kind of thing would happen every once in a while, or a bird hit a window, or it was some other kind of noise that they thought was close to them because it was so loud. It was that loud and that memorable. I assume the same holds true for people who were in Nairobi.

Years later, in 2011, after I had retired from the Foreign Service and joined the Gates Foundation, I ended up having a conversation with former Foreign Minister Jakaya Kikwete—he was then the Tanzanian president—outside of a meeting of the African Union in Addis Ababa. He saw me in the distance, about fifty feet away, remembered me, and called me by my first name. We chatted about the bombing. He had come to the embassy, arriving maybe twenty-five, thirty-five minutes after the bomb went off, and I remember shaking his hand at that time. In Addis, he told me how he remembered he was home that morning, going to go to his office later. And when the bomb went off, he came to the embassy right away, as soon as he could.

And on the margins of a different African Union meeting, in Kampala in 2010, I talked to Jane Goodall, the famous anthropologist, and mentioned that I had been stationed in Dar es Salaam, where my family and I had actually met her at a small dinner hosted by Ambassador Stith. She didn't remember meeting me then, but when I said that I was in

charge of the U.S. embassy at the time of the bombing, she said, Oh, I remember. I was at my home that day in Dar es Salaam. I remember exactly when it happened.

And the same holds true for many who were in Washington. In September 2016, I happened to see former Secretary Albright at a meeting in New York. We chatted a bit and she said, People always ask me if I loved being secretary of state, and I always respond, every single day except for August 7, 1998.

As I said, everybody in Dar es Salaam that day knows exactly where they were when that bomb went off at 10:39 in the morning. And I assume that is also the case for anybody who was in Lower Manhattan or the Pentagon or the field in Pennsylvania—or in the entire country, the United States, for that matter—during the unforgettable attacks on 9/11.

Q: Do you view the embassy bombings as a precursor to the 9/11 attacks?

LANGE: Yes, definitely. August 7 was really a day that had such a huge impact on the Foreign Service and the State Department, and to me the saddest thing about it all is the U.S. government didn't get the wake-up call.

As you said, Congress did not hold hearings about this. The 9/11 Commission report described several instances when President Clinton and his national security team apparently had the opportunity to capture or kill Osama bin Laden, but they chose not to do so for various reasons, including concern that some civilians would be killed. The commission also reported that President Bush's Presidential Daily Brief five weeks before 9/11 included an item saying that bin Laden was determined to strike in the United States, but the president didn't respond or at least didn't respond adequately. It was so clear that the U.S. government was not focused on the seriousness of the terrorist threat from someone who had been able, incredibly, to bomb two U.S. embassies simultaneously, kill 224 people total, and injure 5,000 people. To me it's just shocking that the U.S. government didn't do more, earlier, to focus on the threat from al-Qaeda.

And when the tragedy of 9/11 occurred a little over three years after the East Africa bombings, it really had an impact on those of us who had been through the attack in Dar es Salaam, and I'm sure it did for those in Nairobi, too. By then I was in Gaborone, and I felt that same rush of adrenalin—kind of a physical reaction to intense anxiety—that had been with me for a lengthy period after the Dar bombing. People were really angry, even though most of the Americans by then were in different parts of the world, no longer based in Dar es Salaam. In our email exchanges, one survivor of the Dar bombing told me that he was dysfunctional, another survivor told me she was incapacitated, and a third said that he was bitter and negative because we hadn't hunted down bin Laden after the embassy bombings. In other words—and there are psychologists who can explain this better than I—when 9/11 occurred, many of us were retraumatized, reliving our harrowing experience from Osama bin Laden's 1998 attack. And to see the tragic devastation, with the Twin Towers going down, the Pentagon hit, and the plane that went down in Pennsylvania that was headed for Washington, that's a horrific tragedy that one can argue could have been prevented. Several Dar and Nairobi bombing survivors,

including me, later contributed short pieces to a November 2001 *State* magazine collection offering our reflections on September 11 from the perspective of those who had gone through the terrorist attacks three years earlier.

Q: We all know how Osama bin Laden was killed in Pakistan in 2011, but what about the others who managed to pull off the bombings? You said there had been trials in New York.

LANGE: Most of the conspirators have been captured and imprisoned, killed, or otherwise died. I've testified in all three of the trials held in Manhattan in the Southern District of New York—in 2001, 2010, and 2015—and other witnesses from Dar have testified. For each trial, the federal prosecutors discussed Nairobi in one portion and Dar in a separate portion. I led off the Dar segment, to set the stage. I had no direct knowledge that would connect the defendants to the crime, of course, but others who followed me were able to do that.

I have to say, one of the things that most impressed me during the three trials was the professionalism and expertise of the Justice Department prosecutors and the FBI investigators. They were able to put together from various sources government exhibits consisting of a video and a large set of photographs, and some of the video and photos showing fire and smoke must have been taken in the first minutes after the bomb exploded. It's gruesome viewing, including a human torso on the ground.

And for each trial, a Justice Department office [Office for Victims of Crime] provided travel assistance to victims from Kenya, Tanzania, and the United States to witness a week of trial proceedings—five victims and five traveling companions. That's truly a commendable U.S. government program.

Q: Yes, that's impressive.

LANGE: There was a lot of public interest in the 2001 trial. One of the four defendants was a Tanzanian, Khalfan Khamis Mohamed. His attorney acknowledged that Mohamed knowingly participated in the bombing of the embassy in Tanzania—I assume because the evidence was overwhelming—but argued that he was just a gofer and a pawn used by higher-ups.

He had been captured in South Africa in 1999 and held in a cell in Cape Town, where he confessed to an FBI agent who testified at the trial. I wasn't in the courtroom during her testimony, but reading about it was quite enlightening. She said that, after confessing that he helped build the explosives, he asked her, quote, "Does this mean I'm going to see America?" Yeah, from a courtroom and a prison cell.

What happened was that Mohamed had rented a single-family house with high walls in the Ilala district, where he and others assembled the bomb. They loaded a 1987 Nissan Atlas truck, but it was so heavy with explosives that a few days before the bombing it sank into the sand and they had to dig it out. On that fateful morning, he was on the truck but then got out to go back and clean the house while the lone suicide bomber, the

Egyptian known as Ahmed the German, proceeded to the embassy. The agent testified that Mohamed was not sorry that Tanzanians were killed—he basically considered it part of the job, and Allah would take care of them. Wow. And their first target was U.S. soldiers, but soldiers were such a hard target that they decided to target U.S. government installations instead. I thought that reinforced the need to strengthen embassy security—to make it a harder target.

Q: Who from the embassy in Dar es Salaam testified?

LANGE: I was the lead witness in the Dar es Salaam portion, just as Ambassador Prudence Bushnell had been the lead witness in the Nairobi portion that had occurred earlier in the trial. Lizzie Slater, FSN translator Justina Mdobilu, and security guard Edward Rutahesherwa also testified.

The prosecutor basically asked me to describe my activities from 10:00 a.m. that morning through mid-afternoon, which I talked to you about in detail in one of our earlier meetings. I told the court that I now kind of understood what it's like when the parachute doesn't open and your entire life flashes in front of your eyes, because I could still see that window glass blowing over my head in slow motion, even though there was only a split second before it landed on the people in front of me, including Tina. The prosecution also asked me to identify certain things in a model they had built of the embassy and surrounding buildings as they existed before the bombing. The defense didn't ask me any questions, based on an order from the court.

Tina, who was eight months pregnant at the time of the explosion, told the court she was knocked to the floor by the blast. She gave an animated description of what happened to her and her colleagues. Lizzie choked back tears describing how we took the rubble off of her and how she saw lots of body parts as she walked down the stairwell to leave the building. Edward, who was paid the equivalent of about \$100 a month, explained that he was on a break when the bomb exploded and his replacement was killed. I have here the *New York Times* article, which says our testimony was packed with stomach-churning details and calls it a grim continuation of the terrible tales of the Nairobi bombing earlier in the trial.

They wouldn't let me observe the trial proceedings before I testified, but afterward I was able to sit among the spectators watching the trial. I have to say, I really developed great respect for the investigative powers of the FBI and the Department of Justice in testifying in that trial. The prosecutors introduced evidence of a damaged piece from a vehicle. Then an FBI explosives examiner testifies that, Well, when I got to Dar es Salaam, I was digging in the bomb crater, maybe ten or fifteen feet deep, and found that vehicle part with a vehicle identification number on it. And then an expert from Nissan in Japan who flew in for the trial identifies the piece as being from a Nissan Atlas refrigeration truck. And because of the way it was designed, the expert could tell that it was from the 1987 model year. Then the prosecutors have somebody they flew in from Dar es Salaam who sells used vehicles testify that, Oh, yes, I remember in 1998 selling a used 1987 Nissan Atlas refrigeration truck. And I'll simplify this, it wasn't quite this way in the trial, but basically, they also brought in from Tanzania a house girl, a businessman, a landlord, and

others to establish a link from that piece of damaged metal to the conspirators who were part of this al-Qaeda conspiracy to bomb the embassy in Dar es Salaam, as part of the broader conspiracy to bomb both embassies. It was really impressive to watch. It was just amazing to see how they connected the dots and were able to tie the bombing to the Tanzanian, Khalfan Khamis Mohamed.

At the end of that day, it was March 13, after the four of us testified, we met with lead prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald and Mary Jo White, then the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, in her office. She expressed sympathy for what we had experienced on August 7 and thanked us.

Q: What was the verdict?

LANGE: In May the jury found the four defendants guilty on all 302 counts. Mohamed was convicted of murdering eleven people in the attack in Dar. A big victory for the American justice system.

After the verdict was announced, CNN wanted to interview me by phone but the Department, in its infinite wisdom and without consulting me, decided instead to refer CNN to the deputy spokesman's rather bland three-paragraph statement and to DOJ for further information. I was really upset by that. We had an important story to tell about the tragic deaths and injuries, about the risks and the great sacrifices that Foreign Service and other overseas personnel make in representing the United States, and about the need for secure facilities abroad. There was no way the Justice Department would focus on that.

Q: That was a missed opportunity.

LANGE: Yes, it was. It still irritates me. The AF bureau appealed to PA [Public Affairs] on my behalf, and PA grudgingly agreed it was okay for me to speak to CNN as long as I talked about my experience and the general risk to diplomats, but not about embassy security or funding to construct new embassies. But the appeal took time, and by then CNN was no longer interested. CNN quoted Susan Hirsch, the American Fulbright scholar whose husband Jamal died in the blast and who attended the trial, saying, "The pain and emptiness that I feel is both deeply private and truly indescribable."

Q: And their sentences?

LANGE: In October, a little over five weeks after the 9/11 attacks, Judge Leonard B. Sand sentenced each of the four defendants to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Well-deserved. As Attorney General John Ashcroft said, America won a battle and sent a message. The United States will hunt terrorists down and make them pay the price for their evil acts. And I was happy to play my part in winning this battle in the war against terrorism.

They also were required to pay millions of dollars in restitution to the bombing victims, even though they didn't have the money. That may seem odd, but the prosecution said they wanted to prevent the four from profiting from future endeavors, like writing books.

Mohamed was a pretty nasty character. I remember hearing from a DOJ official that a couple of months before the trial, he and another al-Qaeda prisoner had attacked a guard in a failed attempt to escape from federal prison. They stabbed the officer in the eye with a sharpened comb, resulting in severe brain damage. During the trial's sentencing phase, prosecutors argued that Mohamed posed a constant threat to prison guards and deserved capital punishment, but that was unsuccessful. CNN said that, according to two jurors, the panel deadlocked, 9-3, on capital punishment for Mohamed and one of the other defendants. A few jurors reportedly wanted to prevent them from becoming martyrs. Mohamed wouldn't speak when he came before the judge for sentencing, but his lawyer said he wanted to express gratitude to the jury for sparing his life.

Q: You said you testified in other trials?

LANGE: Yes. For the 2010 trial, and this is in the public record, Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, a Tanzanian from Zanzibar who was directly involved in the Dar attack and who was said to have served as an Osama bin Laden bodyguard, had been detained by the CIA in what was called a "Black Site." He then was transferred to the Guantanamo Bay detention camp. The U.S. Air Force brigadier general in the Pentagon's Office of Military Commissions contacted me, and I was likely to testify in Guantanamo. But then the trial was transferred from military commissions to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. I traveled to New York in early October to testify, but then Judge Lewis A. Kaplan disallowed the testimony of a key witness who was reportedly identified and located through Ghailani's interrogation while in CIA custody. My testimony was delayed by a week.

I was the first witness. The federal prosecutor asked me about the physical layout of the embassy, the aftermath of the attack, and the carnage I had witnessed. As part of the cross-examination, I was asked if I knew the meaning of the phrase Romeo Two. I didn't, and I still don't know what that was all about. I remember the *New York Post* headline for the article reporting on my testimony: "Horrific US envoy blast tale."

The defense lawyers argued that Ghailani had been tortured by the CIA, and the U.S. government even conceded that everything that Ghailani said while in CIA custody could be considered to have been coerced. His attorneys also argued that Ghailani, 36 years old at the time of the trial, was a naïve innocent who was more comfortable playing with children and watching cartoons but was unwittingly duped by others. In the end, he was acquitted on 284 charges, including all murder counts. But thank goodness, the jury nevertheless found him guilty of one count of conspiracy. That was a really close call.

For his sentencing proceedings in January 2011, eleven Kenyan, Tanzanian, and American victims spoke about the bombings' impact on themselves, their families, and their communities. I have here the statement made by Judge Kaplan just before he sentenced Ghailani to life in prison without parole, and I think it's worth quoting for the record. He said the defendant's crime was, quote, "Cold-blooded killing and maiming of innocent people on an enormous scale. It wrecked the lives of thousands more who were

not killed or physically injured, but who lost loved ones and breadwinners and had their lives changed forever.” Sadly true.

The third trial, in 2015, involved defendant Khaled al Fawwaz, a citizen of Saudi Arabia who was known as bin Laden’s man in London. He served as bin Laden’s bridge to the West, facilitating Western media interviews of bin Laden in Afghanistan and disseminating bin Laden’s 1996 declaration of jihad against America and his 1998 fatwa directing followers to kill Americans anywhere in the world. So this trial involved the broad conspiracy but didn’t have a direct link to the Dar bombing.

Before the jury entered the courtroom, Judge Kaplan, presiding over another bombing trial, agreed with the prosecution that there would be no courtroom sketches of Tina Mdobilu and me, the two “victim witnesses.” I was on the witness stand for half an hour, identifying maps and photos for the court record. I found it emotionally draining to identify myself in two photos standing on Laibon Road looking at the embassy shortly after the bombing. And there were compelling video clips, including one with me in it. After our respective testimony, the defense attorney expressed sorrow and sympathy for the victims and thanked both Tina and me for our service. Assistant U.S. Attorney Nick Lewin told me afterward my testimony was powerful. I thought mine was more ambassadorial and diplomatic, while Tina’s was more emotional and truly powerful. Fawwaz was convicted on all four counts related to terrorism offenses and sentenced to life in prison.

After the trial I made a note to myself, quote, “This is a major production about an event that took place sixteen and a half years ago. We don’t forget.” The Department of Justice deserves great credit for continuing to pursue these prosecutions.

Q: Do you have any observations about the court system trying these defendants?

LANGE: As you may expect from someone trained as a lawyer, I think there’s a lesson related to the pursuit of justice through the American court system and the importance of the rule of law and civilian trials.

I mentioned earlier that Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, the Tanzanian, was acquitted on 284 charges, but the jury found him guilty of one count of conspiracy, and that resulted in a sentence of life in prison without parole. He was the first former Guantanamo detainee tried in civilian court.

This was a time when there was tension between Congress and President Obama over his plan to close Guantanamo. I know that some observers concluded that the verdict proved civilian courts could not be trusted to prosecute terrorists, because a jury someday could acquit a guilty defendant entirely. But from my perspective, the conviction and life sentence were proof that the federal justice system works, and we don’t need to use the artifice of military commissions at the military prison at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base as a way to avoid having the U.S. Constitution apply to the court proceedings.

Q: That’s a very important, politically charged issue.

LANGE: Yes.

I also want to point out that Susan Hirsch wrote an award-winning, insightful book, *In the Moment of Greatest Calamity—Terrorism, Grief, and a Victim's Quest for Justice*. She described her loss and grief and discussed moral, political, and legal issues that arose during the first trial, including whether or not to call for the death penalty. Compelling reading.

Q: What about the press? Besides coverage of the trials, have the media shown much interest in the East Africa bombings beyond their initial coverage?

LANGE: In the years after the bombings and after 9/11, there have been frequent references in the media to the East Africa embassy bombings. Those always serve as a reminder. A military officer once told me it's like a military widow whose husband died in battle: every time that war is mentioned, she is reminded of her husband's death. The same applies to the survivors of the East Africa bombings.

In December 2004, while I was deputy inspector general, I was interviewed by CNN for their evening news program, "Paula Zahn Now," regarding my experience in Dar es Salaam. Prudence Bushnell also was interviewed. The segment, which was first shown in May, was called "Diplomats Under Fire," kind of a tribute to the work of the Foreign Service in crisis situations. I emphasized that security at diplomatic posts abroad had improved since the bombings but more needed to be done.

And the media have covered the State Department's commemorations of the embassy bombings.

Q: You've gone into a lot of detail on the bombing and its aftermath, a subject that must be close to your heart.

LANGE: Yes. I talk to people, younger people, about careers, and I highly recommend a career in the Foreign Service. And the way I describe it is, I loved my Foreign Service career except for one terrible, terrible day, August 7, 1998, when eleven people died and over eighty-five were injured on my watch. And even though we didn't have advance warning and the Accountability Review Board was quite positive about our performance when they did their report, I just still feel so bad having lost those people and for all those who were in Dar that day who have been affected ever since.

Q: Well, John, that must be emotional for you to talk about it.

LANGE: It is, it is. Very much so. You're right.

For about ten years after the bombing, I would write articles and give speeches on crisis response to the DCM course, the ambassadorial seminar, and other venues.

But after ten years, I just didn't want to talk about it publicly anymore, other than at the commemorations and in this interview. Now, I will run into people who don't know much about the bombing, especially younger people who may have been five years old at the time, and they'll say, Oh, wow, that must have been terrible. My basic response is, Yes it was, and I'd rather not talk about it right now. I can't just talk to somebody about it in kind of a nice, lighthearted conversation because it's emotional for me, you know.

Q: No, well, fair enough. I mean, we get into serious introspection through these oral interviews. You put in how you feel about it.

Okay, John, we'll stop at this point. And let's take a look at the calendar and figure out where we—

LANGE: Yes. So, thank you for this.

AMERICAN EMBASSY GABORONE

Q: Today is Friday, November 8, 2019, with John Lange. And John, I'm going to turn it over to you.

LANGE: Thank you, Stu.

We ended the last interview discussing my tour in Dar es Salaam. I left post on June 26, 1999, in order to become ambassador to Botswana. But there's a long process to become an ambassador.

Q: You want to talk about it?

LANGE: Yes. It's a frustrating process and, in fact, today it's more frustrating than in the past because the confirmation delays in the U.S. Senate are even longer than I experienced back in 1999.

I found one part of the process particularly exasperating. When I was still in Dar es Salaam, I remember being at the Marine House on movie night in early June when I was called by the White House Counsel's office, the legal office for White House personnel, about my nomination papers. When I submitted the forms earlier I indicated I was a member of the Gymkhana Club in Dar es Salaam, a country club. It had the only golf course in all of Dar es Salaam, and men and women played the course and gathered in the clubhouse. It wasn't a great golf course by any means. It featured oil-and-sand "browns" rather than grass greens, as well as a drainage ditch smelling of sewage running alongside several fairways. But it was the only course available. So the White House Counsel's office asked me if there was a "men's grill" at the Gymkhana Club not accessible to women—because if that were the case, I would have to drop out. He described this as the

new hot topic for nominations. Meanwhile, from my perspective, I had been the one in charge of the American embassy when al-Qaeda blew it up, as we've talked about at length earlier, I had gone through all of that trauma and received a State Department award for my leadership as we recovered from the bombing, and now I possibly was going to lose this ambassadorship if there was one little room that was men's-only in the club, even though I had never entered it and was unaware of it—

Q: But the bathroom.

LANGE: (Laughs) Not counting the bathroom. I responded, honestly, that I was not aware of one. He asked me to check on it and get back to him if there was a men's-only room at the club, and I agreed. And so, next time I was there I made a quick check and didn't discover such a room. I never called them back and shortly thereafter was nominated by the president. But it just struck me as the kind of thing that is so typical of Washington, where there's always some public scandal that triggers a new requirement or a new concern, and it's always looking backward, like the measures taken to avoid another controversy along the lines of Nannygate, when President Bill Clinton's nominee for attorney general was derailed because she had hired an illegal alien to work as a nanny and failed to pay Social Security taxes for the undocumented worker. And then suddenly that criterion becomes a requirement for all nominees. The White House and the Senate just add on all these provisos as time goes on. In this case, there was a concern about a men's-only room in a general facility used by men and women that could disadvantage women who didn't have access.

In any event, on June 8 the White House announced that the president intended to nominate me as ambassador to the Republic of Botswana. My predecessor, who was a former U.S. senator from Texas, was a political appointee. Robert Krueger had been the U.S. ambassador to Burundi and then to Botswana. He wanted to stay on in Gaborone until December 1999 for personal and professional reasons, whereas I wanted to get there as soon as possible for Julia's schooling. There were some tensions and machinations as to my arrival date. The U.S. Senate finally scheduled my confirmation hearing for October 19.

I attended the Foreign Service Institute's ambassadorial seminar in August. I thought it was just about as comprehensive as it could be in a two-week program intended for both career and political appointees. It even included a daytrip to Fort Bragg for counterterrorism briefings by the U.S. Special Operations Command and a visit to the CIA, where Alejandra and I and the other nominees and their spouses met with CIA leadership and Stephanie Glakas-Tenet, wife of the director.

The former ambassadors who chaired the seminar really drilled into us an ambassador's responsibility under the Foreign Service Act of 1980 for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all executive-branch employees, except for those under the command of a U.S. area military commander. That was music to my ears, since years earlier I had worked in the Management Operations office responsible for safeguarding chief of mission authority.

As I waited, Julia was privately schooled in Mexico City, and she and Alejandra returned to Washington in time to attend my Senate confirmation hearing on October 19. There were three nominees for ambassadorships in Africa at the hearing, all of us career FSOs, and it went smoothly.

Q: What issues arose at your Senate confirmation hearing?

LANGE: In my opening statement I told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee [SFRC] that, “if confirmed”—the necessary phrase for any nominee to use before the U.S. Senate—I planned to make HIV/AIDS a major focus of my tenure.

Senator Bill Frist, a Republican from Tennessee who chaired the African Affairs Subcommittee, opened the hearing. He said he particularly wanted to thank me for being very helpful, accommodating, and understanding of the subcommittee’s schedule—a reference to the delay in my receiving a hearing. He asked me half a dozen questions. They focused on Botswana’s participation in what was then called the African Crisis Response Initiative, the U.S. peacekeeping training program; on criticism of Botswana for doing too little to protect the rights and interests of the San minority, also known as the Basarwa; and on Botswana-Namibia relations, including their boundary dispute over Sedudu Island. He was engaged, asked follow-up questions, and seemed satisfied by my answers.

Julia, twelve years old, noticed the green-yellow-red lights that inform speakers when their allotted speaking time is nearing the end. After the hearing she asked me if a red light meant that I had given the wrong answer to a question. (Laughs)

The SFRC approved my nomination just over two weeks later, and a bunch of other nominees and I were confirmed by the full Senate on November 10. And then there was a scramble to schedule and organize my swearing-in ceremony. There really are a lot of steps in this process.

Q: When were you sworn in as ambassador?

LANGE: December 3, 1999. Secretary Madeleine Albright swore me in in the State Department’s large Benjamin Franklin Room. She didn’t do that for everyone, but she had been at our house in Dar es Salaam following the bombing and she agreed to do it. In her speech, she said, and I’ll quote here, “I became acquainted with John on the worst day of his career—and mine.” And she recalled her visit to Dar where Alejandra and Julia were wonderful hosts, as she put it, “under very painful circumstances,” when she participated in a country team meeting in our family living room. My mother held the Bible as the Secretary swore me in, and many of our close relatives and longtime friends came from Wisconsin, Mexico City, and elsewhere to attend.

Botswana’s ambassador to the United States was present, and in my speech I praised U.S.-Botswana cooperation, as would be expected. I even mentioned how Botswana’s ambassador to the UN had told me that he fondly remembered dancing the macarena in

the Security Council chamber with Madeleine Albright when she was U.S. ambassador. And Secretary Albright then did the macarena in front of the audience.

In the latter half of the speech, I spoke of the many heroes following the embassy bombing, both in Dar and in Washington. I wanted it to be inspirational for all those U.S. government employees who serve the American people, and I thought it went over very well.



Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at John's swearing-in ceremony with family members (December 3, 1999)

We left Washington five days later, spent time in Stuttgart for briefings at the U.S. European military command, and then, on December 12, arrived in Gaborone.

Q: How long were you there, just to get this on the record?

LANGE: In Gaborone?

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: I was there, well, I think of it as three years, but the actual time of departure was August 8, 2002, so it was two years and eight months.

Scott DeLisi was the deputy chief of mission upon my arrival. Leslie Bassett replaced him in August 2001. Both were excellent officers who later became ambassadors.

And when I first arrived in December 1999, Scott had been working with the chief of protocol so I could present my credentials very quickly. The reason that was important

was, this being the summer in the southern hemisphere, there was a big, long break over the holidays, and it would have taken probably until the end of January to present my credentials to Botswana's president if I hadn't been able to do so right away. And so, I presented my credentials three days after arrival.

We had over 50 direct-hire Americans and around 250 Botswana staff on the U.S. government payroll. The official American community was small and friendly. The Embassy had been built near the center of town in 1989 according to the Inman security standards and seemed quite secure, though my predecessor wrote in the *Washington Post* that it was a homely, Spartan, cement chancery. When I arrived, there were six U.S. government agencies present: State, USAID, CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention], Voice of America, the Defense Attaché Office, and the Office of Defense Cooperation. The International Law Enforcement Academy came later.

Back then, Botswana had only about 1.7 million people in a landlocked country the size of Texas, but from the U.S. government standpoint it was our third largest mission in Southern Africa because it had a lot of regional responsibilities, in part because the Southern African Development Community [SADC] headquarters were based there. I had a dual role, and this was really thanks to my predecessor who had pushed for it. I was not only the U.S. ambassador to Botswana but also the special representative to SADC—special representative of the secretary of state, not the president's special representative. And so, I had both bilateral and regional roles.

Q: How was Botswana significant to the United States?

LANGE: An ambassador, as you know, looks at all the issues facing the country of assignment and the whole range of U.S. government national interests in that country. Other than the huge HIV/AIDS crisis, there was much to like.

Botswana had made incredible progress since independence in 1966, when it was thought to be the world's poorest country. Under the leadership of its first president, Seretse Khama, it began to prosper as a multiparty democracy with generally good governance, although the government was dominated by the Botswana Democratic Party and the BDP still dominates today. One scholar called Botswana a democracy without a credible opposition, which seemed about right. [Addendum: This was generally true until the October 2024 elections won by the center-left opposition party Umbrella for Democratic Change. The BDP was ousted after having governed the country without interruption for 58 years.]

Having lived in countries where corruption was commonplace, I really liked returning to Botswana from travels outside of the country and seeing at the immigration checkpoint a big sign saying Botswana had zero tolerance for corruption. There were low levels of corruption, as in just about any country, but in general it wasn't the big problem found in many other countries. Transparency International ranked it as Africa's least corrupt country in 1999 and 2000, ahead of many European and East Asian countries. At the same time, I have to say that I concluded by the end of my tour that the government had quite low levels of corruption but a high tolerance for conflict of interest among some of

the cabinet ministers. And there was a case of corruption involving an American congressman and the Debswana Diamond Company that I can talk about later.

The good governance stemmed from Sir Seretse Khama's vision of a government that was ethical, participatory, and committed to service delivery, and also from the reliance on kgotlas to resolve many local issues. Botswana has this long-established system whereby public meetings and traditional law courts in a village are headed by the village chief, and decisions are reached by consensus. Botswana's government is the oldest democracy in Africa, and some even consider the country to be one of the world's oldest democracies due to the traditional kgotla system.

Coupled with good governance was a relatively free press. They had some non-governmental organizations, although there wasn't really a strong NGO sector.

And there was a small but well-disciplined military under civilian control. The U.S. military really liked working with the Botswana Defence Force.

It had some of the world's best safari parks and game reserves, particularly in the vast Okavango Delta, with an emphasis on attracting high-end tourism.

Most of the Kalahari Desert is located in Botswana, and the country is quite dry. So it's not surprising that the currency is called the pula, which literally means rain in the Setswana language. It was customary to end speeches by saying, "Pula," as a wish for rain, happiness, and prosperity.

And another key factor in its prosperity came from the export of high-quality beef. There were more cattle in the country than people. Whenever there was a scare about highly infectious foot-and-mouth disease spreading among cattle, I would encounter a roadblock on the main road going north of Gaborone where everyone had to get out of the vehicle and walk through a shallow pan with liquid disinfectant. The government did whatever it could to support the cattle industry. A person once complained to me that the government reacted more quickly to protect cattle from foot-and-mouth disease than to protect people from HIV when AIDS was spreading in the 1990s.

Very importantly, Botswana had economic prosperity and an orientation toward free enterprise. A huge portion of the economy stemmed from diamond mining and the diamond trade.

Q: They're famous for their diamonds.

LANGE: Yes. The establishment of the Debswana Diamond Company had really set a wonderful precedent in the country's approach to free enterprise. In 1967, De Beers found diamonds at the Orapa diamond mine, which I think is now the world's largest diamond mine by area. This came, thankfully, after independence, not before, so the British Bechuanaland Protectorate and the British colonial authorities were no longer in charge and couldn't distort the use of these resources. Instead, once diamonds were discovered, the government led by President Khama ended up creating with De Beers the

Debswana Diamond Company that was basically half-owned by the government of Botswana and half-owned by De Beers but run as a private sector corporation. Based on the agreement with De Beers in the 1960s, Botswana marketed its entire diamond production through De Beers' Central Selling Organization [CSO] in London, though that had run afoul of U.S. anti-trust legislation. At one point I visited the CSO in London.

It was hard not to get into a discussion of diamonds when talking about the Botswana economy. In May 2000 I visited the Orapa diamond mine with a group of ambassadors when they had a big ceremony opening a new diamond mine, one of their four main mines. And I also visited another mine on my own bilateral visit, and it was just amazing to see the operation. You'd look down at this huge open pit and see what looked like a small vehicle at the bottom bringing up a load of gravel and dirt and, hopefully, some diamonds. And by the time it got to the top you'd realize it was a Caterpillar mining truck whose wheels, the tires, were about ten feet tall. It was just incredibly huge. They would then dump this big load into a sorting area that would sort through the contents and, in the end, determine if there were any diamonds. The trucks were imported from the U.S. company Caterpillar, and that was gratifying for an American ambassador to see.

Unlike some other countries in Africa where they had the resource curse of having oil or diamonds or other resources that brought about a lot of corruption and high incomes for a small number of elite, Botswana really used its resources to benefit the people. At the time of independence in 1966, the country had less than ten miles of paved roads, a per capita income of around \$80, and less than a hundred people educated beyond high school. But the diamond income brought continually increasing prosperity, and Botswana had the world's fastest-expanding economy in the 1990s. By the time I got there thirty-three years after independence, there were paved roads all around the country, ten years of free education for every child, and well over \$3,000 per capita income, which by Sub-Saharan Africa standards in 1999 was really well off. The government's official debt was less than \$450 million while they had something like \$5 billion in foreign reserves. That may seem odd, but they cleverly carried some international debt because they paid lower interest on the debt than they earned in foreign currency holdings. Really prudent fiscal management. Moody's and Standard & Poor's gave the country investment-grade ratings that, in that period, put Botswana on a par with countries like Greece and Israel and above South Korea, Chile, Poland, and all other African countries as a destination for foreign investment. You can see why the conservative, centrist BDP kept getting re-elected.

And they thought of themselves as a non-racial society because of the history in which Sir Seretse Khama, the first president, had married a white English woman, Lady Ruth Khama. And so, that really set a tone of being non-racial, as they would think of it.

Q: There's a movie about this.

LANGE: Yes, yes. It's called *A United Kingdom*. The film is based on the lives of Seretse Khama, when he was heir to the throne of Bechuanaland and studying law in London, and Ruth Williams, a white Englishwoman. It's quite a story. They got married despite protests from both of their families and opposition from the British government. The

British and the government in South Africa were concerned that the marriage of the young heir to the Ngwato chieftaincy to a middle-class white woman from England could generate unrest in Southern Africa at a time, I think it was 1948, when the theory of racial inequality and separation was gaining a firm hold in South Africa.

Their marriage, of course, helped establish a pattern of racial tolerance and acceptance and was key to Botswana seeing itself as a non-racial society. My predecessor, Bob Krueger, once provided what I thought was an interesting historical comparison. Would the United States have avoided racial divisions if President George Washington's wife had been black instead of white?

Sir Seretse Khama died in 1980, but Lady Ruth Khama was still living when we first arrived in Gaborone. Alejandra and I got to know her. A great lady.

And in fact, Botswana was just so different from South Africa. My family and I would visit South Africa on occasion for shopping and vacations, and I visited there for business purposes several times. This was only about ten years after Nelson Mandela had been released from prison, so apartheid was fresh in everyone's mind. But it was really different in neighboring Botswana, the whole mindset, because the people had never suffered through something like apartheid.

So, when you ask about U.S. national interests in Botswana, it was almost all positive except for that one, very tragic thing: It was estimated at the time I arrived that over 38 percent of adults aged fifteen to forty-nine were HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] positive. While that was probably a high estimate due to the methodology used, and the real number was probably closer to 33 percent, it meant basically that one out of every three adults you met was HIV positive. The UN estimated that life expectancy in the country had declined from sixty-three years in the mid-1980s to fifty-two years in 1999, an astounding drop.

And the cost of antiretroviral therapy [ART] to extend a life indefinitely was \$10,000 per year, out of reach of all but top government officials and the rich. I'd like to talk later about HIV/AIDS, which became my signature issue.

Q: Okay. Did you find that Washington was very interested in Botswana?

LANGE: Yes. for all of the positive things in the country and also because it was tackling the AIDS problem.

It was in many ways an African success story, and Washington recognized it as such. When President Mogae visited Washington in June 2001, he discussed HIV/AIDS, conflict diamonds—which he called diamonds for development—and trade opportunities under AGOA [African Growth and Opportunity Act] in meetings with the speaker of the House of Representatives, the majority leader of the Senate, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, and Secretary of State Colin Powell. That's quite an impressive array of meetings for the head of a country in Africa with a small population. The secretary applauded Botswana's success as a multi-party democracy with a history of stability and

economic growth, and he said the country had considerable power in its own right through the “power of example,” quote, unquote. We used that phrase back in Gaborone.

The famous diplomat Richard Holbrooke paid some attention to Botswana. In my very first days in-country, there was an issue that was important to Washington and to USUN Ambassador Holbrooke. Following a 1999 ceasefire accord called the Lusaka Agreement, Washington and New York wanted to get the Inter-Congolese National Dialogue moving. The dialogue was to be the political negotiation for the peace process and transition in the DRC [Democratic Republic of the Congo], and they had been searching for a facilitator. They focused on the former president of Botswana, Sir Ketumile Masire, known as Quett Masire.

Q: So Botswana got involved in brokering peace in the Congo?

LANGE: Yes. When I presented my credentials as U.S. ambassador, President Mogae and I chatted in the usual fashion that one would do, about my background and U.S. government interests in Botswana and his views of U.S.-Botswana relations. But we then ended up talking about Masire as the proposed facilitator. Mogae called it a thankless task but said he had no objection to it. And so, I ended up coming back from presenting credentials and immediately wrote a cable to the State Department, USUN New York, and African posts reporting on what I’d found out, and that was well-received. Personally, I was not sure that Masire was the best person to serve as facilitator because he was a smiling, happy politician not necessarily suited to tough negotiations and, if I recall correctly, he didn’t speak French. But the U.S. decision to support him was already made.

There was a lot of interest in Washington and New York in Masire’s work. Our embassy didn’t have the lead on the Congolese dialogue, of course, but as time went on we ended up having various contacts with Masire and his staff and did what we could to support his work as facilitator for the dialogue. In fact, Howard Wolpe, who was the U.S. special envoy for the Great Lakes region and had come to Dar es Salaam when I was there, as I said earlier, arrived in Gaborone a week after I presented my credentials. We met with Masire, as well as with Mogae and Foreign Minister Mompoti Merafhe, to talk about facilitating the dialogue.

From all of those conversations, it was clear that the parties in the dialogue faced a daunting task trying to bring about a new political dispensation for the DRC. They were negotiating a settlement to end a war that had broken out in August 1998 and also reviving and consolidating the democratization process. And the DRC government under President Laurent Kabila continued to raise obstacles. They called Masire a complicator, not a facilitator. In March of 2000, a Congo Airlines crew forced all but one member of Masire’s delegation off of their flight from Johannesburg to Kinshasa. In June of that year the Congolese government called for the removal of Masire as facilitator, and the police went so far as to board up his Kinshasa office and send staff members home. The State Department at that point had to issue a press statement reiterating its full support for Masire and expressing concern over the efforts by the Congolese government to obstruct the dialogue. Laurent Kabila was assassinated in January 2001 and succeeded by his son

Joseph. Masire's work continued, and the dialogue officially opened with an aborted meeting in Addis Ababa in October 2001. Admirably, Masire kept going. In June 2002, before I left post, I hosted a small lunch for him, and he later wrote to me to say how much he valued U.S. government support for his endeavor.

To close the loop historically: After a difficult process, Masire finally succeeded in his goals. What was called the Final Act or the Sun City Agreement was finally signed by the parties in South Africa in April 2003, after I had left post. In the document the parties saluted Masire's work as the neutral facilitator for his quote, "wise guidance of the negotiations process, his devotion to the mission assigned to him and his tenacity of purpose." I felt that we had played a small, supportive role in that success, even though the DRC was later destined for further unrest.

There was one other instance—a couple of other instances, rather—when I had interactions with Richard Holbrooke, and I'm sure many Foreign Service officers of my era have stories about Holbrooke—

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: —because he was quite a presence.

Holbrooke was interested in having the Peace Corps return to Botswana, and I also had been trying to get the Peace Corps to return to Botswana.

Q: Why did the Peace Corps leave Botswana?

LANGE: They were removed in the mid-nineties, about the same time when the USAID presence was removed. That was a time when there was great pressure in the Congress for USAID and the Peace Corps to show success, and so the theory was that Botswana's economic success meant it had graduated from the need for development assistance. So, they shut down the Peace Corps operation and closed the bilateral USAID mission.

But that was before they realized the full extent of the AIDS crisis. Given the severity of that crisis, which I'll talk more about later, I was urging the Peace Corps to return and to focus on HIV/AIDS, rather than do other traditional Peace Corps work. Yes, Botswana was more prosperous than many of the other Sub-Saharan African countries and other developing countries that the Peace Corps was working in in other parts of the world. But the country was desperately in need of assistance on HIV/AIDS. So, that was my rationale.

Well, Ambassador Holbrooke ended up seeing President Mogae, I believe it was in New York, and pushed on him the need for the Peace Corps to return to Botswana, without any reference or advance notice to me, even though I was the U.S. ambassador to the country. His special assistant, a Foreign Service officer at USUN New York, then called me, kind of apologetically, to let me know what was going on, that the U.S. ambassador to the UN on his own was talking to the Peace Corps director and the president of Botswana to try to bring volunteers back to the country. Holbrooke and I had the same goal, and we were

successful, but I was miffed at his complete lack of consultation with me before pushing the idea that the Peace Corps needed to return to Botswana. Yes, he was in a cabinet-level position and long considered to be a potential secretary of state, his unfulfilled ambition, but I was the president's personal representative to the country. Over the course of two years, I met with two Peace Corps directors in Washington to push the idea. It took time, but a new country director arrived in Gaborone just before I departed post, and the volunteers arrived in March 2003 to join in the effort against HIV/AIDS.

Later on, after Holbrooke left his role at USUN and before he returned to work in the U.S. government, he led an organization called the Global Business Council on HIV/AIDS, where you would have a lot of businesses using their resources—finances, communications, infrastructure, supply chains—in the fight against HIV/AIDS. And he came to Botswana in—as a private citizen—in February of 2002. He didn't clear this with me, of course, because he was a private citizen, but he ended up having an event that I went to where he signed an MOU [memorandum of understanding] with the Botswana Business Coalition on AIDS. He then asked me if I would like to accompany him to see the president. So, I went along with him and his wife, Katie Marton, to meet Mogae to talk about HIV/AIDS and the new Global Business Council. It was a good discussion. But it's the only time I was ever with a head of state when the person who had asked for the meeting, in this case former Ambassador Holbrooke, after the conversation went on for a while, looked at his watch and said, I'm going to have to go. Holbrooke had to end the meeting to make it to a safari that he and his wife had booked. Mogae was actually willing to keep talking, and it was quite something to hear Holbrooke basically say, Well, sorry, thanks, your excellency, but we gotta go. Richard Holbrooke was quite a character, as we all know.

Q: Yes, famously so. Did you have many other Washington visitors?

LANGE: Lots of them. There was a lot of high-level Washington interest in Botswana because it was an African country that worked, and there weren't many examples of that in that period.

Just a day after I presented my credentials to Mogae, I ended up traveling to the Chobe area in northern Botswana to greet a CODEL [congressional delegation] with eleven members of Congress plus spouses and aides led by Representative Richard Pombo. They said they wanted to look at the problems and solutions of endangered species, and also at how countries were able to conserve their natural habitat while still allowing roads through the game parks. That sounds like a serious effort. But I have to say, the CODEL generated some ridicule back in the United States, including a *Washington Post* "In the Loop" column calling it a five-star spectacular trip and an ABC News report that showed them watching wildlife while on safari in South Africa's Kruger National Park, with the clear implication that this was a boondoggle.

Their visit to Chobe took place three days after a decision by the International Court of Justice [ICJ] in The Hague had peacefully settled a dispute between Namibia and Botswana over which country owned Sedudu Island, a small island in the middle of the Chobe River, with annual flooding and no permanent residents. Having studied one

summer at The Hague Academy of International Law, I thought that it was really interesting. The ICJ looked to an old treaty to determine that the main channel of the Chobe River went to the north, rather than the south, of the island, so Botswana owned the territory. Seeing the island up close on a river cruise with the CODEL, I found it hard to believe that what seemed to be an insignificant and uninhabited piece of land was the source of international controversy. And I remember watching an elephant enter the river from the Botswana side, walk totally submerged underwater toward the other side, and then emerge as it walked up the bank on the Namibian side. I thought, that elephant doesn't care what was just decided faraway in The Hague about some arbitrary boundary line. He'll go wherever he wants. (Laughs)

We had numerous other visits by U.S. senators and representatives. One congressman who visited three or four times was William Jefferson, sometimes on an official CODEL and other times on a private visit. I met with him several times and really wondered why he was being treated so royally by the Debswana Diamond Company. Well, several years later, after I departed post, the Botswana government charged the guy who had been Debswana's managing director during Jefferson's visits with illegally funding three of his trips, which Jefferson was supposed to report to the House ethics panel but didn't. Meanwhile, one of the pending issues back then was whether or not Congressman Jefferson would support draft U.S. legislation on so-called blood diamonds that Botswana opposed. I had no idea, no way of knowing, what deals he was making behind closed doors, but later it was publicly disclosed that during this period Jefferson sought huge bribes for himself and others from companies that depended on approvals from particular U.S. and African government agencies. You may remember the story of how the FBI found \$90,000 in cash concealed in his home freezer. (Laughs) That's kind of a smoking gun. His indictment for corruption in June 2007 was the lead item in the *Washington Post*, and he ended up serving five and a half years in prison on corruption charges for his business dealings in Africa.

During my tenure we also had visits by several U.S. cabinet-level officials. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright came in December of 2000, Trade Representative Robert Zoellick in February 2002, and Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson in April 2002. We arranged for Zoellick to meet with President Mogae and tour the local Princess Marina hospital for an HIV/AIDS briefing. And I hosted a roundtable for him to meet with local business executives at my residence. He cited a range of adverse factors—a small market, a private sector that was not highly skilled, and a weak currency—that needed to be addressed for Botswana to participate more in the international economy—an important message for the audience to hear. I'll talk about Thompson's visit later.

Q: Why did Secretary Albright come to Botswana so late in her tenure?

LANGE: She traveled to Mauritius, South Africa, and Botswana to highlight three of the continent's most prominent success stories. I thought she really affirmed our strong ties to Botswana over a busy couple of days. She brought along the under secretary for public diplomacy, the counselor, the assistant secretary for African affairs, and the Department spokesman. At the meet-and-greet session at the embassy for our staff, I thanked her for

the exceptionally strong support she had provided us in Dar es Salaam in the period following the embassy bombing.

One of the big events was her visit to a mother-to-child HIV transmission clinic in Old Naledi, the most densely populated area in Gaborone, to highlight U.S. contributions, through CDC, to fight HIV/AIDS in Botswana—though the total amount in the previous fiscal year was less than \$5 million. A prominent Botswana singer broke HIV taboos by publicly announcing that she was HIV-positive, and Secretary Albright, Assistant Secretary Susan Rice, and Health Minister Joy Phumaphi made headlines when they broke down the stigma of AIDS by warmly embracing her.

At the University of Botswana, which was headed by an American, Albright signed an agreement for a U.S. program to expand technology and educational services. She began her speech, a little over a month before leaving office, by joking that the university was her natural setting—and probably a future one.

Albright then had very productive and candid meetings with the president and foreign minister. She told Mogae that the United States placed great value on its relationship with Botswana. The message was, U.S. policy toward Africa is not optional. She praised Botswana for frequently participating in UN peacekeeping operations and expressed gratitude for former President Masire's role facilitating the Congolese dialogue. They talked about the U.S.-sponsored International Law Enforcement Academy in Botswana and the problematic situation in neighboring Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe. They also discussed U.S. support for the Kimberley process on clean diamonds and Botswana's role in breaking the link between diamonds and conflict while respecting the interests of legitimate producers. She praised Botswana's central role in helping SADC to restructure to be more effective. Mogae, in turn, praised the United States for helping Africa to enhance its capacity to resolve conflicts.

The secretary told Mogae about her meeting at the university and her visit to the health clinic. She said HIV/AIDS was a security issue, even though some had questioned whether it had been appropriate for the United States to raise HIV/AIDS in the UN Security Council. She and Foreign Minister Merafhe, later held a joint press conference where she said it was clear from her visit that much more needed to be done on AIDS and she would recommend to the next administration a substantial increase in funding, especially for Africa.



Botswana President Festus Mogae meets with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and John (December 2000)

One of the things that embassies frequently like to do when a delegation from the United States is visiting Africa, at least the portions of Africa with abundant flora and fauna, is to try to give the visitors the opportunity to see some of the wildlife. There was a nature reserve called Mokolodi that was just outside of Gaborone, maybe a twenty- or twenty-five-minute drive. They had a rhinoceros and some elephants, but they also had a cheetah that was so tame you could pet it. I fondly remember how we brought the delegation to the reserve, where Secretary of State Albright was petting this cheetah, and I was a little nervous because—

Q: (Laughs) Yes.

LANGE: —I didn't want to be the first U.S. ambassador to lose a secretary of state because of a cheetah gone wild. (Laughs) But it turned out to be fine and it was a great photo op. And, of course, world events were still of concern. I particularly liked a photo of Madeleine Albright talking to the Russian foreign minister on a cellphone while out in the bush.

As she was getting on the plane at the airport to leave for Algiers, where she witnessed the signing of a peace accord between Ethiopia and Eritrea, she told me the visit was terrific, terrific. Nice to hear.

Q: You know, you're saying Botswana was active as an example of good government. Were delegations coming from other African countries to see what made this work, or was there great disinterest?

LANGE: Good question. I wasn't aware of such delegations coming just to look at how Botswana worked. But I do know that many Africans who visited left the country impressed.

Q: Can you say more about the issue of what they call “blood diamonds”?

LANGE: Yes. One of the things about Botswana that had significance far beyond the country itself was the controversy over blood diamonds, also called conflict diamonds. The concern was that in several African countries, such as Angola and Sierra Leone, diamonds were being mined through corrupt channels or using children for labor, and that was helping to finance rebel insurgencies or warlords’ activities or terrorism or other unrest.

For Botswana, the international concern for blood diamonds, which threatened to reduce global consumer demand, was a fundamental risk to the country’s wellbeing because diamonds were the government’s main source of income. And the Debswana Diamond Company had very serious controls on its diamonds. It was one of the world’s leading diamond producers by both value and by volume and was really a world-class operation. To my knowledge, they had no problems with diamonds being siphoned off to be used to fund conflicts in other countries. That just wasn’t the case. I mentioned earlier that I had visited the diamond mines a couple of times. I remember how, upon departing the mine, the employees leaving after a day’s work had to proceed through a controlled exit by pressing a button that would flash a light determining if they were allowed to exit immediately or if they first would be extensively searched, because the company didn’t want anyone to steal even the smallest diamond. It was just an incredible and very secure operation.

I also ended up visiting their Orapa House sorting center in Gaborone, which was very close to the American embassy, and it was just amazing to see them going through the diamond sorting. Debswana was so exacting on the controls. Someone who was doing the sorting would be given diamonds that weighed a certain amount, to many decimal points, and, after the diamonds were sorted, the total would have to weigh the exact same amount. If there was even a small diamond missing, the company would know about it.

There was a nascent effort called the Kimberley Process to create an international certification scheme for rough diamonds. It began in May 2000 in Kimberley, South Africa, another diamond center, and involved governments, civil society, and industry trying to reduce the flow of rough diamonds used to finance rebel groups. This was a global concern, and the UN General Assembly even passed a resolution that December on breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and the fueling of armed conflict, supporting the efforts of the Kimberley Process.

That global process was beyond the purview of the U.S. embassy in Botswana, of course, but Botswana was a key player, we tried to be supportive, and when the Kimberley process negotiators met in Gaborone I hosted a lunch for people who came from the U.S. government and diamond companies and others. Botswana had a vested interest in the success of the Kimberley Process so that the countries that had control over their diamond production could produce diamonds that were in a sense certified blood-diamond-free. And looking at the situation today, it’s clear that the Kimberley

Process over the years has helped weaken the link between conflict and diamonds and transformed local economies.

Q: Were there other U.S. commercial opportunities?

LANGE: To some extent. There were ways, beyond diamonds, in which we promoted trade and investment ties between the United States and Botswana. I can think of several key events during my tenure. I hosted a reception attended by the director general of the Foreign Commercial Service for the first conference on the African continent to bring together women business entrepreneurs from more than twenty African countries, Canada, and the United States. And the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation provided money for the refurbishment of half a dozen game camps.

With substantial involvement of our embassy, Botswana eventually qualified for AGOA preferences just before the end of my tour. At a trade fair in Francistown, I urged Botswana companies to take advantage of the ability to export thousands of products to the United States duty-free under AGOA. One newspaper headline called it a pep talk.

Despite our efforts, it was not an easy sell on all sides. I think it's worth noting that Botswana had a host of advantages for foreign investors, including good governance and good infrastructure, but also a host of disadvantages, including a small manufacturing base, small population, and landlocked geography. Botswana never became a major beneficiary under AGOA.

Q: What about the Botswana military?

LANGE: We had a very good relationship, the U.S. government and the government of Botswana, on the military side. At the embassy we had not only had a defense attaché office headed by a U.S. Army major, but an Office of Defense Cooperation [ODC], also headed by a major, so there was a lot of activity that was going on in terms of mil-to-mil [military-to-military] relations. The BDF [Botswana Defence Force] was apolitical and professional with an impressive record in regional and continental peacekeeping operations. I thought it was remarkable that over 80 percent of BDF officers received some form of U.S. government training, in part to prepare for future peacekeeping missions. We provided funds for the C-130s used by the BDF air arm. And the military played an important role in protecting endangered wildlife from poachers.

Q: Were there any consular issues that came to your attention?

LANGE: I have to say, some of the things that were most interesting, both good and bad, and that most ambassadors do not expect to encounter during an ambassadorship, revolved around consular work.

There was a time when a woman and her eleven-year-old son from a prominent family in the Baltimore area were traveling on safari in the Moremi Game Reserve. It ended up as a tragic situation where they were sleeping in separate tents in an unfenced campsite, and one night hyenas managed to enter the son's tent, drag his body away, and kill him.

Q: Oh, God.

LANGE: It was just terrible. And our consular officer, of course, then worked with the mother, who was so distraught over this, as you can imagine. It made the papers in Baltimore and, in fact, I believe the *Baltimore Sun* newspaper ended up sending out a reporter to check into what had happened, because it was just really a big story. Such a terrible, gruesome death had occurred.

And there were other consular things that came up. I once was told by our consular officer that Oprah Winfrey wanted to talk to me. And so, I said sure, I'll be happy—

Q: Could you explain who Winfrey is?

LANGE: Oprah Winfrey is a famous American talk show host, television producer, and actress.

Q: She's a major entertainment figure and—

LANGE: Yes.

Q: —and involved in intellectual matters too.

LANGE: Yes. She was planning to come to Botswana and was worried about security because she had been reading about some disruptions and other concerns in neighboring Zimbabwe. So, she wanted to talk to the U.S. ambassador about whether it was safe to come to Botswana. And so, I told the consular officer, Sure, I'll be happy to talk to Oprah Winfrey. We scheduled the call for a couple of hours later, when Oprah's assistant called and patched me through to Oprah. I called her Ms. Winfrey—because that's how her staff addressed her, even though her public persona uses the familiar term Oprah. She was very nice and told me her concerns about what she'd heard about Zimbabwe. I assured her that none of that civil unrest was affecting Botswana and she would be safe. She was going to travel to Maun and stay in the Okavango Delta, a famous area with wonderful wildlife. I said there should be no problem there whatsoever. And then, knowing her general concern about social and humanitarian issues, I described the HIV/AIDS situation in Botswana and suggested that she come to Gaborone where we could arrange for her to visit a local orphanage and meet with the health minister. She told me, No, I really can't because I've got to go directly to South Africa to meet with Nelson Mandela. So she never did pass through Gaborone. I guess former South African President Nelson Mandela trumped the U.S. ambassador to Botswana in terms of priorities for her trip. (Laughs)

On the theme of consular work, there was another issue that came up at one point. I got a call directly from President Mogae, who wanted us to reconsider giving a visa to one of his staff members because she had been rejected for her visa by the consular officer. And I told him, Your excellency, I'll look into it. But then, I talked to the consular officer, who explained the situation and who was absolutely convinced that it was probable the

woman was not going to return to Botswana and was going to stay in the United States—the way the law would describe it, she was an intending immigrant—so that she, the consular officer, felt she could not issue a visa to the woman. And I backed the consular officer. I wasn't about to try to override that. In fact, I don't even think I had the legal authority to do so. During the ambassadorial seminar, a top official in the Bureau of Consular Affairs specifically told us not to get involved in visa cases. But it's one of those things you just have to do as ambassador, even if there's political pressure from the top level of the host government.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: And I never called the president back to say, No, we won't issue the visa, I just left it as it was, and he never raised it again. My guess is he had felt compelled to make that one call on behalf of a staff member, but that was all he would do. Having had experience as a consular officer on my first tour in Mexico City certainly helped me appreciate the situation the consular officer was in, and I backed her.

Q: What was the view in Botswana of the contested U.S. presidential election in November 2000?

LANGE: I hosted an early-morning breakfast reception on November 8 to watch the U.S. election returns. That's often the case at embassies around the world, no matter what the time zone, to highlight our democracy. The foreign minister and many others came, but the Florida ballot count, we all know, dragged on and on until Al Gore officially conceded to George W. Bush in mid-December. During that intervening month we had a running joke that the breakfast reception to see who won the U.S. election was still going on.

In that period, Vice President Ian Khama chaired a charity dinner featuring humorous roasts in what was called the high court of injustice. President Mogae and judges from the High Court attended. As a proponent of free and fair elections in Southern Africa, I was given the role to defend U.S. democracy from the charge of using illiterate computers to count ballots in Florida, thereby forcing the world to watch unrelenting sequels of the electoral race on CNN. I had a lengthy, tongue-in-cheek response pointing out that when election disputes occur in the United States, one doesn't see thousands of soldiers in the streets—instead, one sees thousands of lawyers, live on CNN. (Laughs) Khama later wrote me saying my defense was exemplary.

Q: What was the reaction in Botswana to the al-Qaeda attacks on 9/11?

LANGE: A few hours after the attacks, Vice President Ian Khama called me from London to express his disbelief and support for a strong response. President Mogae publicly spoke of his shock and outrage over the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and he came to the embassy in early October to sign the book of condolences. It was his first-ever visit to the embassy and it was clear that he was surprised and delighted to see so many of his own people on our staff. Per instructions from the State Department, we held a memorial observance on the three-month anniversary where one of the cabinet ministers said

Botswana stood firmly behind the United States in the fight against terrorism. We ended up engaging all kinds of groups—academics, media, social and business organizations, government leaders, Muslims, students—to try to build support for the U.S. responses to the 9/11 attacks. While the Botswana government and business were generally with us early-on, other sectors were initially sympathetic but then increasingly critical of U.S. actions in Afghanistan.

Three of our staff members had relatives in the World Trade Center complex, but thankfully all survived. The 9/11 attacks had a major impact on the well-being of Americans in Botswana, of course. I spoke at town hall meetings we organized for the American communities in Gaborone, Francistown, and Maun. It was a trying time.

There was one other thing related to our consular work and public diplomacy. Following in the footsteps of a couple of other American embassies in the region, we created a semblance of a U.S. government presence in a hotel conference room in the second largest city in the country, Francistown. We called it American Embassy Francistown, with information tables staffed by our consular, public affairs, commercial, and health sections. We did this over two days at the end of February and beginning of March in 2001. We opened it up with a group of us meeting with the district commissioner and the mayor, and then we visited schools and colleges and HIV/AIDS clinics, performed consular services, and had site visits and meetings, luncheons, dinners, and receptions with the business community and VIPs in the American community. The two days were a big success in promoting U.S. interests in the northeastern part of the country.

Some of us visited the Dukwe refugee camp, two hours' drive from Francistown, where there were over 4,000 refugees from Angola, Somalia, and elsewhere. The State Department's refugee bureau contributed money to UNHCR specifically for the care and maintenance of refugees in Botswana, so I wanted to visit. But there was actually a bit of an incident when we were there. Nearing the end of the camp visit, which was conducted under UNHCR auspices, we were driving toward the exit when a group of around a hundred Somali refugees stopped us. They stood in front of our vehicles blocking the road and we had to stop. Then they surrounded the vehicle I was in. They were protesting the delays in getting approvals for resettlement in the United States. I found the situation a bit scary, but, in the end, the protestors remained peaceful, and we ended up being allowed to exit the camp. Threats from Somali refugees was not something our security officer or I had expected to encounter at all, Botswana being such a peaceful country.

I also thought the presence of Somali refugees in Botswana was quite telling. Just look at a map of Africa and you can see that Somalia is a long, long way from Botswana. To my mind, although the Somalis understandably were fleeing the unrest in a failed state, they could have found safe haven in several other countries along the way. Instead, they headed to Botswana because their real goal was to make it to the United States, and they thought their prospects of being resettled as refugees were better at the Dukwe refugee camp. And the U.S. ambassador's visit was a prime opportunity to promote their cause.

Q: Separate from health programs and refugees, what development assistance did the United States provide to Botswana? Or was it too rich to receive U.S. assistance?

LANGE: We helped in particular ways, despite not having a bilateral USAID program.

I already mentioned our work with the University of Botswana in connection with Secretary Albright's visit. We also financed projects through our Democracy and Human Rights Fund and the Ambassador's Self-Help Fund. We particularly focused on reaching out to women, youth, orphans, the handicapped, and remote area dwellers.

And there was a time when the country experienced a flooding emergency. I think it was March 2000. USAID provided over a million dollars to help reconstruct roads damaged by floodwaters. Traditional toilets in certain rural areas were not functioning, and the government asked for environmentally safe, self-contained toilets for use in the emergency. So the United States government came to the rescue. We provided two dozen Enviro-Loo toilets. Since we always like to get credit when we provide assistance, I had a photo op with the minister for public administration where we shook hands in front of one of the toilets. Given the backdrop, we are both laughing in the photo, which made the newspapers. (Laughs)

And we used money from the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to equip and train the curators of Tsodilo Hills, an area in northwest Botswana with thousands of rock art paintings by the San. Its human history, amazingly, went back 100,000 years, and it was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO while I was there. But it was so out of the way, and in a very difficult environment, that I never made it there, even though they called it the Louvre of the Desert.

Very importantly, Botswana had just wonderful wildlife.

Q: Did Botswana protect all that wildlife?

LANGE: Yes, quite well, actually. I believe the numbers were that there were an estimated 105,000 elephants when I arrived in 1999 and 120,000 when I left in 2002. And today, the number is somewhere around 130,000 to 140,000, though any elephant census is a rough estimate. The country really does well in preserving its wildlife.

And the thing is, there are some people who are not living in that environment but who are looking at the situation from an ocean away and focus on preserving each and every elephant. But it's not a matter of preserving every elephant, it's a matter of preserving the species and letting the species flourish. And the reason I say that is you would end up reading stories in the local press about elephants trampling through villages and sometimes killing people and ruining crops and homes, and you would understand why there was this tension between the villagers and the elephant population. Habitat destruction was a very real concern. Elephants were a tangible threat to rural residents and indigenous flora and fauna that were already threatened by an increasing water shortage in the region.

During my time there, the number of elephants in Botswana exceeded the carrying capacity of the habitat, and it's gotten even worse since then. And the issue of wildlife

fencing was very sensitive, a function of protecting domestic livestock versus managing wildlife resources. So it's the kind of thing where Botswana was doing a great job as a whole, but you also had to recognize some of the difficulties that happen when people live in close proximity to elephants in certain areas.

Q: Was there international concern over protecting the elephants?

LANGE: Yes. The CITES [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora] agreement in 1997 recognized that some Southern African elephant populations were healthy and well managed and permitted Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe to make a one-time sale of ivory. But this was criticized by some. The test was whether the sale would increase poaching. In Botswana, that was not likely due to strong controls. CITES in 2002 authorized Botswana a sport hunting quota of over 200 trophy bulls. That may seem like a lot, but it constituted a miniscule percentage of the total population. The herd was growing by something like 5 percent per year.

In April 2002 the OES [Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs] assistant secretary came to visit to look at the government's anti-poaching operations. He and others and I traveled to the Okavango Delta for a site visit. We also visited the elephant ivory storehouse in Gaborone. Whether from elephants that had died from natural causes, problem-animal control, or attempted poaching, the government collected their ivory tusks and stored them in a smelly warehouse that would be the envy of every elephant poacher in the world. The government said it had thirty-three metric tons of stockpiled ivory.

And one of the more interesting, personal stories related to wildlife occurred when I led a small group of embassy staff to look at the situation involving the Basarwa people in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve [CKGR], an area of the desert larger than Switzerland. It was a very long trek, a seven-hour drive on the Trans-Kalahari Highway followed by lengthy driving on dirt roads, and we had to spend one night at a campsite in the Kalahari Desert. We had a campfire going, and as we looked up, we saw three lions about fifty feet, maybe sixty feet, away looking at us. They weren't going to get close to the fire, but we were kind of spread out at the campsite. And one of the things the wildlife experts always tell you is when you encounter lions—when you're in that kind of situation—don't run, just kind of stare at the lion and back away very slowly. So, the first thing that I did, as the U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Botswana, was to run as fast as I could to get into one of our vehicles, maybe twenty feet away. (Laughs) Everybody else ran too, and we all were able to get into our vehicles for protection. So the lions just stood there, and after a while they slowly sauntered off.

Q: They knew the game. You didn't.

LANGE: (Laughs)

Q: They think, these stupid people.

LANGE: They just kind of ambled off and you know, for them, it's like, well, okay, we'll just move on.

Q: Yeah. How were they treated, the Basarwa?

LANGE: I didn't think they were being treated very well at that particular time. Basically, they were marginalized by the government. And it was a concern that had been raised in my Senate confirmation hearing in Washington.

They are called Basarwa in Botswana and are known elsewhere as the San or Bushmen. They have been called Africa's last hunter-gatherers, and about half of them live in Botswana. You may have seen them portrayed as pristine and content in "The Gods Must Be Crazy"—that's the film with a Bushman in the Kalahari Desert who discovers a Coca-Cola glass bottle that had dropped from the open window of an airplane. It was a South African film partly filmed in Botswana. A pretty funny, off-beat movie that is now rightly criticized for its condescension toward the people of the Kalahari.

Through our Democracy and Human Rights Fund, we gave an NGO called The First People of the Kalahari some money to facilitate dialogue between the government and the Basarwa. But for some reason, the government of Botswana, which had great resources available, had decided to no longer provide the Basarwa settlements in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve with water delivered in water tank trucks or mobile health clinics or other government social services. And so, they were effectively forcing these San, the Basarwa, to move into settlements outside of the CKGR, which was very disruptive to their lifestyle. The Botswana government argued that these were remote area dwellers who were merely induced to move to three settlements where they were perfectly happy. But the move really changed things dramatically for the Basarwa and resulted in higher levels of alcoholism and just all kinds of problems.

I thought there was simply a demeaning attitude that many of the Batswana [people of Botswana] had, critical of the Basarwa people for not being very sophisticated or educated or grateful that after their relocation to the settlements the government would provide them with water, a school, a health clinic, eligibility for social welfare services like school uniforms, et cetera. The outstanding pol-econ [political-economic] chief at the embassy, Mike Morrow, had visited the Basarwa several months before I did, and he termed it the vexing question of modernization versus preservation. An apt description.

I think you could probably look back at U.S. history to find times when Native American Indians were looked down upon in similar fashion and expected to assimilate, purportedly to improve their lives.

Q: Oh, yeah.

LANGE: On my trip in early July 2002, our pol-econ officer, the head of our Self-Help Program, an interpreter, a driver, and I visited the Basarwa, both in the CKGR and outside of it, to get a firsthand look at the situation.

While most of the populace in Botswana lives in the eastern and southern parts of the country, if you look at the map you see the Kalahari Desert and the Okavango Delta in the central and western portions of the country. Smaller, much smaller, settlements exist in those areas because it's just such a difficult place to live in. I remember a BBC report on the Basarwa at that time saying the Kalahari desert was as bare, remote, and harsh as life can get.

In the Central Kalahari Game Reserve we met with the handful of Basarwa who remained at a settlement called Kukama. A total of about 650 Basarwa living in the CKGR were relocated in 2002, and Kukama had been the home of a hundred people before the relocations began six months before we got there. I remember asking them why they chose to stay, since the government promised to provide services at the settlements outside the reserve. An elderly woman told me, This is our land, and she pointed to the tree under which she had been born. She said they would rather stay where they were and with what little they had and with the chance to kill a giraffe. And it turned out that on this trip we witnessed four Basarwa men being arrested by the Botswana Police Service for poaching, getting caught with the remains of a giraffe.



FSO Aaron Tarver, John and embassy FSN visit Basarwa family in Central Kalahari Game Reserve (2002)

The government's actions seemed to us to be mean-spirited. They didn't physically force people to move, but they dismantled houses in the CKGR settlements. And they made it difficult to bring water into the reserve, even dumping the water out of a loaded tank truck that was trying to enter the CKGR. That led an NGO called Ditshwanelo, the Botswana Center for Human Rights, to petition the government to change its policy. A London NGO called Survival International, which was quite strident in its criticism, said the government's attempts were cultural genocide and claimed the government actually

wanted the Basarwa out because it was afraid their presence might complicate potential diamond mining in the CKGR.

After that visit we went to the government-designated Basarwa settlement called Kaudwane, five kilometers outside of the reserve. There were a fair number of cattle and goats around the settlement but little grazing area, and we heard lots of complaints from the Basarwa. The institutions and support structures weren't in place to cope with the influx of new people since January. To us, the situation seemed unsustainable.

Q: Did the government have any reaction to your trip to the Kalahari?

LANGE: In Kaudwane, I raised our concerns with the village chairman, and he admitted they needed more resources to support the settlement. When I got back to Gaborone, I had meetings with the agriculture minister, who was half-Basarwa, and with the local government minister. I raised concerns about what we had witnessed, and they admitted that the government had been too slow to provide services and the current situation was unsustainable. I also explained my views to Foreign Minister Merafhe in a side conversation at a luncheon. But I thought the most interesting meeting was with the permanent secretary at the foreign ministry. He said the ministry had been tasked with containing the negative international press surrounding the relocations, and he was clearly frustrated with activities of foreign NGOs. He lamented that the government had been criticized by animal rights groups in the mid-1990s for allowing Basarwa to hunt wildlife, and now they were being criticized for not providing services in the CKGR so the Basarwa could lead a traditional lifestyle that included hunting wildlife. In his view, Botswana simply couldn't win. But he was not optimistic about any major shifts in policy and said parliament did not see a problem—and it even got angry when told of outside NGO views. It seemed to me that the idea that the Basarwa living in the CKGR could value things differently than the rest of Botswana's people simply did not enter the government's calculus.

Q: Did your trip to the Kalahari ever hit the press?

LANGE: Not in the immediate aftermath. I wanted to follow up discreetly by dealing directly with the government. But I must say, I gave a press conference to the Botswana Press Club in early August 2002, two days before I left the country, and spoke for an hour about things like AIDS, the just-signed expansion of trade benefits for Botswana and other nations under AGOA II, and lots of other issues. There was one question about the government's treatment of the Basarwa, and I responded in a way that I, and others at the embassy, thought was diplomatic and inoffensive but was interpreted by many in the media as condemning the government. I said something to the effect that I couldn't quite understand why the government was no longer providing the Basarwa with water and was moving them, or urging them to move, into settlements under unsustainable conditions outside of the CKGR. I thought that was a mild, relatively mild, expression of my frustrations with the policy. The media blew up the story. It became a big controversy because they're always looking for controversies, and their theory was the U.S. ambassador in his last press conference said things critical of the government.

I first learned about the controversy when I was back in Washington and clippings were mailed to me. One newspaper published an article written by a journalist who had attended the press conference and then read all the articles asserting I had come down hard in condemning government policies, and he wrote that I had not done so, either bluntly or indirectly. The article was headlined, “In Defense of John Lange.” (Laughs)

If I had to do it over again, I may say those exact same words with some additional explanation, and I would hold the press conference a week or two earlier so that I could deal with any criticism myself rather than leave it to the chargé d’affaires after my departure. So—because I really hadn’t been overly critical of the government, and they deserved criticism for what they were doing—I don’t regret what I said then, but it was one of those local controversies. The AF bureau had no problem with what I said, and actually appreciated my remarks because they showed that the U.S. government had not ignored the human rights issues involved. And that same month a European Parliament delegation visited the Kalahari and announced there were human rights abuses and the resettlements had degenerated into hopelessness for many Basarwa.

But the government of Botswana at that time was quite worried about its international reputation and was not at all appreciative of such comments. They put on a bit of a full-court press in response. Foreign Minister Merafhe and others took a helicopter trip to visit the Basarwa. Merafhe went on Radio Botswana to say that my views on the relocation exercise were based on a tiny minority of very vocal Basarwa opposed to relocation, and that governments can differ privately on certain issues but should refrain from criticizing each other in public. Another minister went on the radio to say that some unnamed officials pretend to be friendly and when they leave say upsetting things. And a prominent politician curtly dismissed my remarks in a conversation with chargé d’affaires Leslie Bassett, saying one trip does not an expert make. Survival International tried to reach me in Washington to talk about my observations, but I was no longer the ambassador and chose not to talk to them.

President Mogae wrote in 2002 that the Basarwa, like all other citizens, should be integrated into the mainstream of Botswana society to enjoy the fruits of economic development. He said there had been extensive consultations since 1985, and the relocation exercise was undertaken in a compassionate manner.

But that year, the Basarwa, with support from local and international NGOs, filed a court case alleging that their evictions from the CKGR were illegal. The government argued they were a danger to wildlife and that the game reserve was a poverty trap which stopped them from integrating into society and denied them access to healthcare and education. I have here a frontpage article on the court case from the *Washington Post* in June 2005 with the headline, quote, “A Culture Vanishes in Kalahari Dust—Bushmen Elders Resist Relocation in Botswana.” This was a big human rights controversy for years, and Botswana’s reputation suffered.

It took until December 2006 for the High Court of Botswana to rule that they had been wrongly evicted from their ancestral hunting grounds in the Kalahari Desert and should be allowed to return. One judge said the treatment of the remaining Basarwa in the

CKGR amounted to death by starvation because they were prohibited from hunting or receiving food rations. Another judge said the government had failed to take account of the knowledge and culture of the Basarwa when it expelled them. But the verdict also said the government was not obliged to provide basic services to anyone wishing to return to the reserve, nor had it acted illegally by terminating essential services in the reserve. I followed this from afar and, years after the fact, felt vindicated for expressing my concerns during that 2002 press conference.

Q: Yeah. Speaking of human rights, wasn't Botswana one of the Frontline States during apartheid in South Africa?

LANGE: Yes, Botswana was part of that loose coalition of African countries that sheltered exiled political movements opposed to apartheid and white minority rule, not only from South Africa, but also from Namibia and, prior to 1980, Rhodesia.

It's well-known that Botswana at that time had a complicated relationship with South Africa. It was a hive of African National Congress political activity and in the 1980s endured several cross-border raids by South African Defense Force agents. But at the same time, Botswana was, and still is, a member of the Southern African Customs Union and was a collaborator with South Africa in the De Beers diamond cartel, which was and still is essential to its economic well-being.

One of my good friends among the ambassadors in Botswana was Thandi Lujabe-Rankoe. I first came to know Thandi when she was the South African High Commissioner in Tanzania while I was there. She had been an activist who lived in exile during apartheid as an African National Congress diplomat, and she and I had a conversation where she told me harrowing stories of living in Botswana in the 1980s. For the ANC, Gaborone was considered a dangerous posting, and she said there were times when she and other ANC exiles had to sleep in different houses every night for fear of assassination. In June 1985 South African soldiers entered Botswana in vehicles bearing fake Botswana license plates and killed thirteen of her comrades. She was unharmed, but the massacre still clearly weighed on her. For me, living in stable and peaceful Botswana, it was almost hard to believe that Gaborone had been the scene of such bloodshed some fifteen years earlier.

Q: Could you say more about your regional role?

LANGE: People in Washington at the time, including the Assistant Secretary Susan Rice, had a vision of promoting regional—or maybe a better term, subregional—integration to help foster development in Sub-Saharan Africa. The idea was that the regional economic communities, like the Southern African Development Community, the East African Community, ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States] in West Africa, and others, would really be engines for integration. In my role as the special representative to SADC, as I mentioned, I was tasked to foster this integration. And our pol-econ chief and I did what we could to advance that agenda—but it was basically an impossible task. We were working on it—

Q: What was the theory behind this promotion of regional integration?

LANGE: The theory was that it was inefficient and insufficient to work with over fifty African countries individually. In the end, they really wouldn't develop their economies to the full extent without having much greater cooperation across borders, especially those small economies hoping to become internationally competitive and to mature as trading partners of the United States. So, if you really had regional integration, in theory you would lower customs duties, you would have easier movement of people and goods across borders, you would have integrated transportation networks, et cetera. This potentially could create a market of almost 200 million people in Southern Africa alone. And a regional approach would help to contain threats like narcotics smuggling, international terrorism, wildlife poaching. The whole idea was to reach those goals by fostering regional integration.

There was something called the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference in the 1980s that tried to reduce the region's dependence on South Africa, but after the fall of apartheid it transformed into the Southern African Development Community in 1992 and welcomed South Africa as a member in 1994. SADC had a clear focus on the integration of economic development. In 2001, while I was there, the heads of state and government restructured its institutions to centralize coordination of regional programs through directorates at the secretariat in Gaborone, and they amended the 1992 SADC Treaty to establish a strategic development plan.

The problem was, here I am, the special representative of the secretary of state to the Southern African Development Community, but metaphorically I would go to visit the SADC secretariat headquarters in Gaborone, knock on the door, and nobody would answer. Even before I arrived at post, Bob Krueger, my predecessor, who championed SADC's role in helping its member states realize their best potential, told me that SADC was like dealing with a jellyfish—it was diffuse and able to sting.

Q: Why was it difficult to deal with SADC?

LANGE: There was an executive secretary of SADC, but he didn't have much power because all of the decision making was in the heads of state and Council of Ministers, who would meet regularly. The heads of state had had a difficult time with the previous executive secretary, a Namibian who resigned just a few months before I arrived in Gaborone, over allegations that he was incompetent and arrogant and considered himself as a head of state. He also had been openly critical of U.S. policy toward Africa, especially regarding conflicts in the Congo and Angola. So the secretariat had just gone through this turmoil, and there was no way the heads of state were now going to give the current executive secretary, a Mauritian, the power to really run the organization. And so, it was just very difficult for us to get things to work with SADC because they had this cumbersome bureaucratic structure. I thought SADC's aspirations far exceeded its capabilities. When the heads of state or ministers reached consensus, their decisions could be effective and far-reaching. Absent consensus, however, they settled for the least common denominator. If we had any proposals for regional cooperation, they would be happy to accept our USAID money, but it was clear they wanted to run things their way,

not based on U.S. government priorities. The USAID mission in Botswana had no bilateral functions, as I mentioned earlier, but served as the agency's Regional Center for Southern Africa [RCSA].

Q: Why did USAID not have a bilateral mission in Botswana?

LANGE: As I mentioned earlier, USAID's bilateral program, along with the Peace Corps program, ended in the mid-1990s on the theory that Botswana had graduated from the need for development assistance. USAID leadership had been under great budgetary pressure from some Republicans in Congress, and it needed to demonstrate that there were success stories. So the agency ended its longstanding partnership with Botswana in 1996 following what they considered successful programs in areas like education, entrepreneurship, environmental management, and reproductive health. I really don't know if the USAID withdrawal was warranted, but I do know that Botswana at that time had a growing, and underestimated, HIV/AIDS problem and needed help on that.

So RCSA worked on a regional basis, much of that with SADC. They had programs supporting regional market integration, disaster management, sustainable environmental and natural resources management, new agricultural technologies, and democracy and good governance. They established a competitiveness hub to provide assistance to increase countries' capacity to trade globally. They would sign agreements with the SADC secretariat, though sometimes those agreements were employed just to allow USAID to work in multiple countries in the region. It wasn't like the SADC secretariat was doing much for these programs.

And it was hard to figure out a way for us to cooperate with SADC on regional security issues, especially since its security mechanism [Organ for Politics, Security, and Defense] was chaired by Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, who was openly hostile to U.S. political interests in the region.

I ended up traveling in the region, to Swaziland and Tanzania and South Africa and Mozambique and Angola and Namibia, to attend regional gatherings, et cetera, as part of our effort to advance our work in the SADC region. I would always meet with the U.S. ambassador in whatever country I was in.

And I was invited, in my capacity as the special representative, to attend a UK Southern Africa heads of mission conference in Lancaster House in January 2000. A French representative and I gave speeches to the British ambassadors. The United States and the UK had similar views on the Southern Africa region, though I think the USG had more faith in SADC's capabilities than they did.

There was one quite humorous follow-up to that London visit. I had paid a courtesy call on the DCM at the embassy and noticed that oil paintings of all previous U.S. ambassadors to the United Kingdom were displayed in the executive office space. Meanwhile, at the Gaborone embassy, like just about all other U.S. embassies in the world, photographs of previous ambassadors were on display. When I returned to Botswana, I jokingly complained to my office management specialist that we should have

paintings rather than photos of the ambassadors on the wall. Unbeknownst to me, she then organized a paint-the-ambassador contest for the American children at post. (Laughs) To my surprise, I was presented with the kids' paintings, labelled the Ambassador John E. Lange Portrait Gallery, at an embassy gathering. Really funny.

There was a big event, the second U.S.-SADC Forum in Maputo in May 2000, that was meant to be the prime vehicle for U.S. engagement with Southern Africa on a regional basis, where we could discuss common interests and pursue shared priorities. The first forum was held in Gaborone in April 1999, when my predecessor was the special representative.

Q: What did this forum with SADC accomplish?

LANGE: Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano, who chaired SADC at the time, opened the forum by describing it as a shining example of partnership between the United States and SADC. Lofty language. It was quite an event, with ministers and senior officials from all fourteen SADC member states and business executives from the region in attendance. The head of the U.S. delegation was Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, and eight other U.S. government agencies sent high-level representatives. So we took this quite seriously.

In Strobe's speech, he talked about regional economic integration and the need to address security challenges, tackle HIV/AIDS, and manage disasters. There was a lot of happy talk about maintaining the momentum through annual meetings on issues of mutual interest, and the final communiqué called on the SADC executive secretary and me to convene meetings of the forum steering committee to coordinate follow-up and develop an agenda for the next forum that was supposed to be held in Washington in the second half of 2001.

The AF bureau considered the forum to be, quote, a stunning success, and at the time everybody thought it was. In her January 2001 farewell remarks at the State Department, Secretary Albright spoke of having made a really good beginning in strengthening regional institutions in Africa. But as far as I know, a third U.S.-SADC Forum never took place, even though to this day we still cooperate in various ways with SADC. It was just so difficult to get things to move when dealing with the SADC secretariat, and then, as this evolved, we moved into the Bush Administration.

At that time, things were getting worse and worse in Zimbabwe, as President Mugabe was encouraging black Zimbabweans to violently seize white-owned farms for land redistribution. The so-called land reform decimated commercial food production and led to severe economic decline and a humanitarian crisis, in addition to the government's campaign of violence and intimidation against the political opposition. But the SADC attitude in my time there was, well, if you want to work with SADC, you have to work with all of us, including Zimbabwe.

We at the embassy really focused on trying to make it work, including hosting a January 2002 meeting of the SADC watchers at U.S. embassies in the region organized by

pol-econ chief Mike Morrow. But we were up against geopolitical issues in the region that were beyond our control.

Q: Did the Zimbabwe government cooperate with the other SADC members or was it off on its own?

LANGE: The problem was that, in a SADC context, the heads of state clearly didn't like what Mugabe was doing inside the country, at least most of them didn't. But he had stature and cachet in the region as the man who had been a leader in overthrowing the white Rhodesian government and bringing freedom and independence to Zimbabwe. So they wouldn't stand up against him, they wouldn't expel him from SADC, they basically went along with what he was doing.

I once had a private conversation with President Mogae after I had attended a regional trade and investment meeting in Windhoek, Namibia [Southern Africa Trade and Investment Summit]. Mugabe was one of the speakers, and I found him to be incredibly eloquent in criticizing the British and American colonialists with all of his revolutionary, outdated rhetoric. And so, when I had this conversation with Mogae, I said, It must be really difficult going to a SADC meeting when you know all the problems that President Mugabe is causing your country, Botswana, and you're hearing him blame Britain and the United States for Zimbabwe's troubles in a way that would make you come across as an apologist for colonialists if you criticized him. And Mogae responded, basically, You're absolutely right. I don't remember his exact words, but it was like a really quick yes, it's very difficult. Botswana has a relatively small population, and it seemed to me Mogae felt a certain sense of impotence vis-à-vis Zimbabwe. Mogae's view, as he even said publicly at some point, was that Botswana was relatively weak in terms of its military versus Zimbabwe's. Foreign Minister Merafhe said Botswana's approach was quiet diplomacy, influenced by the fact that Zimbabwe would be its neighbor for eternity. But Mugabe was driving his country into the ground. Mogae actually went public in indirectly criticizing Mugabe a couple of months after I left post, when he said that Zimbabwe's deepening political crisis was due to a drought of good governance. And it's probably not a coincidence that shortly thereafter Zimbabwe recalled its high commissioner to Botswana.

Q: Did the United States try to isolate Zimbabwe?

LANGE: Yes, to some extent, and that affected our work with SADC.

I remember going to a meeting of all the chiefs of mission of U.S. embassies in Southern Africa early in the tenure of the first assistant secretary of state for African affairs under President George W. Bush, Walter Kansteiner, and Walter said at that meeting, We've got to get rid of Mugabe. Well, we obviously weren't going to send troops into Zimbabwe to overthrow the president, even though there were rumors to that effect in the region toward the end of 2002. The Bush Administration was rightfully appalled by Mugabe's actions that had resulted in political, humanitarian, and economic crises, and it turned out that in 2003, after I left Botswana, President Bush issued an executive order creating the

Zimbabwe sanctions program. But it was very difficult for us to influence events inside Zimbabwe, and it took until 2017 for Mugabe, finally, to leave office under pressure.

Meanwhile, SADC was concerned about grants that excluded Zimbabwe, and that put the bulk of U.S. relations with SADC on hold. The U.S. government's attitude was, we want to work with SADC but not with Zimbabwe because we don't want to support Mugabe. But SADC basically responded, No, no, you have to work with all of us. They wouldn't isolate Mugabe themselves. That put a real chill on our relations, and as a result U.S.-SADC collaboration never really fulfilled its early promise, from my perspective.

Q: Can you cite some successes working with SADC?

LANGE: Yes, there were some regional successes. To name one: during U.S. Trade Representative Zoellick's February 2002 visit to several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to encourage the growing trade with the United States, we and the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria arranged for him to meet with ministers from eight SADC countries—not including Zimbabwe, of course—where he announced almost \$9 million in support of SADC trade capacity-building initiatives. The goal was to help the region become more competitive in global markets, including doing more to take advantage of duty-free access to the U.S. market under the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

Since I left post, it seems—from a great distance—that SADC has made progress, including developing the foundations for advancing regional cooperation in various areas and launching a free trade area to gradually reduce tariffs for intra-regional trade. And the member states cooperate better on issues related to politics, defense, and security cooperation. You can look at the ongoing construction of a bridge over the Zambezi River, which will be a one-stop-border-post facility replacing a ferry between Zambia and Botswana, as an example of progress in enhancing regional trade and integration. But those lofty regional integration goals from the year 2000 developed rather slowly, country by country.

Q: What other regional activities were you involved in?

LANGE: Separate from my SADC role, there were a lot of other regional activities that were based in Gaborone in part because you couldn't put everything in South Africa—even though that was the logical place for air routes because the Johannesburg Airport is such a major hub.

One of those regional activities was the nascent Africa Center for Strategic Studies. The ACSS was established following President Clinton's historic March 1998 trip to Africa that I described earlier. It was a regional center modeled after the George C. Marshall Center in Germany, and it's now based at the National Defense University at Fort McNair in Washington. They held their first senior leaders meeting in Dakar in May 1999, where they brought in military officers and others at a relatively senior rank from some fifty African countries for training and academic work.

The second ACSS leadership seminar was held in July 2000 in Gaborone, and we were pleased to host militaries coming from all over Africa. Over two weeks, participants discussed civil-military relations, national security strategy, and defense economics—issues that were of direct relevance on the continent. I thought it was a very worthwhile program. Don Payne, a member of Congress who was very influential on U.S. policy toward Africa, attended for several days.

In May, *The Economist* had featured a rather jarring front page labeling Africa the hopeless continent, and in June the *New York Times* had described all the pessimism about conflict and corruption in Africa. So in my speech at the ACSS closing ceremony, I took the opportunity to argue that the spate of Afro-pessimism belied the reality on the ground. A local newspaper story carried the headline, “Africa isn’t hopeless, says Lange.” I made my point.

One of the interesting things for me, because I had never encountered this in previous postings in the Foreign Service, was the presence in Botswana of the Voice of America.

Q: What was the VOA doing in Botswana?

LANGE: They had a transmission site near Selebi-Phikwe, a mining town close to the Zimbabwean border, that was created to fill in a major gap in VOA’s African coverage. The International Broadcasting Bureau’s Botswana Transmitting Station sent out VOA-produced news reports and radio shows using 500,000-watt mediumwave broadcasts in a few languages to Southern Africa and lower-power, shortwave broadcasts in a variety of local languages to other places in Sub-Saharan Africa and Somalia. At least once over the years President Mugabe’s supporters complained that the VOA was beaming hate messages or whatever into Zimbabwe, but that obviously wasn’t true and instead can be seen as a sign that VOA had effective programming with an impact. The station manager was a career VOA employee, an FSO, who drove down to attend our country team meetings about once a month. And so, we had a visit by a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which governed VOA at that time, and I visited the transmission site a couple of times, which was quite interesting, seeing these huge towers that were a piece of America.

There was a major regional development during my tenure, when we began hosting the International Law Enforcement Academy.

Q: Can you explain what the International Law Enforcement Academy is?

LANGE: ILEAs, as they were called, were regional leadership-training centers developed by U.S. law enforcement agencies and administered by the State Department’s INL Bureau [International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs]. Back then, the other ILEAs were in Budapest, Bangkok, and, for advanced training, New Mexico. The one in Botswana was led by the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center [FLETC]. A Botswana minister and I signed the agreement to establish the academy in July 2000.

The ILEA courses initially were conducted in hotel conference rooms while state-of-the-art facilities outside of Gaborone were being constructed on grounds adjacent to the Botswana Police College. The instructors came from a wide range of U.S. law enforcement agencies—you name it, and they were there: FLETC, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Secret Service, Drug Enforcement Agency, Customs, Internal Revenue Service, State's Diplomatic Security, and Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. I would speak at the graduation ceremonies.

I thought ILEA had great potential as a creative executive development program playing a part in confronting transnational criminal threats, from terrorism and financial tracking to sex crimes and animal poaching. All important for Africa and the United States. The training really did build law enforcement capabilities—particularly for middle-management officials—and connected them to one another. They even maintained an alumni network to reinforce the training and the connections. We got good feedback from U.S. ambassadors in the region, who said the training enhanced their cooperation with local law enforcement leadership. But I have to say, we were a bit frustrated by the challenge of coordinating multiple Washington agencies for counterterrorism training, a fundamental U.S. concern following 9/11. This was before creation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. I advocated for better coordination when I visited FLETC headquarters in Georgia during a trip to the United States in April 2002.

Recognizing that Southern Africa was the world's hardest-hit region dealing with the AIDS epidemic, we worked with the ILEA director to develop a two-hour program on HIV/AIDS as part of the multiweek study course. I remember being told that some police officers from a country that had an extremely high infection rate thought the program was irrelevant because AIDS didn't affect them. But it did affect them or certainly had the potential to do so.

Q: Can you talk more about your work on AIDS?

LANGE: As I said, my signature issue in Botswana was HIV/AIDS. All of those other things that I talked about were important, very interesting issues. I did my best as the U.S. ambassador to show that I cared about every section of the embassy, all the issues that affected the United States, all U.S. government national interests. But when I got to Botswana, as I mentioned earlier, it was estimated that over 38 percent of all adults aged fifteen to forty-nine were HIV positive. That was probably a high estimate because of the methodology they used for the sentinel survey, testing pregnant women, and it later turned out that the figure was probably closer to 33 percent. An HIV-positive baby was born every hour. I arrived in Botswana December '99, and in the year 2000 the World Health Organization estimated, based on trends at that time, that 85 percent of the fifteen-year-olds in Botswana would eventually die of AIDS. In 2002, Botswana's National AIDS Coordinating Agency [NACA] said 75 percent of the country's hospital beds were occupied by HIV-positive patients. Botswana at that time was thought to have the highest HIV infection rate in the world. A tragic situation.

Q: Was this because of truck routes or something?

LANGE: There were a lot of reasons. The truck routes were part of it. Because of customs, duties, and other bureaucratic impediments, you'd have truckers waiting to cross the border, sometimes for twenty-four, forty-eight hours, with a lot of prostitutes waiting around.

But there were so many other reasons, and NACA was quite frank in pointing them out. They included national and international migration patterns and migrant labor, alcohol abuse, and the decline of traditional family structures—the majority of pregnant women in Botswana were single. An article in *The Economist* blamed poverty, ignorance, stigmatization, violence, and promiscuity. One woman wrote in a Gaborone newspaper that Botswana had a culture granting men the license to have extramarital affairs, and there may be some truth to that. And the situation was exacerbated by a government policy that forced some employees to relocate for extended periods away from their families to deal with a scarcity of required skills in certain regions.

The extent of AIDS in Botswana wasn't the way AIDS was thought about in the early stages in the United States, as a gay men's disease. In Botswana, it affected men and women and even babies born HIV-positive.

I once talked to a top official in an insurance company in Selebi-Phikwe, where the VOA transmitter was located. The Botswana city was thought to have the highest HIV infection rate in the world, with prevalence estimated at an astonishing 50%. This was around the year 2000. He said that in normal conditions they needed a workforce of around 500 employees, but now they thought they had to have 600 employees on their staff because so many employees became sick and died, or had to care for loved ones, and you had to have enough trained people onboard to function properly.

That also applied to Debswana, the diamond company. In 2001, it was the first company in the world to provide free antiretroviral treatment to its employees and their spouses. And in 2002 it announced that around 20 percent of its roughly 6,000 workers were HIV-positive.

Q: Did AIDS affect the embassy's workforce?

LANGE: Yes. We knew that we had people on our staff who were HIV positive. As I was leaving post, I ended up selling my personal computer to an FSN who was a leader in one of the sections in the general services office. He was one of our great workers. I knew he was HIV positive, and it turned out that he died of AIDS a month later. So, it was affecting those of us at the embassy directly.

It was such a concern, in 2001 we ended up issuing a mission policy on HIV/AIDS in the workplace, adapted from text approved by the State Department for worldwide use. It emphasized that we would not, as a general proposition, discriminate against employees who had AIDS or were perceived as having it, and it granted a day of administrative leave to take an HIV test, though I think few took advantage of it. The next year we implemented a program called WeCare allowing employees to take off four hours each

month to volunteer at an organization working on AIDS-related community activities. And the regional security officer put together an education campaign for our local guards.

The only way you could get tested for HIV in Botswana when I arrived was to have your doctor send a blood sample to neighboring South Africa, where they had the testing facilities. So, the vast majority of Botswana didn't even know whether or not they were HIV-positive.

I give great credit to Dr. Tom Kenyon, who at that time headed the CDC office at the U.S. embassy. He was running an operation called the BOTUSA Project, which was a collaborative effort between CDC and the ministry of health that was housed within the ministry. The partnership was devoted to prevention, care, support, and surveillance of HIV/AIDS, TB [tuberculosis], and related conditions. While AIDS is known as a fatal disease, the actual cause of death for many victims is TB, the most frequently occurring opportunistic disease that attacks the weakened immune system of HIV-positive persons.

This was in the days when resources were scarce, well before PEPFAR [the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief] was created in 2003. So, what we worked out, and it was really Tom leading this, was to establish voluntary counseling and testing centers [VCTCs] in Botswana where someone could go voluntarily to be tested for HIV and then confidentially find out the results. Even though ART at that time was not affordable for the vast majority of Botswana, the whole idea was, if you were HIV-negative and knew your status, you should take steps to remain so. And if you found out you were HIV-positive, you should get counseling, take action to protect your loved ones by doing what it takes not to infect them, eat better to improve your health and do your best to prolong your own life, et cetera. The VCTCs were built by the embassy's Office of Defense Cooperation—initially through the U.S. European Command and later through the U.S. Africa Command—using DOD humanitarian assistance funds and were staffed and equipped by CDC. It was really a great, cooperative relationship.

ODC also was active in other ways, providing funds to the Botswana Defence Force for their HIV/AIDS strategy and sponsoring a seminar for regional military and police officials on healthcare resource management with a focus on AIDS.

Q: How effective were these testing centers and your other efforts?

LANGE: We opened the first center in June 2000 in the city of Francistown. I'm pretty sure I attended every one of the VCTC openings that occurred while I was in Botswana. The BOTUSA Project named the centers Tebelopele, a Setswana word that translates as "vision" or "look into the future" in English. I still have one of their baseball caps that has a logo with a bright sun and the phrase, quote, "Make a New Start Today." When a center opened, we would have a big celebration, complete with balloons and food, to emphasize the positive. The minister of health would attend, a woman who later became internationally famous in global health circles named Joy Phumaphi, and she was terrific. CDC and ODC were, of course, there. Vice President Ian Khama officially opened the Tebelopele VCTC in Gaborone on World AIDS Day in December 2000, and we

convinced President Mogae to speak when we opened the center in his hometown of Serowe.



John and Botswana Vice President Ian Khama, who later became president, open a voluntary counseling and testing center (2000)

By the time I left Botswana, 45,000 people had learned their status through testing at twelve VCTCs. Tebelopele eventually grew to eighteen centers across the country. And BOTUSA took other innovative approaches to make people aware of the threat of HIV and overcome stigma, from radio soap operas and painted vans to strengthening education in the school system and a door-to-door community mobilization campaign.

But there were limits to the effectiveness of voluntary counseling and testing centers. HIV was thought of as a death sentence because the cost of ART, which can prolong your life indefinitely if you're HIV-positive, was \$10,000 per person per year when I arrived at post. This, in a country with a per capita income of around \$3,000 per year.

There was such great stigma surrounding HIV, negative attitudes and beliefs about people who were HIV-positive. One survey of Botswana found that the most common barrier to getting tested was being afraid to know one's positive status.

Q: Why was there such stigma about AIDS? AIDS is transmitted by sex?

LANGE: Yes, the virus is transmitted by sex. And it also can come from needles and syringes shared by infected drug users or be transmitted from a mother to her baby during pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding. Mother-to-child transmission of HIV is just heartbreaking. Sex was the primary means of transmission in Botswana, from what we could tell.

I was an outsider, but it was clear that AIDS stigma had deep cultural roots in Botswana as well as elsewhere. People would hide their HIV status or not even want to know their HIV status. There were HIV-positive women who wouldn't tell their husbands their status for fear the husbands would leave them immediately. HIV-positive mothers would breastfeed their children, even while knowing that that could transmit the virus, rather than use infant formula because use of formula was considered by some to be an admission that one was HIV-positive. Men would discourage their female partners from getting tested or revealing their status for fear of discrimination or ostracism.

I had concluded that the biggest threat to Botswana was HIV/AIDS, and I used my bully pulpit, as best I could, to raise the issue of AIDS to help try to overcome that stigma. In every speech I gave, no matter what the subject—it could have been military-to-military cooperation or trade cooperation or whatever—I mentioned HIV/AIDS and urged people to know their HIV status, take precautions, and not take risks.

When I look back on it, it seems like I gave countless speeches at countless meetings on HIV/AIDS. I still have many of those newspaper clippings. There's one headline saying, Do not stigmatize HIV/AIDS sufferers, says U.S. envoy. And my efforts included events marking World AIDS Day each year. On December 1, 2000, I announced what we called the U.S. Ambassador's Initiative on HIV/AIDS, funded by USAID and aimed at reducing stigma in three sectors: youth, the media, and community-based organizations. And I spoke a year later when President Mogae officially dedicated the new Botswana-Harvard HIV Reference Laboratory and received the Harvard AIDS Institute's global leadership award. Very well-deserved.

When I gave a speech at one of the VCTC openings, I noted that all American staff at the embassy had been tested for HIV before departing the United States, as was State Department policy. I was trying to promote the normality of HIV testing, but the idea of required testing was so provocative that it made front page headlines. And my messages on AIDS tended to be better heard and understood when I couched the problem in terms of the global pandemic and noted that the United States had its own serious problem, rather than implying that there was something unique or wrong about Africa.

I spoke so often about HIV/AIDS that our FSN political analyst told me that people around town were saying that AIDS, A-I-D-S, stood for Americans Intent on Discouraging Sex. (Laughs) But I wasn't discouraging sex, I was urging that any sex should be protected. And I never, for political reasons, urged people to use condoms. I never said that. I was clearly trying to be polite and diplomatic while urging people not to take risks.

Now, I have to say there's a limit to what the U.S. ambassador can do in terms of influencing people to make individual decisions to protect themselves from HIV infection—

Q: Well, people are dying. I mean, this is not a mild problem. I mean, this is just what you're dealing with, life and death.

LANGE: Yes, so many people were dying, and the burials often would take place back in their home village. There's even a book about it, *Saturday is for Funerals*, co-written by a fellow I got to know pretty well, Dr. Max Essex, pioneering AIDS researcher at Harvard, and Unity Dow, a prominent Botswana jurist and human rights activist. You'd see these caravans of funeral processions leaving Gaborone on a Saturday as Botswana went back to their home village for the funeral of a loved one. Death notices in the newspapers would list numerous people dying in their twenties after what was euphemistically described as a long illness.

Q: Could you explain why you couldn't speak about condoms?

LANGE: Well, there's something about being the U.S. ambassador and not being comfortable in saying to the people of the host country, You need to use condoms. I was trying to be diplomatic and ambassadorial. And there was a U.S. domestic issue about condom usage, especially among some on the conservative side of U.S. politics, many of whom preferred to emphasize abstinence for purposes of infection prevention. That messaging on abstinence ended up being included in the initial congressional authorization for PEPFAR.

But it was not an easy matter to convince people to avoid the risk of infection and take preventive actions themselves. There was a sense of hopelessness.

I remember having the lieutenant general who was the military commander over to my house for a luncheon in honor of our defense attaché, who was departing. As was my wont, I talked about HIV/AIDS and the Botswana Defence Force. At that time Botswana had a policy to test applicants before they entered the military, to weed out those who were HIV positive, but they were never tested again after entering the military. That policy assumed they were taking certain precautions, and the military was providing free condoms and prevention education, but I simply had to assume that some of those young men were not avoiding the risk of infection. And so, I raised with the commander the need for HIV testing within the military, the importance of knowing your status. The general responded, Your excellency, if I don't get tested today, when I go home tonight, I'm going to have a good night's sleep. If I get tested for HIV today and find out that I'm HIV positive, I'm never going to have a good night's sleep again for the rest of my life. Why should I get tested?

I thought that was a really striking statement. That was the mindset, because AIDS was thought of as a death sentence. And it was very difficult to overcome that real fear of knowing one's status.

Q: How important was the leadership on AIDS in Botswana?

LANGE: It was critically important. The president of Botswana could be far more open with his people than I could as the U.S. ambassador. Mogae was an Oxford-educated development economist who once worked at the International Monetary Fund, but it turned out his leadership on AIDS was truly exceptional. He was very candid in several fora warning about the, quote, "blank extinction" of the Botswana if they did not reverse

the HIV/AIDS epidemic. He was forthright in his annual speeches on World AIDS Day, December 1, that I attended. In one of his addresses to parliament, he stressed the need for, quote, “greater abstinence,” especially among the early teen population.

And that was in such contrast to the president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, who was just terrible in the sense that he wouldn’t recognize that HIV causes AIDS because of something he’d read on the internet. He questioned the safety of AIDS drugs. And in March 2001 he ended up rejecting appeals to declare South Africa's AIDS epidemic a national emergency. I am convinced that many, many people died in South Africa because that government did not take hold of this issue and urge people to take precautions and try to reduce the stigma of HIV. A Harvard study estimated that during Mbeki’s tenure something like 365,000 South Africans, including tens of thousands of newborns whose HIV-positive mothers didn’t receive the drug to prevent mother-to-child transmission, died due to his intransigence. I met a couple of times, including at an event in Gaborone, “Manto” Tshabalala-Msimang, the health minister of South Africa. She was infamous for promoting the benefits of beetroot and other nutritious foods for those who were HIV-positive while citing possible toxicities of AIDS medicines, and she was not about to be convinced otherwise by a U.S. ambassador. It took until 2002 for the South African cabinet to finally affirm a policy that HIV actually causes AIDS. The AIDS denialism and lack of strong leadership in South Africa was a tragedy for that country.

The Botswana government’s approach to AIDS was just the opposite of the situation in South Africa. You had President Mogae candidly confronting the crisis with strong support from Minister of Health Phumaphi, who would give very emotional speeches on the specter of AIDS for the country. I had many discussions and meetings with Mogae and Phumaphi about HIV/AIDS because they were such believers in the need to take action, and we were doing our best, within our available resources, to support HIV/AIDS programs.

At the same time, I must say that Mogae’s predecessor—who, as I said earlier, was a great, fun man, I really liked him, President Quett Masire—had not really taken the HIV/AIDS problem seriously enough when he was president. HIV had spread unabated. Mogae took the threat very seriously and did whatever he could, but by the time he took office the epidemic was out of hand.

Given my subsequent work on global health diplomacy, I have to say that watching Mogae confront Botswana’s AIDS challenge was a lesson-learned on the fundamental importance of leadership in global health. I love working with the technical experts in CDC and other agencies, but there’s an important, often critical role for State Department diplomats to play in supporting and fostering leadership in a country as it faces public health challenges, from HIV/AIDS to pandemics to other infectious disease outbreaks. An unchecked epidemic can be disastrous for a country’s economy and a recipe for political instability.

And I thought we did our best at the embassy to support the government’s leadership. We made HIV/AIDS a significant focus for every U.S. government agency based in Botswana.

The public affairs officer and the regional environment and health officer co-produced a pamphlet describing our efforts entitled, “The Partnership: Botswana and the United States Against HIV and AIDS.” We were happy to see a State Department cable to all diplomatic and consular posts with a subject line expressing kudos on U.S. government cooperation on HIV/AIDS in Botswana.

The Public Affairs Office also organized a workshop for the Botswana media on how to cover the AIDS pandemic and gave out HIV/AIDS media awards to highlight exemplary coverage of the epidemic by local print and broadcast media. We were trying to foster accurate and responsible reporting and respectful treatment of those affected, and the winning writer got a free trip to an international AIDS conference. If you want to get a sense of how graphic the discussion of AIDS got, the overall winner wrote an article busting three myths on the use of a condom: That it had worms, it could not stop HIV from going through it, and it was too small for some men.

Q: Wow.

LANGE: By 2001, three U.S. government departments and two agencies were spending around \$12 million a year in Botswana to prevent, test for, and treat HIV/AIDS, but that just paled in comparison to what PEPFAR now spends in Botswana as well as in other countries. At that time, we just didn’t have a lot of U.S. government money compared to the enormous needs. PEPFAR was a godsend.

Q: What was Washington’s international approach to AIDS before PEPFAR?

LANGE: The U.S. government actually provided some funding to address the global HIV epidemic beginning in the mid-1980s. President Clinton created an AIDS office in the White House [White House Office of National AIDS Policy] in his first year as president, but it was part of the Domestic Policy Council. He established a Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS a couple of years later. In July 1999, several months before I arrived in Gaborone, Clinton announced his LIFE Initiative [Leadership and Investment in Fighting an Epidemic] calling for a \$100 million increase in U.S. support for fourteen countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and India to help them reduce HIV transmission and provide basic care and support services to infected persons. USAID had lead responsibility, and Botswana was covered by USAID’s RCSA. I thought that was a worthwhile initiative, but totally inadequate to the task at hand.

And—back to our earlier discussion of Richard Holbrooke and his work on HIV/AIDS after he left his ambassadorship to the UN in New York—Ambassador Holbrooke, while still at USUN, put together a special session of the UN Security Council on January 10, 2000, with Vice President Al Gore as the lead U.S. representative. The council met to discuss the impact of AIDS on peace and security in Africa. While we followed this from afar in Gaborone, it was really a seminal event—the first time the Security Council ever dealt with a public health issue as a matter of international peace and security. By then, HIV/AIDS had become the fourth biggest killer worldwide and the number one killer in Africa. And I think it’s worth citing the statement made by UN Secretary General Kofi

Annan at the meeting. He said, and I have the text in front of me, quote, “The impact of AIDS in that region is no less destructive than that of warfare itself. . . . By overwhelming the continent's health services, by creating millions of orphans and by decimating health workers and teachers, AIDS is causing social and economic crises which in turn threaten political stability. . . . In already unstable societies, this cocktail of disasters is a sure recipe for more conflict. And conflict, in turn, provides fertile ground for further infections.” I thought that was a very powerful statement on the national security implications of the AIDS epidemic in Africa, and I still quote it in my own speeches on global health security.

To his point: I was told by a well-informed government official that there were cabinet ministers in the Botswana government who were HIV-positive.

Q: Surely, I mean, AIDS had no social regard.

LANGE: No, not at all. One AIDS expert called it an equal-opportunity affliction.

In his last State of the Union address, President Clinton announced the launch of a program [Millennium Vaccine Initiative] with incentives for developing vaccines against HIV, TB, and malaria. In April 2000 he declared that the HIV/AIDS epidemic was a threat to U.S. national security. And there was a significant development the next month when Clinton, in light of the high cost of antiretroviral therapy, issued an executive order promising the United States would not challenge laws in African countries that sought to improve access to AIDS drugs. In August, Congress authorized additional funds for international AIDS efforts [the Global AIDS and Tuberculosis Relief Act].

Lots of activity, lots of good U.S. intentions, along with actions taken by other governments and multilateral organizations. But even though these efforts did increase focus and funding, they were nowhere near enough. And some people were skeptical because they thought the U.S. measures were designed to protect the monetary interests of American pharmaceutical companies over the needs of developing countries.

Q: George W. Bush, he really pushed things, didn't he?

LANGE: Yes, he's the one who created PEPFAR. A wonderful legacy that has saved millions of lives. I'll talk about my work in the PEPFAR office later.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: There was great interest in AIDS among the public health experts in Washington, of course, and the National Institutes of Health organized a scientific consultation in Gaborone for Sub-Saharan Africa on a research agenda for the treatment of AIDS-affected women and children early in the Bush Administration, in March 2001.

I thought it was really notable when newly appointed Secretary of State Colin Powell reaffirmed the U.S. statement that AIDS was a national security threat. He was really quite outspoken about HIV/AIDS, once calling it the greatest weapon of mass destruction

on earth today. And in May 2001, President Bush, with the Nigerian president and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan at his side in the Rose Garden of the White House, announced support for creation of the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis with a founding U.S. contribution of \$200 million. It was clear that the president felt the United States, a resource-rich and privileged country, was morally obligated to help.

Bush's announcement was followed by the UN General Assembly's first Special Session on AIDS in June, where President Mogae said that Botswana were threatened with extinction as people were dying in chillingly high numbers in a crisis of the first magnitude. UNGASS, as it was called, passed a declaration calling for the establishment of a global HIV/AIDS and health fund with contributions coming from public and private sources. The concept was endorsed by the G-8 [Group of Eight] a month later, and the Global Fund, as it is known, came into existence in January 2002. That was a major international development, of course, but it took time before the effects were felt in Botswana.

There was a separate global development that I need to mention, since it still resonates in global health. In November 2001, a WTO [World Trade Organization] ministerial meeting in Doha passed a declaration on the TRIPS [Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights] agreement and public health. WTO said governments had the right to grant compulsory licenses in national emergencies such as public health crises relating to HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other epidemics. That meant countries could circumvent patent rights to promote access to medicines for all. It was no panacea, since other hindrances to medication access still existed—lack of resources and infrastructure and such—but it was a really important step for public health.

Q: Can you describe the impact these international developments had on Botswana?

LANGE: The Botswana government stepped up. Following President Mogae's February 2001 announcement, the National AIDS Coordinating Agency in January 2002 launched the first national antiretroviral therapy [ART] program in Africa, called Masa, a Setswana word meaning "new dawn."

The Global Fund took time to become operational, but there were several philanthropic and other organizations doing research and providing antiretroviral drugs to small numbers of Botswana patients. There were many groups that ended up coming to Botswana to set up shop. In addition to the Harvard AIDS Institute, there was the Baylor College of Medicine's International Pediatric AIDS Initiative at Texas Children's Hospital, which opened its first clinic in Sub-Saharan Africa in Botswana in 2000. The Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation's Secure the Future program was another partner in the country's efforts to develop the pediatric HIV response. This was at a time when there was skepticism about whether it was even possible to treat HIV-infected children effectively in low- and middle-income countries, much less to do so at scale. And the nonprofit organization Population Services International was active in communications to promote health and the social marketing of condoms.

Interestingly enough for me, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, where I ended up working after I retired from the Foreign Service, and the Merck Company Foundation worked with the Botswana government in 2000 to develop a country-led, public-private collaboration called the African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnership, or ACHAP. I ended up returning to Botswana in August 2010 for the ten-year ACHAP anniversary and launch of its new phase. I found it kind of eerie giving another speech on AIDS in front of a large crowd, but this time as a representative of the Gates Foundation rather than the U.S. government. President Ian Khama spoke, and several of us met with him afterward. With his predecessor in mind, I pushed him on his role in highlighting the need for action on HIV/AIDS. I thought he had a rather lame response, explaining that he had delegated that to others in the government.

I had the reputation of being an ambassador who really cared about HIV/AIDS and was very knowledgeable about it, so all of these groups would come to see me in Gaborone. But I also recognized that South Africa had something like twenty-five times the population of Botswana. I remember asking them, Why are you coming here, a country of 1.7 million, when there's so many more people who are HIV-infected across the border in South Africa? It wasn't that I was discouraging them from coming to Botswana, but I was just wondering why not also work in South Africa.

Q: Yeah. How did these NGOs and universities explain their emphasis on Botswana?

LANGE: Their answer was, If our pilot program does not work here in Botswana, it won't work anywhere in Africa because Botswana is a country that works. Botswana was one of the smallest yet wealthiest countries in Southern Africa, it had a well-educated population and a developed health-care program, and its leadership was highly motivated to take action on the AIDS epidemic. So they thought that it was a better place to develop their pilot projects back then, before the Global Fund and, later, PEPFAR became fully operational.

As I said, at the embassy we were all doing a lot on HIV/AIDS, everything we could with the limited resources we had available, but the problem was immense. And that threatened what, as I said earlier, was Secretary Powell's description of Botswana's power of example for other African countries. HIV/AIDS was affecting everyone, including educated professionals and the working population, and threatened to erode Botswana's development gains since independence in 1966.

Botswana was considered the most severely infected country in the world, and it wasn't just the mortality rate that was alarming. As parents succumbed to disease, households collapsed and left a generation of orphans. There were even child-headed households, with children as young as fourteen caring for their younger siblings after the death or incapacitation of their parents. On a visit to a community outreach program supported by the Ambassador's Self-Help Fund in Francistown, I was serenaded by children with a song carrying the haunting refrain, My mother died before I met her. The program director told me the children were taught life skills, including about HIV, so they could stay behind when everybody else had gone. And yet the community program had to make

it clear they were helping orphans and vulnerable children, not just AIDS orphans, to avoid the stigma of AIDS that was automatically transferred from parent to child.

What I didn't know at the time was that President Bush wanted the U.S. government to develop a transformational program of its own to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic in developing countries. He tasked a few trusted officials in Washington with determining the feasibility of developing a program for the prevention, treatment, and care of people living with or at risk of HIV/AIDS in Africa and other low-income regions. So, in early 2002, Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson, who was from my home state of Wisconsin where he'd been governor, started to plan a trip to Botswana and a few other hard-hit African countries in a fact-finding mission to determine whether such a program was feasible.

I visited Washington in February 2002, when President Mogae and two other African presidents met with President Bush in the White House, and took the opportunity to call on Secretary Thompson in his office to talk about the plans for his trip. Given his background as a University of Wisconsin Law School graduate, like me, and former Wisconsin state governor, I asked him if it would be okay for me to organize a Wisconsin reunion just before the official reception in honor of his visit, and he agreed.

Q: What was the purpose of President Bush's meeting with three African presidents?

LANGE: There was what they called a mini summit of three African leaders, all from Southern Africa: President Mogae, President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique, and President José Eduardo dos Santos of Angola. It was kind of an economical way for Bush to spend one hour of his time to meet with African leaders, since this was five months after 9/11 and he was not close to being able to take the time to make a trip to Africa.

The meeting was set up to discuss working bilaterally and through SADC on such issues as political stability and security, trade and economic development, poverty reduction, and HIV/AIDS. The four presidents met briefly in the Oval Office and then had their official meeting, with aides present, for forty-five minutes or an hour in the Cabinet Room. The vice president, cabinet secretaries, and top NSC officials as well as the three of us who were U.S. ambassadors to the three countries attended. The three African presidents clearly had coordinated their comments, with Mogae, naturally, taking the lead on HIV/AIDS.

I still remember, after the session ended, there was a bit of chitchat in the Cabinet Room, and President Mogae came up to President Bush to thank him for the meeting. President Bush saw me walk up, and he said, quote, "So, this is my ambassador?" He's telling Mogae this. "So, this is my ambassador? If he gives you any trouble, you let me know." (Both laugh) And then President Bush looked at me and winked. And I have to say, that's where I saw the skilled politician in George W. Bush. That was very charming and quite clever of him to do that.

I also remember departing out the front door of the White House to see a podium and a phalanx of maybe fifty reporters anxious to hear from the three African presidents. I'll

bet that it had to be one of the most memorable moments in the tenures of those presidents.

Hours before the White House meeting, Mogae had met with Secretary Colin Powell in his office. The secretary testified before Congress a week later and recalled those talks with President Mogae. He told a House [of Representatives] committee that average life expectancy in Botswana had dropped from sixty-nine to forty-four and said the tragedy cries out for the whole world to do something about it.

In my farewell courtesy call on Mogae in July 2002, I told him that the high point of my tour was witnessing Presidents Bush and Mogae discuss HIV/AIDS strategy in the White House.

Q: When did the HHS secretary come to Botswana?

LANGE: Secretary Thompson led a high-powered U.S. delegation of several dozen health experts, government officials, leaders of faith-based organizations, politicians, business leaders, and others to visit four countries—Mozambique, South Africa, Botswana, and Côte d'Ivoire—during the first week of April 2002. The delegation included Dr. Anthony Fauci, world-famous AIDS researcher and director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases who later was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bush for his work on PEPFAR, and other luminaries.

The announced purpose of the trip was to strengthen partnerships and discuss capacity-building efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria—with no mention of a potential new U.S. program focused on those diseases. One NGO said it was shameful that Secretary Thompson would carry out a study tour when proven AIDS programs were grossly underfunded in the president's budget proposals—an indication of how polarizing U.S. policy toward AIDS was back then. Little did they know what the real plans were.

The delegation visited South Africa just before they came to Botswana, including a review of the Ford Motor Company's pioneering campaign for the health and well-being of its staff, which was considered a good business practice because some 20 percent of the staff were thought to be HIV-positive. Clearly, AIDS in Africa was hitting American businesses. But, if I recall correctly, the delegation did not meet with the president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki. And they had what they told me was a very difficult meeting with Minister of Health Tshabalala-Msimang. So they arrived in Botswana dispirited because there hadn't been the top-level support for work on HIV/AIDS that they had been hoping to hear from the government of South Africa.

Leadership at the level of head of state or head of government was so important in the fight against AIDS, and they found Botswana to be a stark contrast from South Africa. The government was very appreciative that a top U.S. government official was there to show support for HIV/AIDS programs in the country. The delegation was welcomed with open arms and was visibly relieved. Health Minister Phumaphi was delighted and said so in a welcoming luncheon speech celebrating public-private partnerships with the U.S.

institutions that were helping in the fight against HIV/AIDS and TB. The delegation also got a close look at the work of the BOTUSA Project, including Secretary Thompson's speech at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Gaborone VCTC. The secretary told the crowd, quote, "As much as you are our ally in fighting terrorism, we are your ally in the fight against HIV/AIDS."



HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson and Botswana Health Minister Joy Phumaphi together at voluntary counseling and testing center groundbreaking ceremony with John, Botswana officials, and BOTUSA Project Director Tom Kenyon (2002)

The delegation, with permission, also visited a hospital wing with AIDS patients. And the leaders of the delegation and I went to see President Mogae for a very positive and productive conversation. In the meeting with Mogae, there was, as I recall, an effort to convince him to adopt a program to administer a dose of the drug nevirapine to the mother at the time of delivery and then at least one dose to the infant shortly after birth for prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, which was a major concern of the Bush Administration.

The evening before the delegation's departure, I hosted the Wisconsin reunion that I mentioned earlier. Invitees included the deputy speaker of Botswana's National Assembly and the former head of the University of Botswana, both University of Wisconsin graduates, and just about anybody else we could find who had Wisconsin ties. But the secretary was at his hotel on phone calls to Washington and running late, so, by the time he arrived, that event merged with our official reception in the garden of my residence, with half a dozen Botswana cabinet ministers and leaders of the AIDS community in attendance. When the secretary arrived, he and I sang Wisconsin's alma mater, "Varsity," complete with its arm waving—to the bewilderment of almost everybody from Botswana.

The delegation's visit had been a big success, and everyone was in good spirits. It was a fun, memorable evening.

Q: Did Thompson's visit to Botswana have an impact on Bush's thinking about AIDS?

LANGE: Yes, definitely. In the end, when Thompson and the delegation went back to Washington, they had firsthand knowledge of what was attainable in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was clear to them that governments in general would support a new AIDS program and that patients accepted the critical need for treatment and adherence to treatment regimens. This contradicted the notion infamously expressed in congressional testimony in June 2001 by USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios that Africa didn't have the necessary infrastructure and many Africans didn't know what Western time was, so HIV-infected people were incapable of taking their drugs on schedule at certain times of the day.

Tony Fauci has written that when the delegation returned to DC, President Bush, through his immediate staff, gave the go-ahead to begin designing what came to be known as the PEPFAR program. I can't say that the delegation's trip to Botswana tipped the scales and made the difference, but it clearly had some influence and reinforced the idea that PEPFAR could succeed in the most difficult situations, because at the time we were thought to be living in the country, as I said, that had the worst HIV infection rate in the world. In speeches, I called Botswana "Ground zero" for the AIDS epidemic.

The success of Secretary Thompson's visit to Gaborone is really something that I'm proud of in terms of having an impact on a critical U.S. government policy to save lives. In June, two months after Thompson's trip to Africa, the president announced a \$500 million initiative focusing on treatment and care, including the use of nevirapine, for HIV-infected pregnant women to reduce transmission of HIV to infants [International Mother and Child HIV Prevention Initiative]. It included Botswana and other countries in Africa and the Caribbean.

White House insiders later said that President Bush thought the prevention of mother-to-child transmission program was a great start, but he wanted to do more to address the problem of AIDS in Africa and specifically told his staff, "Think big." The next step was to create the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, which became known as PEPFAR. In his January 2003 State of the Union address, five months after I left post, President Bush made that momentous announcement, which I will talk more about later.

I spoke earlier about our efforts in Botswana to overcome the stigma of AIDS. Despite all those exhortations by President Mogae, me, and many others, I assume that what really turned around the issue of stigma was the ability of people to take advantage of antiretroviral therapy. When programs such as PEPFAR and the Global Fund and others made ART accessible, people could see what is called the Lazarus effect—when someone looks to be in terrible physical shape and is dying of AIDS but suddenly, in a short period of time, is back at work and doing very well because they've started taking ART. When you see that in someone else, there's an incentive for you to get tested and, if you're

HIV-positive, start taking antiretroviral therapy. But before ART became affordable and accessible, it was very hard to overcome the stigma of AIDS.

Q: What made it affordable?

LANGE: The mass purchasing by PEPFAR and other programs, bargaining for lower prices, and the ability to buy generic drugs. In fact, it was part of the negotiations that the PEPFAR office worked on in the first year of the program, to be able to purchase drugs approved by the FDA [Food and Drug Administration] for use in developing countries receiving PEPFAR assistance even if they couldn't be sold in the United States. Former President Bill Clinton and the Clinton Foundation also brokered deals with manufacturers of generics to provide cheaper antiretroviral drugs for people with HIV in developing countries. I'll talk more about the use of generic drugs when we discuss my tour as deputy global AIDS coordinator.

I came back to Washington in April 2002 for a meeting of the AF bureau chiefs of mission. On the way I stopped at CDC in Atlanta to meet with the leadership. The public health experts there were acutely aware of the AIDS disaster but eager to hear how this fit into national security concerns, and my luncheon speech on strategic issues around HIV in Southern Africa drew a standing-room-only crowd.

For the chiefs of mission meeting, AF arranged for each of us to have a photo op with President Bush at the White House. We stood in line waiting to enter the Oval Office for a photo and a very brief conversation with the president. The president and I chatted for less than thirty seconds—there's no timer, but we all knew that was about how much time we each had. He clearly was prepared and asked me how President Mogae and Botswana's HIV/AIDS strategy were doing.



Q: What was the reaction in Gaborone to your discussion with President Bush on AIDS?

LANGE: Well, I was happy to cite that conversation when I later met with President Mogae and others. I described how President Bush and I had discussed HIV/AIDS in the Oval Office, and he commended President Mogae for his leadership. I didn't tell them it was a thirty-second conversation. (Laughs)

Mogae demonstrated what a difference a leader can make, such a stark comparison to Thabo Mbeki in South Africa, as I mentioned. Mogae's candor and strong support for HIV/AIDS programs brought him international fame. The specter of AIDS seemed omnipresent in the country, on billboards and in the hospitals and at the funerals and in meeting after meeting.

For me, it was my signature issue as ambassador. I had never really seriously worked on public health issues before I got to Botswana in 1999. I'd dealt with humanitarian issues, refugee and migration issues when I was in Geneva, but it was really in Botswana where I first became deeply involved in global health and developed the understanding of what I call global health diplomacy. It's at the ministerial level and the prime minister level and the presidential level—the cabinet officer, the head of government, the head of state—where so much can be done to advance public health. And in too many situations, countries are stymied in their efforts to improve public health because the government lacks that leadership. In Botswana I saw such leadership, if I can put it this way, up close and personal.

Some of my Foreign Service friends have called me a pioneer in global health diplomacy in the State Department, starting with my work in Botswana and later in PEPFAR and then on pandemic preparedness and response. Of course, many other Foreign Service personnel have been leaders on global health issues, especially since PEPFAR began in 2003.

Sometimes you don't really know how much of an impact your efforts make. So I was really appreciative of the farewell note Joy Phumaphi sent me. She thanked me for what she called my selfless commitment to the health of the Botswana people and said I had given hope to a new generation. Very kind of her.

Q: Well, you're certainly to be commended for this when you consider how we're all aware of the horrors of this thing. I mean, this was a life and death matter. Thank God we were able to come forward with more or less a solution.

LANGE: Yes. To the point where now people taking ART can live many decades, basically a full life, even though they're HIV-positive.

If I could make a few observations before we talk about my next tour.

Q: Go ahead.

LANGE: One is why I love Africa. I had postings in West Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa, and I've visited dozens of African countries during my tours of duty working on refugee issues, East African affairs, PEPFAR, and pandemics, as well as during my subsequent work at the Gates Foundation and now the UN Foundation. I've seen a lot of Africa.

One of the reasons I love engaging with the continent is because the governments are relatively young. These countries became independent, most of them, in the 1960s. And when you think about the U.S. government, which had a civil war seventy-two years after 1789, yes, you expect these countries to be going through different machinations and difficulties and sometimes civil wars. But there's something really exciting about witnessing their development. I used to give speeches using two props: the March 1998 *Time* magazine cover entitled "Africa Rising" and the May 2000 magazine cover in *The Economist* entitled "The Hopeless Continent" that I mentioned earlier. The truth was somewhere in-between: The trends are not universal, and each country is distinct.

I have a lot of sympathy for the argument that economic development in Africa depends on the success of its political reformers, social entrepreneurs, private-sector entrepreneurs, and the like—and not on the activities of bureaucratic, patronizing, poorly informed, and unaccountable outsiders. There's a very important role for U.S. engagement, including development assistance, but, in the end, Africans have to be in the lead.

My experiences in Africa took place when many of their vaunted early leaders were still living, and I even had the opportunity to meet some of them.

Q: You've mentioned your meetings with some of those African leaders.

LANGE: Yes, and I like to think of those leaders in historical context compared to their counterparts at the time of American independence.

When I had those meetings with former President Julius Nyerere while in Dar es Salaam, I was with the George Washington of Tanzania, the father of the country. The same goes for Zambia and Zimbabwe and Namibia when I was ambassador to Botswana and attended gatherings with their founding fathers, Kenneth Kaunda and Robert Mugabe and Sam Nujoma.

One of my regrets is that I never had the chance to meet Nelson Mandela, who I think is the greatest African leader in history. But when I later worked at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, I ended up having an hours-long conversation with his widow, Graça Machel, the Mozambican politician and humanitarian. And at the UN Foundation I once had a chat with board member Kofi Annan, the Ghanaian who was the first UN secretary general from Sub-Saharan Africa. Slices of history.

While I never met Sir Seretse Khama, the first president of Botswana, who died long before I arrived in 1999, I met his son, Vice President Ian Khama, and his widow, Lady

Ruth Khama, as I said earlier. She remained prominent in Botswana and was president of the Botswana Red Cross Society. She attended the official Fourth of July reception at my residence in 2001. Alejandra and I found her to be a spirited woman always armed with a trenchant observation or a quick quip and a laugh.

And she was an avid jazz fan. One of the great things that the U.S. government does is to have jazz ambassadors, where the State Department puts together musical groups to travel to numerous embassies for concerts and other public events to demonstrate an element of U.S. culture, jazz. A trio playing the music of Louis Armstrong came to Gaborone and our PAO arranged a great schedule. Lady Khama was among the two hundred who attended a public performance in September 2001, where she regaled the group with anecdotes about seeing Louis Armstrong perform in London and New York. Nice. The next day we hosted a concert at our residence, and she attended that, too, along with President Mogae's wife and many others.

In my mind, I knew the Martha Washington of Botswana, the wife of the first president. Lady Khama died in May 2002. Alejandra and I went to the funeral, a remarkable ceremony with over ten thousand people in attendance in the tribal capital of Serowe.

Q: Was your wife active in the diplomatic community?

LANGE: Yes, very much so. Alejandra was the chair of the Diplomatic Women's Association of Botswana, which organized fundraising events to benefit numerous local charities. I think the name stemmed from the time when most of the diplomats, or at least most of the ambassadors, were male. Because it was called the Diplomatic Women's Association and not the Diplomatic Spouses Association, the Cuban ambassador, a woman, was eligible to join. In June 2001, the association organized its annual charity fundraiser and Ale, as chair, hosted it at our residence. It was, to be sure, a very enjoyable event, and there were some really nice items people could bid on that were provided by local stores and airlines and others, with the proceeds going to local charities.

But we had received guidance from the State Department's Botswana desk officer, who had consulted with the Cuba desk, that Alejandra, as the association chair, could not invite the Cuban ambassador to our residence based on U.S. policy to isolate Cuba. So we passed word, through the British high commissioner's wife, to the Cuban embassy that the ambassador was not invited and not welcome to attend. My guess is the ambassador personally thought quite highly of Alejandra, who was originally from Mexico City, a native speaker of Spanish, and extraordinarily personable. So it was nothing personal to Alejandra when the ambassador made a big deal out of this in order to make a political point. At an association membership meeting, the ambassador protested quite loudly, complaining that the group would even consider holding a fundraiser where she, the Cuban ambassador and a member of the association, could not attend. She called for the next charity event to be held on neutral territory.

I felt sorry for Alejandra because she had good intentions in leading a benevolent association. She hadn't signed up to be a member of the Foreign Service dealing with contentious relations between the United States and Cuba. Ale was the unpaid spouse of a

member of the Foreign Service. But she was thrust into the role of being a diplomat, in a way.

As Alejandra said years later, it seems like the ambassador's spouse has more responsibility than the ambassador. There were times when I would come home and say, well, it was just decided that in a day or two we need to host high-level officials for lunch, so can you please put together the event at short notice—talk to our cook, go out to buy the food, and arrange everything? Alejandra thought of it as her duties as Madame Ambassador, like a Foreign Service job—but without being paid.

Q: Yes, spouses make countless sacrifices for the Foreign Service.

LANGE: Regarding family, I'd also like to mention that our daughter Julia and two American friends came in third place in the State Department's KidVid competition. KidVid is an annual, global contest sponsored by the Overseas Briefing Center and the Foreign Service Youth Foundation where students submit videos reflecting daily life for young people at an American post abroad. It's a way to familiarize youth with their next post abroad. So, the three kids created a twenty-three-scene video, quite cute. It started out at the Gaborone airport—Hi, we're at the airport, this is where you will arrive when you get to post—that kind of thing. We showed it one evening at the Marine House and made a big deal out of their award by taking them all out to dinner to celebrate.

Given Botswana's wonderful game parks, you will not be surprised that we had several friends and relatives, including Alejandra's sister Salma, come to visit us. That was one of the reasons I liked the Foreign Service so much—postings abroad gave relatives and friends a great reason to travel to places they otherwise would never go, so they could visit us. My mother and my sister Cindy and her family visited in August of the year 2000. Marion Lange was seventy-eight-years-old, and she'd never been to Africa before. I have this wonderful photo of her on safari, standing up in the jeep with her safari hat on. She became ill the following year and we were able to visit her in Wisconsin. I also went back for her funeral, just nine months after her visit to Botswana.

Q: Well, we cherish these moments.

LANGE: Yes. And I just say this because it's easy to talk about the diplomatic side of history and all of the important things that one does in a Foreign Service career, but family is so important. And so many people at posts abroad experience wonderful things as well as tragedy and turmoil with their families, the positives and the negatives, the happy events and the sad events.

Another observation after this tour, stemming from my career focus on international relations and my time in the Foreign Service, is that nothing beats being an ambassador. It's not people calling you your excellency—which they do when you're abroad—but it's the sheer responsibility of the position, representing the United States of America, being the president's personal representative to your country of assignment.

Article II, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution lists those people who are nominated by the president and appointed with the advice and consent of the U.S. Senate, and first on that list are ambassadors—even before Supreme Court justices. I think it's a huge honor, and maybe even more importantly a privilege, to be an ambassador.

There have been times when some of my friends in the Foreign Service have been in an ambassadorial position and had the opportunity to come back to Washington for a good job, a high-level, very responsible governmental position, and they cut short their tours as ambassador because they either acceded to the request from Washington or maybe even initiated the request from Washington to come back. And that bothers me a bit, I have to say. I think there's historical importance to being an ambassador, no matter what the country of assignment, and that is a commitment that people should take very seriously.

I must say, when I read complaints from the American Foreign Service Association—and I'm a member of it—about the number of politically appointed ambassadors compared to the number of career ambassadors, I sympathize with that. I think the United States is best represented abroad when there is a balance, and generally in recent decades that has been roughly two-thirds career, one-third politically appointed ambassadors. One proposal would even amend the Foreign Service Act of 1980 to limit political appointees to 10 percent of all ambassadorial appointments. And all ambassadorial appointees, obviously, should have certain minimum levels of competency. But back to Article II, the president has the right to nominate ambassadors. It's not like the U.S. Constitution requires that ambassadors be career Foreign Service officers.

Q: Or even in the 1924 Rogers Act that reformed the Foreign Service.

LANGE: Yeah, exactly. I think the career Foreign Service needs to put the nominations of political appointees into perspective. The president can choose anybody he or she wants, so—.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: Then, it's up to the Senate to decide whether they should be confirmed. It's all in the Constitution.

My family and I departed Botswana on August 8, 2002. Let's talk about my next tour when we meet again.

Q: Today is the twenty-second of November 2019 with John Lange. And John, we're leaving Botswana. You want to pick it up?

LANGE: Yes. Thanks, Stu.

I was ambassador to Botswana from 1999 to 2002. Personally, I think of myself as an Africanist and would have loved to have had another tour as a chief of mission in

Sub-Saharan Africa. I received support for another ambassadorship from some influential people in the Department. But my daughter was about to start high school, and I didn't want to serve another three-year tour abroad because I didn't want to be in a situation where Julia went through three years of high school in Africa and then went back to the United States for her last year of high school. I'd witnessed Foreign Service colleagues who had their children go through that and it didn't work out very well, because it was just too disruptive for the teenagers at a pivotal time in their lives. Attending a high school in the United States for the first time as a senior, when everyone else already has their well-established groups of friends, can be very difficult and stressful.

Q: Yes, that can make for a very difficult transition.

SENIOR SEMINAR, FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

LANGE: So, we moved back to our home in Vienna, and in August 2002 I took over running the Senior Seminar as the associate dean in the FSI Leadership and Management School.

I'm sure you've had many people come through here who went through the Senior Seminar.

Q: Yes. I was in the seventeenth seminar.

LANGE: Wow. Seventeenth class. That's a while back. I was in charge of the forty-fifth seminar.

Q: Good God.

LANGE: Which was the next to last, as you know.

Q: Yeah. Well, let's talk about the Senior Seminar.

LANGE: Yes. As you know, it was the federal government's highest-level civilian-military professional development program. Participants were senior civilian and military foreign policy and national security officials who, it was expected, were destined for top-level assignments abroad and in the United States. It was State's flagship program to strengthen executive leadership in foreign affairs.

Q: Uh-huh.

LANGE: The seminar had two basic goals: To understand how U.S. domestic priorities, values and institutions shape our global interests and policies; and to reflect and refine the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for executive leadership in the U.S. government.

The civilians were all new to the senior ranks in their respective agencies, and the military were at the rank of colonel or equivalent. In the group that I was supervising, we had twenty-nine senior officers, about half of them from State and the others from the Departments of Defense and Commerce, USAID, CIA, FBI, NSA, and the five uniformed military services.

We had many, many meetings in the DC area. One of the things that I found really amazing was how many personal contacts the Senior Seminar participants had, which facilitated our meetings with some of the highest-level people in Washington and elsewhere. When I recently reviewed my personal files from the seminar, it reinforced in my mind how the seminarians were exposed to a really incredible array of expertise, accomplished in candid, off-the-record meetings of thirty people rather than in lectures with hundreds of attendees as at the National War College.

We met for two hours at the Supreme Court with Justice Clarence Thomas. Former Vice President Walter Mondale came to FSI to see us. U.S. Representative John Lewis spoke emotionally about leading the “Bloody Sunday” civil rights march halted by police violence on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, in 1965. *Washington Post* investigative reporter Bob Woodward gave us all his direct phone number—just in case. We met with three current or former cabinet secretaries, Republican and Democratic members of Congress, chiefs of the military services, superintendents of the military service academies, the deputy national security advisor, the deputy secretary of the newly created Department of Homeland Security, the FBI deputy director, the head of the National Security Agency, the executive director of the CIA, the Peace Corps director, the USAID administrator, corporate executives, union leaders, religious leaders, scholars, ethicists, officials at a federal prison, and so many others. An under secretary of commerce told us how diplomats are savvy analysts and reporters when abroad but seem to get a prefrontal lobotomy upon returning to the United States, when they struggle to manage the difficult political process of working with Congress. (Laughs) I could go on and on and on. It was an embarrassment of riches.

Our meetings loosely fell under particular themes, organized by sub-groups of seminarians: The state of the nation, examining demographic trends; the connection between governance and the people, including the role of the media and the differing view of guns, ranging from the National Rifle Association to the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence; education and the environment, including climate change; technology and social infrastructure; the economy and capitalism; national security and homeland security in the post-9/11 world; and an overarching theme of race relations in America.

We also met with dozens of leading experts on the keys to successful leadership and management. Everyone had a different list, but they were all kind of similar, and it was up to the seminarians to figure out how that fit into their own management style, of course. They also went through skills training on things such as delivering congressional testimony. And each seminar participant was required to do an individual research project and present a case study on leadership based on their personal experience.

Q: Can you describe your trips around the United States?

LANGE: A really important part of the learning experience was the monthly civilian or military domestic trips. In our travels, we met with newspaper editorial boards in several cities, police chiefs, mayors, educators, citizen groups, corporate leaders, Native American tribal leaders, and many others. An official in the San Diego mayor's office described their extensive relations with Tijuana and told us the people in Washington and Mexico City simply don't understand border issues. We even went on an evening police ride-a-long in Chicago.

The seminar attendees developed a much better understanding of our diversity as a nation. One of my own conclusions from the trips, which may seem obvious, was that local, state, national and international levels do not constitute a hierarchy. Some of the nation's most dynamic, committed, competent, and charismatic leaders and managers work at the local level.

During a visit to Atlanta, we took a chartered bus to see former President Jimmy Carter, and the driver somehow got lost in tiny Plains, Georgia. We barely arrived on time, and Carter mentioned it as he began his speech. Embarrassing. This was a few months after he had received the Nobel Peace Prize, and he clearly was still very engaged in global affairs. He explained the work of the Carter Center and told us the United States was about to make a catastrophic mistake by invading Iraq, which took place a week after we met with him.



Senior Seminar student Karl Wycoff and John with former President Jimmy Carter in Plains, Georgia (2003)

Former Secretary of State George Shultz was a big fan of the seminar. We met with him for two hours at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. He described the seminar as an adult experiential educational program and stressed the importance of learning from

the fantastic mixture of experiences, a veritable introduction to various slices of American life, in order to take oneself up a notch.

During the study trips, the seminarians also engaged in public affairs outreach activities that showed how foreign affairs and national security professionals promote U.S. interests and values abroad. After several seminarians spoke to a class at Colby College in Maine, the professor told us his students don't normally think about government service, but the presentations probably changed some lives that day. That was another benefit of the seminar, looked at from the other angle: connecting the American public with senior U.S. civilian and military foreign policy officials. The learning went both ways.

The graduation ceremony took place in June in the Department's Benjamin Franklin Room. The FSI Director invited former President George H.W. Bush to be the keynote speaker. He sent a response saying, "Darn it all," regretting that he had a conflict he couldn't change, and noting, quote, "I have such great respect for the Foreign Service that I am especially sorry not to be able to be with you." Nice of him. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage delivered the keynote speech.

Q: It was really an impressive program. Do you know how the folks in the seminar fared later in their careers?

LANGE: I have done some recent research, and it turns out that at least ten of the twenty-nine seminarians went on to really serious, high-level leadership positions. Four of them became U.S. ambassadors, three of them from State and one from the Department of Agriculture. One of them was ambassador three times and the director general of the Foreign Service. Another one also was ambassador three times, one was ambassador twice, and one was ambassador once.

Others in the seminar became principal officers at U.S. consulates or deputy assistant secretaries in important positions. One became a brigadier general in the U.S. Air Force. One USAID officer became a finalist for a Service to America medal. Another seminarian actually is still involved in government work and recently was the senior director for Middle East and North African affairs at the National Security Council under President Trump. And, I have to say, another one became the president of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Susan Johnson, here at ADST. So, these were serious, very successful people.

But, as I'm sure you're aware, there were people in the Department and particularly in Department leadership at that time—this was the period 2002 to 2003—who were not supportive of the Seminar.

Q: Why didn't they like the Senior Seminar?

LANGE: They thought it was kind of extravagant to have a small number of senior officers take nine months, forty-one weeks, away from traditional Foreign Service, Civil Service, or military duties to travel around the United States and engage in something

that was not very structured. The program consisted of a lot of lectures, a lot of interaction, a lot of trips, but it really lacked rigor and accountability.

And there was criticism that too many people retired soon after taking the seminar, or that some agencies, quote, “parked” officers at the seminar because they couldn’t find other senior assignments for them. One alumnus who was a strong defender of the seminar said that the failures were within the assignment process, not problems with the Senior Seminar itself.

We certainly tried to attract the best officers. I remember having a conversation with a human resources official from another agency when we were short a couple of participants just before the seminar was to begin. The official described exactly the kind of person we were looking for: someone who had just entered the senior ranks, was destined for higher positions, and was back in Washington. Someone who would really benefit from the leadership and management training and would really broaden their horizons from the trips in the United States and meeting with so many high-level people in DC. The official knew exactly what we were looking for but, alas, couldn’t come up with anybody in the agency who met those criteria and was willing to spend nine months at the seminar.

Secretary Colin Powell and Under Secretary for Management Grant Green both were unhappy with the Senior Seminar, and I didn’t really know the full extent of their unhappiness until I showed up at the Foreign Service Institute to take on the job.

FSI leadership and I had a meeting with Grant in mid-September 2002 where he spoke candidly of his concerns about the need for a rigorous learning experience—less touchy-feely, as he put it—and the importance of ensuring we had quality selectees who were rising leaders in the foreign affairs community. I thought there was a lot of truth in his comment, based on his extensive military experience, that until there is a culture of training in the Foreign Service, training needs to be linked with assignments and promotions. That may still be true today.

And this wasn’t the first time the seminar was threatened with elimination. During the Clinton Administration, the Department had launched a Strategic Management Initiative that proposed major management reforms in light of ever-declining budgetary resources. The initiative’s conclusions noted that most senior FSOs did not attend the seminar and asserted that there seemed to be no appreciable difference in the performance of attendees and non-attendees. It recommended eliminating the seminar in summer 1997, though that did not take place.

I felt I had received my marching orders from management to strengthen the Senior Seminar or face its elimination. I made it clear to the seminar members that together we needed to overhaul the program and bring it to a higher standard if the seminar was to continue in future years. I described it as a serious professional development program and not a personal-enrichment, taxpayer-supported boondoggle.

Pru Bushnell, then dean of the FSI Leadership and Management School, others, and I explored how we could meet the goals of the seminar while shortening it to meet the concerns on the part of the under secretary for management and others. Maybe make it five months long instead of nine months? But that schedule just wasn't going to work for most government agencies and the military. They are readily able to deal with one-year assignments because most officers, especially those with school-age children, want to transfer to their next post over the summer months. It would be disruptive to send personnel to Washington to receive expensive per diem during a five-month TDY assignment. There was pressure from M [Office of the Under Secretary for Management] to change and restructure the seminar, and I spent a lot of time and effort trying to come up with alternatives. But there was no easy answer.

I then worked on a more structured and rigorous curriculum for the full, forty-one-week program. This was very loosely based on my experience graduating from the National War College, a very structured, degree-granting program that resulted in a Master of Science in national security affairs. While we were never going to give out degrees to those who graduated from the Senior Seminar, I thought that we could have a more concentrated focus on two main things, leadership training and the domestic roots of U.S. global goals and strategies. That would make the seminar more organized and purposeful and focused on strategic planning.

And I thought we were making good progress in that regard. In the middle of April 2003, the director of the Foreign Service Institute sent an information memorandum that I drafted to Under Secretary for Management Green entitled, "The Restructured Senior Seminar." The memo explained that the next seminar, beginning in August, would take a more rigorous approach by using the U.S. National Security Strategy as the basis for participants' analysis of the domestic roots—values, priorities, institutions—of American global interests and policies, in addition to activities refining attendees' leadership, management, and tradecraft skills. The director general of the Foreign Service at that time called it, quote, "a great turnaround."

I was expected to be in charge of the Senior Seminar for two years, so I would have been able to implement the changes starting with the new seminar in August. But then—and I'll talk a bit more about this when we talk about my work in the PEPFAR office—I was asked at very short notice to leave my job at FSI to become the deputy global AIDS coordinator.

And then, less than a month and a half after I left FSI, the FSI director announced that the nine-month Senior Seminar would end following the forty-sixth session. It would be replaced by shorter, standalone training for senior officers, and that included opening certain elements of what had been the Senior Seminar to all senior officers.

That decision was a real source of controversy because a lot of the people, especially the alumni of the Senior Seminar, were very unhappy with its cancellation. They constitute a very prestigious group in a lot of ways, and they still organize an annual alumni meeting.

Q: Yeah. The thing I found so valuable in my time was our exposure to the local government, the mayor, the governor of a state, how America worked, which I think many of us, particularly those in the Foreign Service who served abroad, really, outside of university training, just didn't have that exposure.

LANGE: Yes. I think that was a really important part of the education and training. We met with mayors from New Haven, Connecticut, to Jackson, Mississippi, and so many others. And we began the seminar less than a year after 9/11. The response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks had such an impact on local police forces, for example, you could really understand the local connections to U.S. national security. The problem was, in a sense, that there was not a planned and structured way of engaging. We'd have three or four seminar participants organize each trip, and in doing so they would take advantage of opportunities to arrange meetings that would fit into the general themes of the seminar. The U.S. military personnel were very good at having us gain insights into their respective services, like when we visited U.S. Southern Command in Florida and U.S. Northern Command in Colorado and flew in a U.S. Navy plane to land on the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier off the coast of San Diego. We engaged in quite interesting and enlightening activities, an incredible learning experience, but I thought the program could be more structured, rigorous, and related to the work of the military and the foreign affairs agencies. That's the direction I tried to set for the 2003–2004 seminar.

But when I look back on it, if less than half of the twenty-nine seminar participants moved on to very prominent leadership roles—and I'm not saying the others did not, but I don't think most of them ended up in quite as prominent positions—is that good enough for the American taxpayer? Should a nine-month educational opportunity be provided so late in one's career? Do the benefits warrant paying for all those salaries of senior officers plus the program's expenses over nine months? Many would argue yes. Others would argue you need to assign more officers who have the potential to move into top leadership positions. And others would say, Well, it's just too much money to spend having senior officers away from traditional duties for nine months; the program would be better if it involved mid-level officers at the FS-01 level who are projected to be Senior Foreign Service officers someday. One prominent ambassador said his earlier experience in the seminar had been one of the best of his career, when he became more informed and reflective after stepping back from traditional Foreign Service work for nine months, but he thought that time had passed the Senior Seminar by. He now liked the idea of shorter, standalone training that would reach many more people in less time.

The other thing I question, and this is more applicable to the current situation in 2019 than at the time of the forty-fifth seminar or especially your seventeenth seminar—when you didn't have pervasive use of the internet and social media the way they exist now—are those Foreign Service and Civil Service officers and military, newly promoted to senior ranks, really in need of familiarizing themselves with the United States? I remember being in Lomé, on my first tour in Africa, 1989 to '91, and once a month my wife and I could afford to call our respective families. We would pay about six dollars a minute to call Wisconsin and about ten dollars a minute to call Mexico City. The cost was just prohibitive to have anything more than a brief phone call. But today, you can use FaceTime to make free phone calls to stay in touch with families as often as you want.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: I can only assume that the feeling of distance from the United States and the sense of isolation are not as strong for those living abroad today as was the case in the Foreign Service decades ago.

Q: Well, did you find yourself talking to the secretary of state on this?

LANGE: Not directly, though my understanding was that he was concerned. Earlier I had talked directly to Grant Green, the under secretary for management, as I said.

I was told the secretary supported the decision to end the seminar in favor of a totally revamped approach to leadership training, including leadership and management training for all newly promoted members of the Senior Foreign Service and Senior Executive Service, not just a relatively small group of them.

Q: I'm always surprised—the secretary was Colin Powell, who came out of the military, which spends a tremendous amount of time on training—that they would abolish this program.

LANGE: I think it wasn't a negative view of training on the part of Secretary Powell, because as you point out, he was really focused on the need for that. He talked about "my troops" and tried to make sure that staff morale was high. He clearly wanted people to get the training and whatever else they needed to succeed in their work. It was just the nature of the forty-one-week seminar for sixteen State Department officers, plus those from other agencies, who already had made it to the senior ranks.

There was an attitude on the part of some in the Department, what are they doing over there at FSI? Oh, now they're traveling to Indiana to stay overnight on a farm. Oh, okay, great. This is a year after 9/11, so many people in the foreign affairs community are working flat out on the global war on terrorism, and we've got senior officers going off to visit a farm. To what purpose?

Now, I grew up near farms in Wisconsin and my father sold farm equipment, and I have utmost respect for farmers. I can make the case for our trip to the Midwest, which included time spent on farms, at Dow AgroSciences, and at the Chicago Board of Trade futures market. The itinerary provided an in-depth look at biotechnology, agricultural trade issues facing the World Trade Organization, and changing agricultural economics. Plus, one of the implicit seminar goals was to get the participants out of their comfort zone, and one seminarian was extremely apprehensive before our stay on a farm—but he ended up loving it and inviting the farm family to his ambassadorial swearing-in ceremony. The question was whether all those trips and meetings over nine months were warranted for a handful of senior officers. Was it defensible as a U.S. government expense?

Q: Well, it's sort of sad, the demise of what I thought was a good program. People say that the military with their training seem to move up particularly well. I noticed in my group, there were a number of people who retired just almost right afterwards. I think it was bad—there wasn't control of who was going to stay. I think the problem with the State Department is that training assignments are often a way to take an officer they don't know what to do with and give them a job—an assignment rather than having a real goal in mind.

LANGE: Yes, and you can argue that that's fine for short-term training if an officer is trying to fill, say, a one-month gap between assignments. But it's pretty hard to make a case that those folks should spend forty-one weeks at a seminar while on the government payroll.

OFFICE OF THE U.S. GLOBAL AIDS COORDINATOR

Q: Yeah. You said you left your job running the Senior Seminar early to work on AIDS?

LANGE: Yes. As I mentioned, I had a two-year assignment running the Senior Seminar at FSI. FSI is just a great, intellectually stimulating place to work. And after having been so busy as an ambassador for almost three years in Botswana, I was very pleased to be on the FSI campus.

But I ended up getting a phone call on Monday, July 7, when the Senior Seminar was on its summer break between classes. I had taken that day off, and the executive assistant to the under secretary for management tracked me down at home in the early afternoon. He told me that the nomination of the new U.S. global AIDS coordinator, Randall Tobias, who recently had headed Eli Lilly and Company, was announced by the president in a ceremony on July 2 in the Roosevelt Room. Randy was going to come to the State Department for his first day of work on Wednesday. I was asked to lead the effort to prepare for Randy's arrival in two days. It was clear that the Department was totally unprepared to start this new operation, which eventually came to be called the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, PEPFAR.

Since I was known for having spent my three years in Botswana focusing on HIV/AIDS as my signature issue, State Department management thought that I would be a good person to set up the office and potentially stay on as Tobias' official deputy if it worked out.

Based on my work on HIV/AIDS in Botswana, I knew the key people working on AIDS in HHS, including CDC, and in USAID. And based on my earlier work in management in the Department, I knew the key people who could help me set up the office. So I thought that I fit into the role perfectly. Plus, it was a down time for the Senior Seminar, when we were preparing for the next seminar to begin in August. So, I said yes. That came as a bit of a shock, I have to say, to the dean of the leadership and management school, Prudence Bushnell, who hadn't expected me to be leaving for this temporary position, which ended

up becoming a full-year tour. But this was a real opportunity for me to play a key role in an area I cared deeply about, HIV/AIDS and global health. So, with less than twenty-four hours' notice, I took on this new role in the Department on Tuesday morning.

Q: For the record, when did you start and when did you end your stay in the PEPFAR office?

LANGE: I started there in July 2003, and my tour ended in July 2004.

Before I talk a bit more about how the office developed, let me just mention some of the context of this and why the State Department was out of the loop. As I described earlier, HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson had visited Botswana and other countries in Africa in April 2002, and in June President George W. Bush announced a \$500 million initiative aimed at preventing transmission of HIV from mothers to infants and to improve healthcare delivery in Africa and the Caribbean. But I learned, once I began to work in the new PEPFAR office, that the initiative was really only the tip of the iceberg for what President Bush had in mind. His belief was that to whom much is given, much is required. And according to his deputy chief of staff for policy, Bush told key staff in the White House and HHS to think big. He really wanted to do something game-changing to alter the direction of HIV/AIDS, which at that point, as you know, Stu, was devastating in so many countries.

The big announcement came in his January 2003 State of the Union address. Now, many people would remember that speech because that's when he outlined the justifications for what became the 2003 invasion of Iraq. But in just six paragraphs he also talked about his new Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. For those of us focused on public health, this was simply an astounding statement, and it established a legacy that lives on today.

The president described how an AIDS diagnosis in Africa was considered a death sentence, so many did not seek treatment. He noted that the cost of ART had dropped from \$12,000 to under \$300 a year. And he had a great line, which I'll quote, "Seldom has history offered a greater opportunity to do so much for so many." He called his proposal a work of mercy beyond all current international efforts to help the people of Africa. And he described three specific goals, which I repeated many times when I became the deputy U.S. global AIDS coordinator: prevent seven million new infections; treat two million HIV-positive people with life-extending drugs; and provide care to ten million people infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, including AIDS orphans—all to be accomplished within five years. To accomplish this, he asked Congress to commit \$15 billion over five years, including nearly \$10 billion in new money, to turn the tide against AIDS. Most of the resources were to be directed toward fourteen of the most afflicted nations in Africa and the Caribbean, with \$1 billion in additional funding for the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. That portion of the speech won applause, including from me watching the address on television from my home in Northern Virginia.

Both houses of Congress recognized the urgency of the matter, and in May they passed legislation [U.S. Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003]

on a bipartisan basis. On July 2, as I said, President Bush announced his intent to nominate Randy Tobias to be global AIDS coordinator with the rank of ambassador. Tobias would report directly to Secretary of State Powell and coordinate all U.S. international HIV/AIDS activities for all government departments and agencies.

Q: So the State Department really had the central role for PEPFAR?

LANGE: Yes. And you could ask why would a global health program that consisted primarily of development assistance be sitting in the State Department. It could be due to the program's political and strategic implications. But I was told by those who had been working on the origins of this that HHS wouldn't accept PEPFAR being housed in USAID and USAID wouldn't accept it being housed in HHS, so the State Department was kind of a neutral place to put it. The State Department is where it's still housed, even though most of the money for operations goes through HHS (primarily CDC) and USAID.

The key people on the planning task force for what became PEPFAR were based at the White House and HHS. From what I could tell, there was little involvement by USAID and the State Department in that close-hold effort, even though State had its own special representative on global HIV/AIDS. So State was mostly out of the loop and unprepared to house the new global AIDS coordinator.

After getting such short notice to organize the office, I met first thing on July 8 with the deputy secretary of state and the under secretary of state for management, Rich Armitage and Grant Green. I spent that day setting up the office, and I met with them again at the end of the day to provide an update on the plans for Tobias' arrival in the Department the next day.

Now, an outsider might wonder how you can just immediately set up an office with a secretary and desks and computers and things like that, but the State Department is very adept at that. The executive secretariat has these swing spaces, temporary office space available on the first floor of the Main State building, for certain people who are presidential nominees waiting for Senate confirmation or other high-level officials in need of such space. And the executive secretariat was very helpful, especially at the beginning, in part because the legislation required that the global AIDS coordinator report directly to the secretary of state. That differed from the normal State Department organization, which would have placed the position under the purview of what was then called the under secretary of state for global affairs. Instead, support for our operations came directly from S/ES-EX, the office of the secretary's executive director.

As time went on, however, that support proved to be insufficient as we struggled with personnel issues and filling positions. In my view, over that first year we were understaffed at every single moment, beginning with the time Randy Tobias arrived in the Department in July 2003—as the staff grew, so did the workload.

Q: What was Ambassador Tobias' background?

LANGE: Randy was retired and doing philanthropic and community work after having been a strong chief executive officer at Eli Lilly and Company. With that top-level experience at a pharmaceutical company, and earlier at AT&T, he was very focused and goal-oriented, as you would expect from a successful business executive. He was a very courteous man who could be very firm. But I have to say, he lacked three other elements that you would think would have helped in this position. He was not a medical or health expert and had not been involved in the production of AIDS drugs, because Eli Lilly did not produce them. In fact, if the company had produced them, there probably would have been such a conflict of interest—because Randy did not divest all of his financial interests in Eli Lilly—that he would not have been able to take the position. Secondly, he never had had experience working in Washington, and this position required a leader who could coordinate several government agencies and overcome their bureaucratic rivalries. And thirdly, although he'd visited Africa, he'd never worked there, where the biggest portion of the AIDS problem was located, and he hadn't run public health programs in a developing country. As the *Washington Post* put it, he was on a steep learning curve. And he needed strong support, as you can imagine.

As Randy settled in and prepared for his confirmation hearing, he decided to have two deputy global AIDS coordinators. One was Dr. Joseph O'Neill, who was director of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy and earlier had worked on HIV/AIDS at HHS. Joe was one of the key architects of PEPFAR and helped shepherd the legislation through Congress. He also had the title of Chief Medical Officer. And I was officially named as the other deputy.

Randy would give speeches in which he'd say he had two deputies, one whose first name was Ambassador and one whose first name was Doctor. That, of course, helped give him credibility for his role. The positions were considered to be at the deputy assistant secretary level. We had other strong people in that office. Working under Joe was Dr. Mark Dybul, who had conducted trials with antiretroviral therapy for HIV patients in Africa. Mark ended up succeeding Randy as the U.S. global AIDS coordinator in 2006 and later became the head of the Global Fund. He became a real global health leader.

So, here we were, setting up a brand-new office that had to coordinate spending for a huge amount of money.

Q: What was the PEPFAR budget?

LANGE: It was \$2.4 billion in just the first year, fiscal year 2004. That amount included money to fund ongoing bilateral programs at USAID and the Departments of HHS, Labor, Defense, and State; new funding for the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission program in focus countries; money for the Global Fund; and new funding for the State Department. Most of State's money was then provided to those other agencies plus the Peace Corps for programs approved by the global AIDS coordinator. The total funding increased to \$2.8 billion in the next fiscal year. And while PEPFAR was initially authorized to average \$3 billion a year over five years to fulfill President Bush's request for a \$15 billion authorization, Congress actually appropriated something like \$18 billion over the period because the program was such a success.

You can imagine how interested the heads of other agencies were in the work of Randy Tobias, who controlled the purse strings. HHS Secretary Thompson invited Randy and others of us over to have lunch in the secretary's dining room to talk about PEPFAR in July, shortly after Randy began working at State and before he was confirmed by the U.S. Senate. If I recall correctly, I alerted USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios about the HHS lunch in case he wanted to do the same at USAID. Natsios ended up welcoming Randy and others of us to a gathering at USAID. There was great interest—and competition—on the part of government agencies because Randy was going to be in charge of coordinating all AIDS funding. One of the creators of the program described the interagency infighting in the early days of PEPFAR as blood on the floor.

I remember a meeting Randy and I had early-on in Randy's office with Tony Fauci of HHS, one of the key designers of PEPFAR. Randy described his inclination to have his own person in each of the U.S. embassies in the PEPFAR focus countries, twelve in Sub-Saharan Africa and two in the Caribbean. He wanted to have a U.S. government official reporting directly to him. And I was the one—and this was really my role, being the career Foreign Service deputy, not a medical expert like the other deputy—who said, No, that won't work because the chief of mission has authority over that person. The ambassador is the president's personal representative to the country. What evolved was Randy understanding and accepting the role of chiefs of mission and then making sure that ambassadors were ultimately in charge of the PEPFAR operations in-country as head of the HIV/AIDS team. That ambassadorial role was really something that was a bit new at the time, because some people, ambassadors and others, thought PEPFAR was just another development assistance program—so why do you want us to get deeply involved in something that USAID or CDC should be doing? But this was a huge presidential initiative that merited top-level attention at each embassy to ensure its success. And it was clear, as I had seen in Botswana with President Mogae's leadership, that high-level political support was necessary to really turn around the HIV/AIDS epidemic in country after country. There were strong reasons for ambassadors to be directly engaged.

From a diplomatic perspective, it also would have been better if ambassadors had been directly engaged before the official announcement of the PEPFAR focus countries, so they could consult with and get agreement from host countries beforehand. I believe the countries were first informed on the day of Bush's State of the Union address, and it took probably a year to get all of the countries to buy in.

Q: Why weren't those countries notified earlier?

LANGE: The creators of the program knew the political risks, but PEPFAR was developed in secrecy outside of the usual interagency bureaucratic process. And the originators saw the program as being linked to, but not driven by, diplomatic goals.

The Mozambican health minister told the *New York Times* that they weren't consulted before being designated a beneficiary of PEPFAR. He said they welcomed the pledge of big money, but many Mozambicans considered the U.S. approach as arrogant and

neocolonial. Ouch. Even a strong AIDS advocate like President Mogae once said, Nobody asked us to be a focus country.

A month into the job, I sent Randy Tobias and Joe O'Neill a rather detailed memo with my thoughts on some keys to success in Africa, based on my postings in West, East, and Southern Africa. I emphasized how Africa was a vast continent and each subregion, nation, and culture was different. As an example, I noted how South African President Mbeki's controversial views on the connection between HIV and AIDS had no resonance whatsoever across the border in Botswana. I also stressed that NGOs, contractors, and grantees from outside a country work best when they have local partners. The bottom line was to reach the individuals and avoid getting caught up in process.

One idea that others and I couldn't convince Randy to adopt in the first year was to establish an Ambassador's HIV/AIDS Self-Help Program. My proposal was to provide funding for small, innovative, community-based AIDS projects, along the lines of the existing Ambassador's Self-Help Program. He was not convinced it would contribute enough to meet our prevention, treatment, and care goals and he was concerned that bipartisan support for PEPFAR could be derailed by a well-intended country program getting politicized in what he considered a fragile moment. The issue kept coming up, raised by me and by ambassadors in the field, to the point where Randy got tired of hearing about it and made it clear he wouldn't consider it again until the following fiscal year.

Q: When was Tobias confirmed by the Senate?

LANGE: Although Randy had started working at State in July to prepare for his confirmation hearing, he could not make official decisions until he was sworn in as U.S. global AIDS coordinator. President Bush sent his nomination to the Senate on September 15. A few of us, including a State Department lawyer, met with Senate staff to assure them that Randy would not have any conflicts of interest if confirmed for the position. When you look at the way the Senate works now to confirm appointees, dragging on for many months, you can be amazed at this timeline, but this was considered by both Republicans and Democrats to be a very high-priority position.

One of our goals was to have Randy get to the field as quickly as possible. We really wanted him to attend the chiefs of mission conference for all U.S. ambassadors in Sub-Saharan Africa scheduled for October in my old haunt, Gaborone. Therefore, he needed to be confirmed as quickly as possible. So that was used as a hook to convince the Senate to act quickly on his nomination. Senator Lamar Alexander had visited Africa in August, and the *Washington Times* ran his opinion article at the start of October with the headline, quote, "Go to Africa, Mr. Tobias," to see what AIDS was like on the continent. So, there was this pressure, even among U.S. senators, for Randy to go to Africa as soon as he could to see the terrible situation of HIV/AIDS.

His confirmation hearing took place on September 30. In his prepared statement he described the immensity of the challenge. He told the SFRC that if twenty fully loaded jumbo passenger jets had crashed yesterday, newspapers around the world would blare

headlines on the overwhelming disasters. But the same number of people, some 8,500 men, women, and children, actually died of AIDS yesterday, as happens every day, and it's treated like background noise. That really put the issue of AIDS into perspective, and he repeated it in many speeches.

Afterward we immediately received thirty-seven questions for the record, most of them from Democratic Senators Joseph Biden and John Kerry, and answered them all by the following afternoon. Randy was voted out of the SFRC on October 2 and confirmed by the full Senate the next day. He was sworn in on October 6 in the office of the State Department's director general. Truly a fast track.

Q: Yes, that was a quick confirmation process. Did Tobias make it to Botswana in time for that chiefs of mission meeting?

LANGE: Yes. Four days later, he and I were in Gaborone in the office of President Festus Mogae. As one U.S. ambassador in Africa put it, Randy was sworn in and shot out of a cannon.

In Randy's meeting with Mogae, the president let us know that he would soon announce a policy of routine testing for HIV. It was not mandatory, but whenever people entered a public health facility, they would be given an HIV test unless they opted out. Prior to that, the policy was that a person had to opt-in to be tested for HIV. He said Botswana's National AIDS Coordinating Agency was concerned about human rights, but he believed it was a contradiction in terms to be accused of violating someone's human rights while trying to help them. This turned out to be a controversial issue, highly criticized by some AIDS activists in the West. But I thought it made eminent sense and reflected the urgent reality on the ground—people needed to know their status, in part so those who were HIV-positive could access ART sooner and therefore live longer. This was such a contentious issue, Botswana's policy was even the subject of a supportive *New York Times* editorial a few years later.

President Bush wanted a sharp, focused, transformative, and accountable program that demonstrated U.S. leadership for the rest of the world and was not business-as-usual, with money just spread around. PEPFAR was one of his top priorities and needed to be a top priority for all U.S. ambassadors, not just those in the fourteen focus countries but also in other countries because of the growing epidemic. When Tobias spoke to the AF chiefs of mission at their plenary session on HIV/AIDS during the COM conference, he made it very clear that he was going to rely on them to oversee the program in-country. And the COMs from the focus countries stayed on an extra day for in-depth discussions with Randy, where he explained that he would hold them accountable.

After the COM meeting in Gaborone, Tobias and I traveled to South Africa and Namibia to speak to government leaders and U.S. ambassadors and to look at the HIV/AIDS situation in those countries, so that Randy would be familiar with the AIDS situation in Southern Africa, not just in Botswana.

The visit to South Africa included meetings in Pretoria and Johannesburg with a wide range of organizations that were organized by several U.S. agencies represented there. We paid a call on the problematic health minister, Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, the one who promoted beetroot for those who were HIV-positive. She emphasized that South Africa was a sovereign state and complained that they had not been consulted before being announced as a PEPFAR country, while at the same time some other SADC countries were unhappy because they were not included as focus countries. She probably was referring to Zimbabwe. And she said the government feared using antiretrovirals due to what she claimed were their toxicities.

We heard alarming, off-the-record statistics about HIV infections in the South African National Defence Force during our visit to a military hospital that was receiving 150 new patients a week who had just been found to be HIV-positive. That was an astounding figure with significant implications for military preparedness. And at one health clinic we were told about what was called the four C's, when young women and girls engage in risky transactional sex with older men in exchange for cars, cellphones, clothes, and cash. It was so clear from all our meetings that South African society was deeply engaged in the fight against AIDS, despite the ignorant policies of government leadership.

When we visited Namibia, the head of the CDC office there was Dr. Tom Kenyon, whom I mentioned earlier when he and I worked together for three years at the U.S. embassy in Gaborone. He's one of the heroes in the fight against HIV/AIDS, and he had by then transferred to the American Embassy in Windhoek. Randy, Tom and I met with the health minister, and she asked Randy, How can you have abstinence when girls get married at sixteen years and are sexually active at age thirteen or fourteen? A group of us, including the health minister, flew to the north to tour government and mission hospitals. In contrast to the situation in South Africa, the minister expressed Namibia's full support for working with PEPFAR.

Q: After that trip, did Tobias continue to engage with ambassadors?

LANGE: Yes. He had a lot of individual meetings, and when chiefs of mission meetings for other geographic regions took place in Washington, he would address them. In February, he sent a cable to all ambassadors asking that they consider the strategic, economic, social, and developmental impacts of HIV/AIDS as they prepared their annual mission performance plans. He asked that they involve their country teams to influence host governments, civil society, and faith-based and community groups.

To me, that's global health diplomacy: the U.S. ambassador and the country team working to foster strong leadership on the part of the host government at the level of the president, the prime minister, the health minister, and others to deal with a critical public health issue. Political leadership is often the essential enabler for public health programs.

Our office prepared a one-hundred-page strategy document [U.S. Five-Year Global HIV/AIDS Strategy] and arranged for the International Subcommittee of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS to host a town hall meeting in December to accept public comments on it. The strategy was presented to Congress and released publicly in

February 2003. It included my emphasis on the important role of ambassadors and embassy staff in a three-page discussion on the importance of engendering bold leadership.

But, as with so many things related to the origins of PEPFAR, the strategy generated controversy among some activists. One NGO published a lengthy analysis that purported to debunk the so-called myths in the U.S. global AIDS strategy related to its strategies for prevention, treatment, and working with faith-based organizations.

You can look back on this as a very formative period in developing what is now one of the most successful global health programs in history, with strong bipartisan support to this day. But I have to say that it was very difficult to set up an office in that situation.

Q: Why was it difficult to set up the PEPFAR office?

LANGE: We tried to do it at breathtaking speed and intensity because the job in the first year was to coordinate \$2.4 billion in assistance, and there are so many elements required to accomplish that. One was that the budgets weren't yet consolidated, and so the money would be in different pots under control of different agencies. So one of the questions that arose was, How much responsibility does Ambassador Tobias have over HIV/AIDS funding in USAID's budget or in CDC's budget? What about the Peace Corps, which has a long tradition of independence, separated from the day-to-day conduct of U.S. foreign policy because of its people-to-people character? Even if the agencies were inclined to say, Well, it's in our budget, we'll decide, Randy's view was expansive and his mandate from the White House was expansive—the president clearly intended that all international HIV/AIDS policy and program decisions were to be directed by the U.S. global AIDS coordinator in order to ensure consistent policies and messages.

Tobias also had a view, and he said this many times, at least internally, that the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator was, quote, “in, but not of,” the State Department. That concept gave him a sense of removal from normal State Department processes. Though he appreciated the support our office received from the Department, he made it clear that he did not want the State Department to be in the position of interpreting the President's intent for such things as the levels and authorities for the personnel positions needed to implement PEPFAR. The president did not want the initiative to get hung up on existing structures and bureaucracies, and that included not wanting the coordinator to be considered the equivalent of an assistant secretary of state. Randy thought he was above that, reporting by law directly to the secretary of state.

That concept even extended to the office symbol for our office. We began as the Global AIDS Coordinator Planning Task Force until January 2004, when Congress appropriated the funds for implementing the first year of the emergency plan. Then we became the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator. State Department people called it S/GAC, and still do, because it is located organizationally within the office of the secretary of state, known as S. But Randy did not want to use the term S/GAC externally because he wanted to create a brand as a multi-agency entity, complete with its own logo. He even was unhappy when he would attend an outside conference and be introduced with his title

in conjunction with the State Department. He and outsiders called it OGAC, meaning the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, with no reference to the supervisory role of the secretary of state.

Meanwhile, I was a creature of the State Department, a Foreign Service officer since 1981. So it was not always an easy match. We needed to have on board a lot of detailees with deep expertise from other agencies, but we also wanted to have an office that included State Department Foreign Service and Civil Service officers, and, of course, some political appointees. It was just not easy to staff such an office quickly. The State Department is not geared very well, at least was not at that time, to suddenly fill an office with five or ten or fifteen strong Foreign Service officers for one- or two-year tours of duty.

I happened to be available to work in S/GAC at very short notice because the Senior Seminar was in the middle of its summer break. I ended up staying on and never went back to work at the seminar—FSI got another former ambassador to take my place running the next seminar class that began in August. But for most FSOs, it's just very difficult to suddenly leave their current positions. We eventually were able to recruit a good, small nucleus of FSOs to work on the diplomatic side of PEPFAR. But it was a difficult period. And one of my regrets was how long it took to staff up the office, which was partly my responsibility. We needed strong public affairs officers and experts on HIV/AIDS and people who could liaise with embassies. I mean, when you are establishing from scratch a brand-new program that needs to spend almost two-and-a-half billion dollars in twelve months, it's not easy—even for an exciting, new, revolutionary program. It was an exciting time, but not an easy one.

Q: Can you say more about your diplomatic role?

LANGE: In an early organizational chart, I was one of two deputy global AIDS coordinators with three offices, about fifteen people, reporting to me. One office was called diplomatic liaison, one was management services (the administrative side), and the other was public affairs and communications. I was the principal point of contact for the chiefs of mission. And, due to Tobias' heavy schedule and O'Neill's lack of interest, I often was the S/GAC representative attending Secretary Colin Powell's daily 8:30 a.m. staff meeting for those at the assistant secretary level and above. That was always a high point of the day.

During my year in the office, I met with lots of health ministers and various international organization leaders, including the heads of UNICEF, the World Food Program, UNAIDS [the Joint UN Program on HIV/AIDS], and the Global Fund. And I met with Dr. Jim Yong Kim, who later became World Bank president, when he was at WHO running their "Three by Five" initiative to bring antiretroviral treatment to three million people living with HIV by the year 2005. It was launched by WHO and UNAIDS on World AIDS Day in December 2003. We wished them well, but some in our office were skeptical. The initiative had a catchy phrase but seemed to be a response meant to compete with our bilateral program. In the end, it may have succeeded from an advocacy perspective by

accelerating access to treatment in resource-limited settings, and WHO may have eventually reached its goal, but that came a couple of years late.

In February 2004, the Europeans held a fifty-five-nation ministerial meeting at Dublin Castle in Ireland on HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia. Ambassador Tobias chose not to go because that region was not a priority for the office, so I presented PEPFAR's new strategy on a leadership panel. It was a long-overdue, groundbreaking event for that part of the world, which had seen a fifty-fold increase in HIV infections over the previous ten years. South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu made headlines by condemning what he termed irresponsible opposition to condom use to prevent HIV infection, and political activist Bob Geldof, quite an outspoken character, complained that Europe and America spent more on pet food than the world spent on AIDS prevention. The ministers passed what was called the Dublin Declaration emphasizing HIV as an important political priority for governments in the region. I remember the French HIV/AIDS ambassador later telling me how the interventions by me and others at the conference generated a major shift in French policy on AIDS—another example of global health diplomacy in action.

A couple of days later, I briefed some members of the UK House of Commons and House of Lords, as well as NGOs, in a committee room in the Houses of Parliament in London. I also met with DFID [UK Department for International Development] and was interviewed by the BBC World Service.

Our central message was that the AIDS pandemic was urgent and global in nature, and countries needed to step up. The U.S. government was stepping up to this terrible problem, other countries needed to do the same, and donor governments, in particular, needed to put money toward this.

One of my successes in these international interactions came when I was the lead U.S. negotiator on what was called the Three Ones, spearheaded by UNAIDS. Now, I would assume most people haven't heard of the Three Ones outside of HIV/AIDS circles. They were the principles to better coordinate donor assistance for the scale-up of national AIDS responses. Recall this was back in 2003 and 2004, when ART to extend the lives of those who were HIV positive indefinitely was becoming more and more affordable. But millions and millions of people were still suffering from HIV and coming down with the symptoms of AIDS. Much needed to be done, and the focus was on quickly scaling up national AIDS responses. The Three Ones were guiding principles for governments and their partners involving an action framework, a single national coordinating authority, and a monitoring and evaluation system. [One agreed HIV/AIDS action framework as the basis for coordinating the work of all partners; one national AIDS coordinating authority with a broad-based, multisectoral mandate; and one agreed country-level monitoring and evaluation system.] Our office played a major role in shaping the principles, emphasizing the importance of coordination, ensuring their consistency with PEPFAR goals, and—importantly for our bilateral program—heading off efforts to endorse a single funding mechanism for each country. They were adopted by donor and host countries and major international organizations in April 2004 at a consultation on harmonizing

international AIDS funding co-hosted in Washington by the U.S. government, the United Kingdom, and UNAIDS. A very important development.

And I had a tough meeting in Geneva in June 2004 with Richard Feachem, the executive director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. Washington was upset by recent press reports that had criticized President Bush for his alleged lack of support for the Fund. Although Feachem distanced himself from those commentators, he agreed with reports that characterized the Global Fund as having established infrastructure and a pipeline for quicker absorption of PEPFAR funds. I countered that PEPFAR was using long-established CDC and USAID bilateral funding mechanisms. Under instructions, I told him that if misleading and negative press comparisons continued, the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator would be forced to defend itself publicly vis-à-vis the Global Fund. At the end of the meeting, I delivered to him a copy of a letter from the U.S. delegation to the Global Fund that was transmitted electronically to its board members while our meeting took place. That letter raised areas of concern with the Fund's performance in-country as well as with Feachem's management and strategic vision. Although our meeting ended amicably, he was, as you would expect, visibly upset at the contents of the letter and, if I recall correctly, sent a detailed response just a few hours later.

In early June 2004, our office organized a very large field meeting in Johannesburg for the key program implementers from Washington agencies and all the focus countries. There were a myriad of issues to discuss related to policy, program, strategic information, management, human resources, whatever. And we heard a myriad of complaints from the field.

Q: Why were the embassies unhappy?

LANGE: One ambassador said the PEPFAR program created a staggering management burden, and another said we were killing his staff with a workload that couldn't be sustained. Overall, it was a very tough meeting. Randy's response was, We hear you, and he promised to work together with posts to solve the multitude of problems. Afterward, Tobias described it as a very productive meeting but made it clear to us in the S/GAC office that he was particularly concerned about internal U.S. government obstacles related to things like processes, management tools, and contracting. Those management and administrative operations were part of my bailiwick, but they also presented a challenge that was very difficult to overcome due to innumerable government rules and regulations.

The challenges our office faced in implementing the program in resource-poor settings were discussed in a rather comprehensive General Accounting Office report in July 2004. I think most executive branch officials are trepidatious when a new GAO report examining their program is about to be released. In this case, GAO asked the U.S. global AIDS coordinator to address problems of coordination in both U.S. and non-U.S. entities, U.S. government policy constraints, shortages of qualified health workers, host government constraints, and weak infrastructure. All real problems. The detailed, joint response from State, HHS, and USAID noted that GAO's interviews were conducted in

the first few months of program implementation and concluded by saying that PEPFAR was making overwhelming progress, though much remained to be done.

The fact that we had all this money, by the way, meant that we were just inundated with people seeking government funding for their programs.

Q: How did you deal with all of those requests for PEPFAR money?

LANGE: We had very clear goals that had to be met, and funds were distributed accordingly. It was sad to meet with people who wanted our funding but whose experience was entirely focused on HIV/AIDS domestically. They didn't really understand what it was like in the epicenter of the HIV/AIDS epidemic at that time, Southern Africa—even though they thought they did, because they had read about it. In the United States, HIV/AIDS was looked upon back then as more of a disease that gay men and injecting drug users had, while in Sub-Saharan Africa, two-thirds of those infected were women and girls.

I remember one person called on me to say, Well, we've got this really good HIV/AIDS program in Philadelphia, and I know it will work in Sub-Saharan Africa. Well, they didn't know how things worked in Sub-Saharan Africa. It ain't Philadelphia. You really couldn't compare the two situations.

At one point, former Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi called on me in the PEPFAR office because he was trying to get money for what was called the Moi Africa Institute. Its goal was to promote security, stability, and prosperity in Africa—only tangentially related to public health. Needless to say, he got no money from us.

And PEPFAR was my only tour of duty in Washington when a member of Congress called on me in my office. Usually, you are expected to go to their office. He came with one of his constituents to try to get some money for work in PEPFAR countries, though we did not end up funding their request. His name was Randy “Duke” Cunningham, and he later ended up being sentenced to over eight years in prison as a convicted felon because—

Q: From California, wasn't he?

LANGE: I believe so, yes. He had accepted well over \$2 million in bribes from defense contractors. Prosecutors said he even used what they called a bribe menu describing how much it would cost contractors if they wanted multimillion-dollar government contracts. Cunningham called on me trying to get money for his constituents, but I didn't detect any nefarious purpose. Sadly, he wasn't the only corrupt congressman I encountered in my career—I described my encounters with William Jefferson in Botswana earlier.

Q: Did the scope of PEPFAR expand during your time in the office?

LANGE: Yes. PEPFAR began with fourteen focus countries, twelve in Africa plus Haiti and Guyana. Some ambassadors in non-focus countries with high HIV infection rates

were not happy campers, even though something like \$5 billion of the \$15 billion five-year authorization went to sustaining bilateral technical assistance and training programs in about a hundred countries. Congress later insisted that there be an additional focus country from a different region, and there was a lot of interest in the selection. The three candidate countries were Cambodia, India, and Vietnam. AIDS activists and many others lobbied hard for India. But its size, domestic resources, and growing middle class led others to argue it did not fit into the spirit of the president's plan, which was to initially focus on the poorest countries and those least able to contribute to their own domestic needs. In June 2004 President Bush announced that Vietnam, which was thought to be on the brink of an explosive epidemic, would be the fifteenth focus country.

Q: Did you get into the motivation of Bush? I mean, it's remarkable, here is a president, when you think about it, he accomplished something really tremendous but doesn't get enough credit for it. What pushed him into this thing?

LANGE: George W. Bush was a believer in compassionate conservatism. And, as I said earlier, he stated publicly that to whom much is given, much is required. Every indication I got from talking to the people who were there at the origins of this, before I started working on it in July 2003, people like Tony Fauci and Mark Dybul and Joe O'Neill, was that Bush's interest was sincere, genuine. AIDS was considered a disaster, and he thought he could do something about it. People were dying. The president wanted to save lives. His view was totally authentic, and he's the one who pushed his staff to think big.

And when you look at it and compare the amount of HIV/AIDS assistance on an annual basis under President Bush, once he started PEPFAR, compared to under President Clinton, his predecessor, it's just an astonishing increase in U.S. government funding.

In my subsequent work on global health issues, which we'll talk about later, I've often thought of how important it is to strengthen health systems as a whole for the benefit of the entire populace. People will live longer if there's a public health system with universal health coverage, a well-trained health workforce, access to affordable medicines and vaccines, well-equipped medical facilities and laboratories, et cetera. We call that a horizontal public health program, as opposed to a vertical, disease-specific program.

But if President Bush had told Congress in his State of the Union address in January 2003, I'm creating a \$15 billion program over five years to strengthen health systems in developing countries, he never would have received such strong bipartisan support and may never have convinced Congress to fund it. Instead, there was just this strong bipartisan support for a program focused on the immediate AIDS epidemic, including by supporters like Senator Frist. People who were on the Christian right were very concerned about mother-to-child transmission, the tragedy of babies being born HIV-positive, and so many people dying of AIDS. And people on the political left, the HIV/AIDS activists in the United States and elsewhere in the West, were also very supportive of the big infusion of funds even though there was a lot of distrust of President Bush and the motivations of the Bush Administration. While we were working so hard to establish this great new program, we were beset by controversies.

Q: What were the controversies? Why were AIDS activists skeptical about Bush's motivations?

LANGE: There was a lot of international debate over whether patent rules impeded access to medicines in developing countries. The U.S. government had blocked consensus on a World Trade Organization proposal to ease the rules, for fear it would reduce economic incentives and divert resources from the health crises in poor countries to wealthier countries' non-crisis needs.

And then Randy Tobias' nomination was greeted with deep suspicion by some because he came out of the pharmaceutical industry. A coalition of eleven health advocacy NGOs opposed his Senate confirmation because of their general opposition to the U.S. pharmaceutical industry's efforts to block AIDS victims from access to the lowest-cost, generic, lifesaving drugs—ART for people living with AIDS. Because of this suspicion, our office had various meetings with different activists. At one point I had a one-on-one conversation with rock star and activist Bono in a Washington club during an HIV/AIDS event for the ONE advocacy campaign, and he was very skeptical about President Bush's initiative while I defended it. Many activists suspected that much of this big money that the U.S. government was about to spend through PEPFAR would be used to buy expensive, brand-name HIV/AIDS drugs rather than generic equivalents. One activist said, and I'll quote here, "This administration needs a voice of experience on AIDS issues, not a pharmaceutical executive with his own cynical agenda." So, that was the background, the context of what was out there.

Q: Was that a fair criticism of Tobias?

LANGE: I thought that was very unfair. He was new to this issue and new to DC, as I said earlier, but he was very much focused on meeting the president's goals. He wanted to establish a program that would get people onto these drugs, along with the concomitant monitoring and evaluation systems, and he did not take actions, as far as I could tell, to unduly help out the brand-name drug companies. And he had recused himself from matters that could affect his financial interests in Eli Lilly, even though the company was not involved in making antiretroviral or anti-malaria drugs and it had made available to WHO its technology for antibiotics for multi-drug-resistant TB.

This issue was so prominent that at one point I was in a debate at the Council on Foreign Relations [CFR] with former U.S. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, moderated by Ambassador Princeton Lyman. Now, Dick Holbrooke's a famous U.S. diplomat, of course, and earlier I discussed various interactions with him, but this time—we're talking here about a meeting in March 2004—it was in his capacity as president of the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS.

Holbrooke underscored the political importance of having removed the HIV/AIDS issue from the political and cultural wars that had plagued it from 1984 on, and he said that having PEPFAR allies like conservatives Senator Jesse Helms and Reverend Franklin Graham had led him to accept the cognitive dissonance in the debate over abstinence

versus condoms as the most effective way to prevent AIDS. From his perspective, the self-evident answer was you need them both, but he added, let the purists fight.

Holbrooke urged PEPFAR to buy generic drugs and pointed out that WHO had already pre-qualified a fixed-dose combination of antiretrovirals composed of three generic AIDS drugs in one pill. My response was that we needed to assure their quality, safety, and efficacy through approval by the FDA [U.S. Food and Drug Administration] for use abroad. Seeking FDA approval for generic drug use abroad, rather than domestically, was the mechanism that our office employed to allow U.S. government funds to be used to purchase generic antiretroviral drugs.

The CFR vice president called it a frank and provocative meeting, and the debate generated media coverage. As one news service reported, Holbrooke, quote, “lectured” me on the U.S. government’s delay in purchasing generic antiretroviral drugs to fight AIDS in developing countries. Afterward, Dick wrote to Randy to say that the disagreements were tactical, not political, and he supported President Bush’s historic initiative.

Q: What was your impression, you’re right in the middle of this thing, of the pharmaceutical firms and bringing the cost down?

LANGE: In the end, the FDA approved the purchase of generic drugs for use abroad, so PEPFAR didn’t have to buy more expensive brand-name drugs that were sold in the United States. But it took months to figure out that system, and the delay generated a lot of criticism at the time—and not only from Holbrooke. When HHS Secretary Thompson announced the FDA’s expedited review process to ensure the safety of the combination pills and promised that patent issues would not impede the purchase of the drugs for poor countries, a May 2004 *New York Times* editorial labelled it a stunning change of course.

I didn’t have the lead on this issue in our office, but I was supportive and able to defend our policy. I thought it was a creative way to deal with the complications related to intellectual property rights and generic drugs. My impression was that the pharmaceutical companies, as long as we didn’t threaten their markets in the United States and other developed countries, were willing—or at least not opposed—to let PEPFAR purchase generic drugs. Because we’re talking about lifesaving drugs for some of the poorest countries in Africa, and it wasn’t tenable for PEPFAR money to be spent on very expensive antiretroviral therapy at U.S. prices.

Q: Yeah, it would have been just impossible for those countries to pay U.S. prices for the drugs.

LANGE: Yes. But the delay in coming up with a mechanism for FDA approval resulted in persistent criticism from the AIDS activists and others, including on the international level. In July 2004, when Randy addressed the International AIDS Conference in Bangkok, he was heckled for ten minutes due to PEPFAR’s promotion of abstinence and fidelity and its slowness in purchasing generic medicines. Protestors chanted, quote, “He’s lying! People dying!” And there was some criticism of what was termed

Washington's go-it-alone approach concentrating on a limited number of countries. Nelson Mandela called on donors to provide greater funding for the Global Fund, which was working in some 130 countries. Tobias gave a forceful response, saying that, by its actions, the United States had challenged the rest of the world to take action. He said we had turned the corner from eras of apathy and empathy to a new era of compassionate action—a nice phrase.

There was another contentious issue, the anti-prostitution pledge, that was so divisive it made it to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Q: What was the anti-prostitution pledge?

LANGE: In line with President Bush's international policy opposing prostitution and any related activities, the original authorizing legislation from May 2003 said no PEPFAR funds could be used to promote or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution or sex trafficking, and no funds could be used to provide assistance to any organization that did not have a policy explicitly opposing prostitution and sex trafficking.

Opponents argued that that was counterproductive, because community programs that worked with prostitutes could be instrumental in fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS. It was known that female sex workers, along with men who had sex with men, people who injected drugs, and people in prisons and other closed settings, were at a disproportionate risk of acquiring HIV.

Years later, in 2013, the Supreme Court ruled that the U.S. government cannot force a private organization to publicly profess a viewpoint that mirrors the government's view but is not held by the organization itself, a violation of the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech. And in 2020, the Court decided that foreign affiliates of American NGOs were considered separate, non-American entities and therefore did not enjoy the First Amendment freedom of speech protections in this situation.

Another part of the domestic political agenda that affected our work was the controversy over prevention of HIV infection. You had the AIDS activists on the left and you had the faith community on the right. In the five-year authorization, Congress recommended that 20 percent of the money be spent on prevention activities with at least a third of that spent on abstinence-until-marriage programs. This was later expanded to include initiatives promoting monogamy.

Q: How did your office reconcile those differences in how to prevent HIV infection?

LANGE: We used Uganda as our prime example for a prevention program. They promoted what was called the ABC approach: *A* meaning abstain from sex, *B* meaning be faithful within a committed relationship if you're not willing to abstain from sex, and *C* meaning use condoms correctly and consistently if you're not being faithful or your partner's not being faithful within a committed relationship. So, basically, abstain, be faithful, or use condoms. That ABC approach makes sense. Randy Tobias once described ABC as being in priority order—like, as a last-ditch effort, okay, use condoms.

But because of the differences in domestic political agendas and the money to be spent on prevention, we were caught in the middle of divisive discussions. I remember having people come into my office saying, Well, you may talk about ABC, Ambassador Lange, but let's be clear. What we really need is, *A*, abstinence. That's what's going to stop new infections. And then other people would come into my office and say, Ambassador Lange, you can talk about the ABC approach, but you know what we really need is condoms. Because you just have to be realistic, people are going to have sex, and you have to have the condoms available to them. Actually, after being buffeted on all sides on this, I remember a couple of American women who were very familiar with Sub-Saharan Africa coming into my office saying, You know, what we really need is *B*. The problem is people are not faithful to their partner, particularly the men, and we really need to focus on faithfulness. And I thought there was a lot of truth in what those two women said, from my observations while living in Africa.

One advantage of the ABC approach was that it allowed us to proceed with bipartisan support, because even if somebody didn't like the fact that condoms would be distributed, the fact that there was abstinence education led them to accept the PEPFAR approach. And vice versa, for those who supported condom distribution and were skeptical of the efficacy of abstinence programs. It was a construct that actually worked to maintain broad support for PEPFAR. Though I have to say that at one point Randy told me someone had told him his office was full of, quote, "condom lovers."

This was before a lot of data could be accumulated to be able to adjust the prevention program, as was done in subsequent years. But when you look at it, out of that \$15 billion authorized over the first five years, one-fifth was intended for prevention, and a third of that, roughly a billion dollars, was intended for abstinence programs. Some who were quite realistic on how difficult it was to convince people to abstain from sex, especially older teenagers and above, recognized that the abstinence education programs were necessary for the entirety of the PEPFAR program to garner bipartisan congressional support. One U.S. ambassador in Southern Africa told me, Look on it as a \$1 billion tax on the \$15 billion. My personal view was that abstinence education can work for younger age groups by helping to increase the age of their sexual debut, as it's called, and it may help to reduce their number of sexual partners. But on the whole, it's very hard to convince older age groups to be abstinent.

Q: How about the Catholic Church?

LANGE: I don't recall ever being called upon by representatives of the Catholic Church, though others in the office may have met with them. But over the years the U.S. Catholic bishops and the American NGO Catholic Relief Services have been strong supporters of PEPFAR's life-saving work while maintaining their moral objections to condoms and refusing to provide them in their programming. They support prevention programs emphasizing *AB*.

Q: Well, condoms, I mean—

LANGE: Promotion of the use of condoms to prevent HIV transmission was so controversial that a conscience clause was even included in the original May 2003 congressional authorization. NGOs supporting abstinence until marriage but opposing the distribution of condoms on religious or moral grounds were eligible to receive funding for abstinence activities. Similarly, NGOs supporting the use of condoms but not stressing abstinence also were eligible for funding.

During our visit to Namibia that I talked about earlier, Tobias met with the nun in charge of a Catholic mission hospital. I think she was from Germany. Her hospital was dealing with many, many people with AIDS. Randy asked her, What about condoms to prevent HIV infection? Do you distribute condoms here at your hospital? She said, Yes, we distribute condoms. Randy said, How do you reconcile that with the Catholic Church's policy against the use of condoms in this situation? Her response was, Northern Namibia is a long way from Rome.

Q: Yeah. AIDS was still a major problem in the United States at this time, wasn't it? Well, how did this ABC system work here?

LANGE: Yes, and it's still a significant problem in the United States. The thing is that, with antiretroviral therapy, a lot of people who are HIV-positive are living so much longer.

Q: Well, I mean, while you were focused on Africa and other developing countries, was that sort of a reflection on our prevention efforts in the United States?

LANGE: That's interesting because, for the purposes of PEPFAR, it seemed in many ways to be treated as if it was totally distinct. PEPFAR was an effort to deal with a threat to national security. It was thought that the way the disease was spreading was not just a health issue, but it could devastate populations, reduce productivity, drain social services, and destabilize foreign governments. And the secretary general of the United Nations at the time, Kofi Annan, spoke in those terms. But for AIDS in the United States, that was the province of a totally separate part of the U.S. government, the Department of Health and Human Services, and health officials in the states. It's almost as if never the twain shall meet.

Q: Well, where did things stand in the United States at the time when you were setting this up with the ABC approach? I mean, were condoms being advocated? Was abstinence, was faithfulness?

LANGE: I don't have deep expertise on U.S. domestic policy, but the nature of the epidemic in the United States was different from Africa in many ways, with greater prevalence of men who had sex with men and injection drug use. CDC emphasized risk screening and testing and reducing risky sexual behavior and needle-sharing. As I understand it, their recommended behavioral interventions were geared to what was appropriate for the patient and included having condoms readily available at clinics. But I don't know if they used the ABC construct for prevention messaging domestically like PEPFAR did abroad.

Our office was also concerned about another controversial issue related to HIV/AIDs, and that involved applicants to the Foreign Service.

Q: How did HIV status affect those applying to the Foreign Service?

LANGE: The State Department back then had a rule that disqualified HIV-positive applicants from entering the Foreign Service because it was thought they could not be worldwide available, which is the basic standard for a generalist to enter the Foreign Service. Some people in the PEPFAR office were intent on changing the rule so HIV-positive applicants could join the Foreign Service. I understood and was sympathetic to their concern, but I also supported, from my background, the Department rule that then existed as being fundamental to a fair assignments process. I had a hard time envisioning how HIV-positive persons assigned to certain very difficult, remote hardship posts with minimal healthcare services could get the healthcare they were likely to need over a two-year tour. And it's unfair to all the others if someone new to the Foreign Service can avoid being assigned to hardship posts.

But as I thought about it years later, and as antiretroviral therapy became much more accessible, it's quite clear that HIV-positive people can live close to normal lives. Maybe they have to be checked periodically, but they can be available for duty worldwide. I was probably wrong back in 2003. It took until 2008 for the Department, facing a lawsuit, to change its rules to instead review applicants with HIV on a case-by-case basis, similar to candidates who have other illnesses, such as cancer.

Q: How about the Peace Corps?

LANGE: I know there were certain concerns about Peace Corps volunteers who became HIV-positive while they were serving abroad. But I don't really recall what their policy was toward accepting HIV-positive candidates.

When I look back on my time working on PEPFAR, all these domestic HIV/AIDS controversies with international consequences kind of fell upon our office, including AIDS activists from one side or the other. And at the same time, PEPFAR was just a wonderful program. This initiative by a Republican president with bipartisan support is still going strong, double the size now compared to when it began at about \$3 billion a year for the initial years. And to me it's one of the greatest assistance programs the U.S. government has implemented internationally since the Marshall Plan and the creation of the Peace Corps. It makes me very proud to be an American.

Q: Well, certainly, I mean, you know you're on the side of the angels on this policy.

LANGE: Yes. Though being on the side of the angels doesn't mean that when you arrive at work at 8:00 in the morning it's an easy job. (Laughs) It was really an incredible but very difficult year. We had bipartisan support but still were caught up in the domestic political agenda. We faced bureaucratic obstacles in trying to organize and staff the office quickly, as the White House expected of us. A State OIG report in 2010 noted that the

unusual PEPFAR structure of having multiple U.S. government agencies implement the program under a consolidated approach led to some conflict and loss of efficiency in the early years. Very true. And I was in the middle of that.

At the same time, as you say, we were on the side of the angels. And you're right, Stu, this is something where George W. Bush does not get enough credit. Those of us who follow global health, like I have been doing since 1999, know the work of PEPFAR very well. And when Bush visited several African countries in February 2008, he was greeted, as the *Washington Post* put it, with unalloyed adulation in recognition of PEPFAR's impact. But even today I don't think that PEPFAR gets as much credit, domestically and internationally, as it should.

Q: No, it doesn't.

LANGE: In my observation, in international global health discussions, PEPFAR now is simply taken as a given, even though U.S. taxpayers continue to pay around \$6 billion a year for it. Even the head of the U.S. delegation at the World Health Assembly generally just mentions PEPFAR in a list of U.S. global health programs, rather than singling it out for its huge size and impact. And domestically most people don't think of President Bush's legacy in terms of PEPFAR, they think of him in terms of 9/11 and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and things such as that.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: It's really a shame. It's one of the greatest accomplishments of the United States in the twenty-first century, to have created this program that has saved many millions of lives.

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

I'd like to start talking about my next tour, and then we'll quit for the day.

Q: What was your next tour?

LANGE: I was asked by the director general of the Foreign Service to fill an urgent need as the acting inspector general and then to stay on as the deputy. The deputy IG [inspector general] position is considered to be the equivalent of a PDAS [principal deputy assistant secretary of state] position. So, after an intense year in a very challenging job, I left my position as deputy global AIDS coordinator in July 2004.

Q: You were in the OIG office from when to when?

LANGE: From July 2004 until March 2006. I was the acting IG for a short period. Then former U.S. ambassador Cameron Hume arrived as the acting inspector general at the end

of August and I became the deputy IG. In May 2005 the presidentially appointed inspector general, Howard Krongard, arrived and Cameron left the office.

Q: Can you describe what the inspector general does?

LANGE: The inspector general had responsibility for both the State Department and what was then called the Broadcasting Board of Governors [BBG]. Our office conducted independent inspections, investigations, and audits, including information technology and security and intelligence oversight. The purpose was to promote effective management and accountability. Probably every State employee has seen posters urging them to report to the OIG cases of waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement.

I think history is worth reviewing here. State Department inspections go all the way back to 1906, when they were a means of checking on consular work abroad. A seminal event occurred with the passage of the Inspector General Act of 1978 for statutory inspectors general, something near and dear to the heart of every IG. For the State Department, the Foreign Service Act of 1980 required that inspections be done on a five-year cycle. And the current State Department statutory inspector general—who by law cannot be a career member of the Foreign Service—was created in 1986 [Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Antiterrorism Act of 1986].

By the way, I remember from my time in Management Operations how senior FSOs feared having an independent inspector general who didn't have experience at a post abroad. The 1986 act also created a separate office reporting directly to the secretary of state called S/PPR [Policy and Program Review] to review COM foreign policy responsibilities and activities. But embassies didn't need to have two post inspections every five years, one performed by S/PPR and the other performed by OIG. That was just overkill, and within sixteen months S/PPR merged into OIG.

Well, those statutory inspectors general are in a unique position. Though they serve under the general supervision of their agency head, they are independent and, by statute, have dual reporting relationships to the agency head and to the Congress. And they can't be fired by the agency head—only the president can do that. That's a really powerful, and in my view untenable, position to be in. How can one report to two bosses who sometimes are in conflict?

When the State IG was unable to attend, I would go to meetings of what was then called the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency [PCIE], consisting of all the presidentially appointed inspectors general and chaired by the deputy director for management at OMB [Office of Management and Budget]. They've actually changed the composition of it since then and it's got a different name. After going to their meetings, I concluded that federal inspectors general, a group of fine and dedicated civil servants, were obsessed with maintaining their independence and freedom from political intrusion. It was a frequent subject of PCIE discussion. They made it very clear that they were independent of the cabinet secretary to whom they reported because they also had the reporting line to Congress. From my perspective, that was an odd configuration. Having two bosses, in effect, means having no boss.

Now, it's clear that the IG offices do essential work making agencies more honest, accountable, and efficient. Ideally, they serve as agents of positive change. But they are far from popular. Sometimes they're viewed as a consultant to the agency, but sometimes they're viewed as an undertaker. As the saying goes, if you want to get a laugh, walk into the office of a government official and say, We're from the inspector general's office and we're here to help.

The *Foreign Service Journal* even devoted an entire issue back in March 1998 to claims, including by prominent Congressman Lee Hamilton, that OIG was abusing its investigative powers by violating employees' due process rights. The issue was complete with headlines like "In Search of Scapegoats" and "Curbing the State Police." The journal included a strong response from a previous inspector general defending OIG's approach.

Q: What kinds of issues did you deal with during your time as deputy IG?

LANGE: When I look back on this tour, OIG had some great successes in many areas of the State Department. Department programs and post operations improved in response to OIG reports. Probably the most salient example was when two bureaus, for arms control and nonproliferation, were combined following OIG's recommendation.

As the deputy IG, I usually wasn't the one dealing directly with the bureaus in Washington and the posts abroad unless serious problems arose. I was not heading an inspection team, for example. But there was a lot going on that rose to my level and extended beyond the office. I had to deal with some sensitive issues related to the authority of an ambassador abroad. I had meetings with the deputy secretary of state on a sensitive issue and with senior officials at OMB to secure additional OIG funding for important oversight activities in Iraq and Afghanistan. There was a special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction whom we regularly met with, and at one point I went with Inspector General Krongard to see the CIA inspector general at Langley. I testified on behalf of OIG in September 2005 before the House subcommittee on national security, emerging threats, and international relations, which was concerned about the progress that the State Department had made in strengthening the visa process as an anti-terrorism tool. Although the title of the hearing, "Combatting Terrorism, Visas Still Vulnerable," made clear congressional concerns, in my statement I described how the Department actually had made substantial progress since 9/11.

In the year following the invasion of Iraq, U.S. public diplomacy efforts aimed at reaching broader Muslim audiences were a challenge. One of the things the acting inspector general and I had to deal with was a controversial draft report by OIG staff on Radio Sawa, the BBG Middle East Radio Network that broadcast pop music and news in Arabic. After significant revisions, the draft had been submitted to Radio Sawa's overseers, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, for comment just prior to my arrival in the office. BBG prepared a lawyerly forty-nine-page response describing their many concerns with the draft. We brought in an independent auditor to review the draft to ensure that it met generally accepted government auditing standards and was both

accurate and objective. Based on the auditor's conclusions, we determined it did not meet the standards and decided not to issue it. Instead, we officially transmitted conclusions from the review to BBG and asked them to look at particular challenges that had been identified. The *Washington Post* ran articles insinuating OIG had succumbed to political pressure from BBG in not releasing the report, and the issue arose at a Department press briefing. This was a very unpleasant episode that upset the staff who drafted the original report. At one point, I had to submit a declaration in a lawsuit that was filed by a disgruntled OIG employee.

It was clear that OIG had a dire budgetary situation, and that led to bitterness and infighting among the assistant inspectors general for scarce resources. From fiscal years 2001 to 2005, the OIG budget, in constant dollars, had increased by 1 percent. Meanwhile, the State Department's overall budget—and therefore the Department programs and overseas posts that OIG was responsible for inspecting, auditing, and investigating—increased by 50 percent. So, in fiscal year 2005 OIG could afford to fill only 210 of over 300 positions if we were going to keep the amount of money needed for training, travel, et cetera. With so many positions unable to be filled, the assistant inspectors general were in a free-for-all trying to convince me, as deputy inspector general, that their program was so important their positions needed to be filled as a priority. It was a very unpleasant situation. As a former acting inspector general put it, the office was independent and broke. I oversaw a major office reorganization in 2005 that involved many staff members developing a new vision and mission for OIG, reduced the number of assistant inspectors general, and established a realistic staffing chart with office staff ceilings. We moved from what had been a habitual end-of-fiscal-year crisis mode to functioning in a stable manner.

I'm sure you've interviewed for oral histories some Foreign Service officers who'd been ambassadors who headed inspection teams.

Q: Yes, several of them.

LANGE: Well, the OIG Office of Inspections, so well-known to Foreign Service personnel, is very different from the other elements of the State Department OIG and inspector general offices elsewhere in the U.S. government. That was really an eye-opener to me when I started working there.

Inspections are performed by seasoned Foreign Service and Civil Service personnel. When you're in the Foreign Service, you think of the Office of Inspections as the face of OIG. Oh, we're going to have an inspection team come to spend several weeks with us, they'll do their report, and then we will have to respond to all of their recommendations. Let's tidy up beforehand, and let's hope we don't receive too much criticism.

But there are other major functions that a federal inspector general has, primarily audits and investigations. And those functions, in OIGs other than the State Department's, receive a much greater portion of the budget than the inspection function. Inspectors look at policy implementation, resource management, and management controls, which is much different than having an auditor show up to review financial statements for possible

misuse of funds or, even worse, having an investigator show up to look at potential criminal wrongdoing. The way I look at it, the inspectors are serving almost as management consultants to try to improve the operation of an embassy or consulate or Washington bureau.

Well, the prominent role of inspections within State's OIG and the influence of the Foreign Service on the independence and effectiveness of OIG, including presence on inspection teams, have been under periodic attack over decades by Congress and especially the General Accounting Office [GAO, now called the Government Accountability Office]. GAO issued a report back in 1978 saying the temporary detailing of FSOs as inspectors created doubts as to their independence. It issued another report in 1982 saying that State's inspection function should be performed by Department management rather than by the OIG. And in 2007, a year after I left OIG, GAO issued another report saying that State OIG inspections should not be led by career FSOs, who were generally former ambassadors, or other staff who later rotate on to other assignments within the Department. While the only legal prohibition is that an FSO cannot be appointed as inspector general, as I mentioned, GAO also called for a policy prohibiting career FSOs from heading the OIG office even in an acting capacity. I believe the Department eventually agreed that the deputy inspector general, who often serves as acting inspector general, would be a Civil Service employee.

Clearly, Congress has been concerned about the influence of the Foreign Service on the independence and effectiveness of OIG. The theory is, how could Foreign Service officers objectively audit or inspect Department managers who may have control over their future Foreign Service assignments, after their OIG tour of duty? FSOs lack the necessary independence because they have to please people in the Foreign Service to get their next job.

Some said this doesn't question the integrity of Foreign Service personnel but rather is intended to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest. While I understand their point, I personally found that attitude very upsetting. It was as if my integrity was being impugned just because I happened to be in the Foreign Service, not the Civil Service.

Senator Jesse Helms, who was a thorn in the side of the Department regarding OIG independence, thought it was okay for the IG to make an independent decision to hire a member of the Foreign Service, provided it was for permanent employment. But few FSOs would want to permanently leave the Foreign Service unless they were about to retire.

Q: But there is the other side of it, that a civil servant who is sort of a domestic employee for the most part is not going to understand operating in foreign countries.

LANGE: That's the fundamental tension for post inspections. How do you assemble an inspection system with a deep understanding of how an overseas post should be run and—when the ambassador is part of the problem—has the clout to speak the truth to the ambassador to bring about change? To do that, you are much better off having a former ambassador on the inspection team along with others having deep knowledge of how a

well-run embassy is supposed to operate. I believe you need inspection teams that include some members of the Foreign Service with embassy experience who can make realistic assessments, as opposed to relying solely on Civil Service personnel who never have been stationed abroad and who just fly in and think they know how to run things, even though they have never really worked in a situation having to deal with rampant local corruption, security concerns, or all kinds of other difficulties.

I think anybody who's ever served at a U.S. embassy abroad—especially those at a small embassy, very isolated, with maybe half a dozen or a dozen Americans stationed there—recognizes how challenging it can be. When you're in that situation, especially earlier in your career, it can be of great benefit to have a real expert, someone with deep experience working at Foreign Service posts, come into your office and offer management advice in a structured way, according to the inspection process. And there are times when the leadership situation is so bad that the OIG inspection will lead Washington to remove an ambassador from post. I see inspections as serious undertakings. Even if you think of them as a management consultant function, they are very important for a well-functioning State Department.

I'm comfortable with the Foreign Service/Civil Service mix on inspection teams, but it's controversial.

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: I encountered another eye-opener in OIG. Some OIG employees—nearly 90 percent of them were Civil Service, the rest Foreign Service—occasionally resorted to grievance procedures over what I thought were routine administrative decisions.

Q: Were these grievances—were these situations—generated by the budgetary problems?

LANGE: A good question. That was part of it, but the other part of it was that some in the Civil Service were suspicious of those of us who were from the Foreign Service. They were sympathetic to those arguments made by GAO and some in Congress. They were distrustful of the influential role of the Foreign Service in OIG, and the tension was palpable. Inspector General Howard Krongard ended up announcing his departure to the OIG staff after I left, in December of 2007, and his parting email really gives you a sense of what that tension in the office was like. He told all the staff that OIG had enough challenges to focus on without spending energy on rivalries between functional offices and between the Foreign Service and Civil Service, or in rumoring, backbiting, and complaining. So, here was the inspector general himself admonishing the entire staff to do their best to minimize the complaining and to understand that all decisions cannot please all people.

All in all, it was a pretty disagreeable working environment. Though one of the high points was when I attended the Secretary of State's 8:30 a.m. daily senior staff meetings in lieu of Howard. I was there in November 2004 when he told the staff he would be leaving the State Department and wanted us to be the first to know. I was honored, and saddened, to be in attendance. By 10:00 a.m. that news had spread around the world.

Q: Today is Thursday, April 1, 2021. I appreciate the fact that I've got you here, remotely, after a long break.

LANGE: Hello, Stu. How have you been doing in the midst of this pandemic?

Q: Okay. Luckily, I have these interviews

LANGE: My apologies for having taken so long to get back to you on this. My last tour in the Foreign Service, which we'll talk about next, involved pandemic preparedness and response. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, I've just been really busy and couldn't get around to being interviewed for my oral history.

Q: Oh I imagine so. Well, should we have it?

LANGE: Last time we talked, I was describing my work as deputy inspector general. I would like to mention a family highlight from that time. Our daughter Julia received the Una Chapman Cox Foreign Service Award for Domestic Community Service. She was cited for her, quote, “commitment, leadership, and volunteerism” at the annual youth awards ceremony in the Department’s Benjamin Franklin Room in July 2005. She gave a very good speech. It was a really nice accolade for her. She received a \$2,000 U.S. savings bond, and she and the other awardees met separately with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in advance of the presentation.

Q: Oh, my.



*Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice with youth awards recipients,
including Julia at right (2005)*

LANGE: So, as with everyone in the Foreign Service, there are personal, family developments that take place while one is busy working.

Q: Well, they are important, to cite them in a place like this and other places to be acknowledged. Because we don't go to these posts by ourselves. We go with our families, and our families do things. My wife organized an international Girl Scouts troop in Yugoslavia, for example. I mean these things are important.

What did you do after working in OIG?

AVIAN INFLUENZA ACTION GROUP

LANGE: I was fully expecting to continue as the deputy inspector general when, out of the blue, I got a call in February 2006 from Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky. She said, John, I know you have a job, but would you be interested in becoming the special representative on avian and pandemic influenza? This was a job created about six months earlier to coordinate the U.S. government's international efforts to prepare for a potential pandemic, and it was then occupied by my friend and former boss Ambassador Nancy Powell. She had an onward assignment already lined up and wasn't in a position to stay on in the role. Paula was urgently looking for someone to fill it. Now, I don't have an M.D. [Doctor of Medicine] degree, and I don't have an MPH [Master of Public Health] degree, but, as we discussed earlier, I had substantial experience working on global health issues, beginning with HIV/AIDS in Botswana and later as one of the two deputy global AIDS coordinators at the inception of PEPFAR. I knew a lot of the players in global health working in the administration, other governments, and the World Health Organization.

IG Krongard was amenable, and I left OIG a month later to become the special representative.

Q: What were the dates of your tenure as special representative on pandemics?

LANGE: I began in March 2006 and held the position for three years, until February of 2009, when I retired from the Foreign Service.

Before explaining my role, I think it's important to understand the background for the global fear for a potentially catastrophic pandemic from a new influenza virus strain that was officially called H5N1, nicknamed bird flu. The concern started in 1997, when the first human deaths from H5N1 occurred in Hong Kong. The virus kept spreading in birds, killing millions of poultry in Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Bangladesh, Egypt, Nigeria, and elsewhere. H5N1 was present in sixteen countries at the start of 2006 and in over sixty countries by the fall of 2008. After an outbreak in South Korea in 2008, six million

fowl were killed to prevent further spread.

The fundamental concern was that the animal health problem would become a human health problem if the virus ever evolved to become a deadly human influenza pandemic. Experts say something like three out of every four emerging pathogens in humans are zoonotic in origin, meaning the infectious disease was first transmitted from animals to humans. The idea that the health of people is closely connected to the health of animals and the environment is called One Health.

Now, only a small number of humans had become infected, but those who did had a very high mortality rate. They generally had been in direct contact with the sick poultry. But there was increasing concern around the world that a devastating pandemic with a high death rate could begin at any moment if the virus mutated and resulted in what the experts call, quote, “sustained and efficient human-to-human transmission.”

The potential pandemic was alarming. Two U.S. Senators Richard Lugar and Barack Obama of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, wrote an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* in June 2005 urging government action on pandemic preparedness. In my first month on the job, the *New York Times* had a six-page supplement entirely devoted to what it called the uncertain threat from avian flu. And the *Sunday Times* reported that a confidential British Home Office report had concluded that a prudent worst-case assessment would result in 320,000 dead in the United Kingdom, which they said could necessitate the use of mass burials in individually marked coffins. Gruesome stuff. It seemed impossible to watch news media without encountering dire reports about the possibility of a human pandemic.

To his great credit, President George W. Bush did not want the United States and the world to be unprepared for a pandemic. You could wonder why the president would place so much focus on that, but my understanding is that he read a book by John Barry, *The Great Influenza*. That’s the story of one of the deadliest human disease outbreaks in history, the 1918–1919 so-called Spanish Flu that some believe started in the American Midwest. That pandemic killed anywhere from 20 to 50 to 100 million people worldwide—we just don’t know. Most deaths occurred among those in the prime of life, and they say at least a quarter of the world’s population of 1.8 billion people became ill. I was told that one of my great-grandmothers died of the Spanish influenza.

Q: I read that book. Excellent book.

LANGE: Really? You did? Wow. I’m impressed.

Q: A long time ago.

LANGE: Yeah, it was an excellent book. I ended up meeting John Barry a couple of times.

The world has changed since 1918, of course. Now there’s widespread use of antibiotics and vaccines and improved healthcare. But it was feared that much greater international

trade and travel could accelerate the spread of a pandemic virus and foster the first pandemic in the age of globalization.

Many experts warned that a pandemic was inevitable and possibly imminent. It was only a matter of timing, and there was no place for complacency. So, after reading the book, you can understand why President Bush decided, we've got to be prepared in case we have a once-in-a-century catastrophic pandemic.

In that time period, the Homeland Security Council [HSC], which now is part of the National Security Council, considered a biological disease outbreak of pandemic influenza to be one of the eight critical threats facing the United States.

But that's not to say that there weren't any naysayers who thought the threat was overblown. The U.S. *Weekly Standard* had a cover story in November 2005 depicting a henhouse full of Chicken Littles screaming, "The flu is coming." The article, by a controversial author, claimed the line between informing the public and starting a panic was being crossed by politicians, public health officials, and journalists. I think that the 2005 debate resonates today in disagreements on the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q: What was the expected impact if this bird flu pandemic came to pass?

LANGE: When I came on board in March 2006, the draft of the government's implementation plan ["National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Implementation Plan"] was nearing completion, and it was released in May. It projected that a modern pandemic could lead to the deaths of 200,000 to two million people in the United States alone. WHO's "World Health Report 2007" called pandemic influenza the most feared security threat. Later, in 2008, the journal *Lancet Infectious Diseases* had an article suggesting that up to 350 million people worldwide could die in a severe pandemic, an astounding figure. That was in part due to the fact that the case fatality rate for the small number of people who had already become infected with H5N1 was much higher than the rate for the 1918 strain of influenza. And that year the World Bank's worst-case scenario estimated that a flu pandemic could reduce global GDP [Gross Domestic Product] by over \$3 trillion.

Q: How did these projections compare to previous pandemics? Or COVID?

LANGE: As you know, the world has a history of pandemics. There was even a plague in Athens in the fifth century B.C. While the 1918 Spanish Flu was particularly deadly, the Asian Flu in 1957 claimed around two million lives and the 1968 Hong Kong Flu caused something like one million deaths worldwide. There was the HIV/AIDS epidemic. And in 2003, SARS [severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus, SARS-CoV-1] caused an epidemic that killed 774 people before it was quickly contained using quarantine and sanitation policies.

Think about that history. Pandemics from emerging infectious diseases occur fairly often. Why wouldn't the nations of the world try to figure out ways to diminish the risk and

minimize their global impact? In May 2006 the U.S. government had a robust national strategy and implementation plan to prepare for a potentially lethal pandemic. Now, as you and I speak, we are in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the U.S. government's initial response seemed to indicate we were unprepared. As of today, April 1, 2021, it's estimated there have been over 550,000 deaths in the United States and 2.8 million globally.

I think you can argue, based on history, that a deadly pandemic was inevitable, and the United States should have maintained the level of preparedness first established by President Bush. How many lives would have been saved during COVID if the United States and the world had maintained the sense of urgency about a potential pandemic? Alas, governmental concern for pandemics over the years has been a cycle of panic or neglect.

I should point out there are differences between what we were preparing for in 2006, pandemic influenza, and COVID-19—differences between an influenza virus and a coronavirus. Influenza viruses typically begin in particular animal species or geographic regions. But many elements of pandemic preparedness and response are similar no matter the nature of the infectious disease outbreak. Leadership is important, and leaders at all levels need to be clear and honest in their communications even if the message consists of bad news and uncertainty. Pandemics are not just a health issue, but also involve political, social, cultural, and psychological issues.

Q: How did you set up shop as special representative?

LANGE: When Nancy Powell was in the lead, before I came on board, she had the title senior coordinator for avian influenza and infectious diseases and worked in the OES Bureau [Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental Scientific Affairs]. Paula Dobriansky's idea was that this issue was so important, with intense White House interest, that the State Department needed to establish what in effect was a task force, separate from, but working with, the OES Bureau. She asked me to establish that office. It turned out that the State Department Operations Center owned the term task force and didn't allow us to use it, so we ended up—and I didn't create this name—as the Avian Influenza Action Group. Which is kind of an odd name for an office. My job was considered to be at the deputy assistant secretary level, and I worked directly for the under secretary, so our office symbol was G/AIAG.

I recruited Foreign Service officers on short tours, Civil Service Officers on detail from elsewhere in the Department, detailees from three other U.S. government agencies, and Foreign Service retirees who came back to work on contract. At our peak, there were nineteen staff members in G/AIAG. I have to say they were a really dedicated, motivated group of people. The longest lasting deputy I had over the three years was Kathleen Reddy-Smith, who was excellent.

This was the second time in my career when I had to create a new office from scratch. The first one was when we created the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator for PEPFAR, as I discussed earlier. It's hard to get a new State Department office up and

running at short notice, because just about all of those qualified to do the job already are on their own Foreign Service tours of duty or in Civil Service positions. People are sometimes willing to come for short periods to help out on temporary duty, but not in terms of a long-term move. It was not an easy task, and I don't envy anyone who has to establish a new office in the federal government, but it was really important to do so and to do it quickly.

Q: Oh, space. I'm sure there was a premium on office space.

LANGE: Well, yes, in fact. We were housed in a State Department annex and it was really kind of a drab affair. No windows at all. I had a small office, and we carved out a little area for a conference table separated by a partition from the staff's cubicles.

But we were dealing with a compelling, potentially lifesaving issue, and the dreary office space mattered little. In fact, out of all the global health issues I have dealt with in my career—I already talked about AIDS, and I'll explain later my work on polio, measles, and other infectious diseases after retiring from the Foreign Service—the one that I find most fascinating and intellectually challenging is pandemic preparedness and response. It's a crosscutting, multisectoral issue where leadership at all levels, including heads of state and government, is important. That's why the State Department needs to play a central role internationally.

Because I was reporting directly to Under Secretary Dobriansky, I attended her weekly staff meetings with the assistant secretaries and others who worked on global affairs. I briefed Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice twice about our work and the importance of it. She was gracious and supportive, but I always assumed she was happy to delegate the matter to Paula so she could focus on Iraq and Afghanistan and other huge issues of the day.

After a couple of years in operation, our office was proud to be cited in the OMB presentation for fiscal year 2008.

Q: Why was your rather small office highlighted in the huge federal government budget?

LANGE: OMB described the Bush Administration's seven major accomplishments since 2001 for the State Department and other international programs, and one of them was that the Department directed over \$400 million to international avian and pandemic influenza efforts and established the Avian Influenza Action Group to coordinate governmentwide international activities addressing the threat. I think that was an indication of how seriously the administration took international cooperation for pandemic preparedness.

Q: Were other State offices involved in preparing for a pandemic?

LANGE: Yes, definitely. Within the Department, we worked closely with the regional bureaus. And many other bureaus were very involved in one way or another. We were supported administratively by OES and coordinated with them.

Management, which had its own senior coordinator for preparedness, was concerned about the continuity of operations and contemplated two overseas scenarios at the beginning of a pandemic: either evacuations from post (which would require coordination with DOD on evacuation contingency planning) or shelter-in-place (which would require expanded use of telework). There was precedent for evacuations, since the Department had authorized departure of certain personnel during the 2003 SARS outbreak in Asia and elsewhere.

State's initial pandemic influenza plan, requested by the White House, was well over a hundred pages long. During a pandemic, the plan was for HR [Bureau of Human Resources] and MED [Medical Services] to deal with State personnel, MED to employ its own domestic pandemic plan, and regional bureau executive offices to coordinate with management at overseas posts.

The Office of Foreign Missions kept foreign diplomats in Washington informed. They even sent a diplomatic note to all embassies asking the ambassadors to ensure that visa requests for U.S. government emergency response teams in a pandemic would be expedited so they could help contain outbreaks. But a central issue for the embassies in DC—whether foreigners in the United States would have access to the U.S. supply of antivirals and vaccines at the start of a pandemic—was problematic, and we did our best to avoid answering the question.

EB [Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs] led an interagency group looking at the potentially devastating economic consequences of a major pandemic, as we've now witnessed with COVID-19. EB and INR did some economic modeling. The Homeland Security Council at the White House also oversaw a lot of modeling efforts.

And this work often got down into the weeds. OBO [Overseas Building Operations] at one point sent a message to all overseas posts on the subject of controlling risks from bird droppings, bird carcasses, and housecats.

Q: Wow. Can you describe the State Department's role vis-à-vis other government agencies?

LANGE: The president's strategy ["National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza"] had been released in November 2005, and one of its basic principles was that the federal government would use all instruments of national power in fighting a pandemic. I like that concept. Another principle was that global partnerships would be used, which brought in the State Department. The strategy covered areas like preparedness, communication, surveillance, detection, response, and containment. President Bush proposed over \$7 billion in spending to prepare for an influenza pandemic, including \$5 billion for vaccines and drugs, and Congress appropriated \$3.8 billion in December 2005, most of that for HHS.

The key to the May 2006 implementation plan, for purposes of State, was that the Department, and I'll quote here, "Leads coordination of the federal government's international efforts to prepare for and respond to a pandemic." Countries needed to adopt

a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, so State, in my view, was the appropriate agency to coordinate U.S. engagement with other governments, international organizations, and the private sector. Our role was to spur action and mobilize international resources. That involved global health diplomacy, which is not limited to the public health sector and the experts at CDC and USAID.

Really, the whole idea was for the world to be proactive, not reactive, in facing the pandemic threat. We at State were fully aware we didn't have deep expertise in public health—that was for HHS. Our work involved coordinating efforts among donor governments and those countries affected by bird flu. We tried to help countries build their capacity to identify, contain, and respond to emerging infectious diseases. And we pushed to increase transparency in disease reporting and improve disease surveillance.

HSC staff made it clear they wanted State to ensure all U.S. government international avian and pandemic spending was coordinated and targeted. At one point they asked me to establish a mechanism to do that. Well, I tried, but my proposal to the HSC didn't pass muster with the White House lawyers. Other agencies wouldn't cooperate because they had control of their own appropriated funds and weren't legally required to get State Department approval for expenditures. So we abandoned the effort.

In our very first week, our office developed what we called a Daily Activity Report. It quickly became the definitive report on international developments and the U.S. government's international activities related to avian and pandemic influenza. Looking back on it, it served as a real-time account of how things progressed based on a lot of reporting from government agencies and U.S. embassies and consulates on the spread of H5N1 in birds and on the work of governments and international organizations preparing for a pandemic. By the end of my tenure, we were emailing the daily newsletter, which was sensitive but unclassified and not for public dissemination, to over 300 people in a dozen government agencies every workday.

Probably the single most important thing my office did, in terms of coordination within the U.S. government, was to host a weekly interagency meeting involving ten government agencies. This included the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, USAID, the Homeland Security Council, the National Security Council, et cetera.

But to be frank, there were varying levels of coordination accepted by the agencies. USAID professed cooperation but tended to want to do its own thing, for example. And I remember a conversation where an appreciative USDA [Department of Agriculture] representative said, Well, you know, before now we never really talked to people from HHS. But this was an issue that involved both veterinarians at USDA and medical doctors at CDC, as well as many others, and they all needed to talk to each other to coordinate their international efforts.

Q: What about our borders? Was the White House involved on that issue?

LANGE: Yes, very involved. A huge issue. That was one of the biggest issues within the

U.S. government, whether we should close our borders to people and goods once a pandemic had begun outside of the United States. State's position was that the U.S. government needed to carefully balance the possible public health benefit against the negative impact of border closure on the economy and on foreign policy. I told my contact at the HSC that it was very likely the president would get calls from the president of Mexico and the prime minister of Canada if we closed our borders.

And if we closed our borders, there would be many unintended consequences. Some families would be separated for many months. And other nations would probably follow suit, closing their borders. That would restrict movement and operations of U.S. diplomats and citizens and could impede our delivery of humanitarian assistance abroad. We had reporting from several embassies confirming those concerns. And CA [Bureau of Consular Affairs] was concerned that we could be denying American citizens outside of the country the ability to return to the United States, even though HHS has longstanding legal authority to prohibit the entry of individuals who pose a danger to public health into the United States.

If the pandemic virus had not yet arrived in the United States, the modeling indicated that stopping entry by land, sea, and air would provide only about a one-week advantage before the virus inevitably made it into the country. There's just so much movement back and forth, land and air traffic, that you simply can't completely seal the border and keep the virus out. All you could do would be to delay it for a short period. There were discussions on this issue at the level of the Homeland Security Council that got quite tense at times, because Vice President Cheney's office, in particular, wanted to retain the ability to close the border. I remember an irritated Pentagon official saying, in a bit of an exaggeration, they would have to position a soldier every fifty feet along our southern border to prevent anyone from coming into the country—an impossible task.

The conclusion of these policy deliberations, which had gone on in one form or another for over a year, was announced at a July 2007 press conference by a senior HSC director. He said that we would maintain the flow of U.S. citizens, non-citizens, and cargo across borders during a severe pandemic—but that the president still reserved the right to close the borders if necessary. That proviso was key to getting approval from the Vice President's office.

The plan was to use scalable, flexible border measures such as screening for illness at ports of entry and restrictions on the arrival of planes and other transport from affected regions. So what followed was an exhaustive interagency debate on whether to limit the number of airports open to international traffic at the start of a pandemic to nineteen or twenty, or to stand up CDC quarantine stations at an additional six airports. State, led by EB, supported the latter to maximize the international flow of people and goods, including Americans returning home. As I said earlier, the planning really got down into the weeds. Here you had a lengthy interagency argument over what was called flight funneling—whether incoming international air passengers should be able to fly into twenty or twenty-six U.S. airports.

Even if the incipient pandemic would inevitably make it to the United States, a delay in

the introduction would allow more time to prepare the public through communications to set expectations, to produce antiviral medications and a pre-pandemic vaccine, and to distribute countermeasures such as masks and antiviral medications. At least that was the theory—that the government would act quickly from the very beginning.

Q: What about our neighbors, Canada and Mexico?

LANGE: This was probably a bigger issue for the Canadians than it was for the United States. They were concerned that if we closed the border, Canada would immediately be adversely affected since something like a third of their GDP, including much of their food supply and industrial production, was dependent on the daily movement of goods across the border. Our embassy in Ottawa predicted a significant negative reaction by the government and political opposition if we closed the border to goods or passenger traffic.

The official U.S. view was that it was essential to coordinate our strategy with our neighbors, and in August 2007 President Bush, Mexican President Felipe Calderón, and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper unveiled a plan [North American Plan for Avian and Pandemic Influenza] under the auspices of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America. The idea was to strike a balance between delaying the impact of a pandemic virus, which would provide more time to develop a vaccine, while minimizing the impact on people and goods crossing the borders. The three countries agreed to employ a risk-based approach to the screening of travelers entering the North American region. Everybody took this very seriously.

And there were lots of U.S. domestic and international tabletop exercises to test pandemic planning. The HSC's implementation plan tasked State with encouraging at-risk countries to develop and exercise their own national pandemic response plans, and we participated in at least one with Canada and Mexico and another involving Mexican government officials and legislators and their U.S. counterparts. A Treasury Department pandemic flu exercise held remotely over three weeks in the fall of 2007 involved over 2,700 financial services organizations looking at systemic risks. Later, HHS hosted an exercise with several journalists to understand how traditional and online media would cover an unfolding event.

Q: What were the conclusions from all those pandemic exercises?

LANGE: The Treasury Department exercise used progressive absenteeism rates, up to nearly 50 percent, to place stress on organizations' business continuity plans. As I recall, large organizations indicated they would rely more heavily on telecommuting while smaller organizations were more likely to use social distancing. Treasury concluded there would be significant impact on the financial services sector, but overall the sector could continue to operate and cope.

I saw how the key issues played out during an exercise that Under Secretary Dobriansky hosted in October 2007. Assistant secretaries from ten U.S. agencies and key White House staff were presented with a scenario in which two clusters of human avian influenza cases were found in Laos. Participants decided whether to deploy assets from

the U.S. stockpile of medical countermeasures in Japan to try to contain the incipient pandemic locally. When that failed, they dealt with issues related to air passengers, support for Americans abroad, and a joint approach with Canada and Mexico. I thought the exercise helped clarify agency roles and international responsibilities.

Q: But can you really stop a pandemic just as it begins?

LANGE: Great question. We hoped, with sufficient early warning that human-to-human transmission had begun, that we could flood the immediate area with antiviral medication, or maybe even a pre-pandemic vaccine based on the pre-existing virus, for all residents. The idea was to mitigate the human symptoms and extinguish the virus before it spread, or at least to delay its arrival in the United States in order to buy time to make preparations and produce a new vaccine.

And we applied resources to that effort. The United States deployed PPE [personal protective equipment] in dozens of countries. U.S. policy stipulated that a portion of our domestic stockpile of Tamiflu antiviral medicine, up to five percent, could be used in an international containment effort, and HHS had pre-positioned almost 300,000 treatment courses of the medicine at the Naval Hospital in Yokosuka, Japan.

I think you can compare it to trying to put out a small fire with a fire extinguisher before it burns out of control. We thought there was about a twenty-one-day window of opportunity to succeed. Some studies indicated containment might work, but only if everything broke right: the virus strain had to be only moderately transmissible; it was detected within one to three weeks; and then antiviral prophylaxis was quickly delivered to people in the immediate area. Others argued that weak health systems and slow reporting meant the window was likely to pass long before an outbreak was even discovered by governments in many poorer countries. I got the impression from my interactions with HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt that he thought containment was unlikely to succeed, and we needed to be prepared domestically for the arrival of the pandemic. Personally, based on my experience in developing countries, I thought it was a real longshot though probably worth the try. The *Washington Post* ran an editorial in July 2006 that said the idea of sending an antidote to a less-developed country to stamp out early signs of an epidemic was unrealistic.

Even if it couldn't be stopped, we hoped to lessen the effects of a pandemic. CDC developed community mitigation guidance emphasizing the use of early, targeted, and layered nonpharmaceutical interventions to reduce harm at a time when vaccines and drugs would not yet be available. Given the salience of the issue, the guidance had to be approved by the HSC's high-level Deputies Committee. We promoted the guidance at the May 2007 World Health Assembly, in part to get countries to focus on those kinds of interventions rather than just on access to vaccines. We estimated that a pandemic vaccine specifically for the mutated virus would not become available for twenty weeks after the start of a pandemic and then would be limited by manufacturing capacity, so things like antiviral drugs, respirators, and facemasks would be critical in saving lives.

As you know from reading John Barry's book, one of the famous lessons learned from

the 1918 pandemic compared the situations in Philadelphia and St. Louis. The death rate from influenza and pneumonia in Philadelphia, which held a World War I Liberty Loans parade with crowded sidewalks and over 200,000 people in attendance, was well over three times the rate in St. Louis, where the mayor took action to close theaters, schools, pool halls, public funerals, et cetera. The Philadelphia parade has been called the deadliest parade in American history. That story, emphasizing the importance of social distancing and the like, was well-known in public health, and I suspect that it influenced U.S. government guidance early in the COVID pandemic.

Q: Were you ever in a meeting with President Bush on this?

LANGE: No, I never met with President Bush on the subject of pandemic influenza. But he had made it clear the administration would do everything to be prepared and to respond.

That idea came up when I attended a Restricted HSC principals meeting in the Cabinet Room at the White House in March 2007. It was chaired by Frances Townsend, Homeland Security Advisor. Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael Leavitt, and Tony Fauci of NIH did most of the talking. In what I thought was a very telling comment, Townsend at one point spoke about how the Bush Administration had been criticized—unfairly, in her mind—for what was widely considered to be an inadequate federal response during Hurricane Katrina. She asked about federal versus state responsibilities for pandemic response and questioned whether saying, quote, “We warned you,” would be enough. I thought her basic message was, this time the administration will not be in a position where it could be accused of being unprepared—even if many aspects of pandemic preparedness and response were actually state responsibilities. A potential pandemic was something that had been signaled as a serious concern ever since the first human cases in Hong Kong in 1997, so there was ample warning.

I also remember going to a conference on global health protection in Washington in March 2008 that was unclassified but included a lot of leading experts in the biosecurity community. Some of them had worked on the response to the anthrax attacks that occurred shortly after 9/11, killing five Americans. The biosecurity community was concerned about potential bioterrorism.

In my view there's a threat continuum, in a sense, going from a deliberate attack using a biological agent, to an accidental release from, for example, a laboratory leak, to a naturally occurring biological threat. In many respects the responses to these different kinds of biological threats are the same, as part of an all-hazards approach to biodefense. I remember explaining to the group, maybe fifty or seventy-five attendees, the work that we were doing to prepare for a potential naturally occurring influenza pandemic from H5N1. I described how we were coordinating with USDA and agriculture ministers around the world because of the concerns for animal health, those millions of poultry that were dying. But I had the impression that many of the high-level biosecurity experts in the room, primarily focused on hard-power national security concerns, were looking at me like I was from another planet. They seemed to be thinking, we're concerned about

terrorists sending anthrax in the mail, and you're talking to veterinarians about dead chickens? (Laughs)

Sometimes foreign policy professionals, especially those who focus on hard power, think, well, public health issues— leave that to USAID and HHS. But severe pandemics involve all sectors of government and society and touch on so many issues related to national security, broadly defined. I'm sorry to say, however, that it's clear the U.S. government and other governments deal with that continuum—intentional, accidental, or naturally occurring biothreats—through siloed governmental programs.

Q: Can you explain more about your office's international work?

LANGE: Yes. President Bush launched the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, known as IPAPI, in his speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2005. The idea was to foster transparency and coordinated action by the international community. He said countries in the partnership who were facing an outbreak would immediately share the information and provide virus samples to WHO so the world could respond rapidly and stop the outbreak before it became a pandemic. And he invited all nations to participate.

Bush was really a world leader on pandemic preparedness back then. The United States hosted a big IPAPI conference in Washington in October 2005 where eighty-six nations were represented. A month later he outlined his strategy on pandemic influenza preparations and response in a seminal speech at NIH in the presence of top-level UN and Cabinet officers.

And the EU was very engaged. The European Commission [EC], the World Bank, and China cosponsored a big international pledging conference in Beijing in January 2006 with nearly a hundred countries in attendance. That resulted in a declaration and nearly \$2 billion in pledges.

But after I started in the job in March 2006, the thing that took a lot of effort in my first couple of months was negotiating over the differences between the U.S. government and the EU and EC on respective visions for international cooperation. The EU was planning to host a big meeting of senior officials in Austria in June. That ended up being a big success, but getting there was very difficult.

Q: What were those differences between the U.S. and the EU?

LANGE: The Europeans were not fans of IPAPI, in part because it was clearly a U.S. initiative whose ten core principles for international cooperation had been unilaterally drafted by the U.S. government. They preferred the Beijing Declaration, even though it did not endorse transparency as a principle. Meanwhile, they thought the European Union should be in the lead since the EC had cosponsored the Beijing conference. I also speculated that their attitude toward IPAPI may have been colored by the fact that many of them didn't like President Bush or his actions in other areas, particularly the Iraq War.

For whatever reasons, it was a very difficult negotiation. We finally agreed to use letterhead for the meeting documents that included both the European Union and IPAPI, giving them equal weight. The United States called it an IPAPI meeting, the Europeans called it the Vienna Senior Officials Meeting on Avian and Human Pandemic Influenza. As time went on, I made a concerted effort to work cooperatively with the EU and the EC even though some tension remained when we collaborated on subsequent international ministerial conferences.

When one is preparing the world for a potentially catastrophic pandemic that could kill tens of millions of people, it would seem ridiculous to spend time negotiating over the letterhead. So goes diplomacy.

Before the Vienna meeting, President Bush sent a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin proposing to use the gathering to begin to coordinate within the G-8 [Group of Eight intergovernmental political forum] on spending plans to address the rapid spread of H5N1. The delegation from Russia, which then held the G-8 presidency, then organized a side meeting during the conference to discuss G-8 spending plans.

Paula Dobriansky addressed the Vienna meeting, and everyone thought it was a big success in raising high-level political awareness, galvanizing action, and highlighting the need for transparency. About 110 countries and international organizations attended, as well as civil society organizations.

IPAPI continued as a loose international partnership, and I would chair regular conference calls and in-person meetings of an informal core group, initially consisting of representatives from Australia, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and eventually adding the EU and EC, with participation by the UN.

There were other tricky political issues that we had to deal with. As an example, back then one of the U.S. concerns was, how do you deal with Burma? We have certain issues today, of course, with Myanmar. Back in 2006 the policy was that the U.S. government would not give money to Burma's authoritarian military government. Shortly after starting on the job, I co-chaired an interagency meeting with a deputy assistant secretary from EAP [Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs] on what could be done to help Burma prepare for a pandemic, since our goal was that every country—whether or not we had diplomatic relations with them or could give them assistance—needed to be in a position to stop an incipient pandemic, for the benefit of all. We talked about the basic dichotomy of the policy constraints in dealing with a military junta versus the need to provide a developing country with urgent public health assistance. Our conclusion was that U.S. funds for Burma could be channeled through international organizations.

In May 2006, APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation] organized a ministerial meeting in Da Nang, Vietnam, to coordinate preparedness planning. HHS Secretary Leavitt couldn't attend, so I ended up co-leading the U.S. delegation. I met with officials in Indonesia and Thailand on the way there. In Vietnam, a USDA official and I made a field visit to a private poultry farm near Da Nang. We donned PPE to examine day-old chicks, and our photo was featured in a June 2006 *State* magazine article on the G/AIAG

office with a nice line, “Can-do people achieving must-do results.”



John wearing personal protective equipment while examining biosecurity measures at a poultry farm in Vietnam (2006)

Australia was really quite active in pandemic preparedness, including in support of its near neighbors. When the new U.S. ambassador paid his initial call on the Australian health minister in 2006, Tony Abbott, who later became prime minister, said his scariest moment since becoming health minister was reading his first brief on pandemic influenza. He said he and the ministry had worked hard and done all a reasonable observer could demand of a government to prepare—but electorates can be vengeful. The Australians later released their strategy where the foreign minister wrote, and I’ll quote here, “While the probability, timing, source, and severity of a future pandemic cannot be certain, what is clear is that its health, economic, and social impacts could be devastating.” Exactly. And that remains true today.

Q: Were U.S. embassies very engaged?

LANGE: Yes, very much so. The Department sent a tripwires cable on pandemic influenza, and post working groups developed their own responses. Many post emergency action committees held crisis management exercises that included a pandemic outbreak component.

As I said, our plan was to provide antiviral medication to mitigate flu symptoms before a vaccine could be developed based on the new pandemic influenza virus. Sufficient antivirals were in place at overseas posts for official Americans, family members, and locally engaged staff. This raised the question of what the U.S. government could do to assist American citizens abroad if plane travel was shut down. The National Security Council hosted a Policy Coordination Committee meeting on forward deployment of antivirals. The State Department’s travel website said Americans abroad should plan to

remain in-country and practice social distancing for an extended period if WHO declared a pandemic. Consular and medical officers provided briefings to international schools and at town hall meetings for American citizens residing in-country. They urged people to exercise personal responsibility to prepare for and respond to a pandemic, including being aware of local availability of antiviral medications and possibly stockpiling food, water, medications, and other necessities sufficient to ride out a pandemic.

There were lots of interesting reports from posts abroad. Infected birds needed to be killed to keep the virus from spreading, and the best strategy was to kill all poultry and pet birds, even apparently healthy ones, within a wide radius of each detected outbreak. One of the challenges for many governments was to find the necessary equipment and expertise and then secure enough cash to reimburse farmers for handing over their birds for culling. In Afghanistan, flocks would mysteriously vanish just before official teams arrived to dispatch them. And I remember a cable out of the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv reporting that Palestinian farmers were unhappy with the Palestinian Authority for not compensating them for infected poultry that had been culled. So the farmers were mounting automatic weapons on the roofs of their chicken coops to keep away the veterinarian teams.

USAID and CDC provided countries with capacity-building assistance. I traveled with other agency representatives to countries experiencing H5N1 outbreaks—Nigeria, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, et cetera—and met with the embassy country teams, ministers of health and agriculture, UN agency representatives, the private sector, civil society, and the press. Our central message was the importance of transparency and the need for collaboration between the health and agriculture ministries to control the spread of the disease and prepare for a potential pandemic.

Q: How closely did you work with the United Nations?

LANGE: In addition to working the interagency, as they say, my real role was to work internationally and manage the U.S. government effort to work with other governments and UN agencies. I developed a close working relationship with the UN system influenza coordinator [UNSCIC], Dr. David Nabarro. He was, I believe, at the assistant secretary general level and reported to the deputy secretary general within the UN Secretariat. When I first took on this role and met with David, he described what we would be doing together and said our job was, quote, “To save humanity as we know it,” unquote. Kind of an exaggeration, but it really did express the concern that a human pandemic could kill many millions. Of course, we’re in the midst of one now, COVID, that has already killed millions.

Also, State, USDA, and USAID all collaborated with FAO [UN Food and Agriculture Organization] and OIE [World Organization for Animal Health] on ways to deploy international resources to prevent and contain animal diseases like highly pathogenic avian influenza.

And I developed a close working relationship with Dr. Margaret Chan, who was then an assistant director general at WHO and later became director general. She rose to fame as

the health lead in Hong Kong in 1997 responding to the first human deaths from H5N1 and later was a global leader promoting pandemic preparedness.

One personal anecdote: a few weeks after the sudden death of the WHO director general in May 2006, Margaret and I had a long, candid conversation over coffee in Vienna, Austria, where she discussed family considerations—she was working in Geneva and her husband was based in Hong Kong—regarding whether or not she should run for the top WHO post. She ended up running, was elected in November, and afterward sent me an email thanking me for my advice.

Q: What about collaborating with governments?

LANGE: We worked directly with many governments trying to spur action toward a coordinated, international approach to pandemic preparedness and response. But it wasn't so much the traditional Foreign Service role dealing primarily with foreign ministries. It was more focused on health ministries, agriculture ministries, multilateral health and agriculture organizations, et cetera. I got to know a lot of health ministers and some agriculture ministers.

There was a grouping called the Global Health Security Initiative that was created after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 by HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson. The idea was that key countries fighting bioterrorism should meet to coordinate their efforts to improve global health security, which a year later was expanded to include pandemic influenza. HHS had the lead on this, working with Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, and the United Kingdom. At one point, I co-chaired with an HHS assistant secretary one of their senior-officials meetings on avian and pandemic influenza.

Egypt's health minister, on a visit to Washington, came to our spartan office to seek advice on how to deal with the large number of infected poultry in the country. Paula Dobriansky and I once had a meeting with the Egyptian prime minister where he expressed concern about migratory bird routes to and from elsewhere in Africa. My guess is there aren't a lot of diplomats who've talked to prime ministers about migratory birds. (Laughs) I probably met with more veterinarians in this job than the vast majority of FSOs do in an entire career.

Some governments, especially those in developed countries, took the pandemic threat more seriously than others. U.S. government agencies deployed public health experts, veterinarians, scientists, emergency response teams, and others to high-risk countries to assist them in developing preparedness plans. Spurred by UNSIC, the large majority of countries ended up developing national plans for combatting avian and pandemic influenza. But many of those national plans were not endorsed by top levels of government or made operational, especially beyond the public health sector and at the local level.

For poultry, it became clear that the countries best able to control and eliminate avian influenza were the richer countries, those with mainly commercial poultry production, well-developed veterinary services, and strong early disease and response capacities. And

I often thought, when I talked about the pandemic threat to health ministers from poor, developing countries, that in the back of their minds they must be thinking, Ambassador, we have very limited resources. My people are dying of malaria, measles, AIDS, and other diseases. But you now want me to spend money to prepare for a human pandemic that may or may not be severe and may or may not occur in the near future? The idea of pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response was not always an easy sell.

There were also cultural factors affecting pandemic preparations. I remember reading a media report out of Benin, the cradle of voodoo, saying government health experts had warned against the bloody ritual of sacrificing chickens. A voodoo priest responded by saying that if you buy a chicken to sacrifice it to your God, God will not let you buy an infected bird. And in Côte d'Ivoire, demand for bush meat went up and demand for chickens plummeted after the government confirmed bird flu was in the country.

The Egyptian version of the American Sesame Street children's television show had a campaign to inform children about the risk of avian flu by promoting general hygiene. For schools in Northern Nigeria, the federal government went so far as to translate avian flu educational material for schoolchildren into the Hausa language. But the Nigerian government downplayed the significance and severity of their avian influenza problem, presumably to protect poultry exports and to paint a picture of calm and control in an election year.

There were many unusual reactions, mostly out of fear. It's not like well, a few chickens are dying. The fear, of course, was for a deadly, global, human pandemic.

With regard to collaboration with governments, I need to mention that there was a fundamental issue related to Indonesia's refusal to share virus samples that took much of my time. I'll talk about that in a bit.

As for Europe, after an initial rocky start, as I said earlier, I was able to develop a close working relationship with the European Commission, particularly Dr. Alain Vandersmissen, a veterinarian who served as senior coordinator of the EU external response. David Nabarro, Alain, and I ended up coordinating closely to spearhead with host governments a series of international ministerial-level conferences every six to twelve months.

Q: So there were big international bird flu conferences once or twice a year?

LANGE: Yes. Following those meetings in Washington [October 2005], Beijing [January 2006], and Vienna [June 2006], a ministerial-level conference took place in Bamako in December 2006. It was cosponsored by the government of Mali, the African Union, and the European Commission. It wasn't an IPAPI conference per se, but the partnership supported it. Around eighty governments and international and regional organizations sent representatives. There was a Bamako Declaration which passed by consensus. It strengthened the international commitment to transparency in reporting influenza cases and immediate sharing of epidemiological data and samples, which was important to us. I announced an increase of \$100 million in U.S. assistance, and the Malian president

[Amadou Toumani Touré] praised U.S. government leadership on avian and pandemic influenza. Our contribution led the way, and international donors pledged a total of around \$475 million in new assistance. That figure approached the minimum yearly requirement that had been identified by the UN's Nabarro, but we already detected signs that momentum in the fight against avian and pandemic influenza was beginning to slow. It was clear that we couldn't keep holding major conferences with government ministers every six months, so the next conference took place a year later.

President Bush had visited India in March 2006, where it was announced that the government would host an IPAPI conference the following year. That took place over three days in New Delhi in December 2007 with well over a hundred countries and almost thirty international and regional organizations represented, including forty ministers. The Indian prime minister [Manmohan Singh] warned of institutional fatigue in the battle against avian and pandemic influenza, and WHO Director General Margaret Chan said we dare not let down our guard. The implication, of course, was that the momentum for pandemic preparedness was starting to slow. I announced an additional U.S. contribution of \$195 million, and new donor pledges totaled just over \$400 million. In closing, India, as the host country, presented what it called a Vision and Roadmap for use by countries that stressed the need for improved disease surveillance, biosecurity on farms, quick response to outbreaks in poultry, and use of pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical interventions for human cases. It was their document, but we and other delegations had provided lots of input.



John (center) and other speakers at New Delhi conference (2007)

The last ministerial conference I attended was in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, in October 2008. I had visited Cairo earlier to make preparations. Over 120 countries, plus international and non-governmental organizations, were represented, including over sixty ministers of either health or agriculture. One of the themes was that there could be no human cases without animal cases—all it would take to start a human pandemic was one dead bird. The Egyptians presented what they called a Vision for the Future, which many

of us helped draft, that defined future priorities such as addressing preparedness inequities between richer and poorer countries and, more broadly, reducing risks from emerging diseases of animal origin. Paula Dobriansky warned attendees against flu fatigue, and her announcement of a new U.S. government pledge of \$320 million energized the conference. That brought our total international assistance to \$949 million. But other donors showed their flu fatigue by coming up with a little over \$30 million in new pledges, all from Japan and Norway. In a sense, the handwriting was on the wall: the global focus on pandemic preparedness and response based on the H5N1 virus was waning. To the media, we emphasized the positive: the large U.S. pledge and the fact that the new contributions brought total international pledges since 2005 to over \$3 billion.

Another international conference took place in Hanoi in April 2010, after I retired.

Q: How active was your office in dealing with the media, in public diplomacy?

LANGE: Nabarro was the well-spoken global leader in dealing with the media, but I talked a lot with the press in various locations. I once gave a press conference at the UN's Palais des Nations in Geneva. I spoke to lots of different groups in the United States, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the NGO alliance InterAction. And I even spoke to the National Chicken Council in October 2006. In what was perhaps an overstatement, I told them U.S. preparations against a deadly avian flu outbreak were state-of-the-art, but abroad it was a mixed bag. One blogger wrote that my assessment was either dark humor or an amazingly clueless assessment of where we stood in the United States. Tough crowd out there. (Laughs)

There was a conference at Chatham House in October 2007 and my keynote address is still on the State Department's archived website. I said, and I'll quote here, "We need to maintain our sense of urgency with respect to the pandemic threat if the momentum of preparedness and capacity-building is to be maintained." And I think you can argue that the world, sadly, did not maintain that sense of urgency and preparedness. Just look at the millions of deaths from COVID, which started twelve years after I gave that speech. We know there will be more pandemics in the future, and we need to be prepared.

Q: What were the main areas where we could have done something?

LANGE: There are many elements every country needs to be prepared to prevent, or respond to, a pandemic. And that also strengthens the health system as a whole. That's why I stressed the importance of capacity-building in my Chatham House speech.

Countries need strong leadership at all levels, a well-trained health workforce, a disease surveillance system to monitor outbreaks, a strong lab network, and equitable access to all those things in the midst of a pandemic, from masks to vaccines.

And transparency is important. After receiving an early warning, countries are required to quickly report it to WHO. Under the International Health Regulations, the WHO director general decides whether or not to declare what is officially called a public health emergency of international concern.

Once a pandemic has begun, there also are nonpharmaceutical measures to slow its effects, things like isolation, quarantine, social distancing, school and workplace closures, travel restrictions, personal hygiene.

All of society needs to be prepared. Corporations, for example, need to have pandemic readiness plans, business continuity plans, in place to provide essential services and access to facilities, equipment, and staff during a pandemic.

I think international coordination is essential, so the international community can assist the country where there is an incipient pandemic to limit the spread of the disease, if possible, and to coordinate preparations for a possible global pandemic. That's why we had coordination mechanisms in place during the bird flu scare. Like I said, there was IPAPI and there was high-level coordination involving the UN's influenza coordinator, WHO, the European Community and Commission, and governments around the world. But that coordination gradually withered away when the threat was perceived to go down, especially after the 2009–2010 H1N1 swine flu pandemic proved to be moderate and people thought the experts had made too much of a fuss over the dangers of a pandemic. I'll say more about my work on that later.

I have to tell you a funny story about our international cooperation. Alain Vandersmissen, the lead at the European Commission, and his staff developed a graphic novel, over fifty pages long, with the title, "Infected." They billed it as an exciting adventure to convince people to act together and save the world. It was published in 2011 and is still on the EU publications website. It was a fictional story, as the lead characters wend their way from Beijing to Brussels, intertwined with factual information, including an emphasis on zoonoses [infectious diseases that have jumped from animals to humans] and the One Health concept. I have no idea if the younger generation, more interested in graphic novels than I am, found it an interesting read.

The story features three characters based on three real-life senior officials who worked closely together: Alain Vandersmissen, David Nabarro (who really stars), and me.

Q: Ha!

LANGE: It's kind of funny at times. I'm called Jack Frost and my title is VSHA, which stands for U.S. Special Envoy for Very Scary Health Affairs. It's a complicated narrative and, at the very end, in the middle of the pandemic, there's this huge meeting via teleconference involving the UN, the EU, the United States, and many others during which they proudly say they've limited the losses from the deadly virus to less than one million human lives, and the spread was stopped in six weeks because of quick, coordinated international action.

I must be the only Foreign Service officer in the history of American diplomacy to be depicted in a graphic novel published by the European Union. (Laughs)

Q: Oh my god. The title was Very Scary Health Affairs?

LANGE: Yes. I suppose you could say that was the nature of my actual work, to try to prevent or at least mitigate a catastrophic global pandemic that could kill tens of millions of people. Very scary stuff. And we've seen in the COVID pandemic that the comic "Infected" remains relevant. It came up during a May 2020 interview I gave to Agence Europe about the One Health concept.

Q: You said there was a problem with Indonesia?

LANGE: Yes. The biggest, most divisive issue we dealt with was called virus sharing and benefit sharing. That phrase is kind of an odd description, but it succinctly described the essence of a very complicated international negotiation that got top-level attention from governments. It really occupied a huge amount of my time during the last two years of my three years as special representative, and it began with the Indonesian health minister's refusal to continue sharing flu viruses.

Q: Why didn't Indonesia want to share its viruses?

LANGE: Indonesia was really thought of as the epicenter of avian influenza. Millions of poultry had died, and it was very hard for them to control the spread of H5N1 with so many islands and decentralized governmental control. In November 2005, the leaders of the United States, Singapore, and Indonesia had committed to work with international organizations on a pilot project to control avian influenza in Indonesia. They later agreed it would be in Tangerang. In May 2006, after I started in the job, there was a cluster of human cases, all blood relatives, in which seven of the eight infected people died, though human-to-human transmission was not sustained. Many of us thought that if the H5N1 virus was going to mutate and result in a human pandemic, the most likely place in the world would be in Indonesia.

But Indonesia was upset that results of laboratory analyses of H5N1 viruses it had shared were being presented in international meetings without prior permission or notification to the Indonesian government or its scientists. Well, beginning in December 2006, Health Minister Dr. Siti Fadilah Supari led an effort to deny WHO and its collaborating centers, which included CDC in Atlanta, access to the virus samples from infected poultry in Indonesia.

I need to explain that there was something that at that time was called the WHO Global Influenza Surveillance Network [GISN]. Countries all over the world shared biological specimens for analysis by WHO collaborating centers in the GISN. Pharmaceutical companies would then obtain free access to the specimens so they could, as needed, patent and produce diagnostics, vaccines, and therapeutics. And the world would then benefit from the availability of those products to save lives.

Minister Supari used the word "colonialist" to describe this network, because it allowed pharmaceutical companies in rich countries to profit from selling vaccines that were created using biological specimens received at no cost from Indonesia and other developing countries. From her perspective, all countries were expected to freely share

their virus samples, but then poorer countries would be last in line to receive the benefits derived from those virus samples—the lifesaving vaccines—during a pandemic. That’s where the term virus sharing and benefit sharing comes from. Without a guarantee that Indonesia would receive those vaccines at an affordable price early in a pandemic, the government just stopped sharing virus samples.

Well, in the U.S. government, the folks who were working on pandemics, including HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt, thought this was a disaster. A senior director at the Homeland Security Council told me the situation in Indonesia was of, quote, “critical relevance” to U.S. national security interests. We feared a deadly global pandemic. Pandemic preparedness was President Bush’s initiative. WHO and CDC had to be able to monitor mutations in the H5N1 virus to know if it was closer to becoming a pandemic virus and to learn as quickly as possible when a pandemic had begun. And Indonesia’s actions interrupted that critical process.

Let’s say that human-to-human transmission began in a rural part of Indonesia. As I mentioned earlier, if given sufficient advance warning, we thought we could flood the immediately surrounding area with antiviral medication for all people to mitigate the symptoms, try to stop the spread, and hopefully prevent a global pandemic long before any vaccine designed for the mutated virus could be produced. Now, we knew the odds were long on this, but it was a part of our pandemic prevention and preparedness efforts. But if WHO’s collaborating centers, including CDC, weren’t receiving the virus samples, there wasn’t any way to analyze them in time to understand if such an outbreak really had the potential to become a human pandemic. Without immediate virus sharing, we would lose the capability to try to stop an incipient pandemic at its source.

Q: Well, why would Indonesia resist this?

LANGE: Their theory, and this was especially Supari’s theory, was that you folks, you developed countries, will reap the near-term benefits from having those virus samples and producing vaccines, and it will take months and months and months before we will be able to buy the vaccines at high prices, after so many of our own people have died. You won’t give us the vaccines when they’re available—you will first help your own people get the vaccines. She thought, why should we benefit the rich countries so they can get the vaccine first, when we’re the ones who initially found the virus? There was even a Reuters story quoting her saying the huge vaccine inequity between rich and poor countries could threaten world peace.

And I’m sure she thought she had leverage in this situation, since Indonesia was receiving global attention based on the unchecked spread of the virus in poultry. I had a bilateral meeting with Australian Health Minister Tony Abbott at an APEC health ministers meeting in June 2007 and thought he had a really interesting take on our difficult negotiations with Indonesia. He said Indonesia’s position was influenced by the fact that they were suffering from a wide range of endemic diseases and thus viewed the risk of a human pandemic from avian influenza as less dramatic than how it was viewed in developed countries. That led them to try to leverage their role as an epicenter of the virus to achieve broader health gains. Quite insightful.

I have to admit, there are parallels between her concerns and what's actually happening today in terms of the slow distribution of the new COVID vaccine to developing countries. You could argue that Supari was prescient. But from a U.S. government standpoint back in 2007, her stance proved to be very difficult.

In March 2007, WHO organized technical discussions followed by a high-level meeting organized by Indonesia with delegates from almost three dozen countries on the subject of responsible practices for sharing avian influenza viruses and resulting benefits. We sent a relatively low-level delegation of public health experts. The Indonesian president addressed the group. They passed a declaration [Jakarta Declaration on a Fair Virus Sharing Mechanism] calling for improving the surveillance network, capacity development in developing countries, and improved vaccine access. But that didn't really solve the dispute.

The whole issue ended up being a major subject of discussion at the World Health Assembly [WHA] in Geneva in May of 2007. For the first time, I was part of the U.S. delegation and have attended WHA in one capacity or another every year since.

Indonesia submitted a draft resolution a few days before the assembly began that we found unacceptable. The health attaché at USUN Geneva said that we then needed to submit our own resolution, which we hastily did. That way, in the negotiations at the assembly, delegates wouldn't be debating based on the Indonesian text but instead would have two competing drafts in front of them. Sure enough, when the negotiations began, delegates agreed that we had to come up with a third text rather than negotiate based on either the Indonesian or U.S. proposals. That was a very clever ploy in terms of multilateral negotiations.

The hope on our side was that WHA would adopt by consensus a resolution that would solve the problem so that there would be an unimpeded flow of virus samples to the GISN. Delegates spent over forty hours in negotiations at the Palais des Nations while other WHA proceedings took place elsewhere in the building. But the most important thing we were able to accomplish was merely to establish a process for further negotiations. So WHA passed a resolution creating a negotiating forum [WHO Intergovernmental Meeting on Pandemic Influenza Preparedness, IGM], which for the first couple of years was very ably chaired by Jane Halton of the Australian health department.

Lots of multilateral and bilateral meetings followed over the next couple of years, and actually four years in total. We would have meetings in the IGM and make some progress but not enough. There were bilateral negotiations between the U.S. and Indonesia, many of them facilitated by Australia. And different outside factions were very engaged in trying to influence the negotiations among WHO member states, including IFPMA [International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations] representing Big Pharma.

Negotiations would go on and on. I fondly recall celebrating a late-night, delayed holiday

dinner in 2007 with the WHO director general and the Australian delegation at the apartment of the U.S. health attaché in Geneva following a week of exhausting negotiations that ended at 10:45 p.m. on the Friday after Thanksgiving.

The negotiations were complex. It wasn't just a matter for health ministries. It wasn't just a matter for foreign ministries.

Q: What other U.S. agencies were on your negotiating team?

LANGE: The delegations that I led included representatives not only from State and HHS, but at times USDA, USAID, and even the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, because there were IPR [intellectual property rights] issues related to vaccine manufacturers' ability to produce vaccines from the virus samples.

Minister Supari wrote a book on the negotiations. In the English translation, the title is, *It's Time for the World to Change—In the spirit of dignity, equity, and transparency*. It obviously highlights her side of the story. She emphasized sovereignty and described her concern that the United States had the capability to genetically engineer viruses to create new and more virulent doses. And if you had any doubt about her views about tearing down the Global Influenza Surveillance Network, there's a full-page drawing of a padlocked tower labelled GISN with a woman representing Supari in front of it wielding a huge sledgehammer.

Her book comes complete with a photo of me and the U.S. health attaché in Geneva on one side of the table and her and her aide on the other side when we were in direct bilateral negotiations in a side room at the Palais des Nations in November 2007. In discussing our negotiations over six pages, she said, and I'll quote here, "It was the most violent argument I ever had. The sizzling argument took one hour, 10 minutes of our time, it was extraordinary." That's how she described it. I, meanwhile, considered it to be what we diplomats call a frank and candid exchange of views. (Laughs)

Q: Why was the health minister so animated by these negotiations?

LANGE: She was quixotic, and one of the reasons I think she found our discussion to be so difficult was that she had sycophants working for her in the ministry in Indonesia who were telling her, Yes, we've got to fight this. Here, I was trying to explain to her, No, the U.S. government can't accept your proposed radical changes in the global network for sharing influenza viruses. She spoke English but wasn't very fluent, and I also think that hurt her in our negotiations in English. U.S. government representatives, in this meeting and others along the way, tried to negotiate directly with her, all to no avail. Though I will point out that she ended up giving me a signed season's greetings card in December 2008, so I guess she wasn't all that upset with me personally.

As I said, Supari had a basic concern, shared by many other developing countries, that they would be freely sharing viruses but then, in a pandemic, would suffer delays in receiving the benefits derived from those viruses, lifesaving vaccines, that would go first to countries with their own pharmaceutical industries. I personally thought that was an

understandable concern. But the policy of the U.S. government, and this was decided at a higher level than I was at, was to absolutely insist on continuing the free and unfettered sharing of virus samples to the GISN—as had been the case since it was created in 1952—without a requirement to provide some kind of benefits in return. It's a deadly virus that the world wants to eliminate, so pharmaceutical companies should not have to pay, nobody should have to pay, to benefit public health. The world needed to maintain early warning of evolving virus strains for the benefit of everyone. How could a country claim that it owned a virus? Why would any government say it owned a pathogen? My own rather mischievous perspective on it was, if you say you own the pathogen, maybe you should be held legally liable for the damage from a global pandemic caused by your pathogen if you failed to keep it under control. HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt, whom I spoke to numerous times, was really outspoken on the need to maintain the network's free sharing of virus samples. And we felt strongly that there should not be a one-to-one relationship between sharing a particular sample and accruing a specific benefit.

But then Supari kind of expanded her grievances against the United States by claiming the U.S. government was creating biological weapons from the viruses that Indonesia shared. That was just really bizarre. U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates went to Jakarta in February 2008 and was asked about Supari's allegation in her book that the United States may be manufacturing biological weapons at Los Alamos using H5N1 avian influenza virus samples. Gates responded with one sentence, and he didn't elaborate further. He said, quote, "I think it's the nuttiest idea I've ever heard." I've always wondered, jokingly, who was the junior DOD official who wrote that talking point for the secretary. (Laughs) It was a perfect, spontaneous response. In fact, the Indonesian presidential spokesperson responded later to say any claim that the U.S. designed a virus as a biological weapon was a personal view of the minister and not that of President Yudhoyono. We had heard earlier from a source in Geneva that Yudhoyono was humiliated by the controversy. Supari was grandstanding for domestic consumption.

Supari also questioned why a U.S. public health laboratory that collaborated with her ministry, the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit [NAMRU] No. 2 established in Jakarta back in 1970, was under the U.S. military. She tried to restrict its operations. An Indonesian magazine in May 2008 featured her on its cover with the headline in the local language that translated as, quote, "Opponent of the American Intelligence Network – They are Masked as NAMRU Researchers." A couple of years later, the NAMRU laboratory in Jakarta closed after decades conducting biomedical research.

We kept trying. Secretary Leavitt had bilateral meetings with the minister in Jakarta in April and in Geneva in May of 2008, and President Bush and Secretary Rice tried to persuade their Indonesian counterparts in their meetings.

As the negotiations dragged on, other countries brought in their own agendas. Brazil, with support from India and Thailand, wanted to undermine international IPR commitments, though that didn't seem to be Indonesia's goal.

Even former U.S. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, along with science journalist Laurie Garrett, got involved. They wrote a piece in the *Washington Post* in August 2008

criticizing Indonesia for declaring what they termed “viral sovereignty,” as if deadly viruses were the sovereign property of an individual nation. They argued that the failure to share potentially pandemic viral strains with international health agencies was morally reprehensible. So the issue of virus sharing was getting huge play at the top levels of governments and the media due to the fear of a calamitous pandemic.

And the U.S. government rejected the argument that influenza viruses were covered under the Convention on Biological Diversity, which the United States had signed but not ratified. That convention strives to conserve and sustain genetic resources, whereas we were hoping to do the opposite by eradicating the pandemic influenza virus itself.

At one point in these negotiations, at the IGM session in Geneva in December 2008, we all were struggling to come up with a way in which we could show that both issues, virus sharing and benefit sharing, were important. In a side meeting, I raised the idea that governments would commit to share viruses and benefits, quote, on “an equal footing,” unquote. That phrase ended up in the compromise text and was considered a key success of the meeting. I actually did not clear the wording with Washington because I thought it had symbolic meaning—two equally important objectives—but no specific legal implications. Afterward, the meeting chair wrote me to say the agreement among governments to share on an equal footing was an important milestone in the ongoing debate. And it’s been really interesting to me that the concept endures. Margaret Chan, when she was still WHO director general, even cited it at an Executive Board meeting in 2017. In fact, a WHO lawyer at one point called it a fundamental principle. So maybe I underestimated its importance, and in retrospect Washington agencies probably should have cleared on it, but I don’t regret it. I think it’s fundamentally fair for the international community to expect that viruses and genetic sequence data be freely shared rather than owned by a particular nation, and concomitantly that the benefits derived from those viruses, such as vaccines, be equitably shared—both having equal footing. My phrase lives on.

Q: Did you resolve this on your watch?

LANGE: Sorry to say, no. I left the position and retired from the State Department in February 2009. The negotiations continued for two more years.

I ended up following what was happening in these negotiations from a distance. For the next couple of years, the Mexican and Norwegian ambassadors to the UN in Geneva led the negotiations and came up with what is now called the PIP framework [Pandemic Influenza Preparedness framework]. It was unanimously agreed upon by WHO member states at the World Health Assembly in May 2011.

As I said earlier, Minister Supari wanted to tear down the Global Influenza Surveillance Network with a sledgehammer. That didn’t happen, but the WHA resolution renamed GISN the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System.

More importantly, I think the PIP framework is a very clever way to resolve what had been an intractable controversy. It brings together WHO member states, the WHO

secretariat, and industry stakeholders to strengthen the sharing of influenza viruses with human pandemic potential and to increase developing countries' access to medical countermeasures like vaccines. The key breakthrough was that manufacturers are required to provide benefits in return for continuing to have free access to the biological materials needed to produce the vaccines, et cetera. Those benefits include commitments to set aside vaccines, antivirals, or diagnostics for donation or purchase during a pandemic and to provide an annual partnership contribution, which I believe started at a total of \$28 million a year, toward pandemic influenza preparedness and response. That's not a lot of money for the pharmaceutical industry to pay.

What's clever about it is that it doesn't require a new international treaty or convention or regulation, which would have added years to the approval process. Instead, the goals are accomplished through a legally binding contract called a standard material transfer agreement between WHO and the manufacturer or research institution that receives the viruses. I wasn't involved in the last two years of negotiations, and I give great credit to those who were able to bring it to a successful conclusion.

Looking back on it, we were dealing with an urgent concern about the potential for a pandemic at the level of 1918–1919 that could kill tens of millions of people worldwide. And when it was given to this international forum to try to resolve the issue of virus sharing and benefit sharing, diplomats took a full four years to reach consensus on the way forward.

I ended up authoring a case study going into the details of the two years of negotiations when I was involved. It was published in 2012 in a broader book entitled *Negotiating and Navigating Global Health—Case Studies in Global Health Diplomacy*.

Since we are in the midst of a pandemic from the COVID-19 coronavirus, I should note that the PIP framework deals with influenza viruses, not coronaviruses. But it's still relevant to what could happen in the future if the world reforms pandemic preparedness processes following COVID.

Q: After all of your work, was the world really better prepared for a pandemic?

LANGE: Yes, I think it was. Most countries had pandemic plans in place, countries invested in improving their veterinary services, and public health officials around the world were very aware of steps to take to mitigate a pandemic.

For the United States, it's really hard to overstate the extent of the preparations undertaken. I was looking through some of my old papers and was astounded at the detailed planning, almost to the point of micromanagement. The Homeland Security Council organized meeting after meeting after meeting with document after document after document on issues like rapid assessment and response to an outbreak, priority groups to receive the vaccine when it was only available in limited quantities, advice to Americans abroad on whether to remain in-country or depart, North American and global engagement, et cetera, et cetera. The problem, of course, was that those systems were allowed to atrophy as time went on.

Q: Do you think the risk of pandemic influenza was overblown? What do you think about the way the U.S. government calculates risks from disease and other threats?

LANGE: No, it wasn't overblown, even though the H5N1 virus, so far, has not evolved to produce a human pandemic. I think there will always be the risk that a pandemic virus will emerge somewhere in the world, and it's important for governments to have in place capabilities to eliminate or at least mitigate an emerging infectious disease to save lives.

Regarding national security, the Eurasia Group, which analyzes political risks for businesses, rated avian influenza as one of its top eight political risks for 2006. The concern was that a major pandemic could potentially overwhelm even the most well-developed healthcare systems and have a devastating effect on the global economy and stability. An unclassified U.S. defense intelligence assessment from the Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center in 2007 considered a human pandemic of highly lethal influenza to be an event with intermediate probability and very high impact. And the UK Cabinet Office overhauled its security strategy and concluded in August 2008 that pandemic flu was the most serious risk facing the British public over the next five years. Lower probability than some terrorist attacks but highest impact. Unlikely to happen, but a disaster if it does.

I wish the U.S. government would do an objective analysis with that same overall approach, ranking the threats to America and Americans—and then apply resources accordingly. I'd like to see the U.S. National Intelligence Council take an objective look at all the threats we face, quantifying as best as possible both the likelihood and the impact on the United States, particularly in terms of American lives. Compare pandemics versus nuclear war versus all the other threats we prepare for. If you looked at that objectively, I think you'd come to the conclusion that we need to be spending billions of dollars more every year for pandemic preparedness and response, particularly when compared to the hundreds of billions of dollars that we spend to deter more distant threats, albeit with devastating impact, such as nuclear war. The U.S. Department of Defense has an enormous budget, and the resources for pandemic preparedness pale in comparison, even though American deaths in the most severe pandemic would run into the millions. It's very frustrating when you think about what global health security really entails and the grossly insufficient amount of money spent on it. We need intelligent risk management.

Although there have been some efforts now, including that just-passed \$2 trillion package for COVID response that includes support for some international efforts for pandemic response, much of the funding still relies on supplemental appropriations and is not built into the regular budget each year.

Even though the calamitous events we prepared for didn't transpire back then, those same issues now are directly relevant in the case of COVID-19—though it's apparently not as severe as the 1918–1919 pandemic. I wrote an article that was published in *The Hill* in August 2020 entitled, "Pandemic preparedness and response under a different president." I wrote about all the efforts to prepare for a potential pandemic, including international

leadership, under President George W. Bush. Even though a pandemic didn't materialize from the H5N1 virus at that time, the threat remains and someday the H5N1 virus could mutate and become a human pandemic. And I compared Bush's leadership to the efforts of the Trump administration in response to COVID-19, which I thought were just inadequate in terms of the domestic response and the international engagement. Looking back at what President Bush did, I really believe that, if he had been president when COVID-19 began, there would have been a much quicker and better U.S. government response, both domestically and, for what I was working on, internationally.

As we end this discussion of my time as special representative, I must say that this tour of duty really solidified my focus on global health diplomacy, even though it's not a traditional Foreign Service role. *The Lancet* said back in 2008 that there are several metaphors for viewing global health: as foreign policy, security, charity, investment, or public health. All are valid. I tend to focus on global health security and diplomacy, in the realm of soft power rather than hard power.

Q: How did you maintain your interest in global health diplomacy?

LANGE: After three years in the job, it was time for me to move on. I had had six overseas tours in the Foreign Service, my family and I weren't enthused about going abroad again, and I wanted to remain involved in global health issues.

Meanwhile, in the waning months of the Bush Administration, the State Department's OES Bureau proposed to Under Secretary Dobriansky that G/AIAG be eliminated as a separate entity and folded into the bureau. I argued that that would be premature and send the wrong signal to the U.S. government and the world about the importance of pandemic preparedness unless the integration could be done in a way that maintained the group's stature, unit, and mandate. We had established high-level visibility and an internationally recognized leadership role that I thought needed to be maintained. But I lost the debate, and immediately after I left the office for retirement the Avian Influenza Action Group personnel were moved into OES by the acting assistant secretary.

When I look back on it, one of the frustrating things about that transition was that we didn't create permanent, high-level global health mechanisms within the Department that included pandemic preparedness. The OES Bureau did not even have a deputy assistant secretary working full-time on global health, which really diminished the Department's stature in international health fora. I have argued ever since that the State Department needs to consolidate its global health functions, which range from the PEPFAR office to the OES Office of International Health and Biodefense to special-purpose task forces for health emergencies, into one bureau.

Q: So, well. I'm afraid that's political life.

LANGE: True. The President of the United States, George W. Bush, knew that pandemic preparedness was necessary. When you think about all the domestic and international efforts a dozen years ago, it's really sad to see that the world didn't maintain that preparedness and do a better job responding to COVID-19. Now, there seems to be a

greater recognition of the global need for permanent preparedness and response mechanisms. But, as I said, adequate funding through annual appropriations isn't there.

So I ended up retiring in February 2009. I took only a month off of work and started at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation at the end of March to continue my work on global health diplomacy. I'm now at the United Nations Foundation, and in our next session I hope we can talk about the work that I did at the Gates Foundation and now at the UN Foundation.

Q: Oh absolutely, absolutely. Okay, well, thank you very much. You were at the right place at the right time for doing something.

LANGE: Yes, I think so. I hope this was helpful and useful.

Q: Oh, it is, and it's very good to get on the record.

LANGE: Yeah, that's what I thought. This was a three-year, global effort featuring top-level government interest, big ministerial conferences, and intense diplomatic negotiations. The high-level U.S. government and international dynamics and policy issues were intellectually fascinating, in part because we were dealing with worst-case scenarios that hopefully could be avoided. Our goal was to save humanity as we know it, as the UN's influenza coordinator once told me.

Once COVID-19 came about, I delayed having this interview because I just knew that, even though my work on pandemics was back in 2006-2009, it would be directly relevant to what's happening today.

Q: God help us?

LANGE: Yes.

Q: Oh, well, thank you very much. We'll set up something again. But this is going along very well. I appreciate it. All right.

LANGE: I really appreciate talking to you, Stu. Thanks.

RETIREMENT

Q: Hi. You want to give the date and your name and then I'll let you proceed.

LANGE: Hello, Stu. I'm John Lange and it's April 7, 2021.

Thanks very much. I'm going to be talking mainly about my work on global health diplomacy after I retired from the Department. So, let's see how it goes.

The last time we met, I was describing my work as special representative on avian and pandemic influenza, which began in March 2006. By the end of 2008, I decided that I wanted to retire. I had a full career in the Foreign Service, including six overseas tours. I wasn't in the mood, and especially my family was not in the mood, to go overseas. Alejandra and I just didn't want to move again. I don't know about you, but I love the Foreign Service yet hate the smell of cardboard, the idea of—

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: —you know, every time you have to pack all your things in boxes and the movers come, and then you have to unpack everything at your new location. I was really tired of that smell of cardboard and all the hassles of moving. We have remained at our house in Vienna, Virginia, since 2002.

The Department's director general presided over my chief of mission flag ceremony in the Treaty Room, and my longtime colleague, Under Secretary for Management Pat Kennedy, gave a speech. Speakers paid tribute to Alejandra's skill at cross-cultural communications and her charm and personal warmth that made many friends in diplomatic communities. Well-deserved. Many of our friends and colleagues were there, and it was a fun occasion.



Under Secretary for Management Patrick Kennedy, Alejandra, John, and Director General of the Foreign Service Harry Thomas at John's flag ceremony (2009)

My last day at State was the last day of February 2009, after almost exactly twenty-eight years in the Foreign Service.



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton congratulates John on his retirement (2009)

GATES FOUNDATION

I'd spent a lot of time working on global health issues in Botswana, in the PEPFAR office, and in my work on pandemics. So I thought I could use the expertise that I'd developed in what I call global health diplomacy in a post-retirement position.

A former colleague who had been the Homeland Security Council senior director working on pandemic preparedness and response had moved to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and encouraged me to work there. The foundation's core belief was that every person should have the opportunity to live a healthy, productive life, which I found to be a compelling vision. Their stated goal for global health was to foster innovative technologies for health solutions delivered for impact, so it seemed like a place where I could make a difference. I applied and was hired for a position in what was then called Global Health Policy and Advocacy. I began working in March 2009 in the foundation's East Coast office in Washington, DC, though I ended up frequently going to Seattle for meetings.

And it turned out that in my first month in the new job there was an influenza virus circulating called H1N1, or swine flu, that developed into a human influenza pandemic.

Q: So the 2009 pandemic started after you retired from State?

LANGE: Yes. I'd just spent three years in the Department preparing for a pandemic, I retired, and then a pandemic came along. The first H1N1 cases identified in human

beings were in April 2009, and WHO Director General Margaret Chan declared it to be a public health emergency of international concern. Later on, in June, she raised the pandemic alert to its highest level for pandemic influenza.

My successor in the State Department told me that the new administration honored the previous administration's national implementation plan in spirit, with a slightly different approach. The *Washington Post* ran an article in May describing how the Bush team's strategy was now the Obama team's swine flu playbook. I'd like to read the quotation from former HHS Secretary Leavitt: "The Obama Administration is following a playbook that's been developed, refined, and exercised for going on almost three years now." So all of that work we did on pandemic preparedness did not go for naught. I attended the World Health Assembly in May, where Dr. Chan told the plenary that, after five years of concern for highly pathogenic avian influenza, the world was better prepared—and very scared.

Several of us at the Gates Foundation formed kind of an ad hoc internal swine flu task force to work on the foundation's response. In June I was with Bill Gates and a few others for meetings at WHO and other multilateral organizations in Geneva to talk about the pandemic and other global health issues. I was sitting behind him during his speech to around a hundred WHO senior staff to talk about the foundation's work. When someone commended him for working full-time on global health without a salary, Bill responded, Well, it did cost me \$30 billion. (Laughs)

The Gates Foundation, and I'll talk more about it, is really quite powerful because of the billions of dollars that it's spending every year for global development, particularly global health, as well as some domestic programs on U.S. education, et cetera. The foundation also has great impact because Melinda and, especially, Bill have top-level access to advocate for their causes with the world's decisionmakers. And it's flexible and can act more quickly than governments in many cases. In our swine flu task force at the foundation, for example, we developed a list of principles for distribution of a pandemic vaccine [Proposed Principles to Guide Global Allocation of Pandemic Vaccine], and in June 2009 our president of Global Health hosted a meeting in Seattle with key officials to ensure global access to H1N1 vaccines. Our focus was on health equity. The principles were published in 2009 and, I have to say, as we speak in 2021, it's still an important issue, the issue of vaccine diplomacy and who will get the COVID-19 vaccine. Whether the vaccine will get to everyone in the rich countries before it gets to those in the poorest countries is a prime concern in global health circles these days. Well, it was something we dealt with way back in 2009 when planning for the vaccine for the H1N1 virus.

The world paid a lot of attention to the H1N1 pandemic, and, in fact, Mexican President Felipe Calderón held a summit in Cancun in July 2009 with health ministers and other high-level officials from forty countries. Several of us from the foundation attended. And in October I spoke on a panel at a Council on Foreign Relations event on the science, economics and foreign policy aspects of pandemic influenza.

There was great concern, but in the end, swine flu turned out to be a moderate pandemic. While many died, it was not as severe and long-lasting as we initially expected. It really

was nowhere near as virulent as we had feared could be the case with the H5N1 virus, nor was it as severe as COVID-19.

Because it was a moderate pandemic, afterward there was a general sense of, Oh, what's the big deal? We can easily handle these pandemics. So there was a decline in interest in pandemic preparedness. The people who work on global health security, and I'm one of them, now talk about global interest and funding for pandemic preparedness and response being either feast or famine. When you have an immediate concern, money pours in, as initially it did for the threat of a bird flu pandemic. Then, after the bird flu scare didn't come to fruition and the moderate swine flu pandemic ended, well, most of the money went away. Congresses and parliaments lost interest. Then, when Ebola spread in West Africa and really exploded in August 2014, money started pouring in. After that outbreak was controlled, people lost interest again. Now, COVID-19 has generated huge interest and funding. But the cycle of panic and neglect is likely to continue after COVID ends. It really shouldn't be that way. David Nabarro once said that his time as UN system influenza coordinator taught him about the challenges of preparing for a major pandemic in a world that doesn't want to put a lot of resources into preparedness. Pandemic preparedness—which broadly includes strong health systems for disease surveillance, immunization programs, et cetera—really needs to be, in my opinion, a continuing effort funded through regular appropriations.

Q: Did you work closely with Bill and Melinda Gates?

LANGE: I wasn't in a top-level position in Seattle working with them every day, but during my four years at the foundation I was in many meetings with the two of them—particularly Bill, because he was more focused on vaccines and immunizations, and that was the area that I was spending most of my time on. And I have to say, I give the two of them huge credit. There are a lot of rich people in this world, and Bill and Melinda could be buying huge yachts and sports teams and spending their money on frivolous things. Instead, they have this foundation guided by the belief that every life has equal value. I really find that persuasive. When the foundation would do employee surveys, the mission and vision were what really drew many people to work there. Bill is also brilliant. Melinda is very, very smart, and in fact, she has stronger interpersonal skills than Bill, but he's absolutely brilliant. I remember being advised by an FSO who had worked on detail to the foundation in its early years that no matter how hard you prepare for a meeting with Bill, he always will ask a question that you don't know the answer to. And that's really true. He's just so intelligent, it's a delight to see him in action, applying his brilliance to learn about public health challenges and search for solutions.

My goal in going from the State Department to the Gates Foundation was to work in a post-retirement, fulfilling job aimed at improving global health, improving people's lives. But I have to admit that I experienced a bit of culture shock working there.

Q: What culture shock did you encounter at the Gates Foundation?

LANGE: I had a rather lofty vision of my role, as I once wrote in a note to myself: diplomatic leadership to support, shape, and elevate the foundation's priority global

health issues in countries and multilateral organizations and to represent the foundation by strategically engaging in diplomatic interactions. Kind of like the role of an ambassador or special envoy who supports and advances the work of the secretary of state and the president. I don't think my vision matched with the foundation's ethos and expectations for my position, however. Staff members were looking to Bill and Melinda to provide that high-level engagement with leaders. The foundation was full of highly accomplished people, and my ideas for my role weren't appreciated by some. Though at least a few seemed to appreciate my approach. When I left the foundation, one of the leaders in immunization wrote me to say how much he had appreciated my insights from the diplomatic and political level—as well as my plain, good common sense.

I had a hard time adjusting. There was a joke among some staff that, upon arriving at the foundation, you knew what you would be doing but didn't know what others were doing. Six months later, you knew what others were doing but didn't know what you were doing. I thought too many of the younger staff were very smart but kind of competitive in ways that impeded information sharing and collaboration across silos. As one disgruntled staff member once told me, it was like putting a thousand Type A personalities into one big room and seeing how that would turn out. And I thought some of the younger people on the staff seemed starstruck—it was all about pleasing the co-chairs, especially Bill, who lived for data and intellectual dialogue but could be quite demanding. Though I suppose that all of us were awed by Bill.

There were lots and lots of internal coordination meetings, but I thought the organization was really stovepiped in a way that at times was unhelpful. For example, there was a director of vaccine delivery and another director of polio, which is eliminated by delivering vaccine. And if you really want to eradicate infectious disease and improve immunization systems in the developing world, you need to work in unison. As a colleague once asked, does global health at the foundation consist of thirteen small companies responsible for achieving their individual missions or one large organization maximizing resources across all units?

Q: Did their approach stem from their experiences at Microsoft?

LANGE: Well, the foundation had some elements of Microsoft in it, as you would expect, and one of those was to reorganize fairly frequently, especially in the early years. The foundation had started in its current form in the year 2000, and I was there from 2009 to 2013. On my first day on the job, a person from HR [Human Resources] described it as the world's largest foundation with the skills of a child. It was still a bit of a startup, really in its adolescence, and they were making fairly frequent organizational changes, which was not always easy on the staff. But one could see why the leadership felt they needed to change the structure to achieve their evolving goals.

Both the CEO and the president of Global Health lamented that there were many staff members who were inspired by the vision but didn't come to the foundation to be good managers. Since those staff weren't experienced managers, it was hard for them to delegate decision-making. The CEO once said the foundation was overly collaborative but constipated when it came to making decisions.

From my State Department experience, I thought the whole approach to foundation policy and program would work better with a formal clearance process to ensure that all the proper offices had been involved and had agreed on the way forward, or at least had been able to express their differences, before decisions were made. Well, after about eight months on the job, I was told to come to Seattle for what was called a “staff chat” with Melinda Gates, where she would meet with new staff members who’d been on board for a few months to get their impressions and advice. There were about ten or twelve of us in the room. In response to her request for thoughts on what the foundation called meeting hygiene and its matrix structure, I had the temerity to suggest that the foundation should add a clearance page to the memos that were sent to her and Bill to ensure that all of the proper people had been consulted along the way. She dismissed that suggestion. She responded that when she and Bill were in the dynamic business culture at Microsoft, whenever she and others had a new idea, they just touched base with the right people before moving forward—though they sometimes missed someone. It was clear to me that she found my suggestion for a formal clearance process to be quite bureaucratic. That was quite deflating. The clearance process had been really integral to my professional career working in the State Department, but that didn’t fit in Seattle.

I told her that I thought polio eradication was a bureaucratic anomaly in the organizational structure, and she responded, Well, it was working. She added her view that polio was not the foundation’s number one priority but was its most immediate priority. This was in December 2009, at the end of the Great Recession, after the foundation’s endowment had dropped from something like \$39 billion to \$30 billion the previous year. With that in mind, Melinda said that if the foundation were someday in a lifeboat situation and had to decide which global health program would survive between HIV and polio, they would choose HIV.

During the meeting I also told Melinda that they obviously would never run their program for the U.S. Pacific Northwest out of the new London office, but they were doing something similar by trying to run their Africa programs out of the Seattle and DC offices with no staff based in Africa. I cited my own experience fighting HIV/AIDS in Botswana to explain how important it was to understand the political and cultural context. She responded that they were considering opening up two or three new offices in Africa and needed to take into account lessons learned from opening the India office in March 2009.

Bill and Melinda described themselves as impatient optimists, and that was part of the culture shock I experienced. Given my overseas postings—especially living in West Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa—I consider myself a realist, and that can sometimes result in being more of a patient pessimist than an impatient optimist. Sometimes, no matter how well you plan ahead, things can take longer than expected or not succeed at all. I found that to be especially true in West Africa. One has to keep trying but be realistic about it. Bill and Melinda were the impatient optimists, whereas I would sometimes bring up potential impediments to certain approaches or efforts that I just thought would be hard to implement on the ground. As another frustrated staff member with extensive experience in Africa told me, such efforts to inject a note of realism into

the discussion were seen by some as being disloyal—not being a team player. The foundation even promoted the idea that cynics and pessimists need not enter. It’s another example of how I didn’t fit into the foundation’s culture very well.

To their credit, Bill and Melinda tried to redefine the art of the possible. They routinely and systematically challenged traditional dogma and in some cases were right, while in other cases the field perspective won out. To fit in, those of us with development experience on the ground needed to redefine ourselves as savvy, realistic optimists, focused on making the best use of all resources—money, advocacy, policy, et cetera.

The beauty of Foreign Service work at embassies, as you know, is that we get the granular knowledge and ability to understand that ground-level reality, the subtle nuances that can’t be readily understood in faraway Washington. And that’s really a fundamental reason why we need to have a strong U.S. government presence in every country with which we have diplomatic relations. As a part of the culture shock that I experienced, I was coming from an organization that had 160 or so embassies abroad to one that focused much of its work on Sub-Saharan Africa, some of the poorest countries in the world, to improve lives—and yet, as I said, it had zero staff members on the ground in Africa. That really came as a surprise to me.

Q: Why didn’t they have any staff in Africa?

LANGE: The theory of the foundation was that it was never meant to be operational on the ground. They were present in the field through their grantees, and they wanted to use those implementing partners to do all the work. They had strategies for issues like malaria or agriculture, but not strategies for countries. They were out to change polio, not change Nigeria—where polio happened to be.

A couple of senior foundation staff members told me that Bill and Melinda had looked at the structures of other major foundations when they were establishing their own foundation, and they decided that having country offices became a self-perpetuating ideology: because we have an office in a country, we must do XYZ. The president of Global Health made it clear in my introductory call in his office that the foundation’s strategy wasn’t to fix a country, as bilateral development programs seem to want to do. By the way, he also advised that I not wear a tie in the office. (Laughs) Bill at that time didn’t want to plant the Gates Foundation flag on an office in Africa. And I was warned from the beginning not to use the term “health systems,” since Bill was terrified by the black hole of delivering health in a country—how do you measure progress and how do you put a limit to your investment?

But, without having staff on the ground, I thought it was very difficult to understand the politics and the culture and to work with all those implementing partners in overcoming bottlenecks. The foundation lacked the ability to really understand what was happening, including potential corruption, and to continuously guide and monitor programs that, we hoped, were going to bring about sustainable change. There would be regular visits on the part of program officers who had provided the grant funding for those implementing partners in Africa and elsewhere, but the grantees would make sure everything looked

good during their visits. And if things didn't look good, they would explain that it wasn't their fault because they wanted to keep the money flowing. Basically, they told foundation representatives what they thought they wanted to hear. It was really not the best of organizational models, I thought.

So I became an early proponent of having foundation staff on the ground in our priority African countries. I raised it with CEO Jeff Raikes in my first month on the job, when I spent three days attending Starting Gates, the introductory training program required for all new staff. He said they were thinking about it. And I raised it with Melinda in that staff chat, as I mentioned. As time went on, I coordinated with a few others who were on the development side dealing with agriculture, et cetera. In early 2010, I did a series of interviews with each of the directors in the Global Health program on issues that needed to be considered in making a decision on whether or not to establish an Africa presence. Their views were all over the map. And in May 2011, two years after I'd arrived, the CEO finally announced an Africa representation pilot program to develop a physical presence on the continent. That resulted in offices opening in Ethiopia, South Africa, and Nigeria.

One of my other successes was to hire a health expert who had previously been a contractor for the foundation and had moved to Lusaka with her husband, the Peace Corps director at the U.S. embassy. She got to know the health minister and others and was instrumental in providing that on-the-ground reality check for the various program officers who had grantees in Zambia. Some saw her as the model for country engagement where we didn't have offices, but a lot of it depended on her singular ability to connect the dots and move our health programs forward.

In 2012 there was a reorganization and I moved to the new Africa Team, which was created when we established the three offices on the continent.

And throughout my four years at the foundation, I worked on polio eradication.

Q: What kind of work did you do on polio?

LANGE: Bill Gates frequently said publicly that polio eradication was the foundation's top priority. But he recognized the challenge and once told the staff, We've got a very good team dealing with a very, very hard problem. He had monthly strategy meetings with his polio team, about twenty to twenty-five people, and I flew to Seattle every month to attend. His idea was that there were huge benefits that would accrue by eradicating polio. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative [GPEI] was established by the World Health Assembly in 1988 and continues today as the world still tries to get rid of polio. Once you contract polio there's no cure, so eradicating polio would, first of all, mean that no child in the future would ever die or be paralyzed for life from polio. Plus, the money that would be saved when polio no longer existed would actually far exceed what is now spent on eradication—there were studies saying that the world would save up to \$50 billion over twenty-five years after eradication. And finally, Bill felt that eradication would energize the field of global health by showing that investments in public health can lead to amazing victories and more human diseases can be eradicated.

GPEI's original spearheading partners were Rotary International, CDC, WHO, and UNICEF. When the Gates Foundation began seriously investing in polio eradication, especially beginning around 2008, they added the foundation as a core partner. And in recent years GPEI added a sixth core partner, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

GPEI always needed money, and I give credit to Bill for doing his best to raise funds for the program, including with high-net-worth individuals. But GPEI was facing challenges reaching its eradication goal, and in December 2011 the core partners met at CDC in Atlanta to restructure the program. The new structure included a strategy committee reporting to a Polio Oversight Board consisting of the heads of the core agencies. And here's where I called on my experience at USUN Geneva in the 1990s. A couple of us came up with the idea of bringing a broad group of stakeholders in polio eradication—governments, foundations, advocacy groups, others—together in what came to be called the Polio Partners Group [PPG] that would meet at WHO in Geneva to bring in ambassadorial-level participation. I called it a strong advisory group, one that would be influential.

A couple of months later, at Bill's monthly internal polio meeting, he complained that the new committee structure had nothing to do with what was wrong with the polio program and constituted bureaucratization of the polio campaign. I argued that the broad group of polio donors wouldn't just serve as an ATM [automated teller machine] and needed to have a voice in the program through the new PPG. I don't think he was convinced

Q: So what happened with this idea for a Polio Partners Group?

LANGE: We went ahead with it. I presided at the first meeting in April 2012 and used a chit that I had with WHO Director General Chan from our earlier collaboration on pandemic preparedness to ask her to address the group. That really helped the PPG get off on the right foot, and, in fact, all of the semi-annual meetings since then have had a very high-level person, usually the head of an agency, address the group, with numerous ambassadors in attendance.

During a break at that first meeting, where I was officially elected PPG chair, I met with the Canadian ambassador to the UN in Geneva, Elissa Golberg, and invited her to serve as co-chair with me. She agreed, and since then having a sitting ambassador in Geneva and a representative of a non-state actor serve together as co-chairs has worked well.

One of the things I did was to invite Bill to speak to a PPG meeting. As I said, he was skeptical of the group, believing it took time away from the operational duties of the WHO polio staff, but I convinced him to speak to a special ambassadorial meeting at the Canadian mission in Geneva in January 2013 when he was on his way to Davos. He had expressed his long-term view of polio eradication in a speech to Rotary International back in 2009, when he said that we do not know when we will eradicate polio, but we know that we will. He told the PPG that he had a lot of confidence that this would be the final polio plan, resulting in eradication. Alas, he was off by many years. As we speak, eradication remains a work in progress.

About a dozen and a half ambassadors and over sixty people in total attended the breakfast meeting. I think a lot of those ambassadors expected to hear some generalities from Bill. But, as I said, he's brilliant, and he instead got into the details of the polio strategic plan and the need for donor support. It was clear that the details in the discussion were way beyond the knowledge of a lot of the ambassadors. But I'm sure that afterward most if not all of them sent a message to their home office describing how they met that morning with Bill Gates. Bill said afterward that the meeting was "super," and the Canadians told me the session was the talk of the town.



*Canadian Ambassador Elissa Golberg and John preside over
Polio Partners Group meeting with Bill Gates (2013)*

I think Bill's appearance at that PPG meeting helps explain how the foundation works. It doesn't just fund projects. To support its work and to achieve its global health goals, it engages in global health advocacy—not lobbying but educating. And Bill is treated almost as a head of state, with ready access to presidents and prime ministers. He is in the enviable position of being able to share his deep understanding of public health challenges and his vision for addressing them with leaders at all levels.

Now, I call those efforts to educate governments global health diplomacy. Or you can call it multi-track diplomacy practiced by a non-state actor. There are a lot of similarities to diplomacy as practiced by governments and their foreign ministries. I used to joke that the biggest difference in the briefing memos that were prepared for the secretary of state in my time in the State Department versus those that were prepared for Bill or Melinda at the Gates Foundation was that the foundation used color and graphics far more than the Department, as you would expect for the co-founder of Microsoft. But the formats were really quite similar in terms of the purpose of the meeting, the background information, the talking points, et cetera.

Bill put a lot of faith in modeling, which can help in establishing priorities and in identifying actions essential to success. His modelers in early 2013 thought polio could be eradicated in a couple of years, by the end of 2014 or 2015. It turned out that they were way off the mark.

I thought that modeling provided useful input but had very limited predictive value. As I said earlier, I thought of myself as a realist based on my experiences in the developing world. My fundamental problem with relying too much on a model was that it underestimated or couldn't take into account the fluidity and changeability of the security, political, social, and religious dynamics that could greatly impede vaccination campaigns. There had been a disruptive polio vaccine boycott in Northern Nigeria in 2003 led by some Muslim leaders who endorsed rumors that OPV [oral polio vaccine] was an American conspiracy to spread HIV and cause infertility in Muslim girls. How could a model have planned ahead for that? And the Taliban in areas they controlled in Afghanistan had banned door-to-door polio vaccinations, the gold standard for a successful campaign, due to perceived security risks. Coups can occur, earthquakes can occur. I raised my concerns with the lead modeler, and he said that they, of course, couldn't predict such instability and instead just factored in a greater level of uncertainty in their predictions. Well, there's a reason the State Department doesn't use modeling to reliably predict the results of the Middle East peace process.

Q: You mentioned working on the Africa team. You spent so much time in Africa in the Foreign Service. Did you travel there much for the Gates Foundation?

LANGE: Yes, I made a lot of trips to Africa as well as elsewhere, including Geneva for the World Health Assembly every year. I've been reviewing my trip reports and can describe several examples.

In my second month at the foundation, May 2009, a group of us traveled to Nigeria to speak with the minister of health and other officials to sustain momentum for polio eradication and discuss our maternal and neonatal health strategy. This was a follow-up to Bill Gates' visit in February, when he met with the executive governors of the thirty-six states and they committed to eradicate polio [Abuja Commitments to Polio Eradication in Nigeria]. We also met with the special assistant to the Nigerian president on the UN's Millennium Development Goals, Amina Mohammed. She was impressive, and in 2017 she became deputy secretary general of the United Nations. Our group took separate side trips, so a couple of us went to Kaduna and met with the executive governor as well as a traditional leader, an emir who carried great influence. I went back to Nigeria for the foundation several times.

In March 2010, a fairly small group of us, including the then-president of Global Health, traveled to Ethiopia. We had a meeting over dinner in Addis Ababa with the health minister, Dr. Tedros, who later became WHO director general, and discussed the Health Extension Program that placed health workers in remote outposts to provide at least a modicum of healthcare for the citizenry. That was quite an innovation for a very poor country. We also traveled to Southern Ethiopia [Southern Nations, Nationalities, and

Peoples' Region] to see how those health posts operated. And we had meetings with the AU [African Union] commission chair and with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Meles was really impressive, very smart.

A few months later, in June 2010, a few others and I were in Abuja for Bill Gates' meeting with President Goodluck Jonathan, who wore his customary fedora hat, and many of his cabinet ministers. Jonathan had been in office for about a month, and I think he was expecting some pleasantries more than a detailed discussion of the polio situation in Nigeria. But Bill's main goal was to push the government at the highest level to bolster its polio program, and he quickly delved into the details of the trip he had just made to Kano. To be frank, President Jonathan seemed unprepared for the discussion. But he clearly took onboard the message that Bill had given on the importance of eliminating polio from Nigeria. Bill keeps a busy schedule, and during our stay in Abuja he also discussed polio and immunizations with the country's Governors Forum and with corporate and civic leaders, including Nigeria's first billionaire, Aliko Dangote, who all signed a polio eradication pledge.



*Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, Bill Gates and John
at meeting in State House, Abuja (2010)*

The next month, I represented the foundation as an observer at the African Union Summit in Kampala. The subject of the summit was maternal, infant, and child health and development in Africa, so there were a lot of health ministers there and I met with several of them. The highlight of the summit was a dinner gala. After dinner, South African singer and humanitarian Yvonne Chaka Chaka performed by walking from table to table, singing. She was able to get several of the presidents and prime ministers to sing along with her when she thrust the microphone in front of them. As I wrote in my trip report for the foundation, you haven't experienced soul music until you've heard Ethiopian Prime

Minister Meles croon, “You make me feel like a natural woman.” (Laughs) She also coaxed onstage a dozen or so presidents, prime ministers, leaders of international organizations, et cetera, to sing along with her. It was really a delightful dinner that I’ll never forget.

Q: Did you ever meet with polio victims on these trips?

LANGE: Yes. I’m still haunted by the memory of a paralyzed child during one of my trips to Angola, in January 2011. A group of us visited a family in a desolate neighborhood on the outskirts of Luanda where a two-year-old unvaccinated boy had contracted polio. He will be paralyzed and suffer for the rest of his life, given the weak healthcare system there. To me, that really reaffirmed the importance of our work to eradicate the disease.

A few months later, I led a small group from the foundation to Kinshasa to push for top-level support for polio eradication and help launch the five-day DRC polio campaign. The day before the campaign we met with the health minister and the president of the national assembly, and I convinced the prime minister to speak at the launch of the National Immunization Day campaign. It was a wonderful event with 800 attendees, dancers and singers, and a series of speeches, including mine in French. The prime minister delivered the keynote address, and afterward the health minister vaccinated him with the oral polio vaccine. There are two kinds of polio vaccines; one is injectable and one is taken orally by mouth. OPV is the one most used in developing countries because it’s easier to administer and doesn’t require the technical expertise that an injection requires. Well, the health minister put the two drops of vaccine into the mouth of the prime minister. The prime minister was really into this, and he thought well, all right, let me vaccinate the others. He then took the dropper and joyfully vaccinated me and the others who were in the VIP section. So, the last time I was vaccinated for polio was by the prime minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. (Laughs)

And a little after that, in May 2011, Bill Gates went to Geneva to give the keynote speech at the World Health Assembly, which was quite well-received. I remember attending his side meeting in the Palais des Nations with the health ministers from Honduras and Sierra Leone where he discussed public health in their countries and asked them about the vaccine cold chain, the temperature-controlled supply chain that keeps vaccines and pharmaceuticals cold from production to final use. It’s not easy to maintain that in the most remote areas of the poorest countries that don’t have reliable electrical grids. Sometimes they have to use kerosene or solar-powered refrigerators. But that’s critical for vaccines to keep their effectiveness. Bill was concerned that there were lots of spoiled vaccines. So he asked these two health ministers about their problems with the cold chain, and he concluded by telling them that next year he was going to take a trip to look at cold chain issues, though he may not go to their countries. Clearly, he was trying to figure out if the foundation could fund R&D [research and development] to improve the cold chain through innovations, such as longer-lasting coolers. I was sitting next to him at the table and thought to myself, Here I am, sitting next to one of the richest men in the world, and he’s asking about the vaccine cold chain. I found that really impressive that he cared so much and was using his brilliance and his personal wealth in a genuine effort to

improve public health. And this wasn't just some kind of offhand comment feigning interest in the subject. He made sure that his staff arranged a trip the following year where he examined cold chain issues.

I thought that was a notable example of how Gates Foundation resources can raise the profile of key health issues and fund innovations to improve public health in ways that governments are not necessarily able to do. While the U.S. government funds a lot of public health research, most government-provided development assistance focuses on improving existing public health systems and producing deliverable results rather than on funding R&D for clever, out-of-the-box ideas that may or may not succeed. Bill was willing to take risks, though his calculated decision-making was always based on data and expert opinion. He once explained that there needed to be clear data at the granular level on where polio campaigns were failing if he was going to tell a politician to impose sanctions on bad campaign performance.

Later, in September 2011, a few other staff members and I were with Bill in N'Djamena, Chad. We met with President Idriss Déby at the presidential palace after the president, Bill, and others launched the polio campaign earlier that day. So, here again, Bill and his polio team had identified a key weak link in the eradication program, and he met with a head of state to push for greater leadership on polio and other immunizations. Déby responded by assuring Bill that he was committed. Not many of the world's richest people make the trek to Chad.

Q: Very true.

LANGE: On another trip to Africa, I led a small foundation delegation to a November 2011 meeting of SADC health ministers in Polokwane, South Africa. Mrs. Graça Machel, the widow of former South African President Nelson Mandela, and I were scheduled to be on a panel discussing food security and hunger issues in the region. She arrived early and it was fascinating to see how she was treated like royalty by the health ministers. They changed their whole schedule so she could speak sooner than planned. We both delivered our speeches, but I certainly couldn't match her fervor and passion, especially for helping children under the age of five. But then her next scheduled discussion in a smaller group was to take place much later in the day, and she had a lot of time to kill. So she and I, along with our aides, sat in a room for an hour or two talking about how to work with governments and SADC to improve childhood nutrition in Southern Africa. She's truly a wonderful, dynamic, and caring woman.

Another example I'll give in terms of global health diplomacy at the Gates Foundation took place in New York in September 2012. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon hosted what was the highest-level meeting on polio eradication in twenty years. The heads of state from the three countries where the wild poliovirus was still endemic (Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Pakistan), Bill Gates, and other dignitaries all expressed their commitment to eradication. It was moderated by Tim Wirth, the former U.S. senator who was vice-chair of the UN Foundation at that time. The event was a big success that raised the profile of polio eradication as a public health priority among the political leadership.

Just before the big event, Bill met again with President Goodluck Jonathan. A few other staff members and I were in the meeting. I told you earlier how President Jonathan was really unprepared for his June 2010 meeting in Abuja with Bill a month after he had taken office, when he really didn't know much about the polio program in Nigeria. Well, at this meeting, he had all these papers in front of him describing how each of the local government areas in Nigeria had performed during the latest polio campaign and where wild poliovirus cases were present. He talked about all of this data to be able to show Bill that he was really on top of the efforts to eliminate polio. To me, the take-home message was that the Gates Foundation has great influence. When Bill or Melinda meets with heads of state or government, they listen—and hopefully act—on the advice. That's really global health diplomacy as practiced by a non-state actor. Since that time, the wild poliovirus has been eliminated in Nigeria and as of today there are only two countries left in the world where wild polio is endemic, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Shortly before I left the foundation, in April 2013, I was part of a large foundation delegation attending the first Global Vaccine Summit in Abu Dhabi. Bill told the high-level group that polio eradication was what he was spending most of his time on and was the foundation's top priority, and he made it clear that he was passionate about vaccines. His partnership with the crown prince of Abu Dhabi was fundamental to the success of the event—though I have to admit that my most memorable activity in the United Arab Emirates was to take a ride on the world's fastest roller coaster at Ferrari World, when a few of us had some extra time available. (Laughs)

The basic premise of all of these high-level meetings that I've been discussing was that in many countries, where there is no end to potential priorities facing government leaders, there was not enough attention and effort being made at various levels of government to immunize children against vaccine-preventable diseases, including polio, and more generally to improve public health. Bill and his teams knew that efficient immunization efforts were at or near the top of the list of cost-effective development interventions. A strong push from top government leaders was often a necessary, though insufficient, part of strengthening community health programs. That's why we advocated for greater action at the highest levels of government. And in most, if not all, cases we succeeded in that goal even though much more needed to be done.

I ended up spending more than four years at the Gates Foundation. As I said earlier, coming from the culture of the State Department, I had differences with the foundation's approach and thought it was not an easy place to work. But it was a better foundation in 2013, particularly with its presence on the continent of Africa, than when I arrived in 2009. It has a compelling vision. It's making a difference in the lives of millions of people. And it continues to evolve for the better.

Q: Yes, certainly. What did you do next?

UNITED NATIONS FOUNDATION

LANGE: I decided to seek a position at the United Nations Foundation [UNF], and they hired me as senior fellow for global health diplomacy. I left the Gates Foundation at the end of June 2013 and started at the UN Foundation at the beginning of July. UNF has offices in both New York and Washington, with the main office in Washington, and that's where I've been working.

UNF is an independent, charitable organization with a special partnership agreement with the United Nations. It also has very close connections with experts, advocates, and the private sector. We work behind the scenes trying to bring in new ideas and connect experts to the United Nations in a way that they wouldn't have the ability to do on their own. We also have a very strong public information and advocacy component.

Some people joked at the time that I was going from working for two billionaires to working for another billionaire, because after leaving the foundation started by Bill and Melinda Gates I went to a foundation started by Ted Turner. Ted started UNF in 1998 when the United States was not paying its full dues to the UN. He announced that he would contribute a billion dollars to the United Nations over time. But you don't just write a check to the UN, so he ended up creating UNF to serve as a conduit for his contribution and to develop its own programs to support strong U.S. participation in the UN and the goals of the UN. He's been ill but is still board chair. I've met him a few times since I've been there.

To come to work at the United Nations Foundation was coming full circle because, as you may recall, I worked for the UN Association of the USA from 1976 to 1981, before joining the Foreign Service. And UNA-USA, with its extensive chapter network, merged into the UN Foundation in 2010.

Q: What are you doing at the UN Foundation?

LANGE: More global health diplomacy, working on a variety of projects and publishing articles. I can make the case that this was a natural segue in my career: from being a diplomat, to being a diplomat working on global health, to being a retired diplomat working on global health in foundations—the Gates Foundation and now the UN Foundation. But in other respects, I'm now dealing with many different people than you would if you were working on global health while sitting in the State Department. I actually feel quite at home when I walk the corridors of the World Health Organization in Geneva. I just know so many people there, and I always meet somebody I know in the coffee shop.

UNF has been involved in polio for years and was key to getting Bill and Melinda interested in eradication. Ted Turner gave \$25 million to stop polio back in 1999 and then, as Bill Gates tells it, Ted told Bill that he was twice as rich and therefore should give twice as much, which he did. Upon my arrival at UNF, I was able to stay on as co-chair of the Polio Partners Group until my four-year term ended in June 2016. And the PPG continued holding its very high-level meetings to support polio eradication. I received nice thank-you notes from the heads of WHO, UNICEF, CDC, and Gates Foundation Global Development when I left my position as co-chair. [Addendum: the

GPEI Polio Partners Group continued to meet regularly through 2023, when it disbanded.]

One of the things that I have tried to bring to discussions about the polio program, as I tried to do in my work at the Gates Foundation, is a sense of realism based on my experiences on the ground in Africa. There are many great, committed people working on polio eradication, some for most of their careers, but some of them can be overly optimistic. The initial goal of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative was to finish the job by the year 2000. Since then, GPEI has developed new strategies every several years but still has missed every new deadline to eradicate the wild poliovirus. There have been clear successes and the number of cases is way down, but it's so sad that children are still being paralyzed for life from contracting polio.

Q: I'm old enough to remember the polio situation in the United States before the Salk vaccine came out. And every summer, you know, my mother had to decide whether to let me go to the swimming pool or not. I mean, people I knew came down with polio. I mean, it was horrendous.

LANGE: Yes, it really was and still is. Rotary International, the Gates Foundation, and the other core partners deserve great credit for keeping the program going and keeping the focus on eradication. I've met polio survivors who are in their seventies and eighties and nineties and it's just—they've lived long lives, but they've also suffered throughout those lives. One of the more moving speeches by a polio survivor that I have seen was by U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell. He suffered from polio as a child, and I'm sure most people in the United States don't know that.

In October 2014 I headed a delegation with leading polio officials from the GPEI core partners for a six-day visit to Cameroon. We met in Yaoundé with the prime minister, the health minister, the U.S. ambassador, and many others. The purpose was to generate political-level support for the polio program. We went with some of the vaccinators door-to-door to see how well the campaign was working. And I vaccinated children at the launch of the polio campaign, which got some publicity in-country.



John vaccinates a child in Yaoundé to launch Cameroon's polio campaign (2014)

There's something—I'm not sure what the word is—addictive about working on an eradication program. The goal is that no child will ever again contract polio. That's been described as the ultimate in sustainability and equity, because eradication is forever and for everyone. That would be immensely gratifying. And I was pleased to have played my own very small part when, after four years without a single case of wild polio, WHO's African region was certified to be free of wild poliovirus in August 2020.

But it's been very difficult to achieve that goal globally. I've used my background on the political side of things to try to help GPEI. Wild polio remains endemic in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and there are major challenges in Southern Afghanistan and areas controlled by the Taliban. In my view, the problems that the polio program encounters are no longer related to public health but instead are related to humanitarian, diplomatic, political, security, and economic issues. Public health experts know how to organize a campaign to put two drops of oral polio vaccine into each child's mouth. I've done it myself in campaigns in Africa. It's not a matter of knowing what to do, it's a matter of having access to the children and convincing the mothers, in particular, to agree to have their children vaccinated. Now, I'm no expert on the Middle East, but I did some inquiries to try to determine if there were means to get greater access to children in Taliban-controlled regions where door-to-door campaigns were prohibited. But it's very complex and often boils down to decisions by the local Taliban commander. That is very difficult to deal with in GPEI, a program that is based out of Geneva and quite centralized or, in global health terms, vertical. They, of course, have people on the ground in regional and country offices working on the campaigns, but success has been elusive.

At UNF I've also worked on a global program related to measles.

Q: What have you done on measles?

LANGE: I think it was 2015 when I started working on the Measles and Rubella Initiative [M&RI], which is trying to eliminate measles region by region. Measles is highly infectious, and there can be a hundred thousand or more measles deaths each year, mostly children under the age of five. It's so sad because it's easily preventable with a vaccine that costs less than \$2 to buy and deliver. It's one of the most effective vaccines in the world. I currently chair the M&RI leadership team, which consists of the leading immunization officials in the initiative's founding partners: UNF, the American Red Cross, CDC, UNICEF, and WHO. [Addendum: In January 2023, the Measles and Rubella Initiative transitioned to become the Measles and Rubella Partnership, part of WHO's Immunization Agenda 2030 strategy.]

I also became UNF's primary focal point for our wide-ranging work with the World Health Organization.

Q: What kind of work do you do with WHO?

LANGE: I worked to establish a more coherent and collaborative UNF relationship with WHO. And I continue to attend the World Health Assembly in Geneva every May. It's always held in-person except during the COVID period, when it's been online. Health ministers and thousands of others attend, and it is really the world's meeting place for global health. I've joked that I can't walk more than twenty feet in the Palais des Nations during WHA without running into somebody I know. I've talked to health ministers on the escalators, when they're going up and I'm going down. Over the years I've attended the assembly as a member of the U.S. delegation, 2007-2008, as a representative of the Gates Foundation, and now as a representative of the UN Foundation.

I worked with the head of the Global Health Centre at the Geneva Graduate Institute to create a briefing that we call "Introduction to the World Health Assembly—Open Briefing." The briefing began in May of 2015 and is held every year on the day before the assembly itself opens. It's intended for a broad audience, and we've averaged about 500 attendees for every in-person briefing, two or three hours long. During the COVID era it's been online. The briefing is very popular because we are able to attract leading officials and top-notch experts to discuss and debate salient issues that will be considered the following week at WHA itself. The annual briefing has become kind of an institution and is something I am very proud of.



John speaks at the WHO Director General candidates' debate cosponsored by the UN Foundation (2017)

Let me talk a bit about the work I've done at UNF on pandemic preparedness and response and more broadly what is called global health security. This is what I've been working on much of the time since first focusing on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Botswana in 1999. In July 2014, I hosted a dinner in Washington with executive branch officials who were ambassadors and assistant secretaries, senior NGO leaders, and a WHO assistant director general to discuss global health security and the spread of Ebola in West Africa. This was just weeks before the West Africa outbreak really exploded and became front-page news, and it was very helpful to get all these people in the room together to exchange views. Still, the outbreak was just a disaster. Over eleven thousand people ended up dying in the three countries that were most affected, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia.

I've also been UNF's representative to meetings of the Global Health Security Agenda [GHSa], including one that took place in Bali, Indonesia, in November 2018. I'm not sure many people are aware that the Obama Administration started GHSa in February 2014 and the Trump and Biden Administrations both continued it. For the Bali ministerial meeting, the HHS deputy secretary attended and a pre-recorded speech by the HHS secretary was shown on video. The Department of Defense had a large delegation that worked very closely with the host, the Indonesian government and particularly the Indonesian military, to organize meetings on global health security issues.

I was happy the U.S. military was so well-represented in Bali. As we've seen with COVID, there are national security implications in a pandemic, and it can't be treated as just a technical public health issue. An all-of-government approach is needed, including the military. This was recognized back in 2012 in a Center for Strategic and International Studies publication ["Global Health as a Bridge to Security: Interviews with U.S. Leaders"] that showed the connections between public health and U.S. and global security. Several retired flag-rank officers were interviewed for this, as was I.

I ended up writing an article on ongoing global health security threats that was published in *The Hill* in October 2018 [“Global Health Security Threats: Despite Worldwide Responses There’s Much More to Do”]. Sure enough, a little over a year later the coronavirus pandemic, COVID-19, began. And, as I mentioned earlier, I wrote another article in *The Hill* in August 2020 contrasting President George W. Bush’s approach to pandemic preparedness and response with President Donald Trump’s.

In recent years I’ve worked with the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in various capacities.

Q: What kind of work have you done with the National Academies?

LANGE: I co-chaired a committee that produced a report on building health systems [“Investing in Global Health Systems—Sustaining Gains, Transforming Lives”] that was published in September 2014. And I was a member of the National Academy of Medicine’s forum on public-private partnerships for global health and safety. We organized a couple of public workshops on issues related to the transitions taking place in some global health institutions, as well as public-private partnerships used in the COVID response.

I also was a member of the National Academy of Sciences’ Committee on Enhancing Global Health Security Through International Biosecurity and Health Engagement Programs. Kind of a cumbersome title. We produced a report in April 2020 [“A Strategic Vision for Biological Threat Reduction—The U.S. Department of Defense and Beyond”]. One of the most interesting global health security meetings I’ve been in came during one of our open committee sessions where we heard from U.S. government officials. On one end of the panel was someone from the Department of Defense talking about force protection and the need for public health measures to ensure that U.S. military forces were protected when they’re abroad. And then, the DOD official next to him talked in terms of broader global health programs, including assistance provided by the Department of Defense to allied militaries abroad to protect their troops. And then, you had a State Department official talking about the political dynamics of the Global Health Security Agenda and biosecurity efforts, including State’s Biosecurity Engagement Program and its global health programs. And then, you had the HHS representative talking about their work on the Global Health Security Agenda coming from the perspective of HHS and CDC. And the next speaker was an official from USAID talking about their assistance, including work on One Health connecting human health and animal health and the environment. It was really a wide spectrum of perspectives on biosecurity.

As I said earlier from my experience working on this as special representative on pandemics, the people who worry about force protection and anthrax attacks hardly ever talk to those on the other end of the spectrum, the veterinarians and those working on One Health. It’s very hard to collaborate across those silos because they’re really distinct cultures. One of our committee’s findings dealt directly with those organizational silos and the continuum across biosecurity threats. We concluded that natural, accidental, and

intentionally caused outbreaks can have similar consequences for health, the economy, and national security as well as similar requirements related to prevention, detection, response, and recovery initiatives. There needs to be an integrated view of biological threats to prevent bureaucratic boundaries from interfering with partnerships and progress. In a lot of respects, that finding explained why global health security is a matter of national security.

So those are some of the highlights of my work in global health diplomacy. I don't have a university degree in health, but I've come to speak the lingo for the areas of global health and public health I've worked on, like CD4 cell counts for HIV, or OPV versus IPV [inactivated poliovirus vaccine] for polio, or MCV1 and MCV2 [measles-containing-vaccines] for measles. I can speak some of the technical jargon, but that's not what people are looking to me for. It's really to bring in that diplomatic perspective that one gets from the Foreign Service, with advocacy aimed at decisionmakers. It's really to bring in that broader outlook to see the totality, a multisectoral approach. Sometimes it's limited to a public health issue, but as I said with regard to polio in particular, the challenges can involve political, security, social, and humanitarian issues far beyond health expertise. That's why diplomatic expertise and on-the-ground experience can be directly relevant in meeting those challenges.

And one of the things I have often found kind of frustrating in global health discussions is talking to people who have very little experience in developing countries and yet are opining—whether in Geneva or inside the Washington beltway or wherever—on what needs to be done in developing-country public health programs with little regard for the challenges. That's why I've always tried to bring in that country focus, because that's just what was drilled into me in my Foreign Service tours in Togo, Tanzania, and Botswana.

As we draw this to a close, I'll mention that I've maintained close relations with my alma mater, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and am on the boards of visitors for the Global Health Institute and the International Division. When Botswana President Ian Khama visited Madison in 2017, I was asked to moderate his meeting with university faculty on environmental issues in Southern Africa.

And my family has done well over the years. My daughter Julia graduated from the University of Mary Washington in 2011. My wife Alejandra and I bought a condominium in Mexico City four blocks from the U.S. embassy where we met in 1981, when she was a Foreign Service National and I was a first-tour officer.

It's been an interesting journey, to go from that first tour as a Foreign Service officer to a full Foreign Service career—with all of its high points and that tragic low point when the Dar es Salaam embassy was bombed—and now to have transitioned to global health diplomacy to try to do what I can, in my own way, to improve public health and better people's lives. It's been a fun ride.

Thanks, Stu.

Q: This has been a fascinating account and you've really gotten into subjects which I don't think we've covered in any of these other interviews, the public health treaty and broad public health issues, the way you have.

LANGE: Yeah, thank you. That's why I wanted to go into some detail, including my post-State Department career, because when you think of what I was just saying about the—what Bill Gates does, he's kind of acting as either a head of state or a secretary of state in a lot of what he does. And it's just been really interesting to do this. I was really, in a lot of respects, very fortunate to be able to have gone directly from the State Department to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation because there were so many similarities, but at the same time so many differences. And I thought it would be worth going into the details for the reasons you just said, that it really was trying to bring in an aspect of this work that I don't think a lot of people know about. And yet, I can make a logical segue from traditional Foreign Service work to the global health diplomacy work that I'm doing today.

Q: Obviously, you're continuing, doing what you're doing.

LANGE: Yes. I'm part-time now, but I still do some writing and a lot of speeches and meeting with people. And I'm looking forward to the next time I can fly to Geneva.

Q: Well, how about, I mean, right now, as I sit here interviewing you on my computer, I'm looking at my face mask. You know, I mean, this has become part of our lives. I wear a mask every time I go—step outside my room. Are you involved in the—what we are talking about—COVID-19 or something like this?

LANGE: Yeah, COVID-19. Well, ever since it started, I've been really busy, and that was really the delay, when otherwise I would have finished this interview about a year ago, the process, if it hadn't been for COVID-19. But then I suddenly became so busy within the UN Foundation and in our contacts externally on the COVID response. We're not responders per se, but actually, the UN Foundation hosted for a year and now just transferred to WHO Foundation something called the Solidarity Response Fund. The UN Foundation brought in over \$200 million, well over \$200 million, from individuals and corporations in the United States to help WHO in its response. So, there have been a lot of ways that the UN Foundation has been engaged on COVID-19, and I've been part of this broad effort of the foundation, often relying on the expertise and longstanding work I've done on pandemic preparedness and response. It's been quite a ride.

I believe I mentioned earlier in my interview about when I was the U.S. ambassador, and there was a big delegation by—led by the secretary of Health and Human Services, Tommy Thompson, that came to Gaborone, Botswana to look at the HIV/AIDS situation in early April of 1990—sorry, early April of 2002—and Tony Fauci was on the delegation. And now, I see him on television all the time.

Q: He's sort of the spokesperson for people who want to know what we're going to do about the present pandemic.

LANGE: Yeah, exactly. And he's stayed that way, famously so, in the Trump Administration and now in the Biden Administration. And when I was doing pandemic influenza and also when I was the deputy global AIDS coordinator at the start of PEPFAR, I got to know Tony even better. One of the satisfying things in some respects from all of my work on global health is I know so many of the actors on a first-name basis. Having been the deputy global AIDS coordinator I, of course, knew—I've known—the global AIDS coordinators over the years, including Deborah Birx, who during COVID-19 ended up leading the White House task force under Vice President Pence for the COVID response. So, I just know a lot of these people working in public health, and it's been interesting to see so many engaged and to be in contact with so many of those who are engaged on this very important pandemic response, including my friend Tedros. Dr. Tedros and I have known each other since, as I said earlier, 2011, when I met him in Addis Ababa. He's a very good guy, very friendly guy, but at the same time really knows public health and has a strong perspective on the needs of developing countries.

One of the things I find kind of frustrating too often in global health discussions, the people who are talking have very little experience in developing countries, and yet are trying to opine on what should be done in developing countries in terms of the public health programs, and it can be kind of frustrating at times in these discussions that take place in Geneva or inside the beltway of Washington. And that's where I've always tried to bring in that country focus, because that's just what was drilled into me in my tours in Togo, Tanzania and Botswana.

Q: So, well, do you think we've pretty well covered this?

LANGE: Yeah, that's really it from my perspective up to today. I'm sure I may have future adventures, but that's where I stand right now.

Q: Okay. Well, how about we'll leave it at this. If you've got more to say at any time, you know how to get in touch.

LANGE: Yeah. And do you have any advice, or do you want to have a separate conversation, once I get the manuscript, which I assume Heather will send me maybe in six months or something?

Q: Yeah.

LANGE: Any advice on putting that together? Because you had told me at the beginning, I could put in anything—I could make any changes that I deemed necessary.

Q: Oh, absolutely. I mean, it's your account and we rely on you mainly more to expand than to diminish because you never know what people are going to really be interested in or working on.

LANGE: Yeah.

Q: So, more is better; more is better than less.

LANGE: All right. And the tone and what we've done here worked out fine in terms of—because I've never done an oral history before, of course, so I'm just—

Q: Oh, yeah.

LANGE: I think what happens to everybody is when they see what they said orally in print they get a little nervous because it sounds so different.

Q: Well, yeah. But it's stronger. That's the thing, you know. Rather than a well-written official document or whatever you want, I mean, it has that personal account there that is so important. And it does make it stronger.

LANGE: Yeah, I think you're right. In fact, that's where—I've been in touch with Ambassador Christopher McMullen, my friend who I suggested to you, and he did his oral history with you, I think maybe even over a year ago. And he and I have just been singing your praises. You're the one who really has been driving this oral history effort for the State Department, and it is so important for historians to be able to look back at these things. And as you said, you never know what people are interested in. And you're the one who really created this. You deserve huge, huge credit for it.

Q: Well, we've got people who have been doing remarkable things, and I mean, as a group the Foreign Service essentially, but others, too, are a remarkable group. And they don't get much credit for what they do. And this I hope will, one, give them more exposure, but also not just the exposure but also what they did or what you all are doing.

LANGE: Yeah. And in fact, my interview changed over time—from what it would have been if we'd have finished this a year ago, before COVID, actually.

Q: Oh, yeah.

LANGE: You know, because once COVID hit, I really wanted to make sure that my discussion which we did in our last session, last week, on my role as special representative on avian and pandemic influenza was very full of details that were relevant, because I think it's the kind of thing that historians will care about because here we had all these warnings of a potential pandemic and even though it never materialized from the H5N1 bird flu virus, we knew that this was inevitable, and yet so many governments in the world, including the United States, didn't respond properly to COVID-19 based on lessons that should have been learned. The public health experts knew what those lessons were, but they couldn't get the higher-level attention, and it's really been sad. But that's why I wanted to go into more detail on what was done, even back when I was working in the department, 2006-2009.

Q: Ah, yes, well. I thank you so much. And look, don't feel this is the end of it. If you've got more to say as you're continuing your work and doing, come on back.

LANGE: (Laughs) Thanks. I appreciate that. And I'll look forward to getting the transcript and work on it then—and I may very well be back. You never know because I'm still working part-time on this.

And Stu, it's just been great to get to know you. I really deeply appreciate what you've done for me through this interview process, as well as what you've done for the Foreign Service. I give you huge credit.

Q: Well, I think people deserve credit for work they've done, and we're doing it.

LANGE: You're doing it. Great. Much, much appreciated. So, thanks a lot, Stu, and I hope we can see each other sometime, in person, sometime soon.

Q: Yeah. Without our masks on.

LANGE: (Laughs) Exactly. All right, take care and let's keep in touch.

Q: Take care, John, Bye-bye.

LANGE: Thanks. Bye.

End of interview