

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

CHRIS MILLIGAN

*Interviewed by: Carol Peasley
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is February 2, 2022. This is Carol Peasley, and this is interview number one with Chris Milligan.

So, first Chris, we are delighted to have the chance to get your oral history into the collection at ADST (Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training). Maybe we could start with some background on yourself: where you were born, maybe when you were born and where you grew up and some thoughts about your family as well.

Early Background, Childhood, Family, and Education

MILLIGAN: Thank you, Carol. I was born on September 15, 1965, in Vancouver, Canada. I never lived there because I was adopted at birth by the Milligan family. In December, my parents, who lived in Victoria, came across to Vancouver on a ferry boat, gathered me up, and I came home in time for the Christmas holidays to live with my mom, my dad and my older brother, Peter. My father, who passed away two years ago, was a gastroenterologist. He was born in Cumberland, a small coal mining town in the heart of the Comox Valley in Central Vancouver Island but grew up in Victoria. Cumberland is still quite small today. Most people today would still refer to it as a village. His father William emigrated from Scotland and worked as a printer. His mother Amy was of Italian descent. I lived for four years in Victoria. My younger brother, Mark, was born there during that time.

Q: Then you were Canadians?

MILLIGAN: Yes, my older brother, my father and I were Canadians, but my younger brother had dual citizenship and my mother retained her American citizenship. She is from Baltimore. My father was truly a self-made man. Very principled and hard-working, he left Cumberland to study at the University of Portland. After that, he received a scholarship to the Johns Hopkins Medical School, where he graduated and while working at the Johns Hopkins hospital met my mother, who was also working there as well. They

married in 1960 and in 1962 moved to Victoria, residing there until 1969. I was a Canadian citizen by birth, so was my older brother and my father. I became a U.S. citizen in April of 1979.

We left Victoria and lived for a year in Kingstown, Ontario. Ontario is bitterly cold in the winter. I can still remember the snow piles and icy streets. In 1970, we moved to Baltimore. My father being a medical professional, Baltimore was where one would want to be because of the Johns Hopkins hospital.

Q: So, he was at Hopkins then. Was he teaching or practicing at the hospital or—?

MILLIGAN: Both. He was at the hospital but also affiliated with the university. He was an assistant professor of medicine at the gastroenterology division and practicing medicine, and later went into private practice.

Q: And you said you have an older brother?

MILLIGAN: I have an older brother, Peter, and a younger brother Mark. Neither of them pursued a career in international affairs like I did. I say that because I read in advance that one of the questions in these interviews is what motivated you, why do you think you picked a career in international relations? They both have visited me overseas and they appreciate what I do. But we've followed careers that took us in different directions. My older brother works in sales and my younger brother lives in Texas and works with a software startup. I think this speaks highly of my parents. When I was growing up, most would assume that if a doctor had three sons, then one of the sons would take on the family practice. But we were never pressured to do so. We were encouraged and had the freedom to pursue what we wanted to. I am very grateful to my parents that they supported us all in that way.

Q: That's fantastic. After you moved to Baltimore, did you go to public schools or were you in private schools?

MILLIGAN: In Baltimore, we lived just inside the city in a neighborhood called Homeland. It is a quiet residential neighborhood with elm lined streets and houses built in the 30s and 40s. During the Seventies, it was a sort of idyllic place to grow up. The neighborhood kids would run out of the houses and roam around the neighborhood all day, playing basketball in the alley or hunting crayfish in ponds we called "the lakes". Of course, you had to be home by 5:00. Each mom had their own whistle, bell or signal to get the kids inside. If you ever had a problem, you knew where to stop by, which neighbor you could turn to for help. It was a very protective environment to grow up, although it was a bubble in many ways. This was the Seventies.

I went to the Catholic grade school that was at the top of the street. It was about a ten- or fifteen-minute walk; we walked to school. Ever since a very early age, we walked by ourselves to school, or we'd go with packs of kids up to the school and back.

Q: Did you also go to a Catholic high school then too?

MILLIGAN: I did. I grew up a Catholic.

Q: Yes. I'm not really pursuing the religious side of it so much, but I know that Baltimore has important Catholic high schools.

MILLIGAN: Yes, it is interesting. My parents gave me the option of going to any high school I wanted to. I considered quite a few, such as Gilman and Friends, but I really valued the educational environment at the local Jesuit high school, called Loyola High School. Looking back now, I recognize that the four years I spent there did more for my educational growth than any other experience. It was at Loyola that I truly learned how to write. We were all taught how to organize one's thoughts, present an argument, and how to write and think clearly. This disciplined academic environment even included studying Latin. I found Loyola more challenging than my studies in college or graduate school. This was the period in my life when my thinking and perspective just increased enormously; my horizons expanded.

Q: That's very interesting. And I suspect that influenced you in your choice of university?

MILLIGAN: One would think so because it would appear to be a natural trajectory. You would assume that going to Georgetown was a logical step, but this wasn't really the case. In fact, I did not consider attending Georgetown at first. It was in some ways an afterthought. When considering which college to attend, I wanted to go off to another city. I have always wanted to explore; I've always wanted to travel. Attending college would allow me to move out on my own and be independent. When I first considered Georgetown, I thought that was not far enough away from Baltimore. Initially, I visited universities like Northwestern, University of Chicago, Brown and Columbia.

Why Georgetown came onto the radar screen was due to my mom's advice. She thought I should consider Georgetown, noting that "there's a School of Foreign Service, and it sounds like something that you would enjoy." I thought, "Well, that's interesting". I had never heard of the School of Foreign Service. I looked it up and she was right—it sounded exactly like what I'd like to do and study.

I applied to seven universities and six of my applications were successful. In the end, it came down to a choice between Georgetown and Columbia. I took the train up to Columbia and spent a few days there. They placed me with some students. At that time, Columbia was in a very dicey, rough neighborhood. Going off campus was dangerous. I thought, "Boy, New York's fascinating, but I'm just not old enough for it yet". So, I opted for Georgetown even though it was close to home.

Q: Had you traveled much as a kid before you went to university, or did you have any international overseas travel experience other than, of course, your Canada roots?

MILLIGAN: Very little. I had always wanted to though. Growing up, we would pack up the station wagon for the family beach vacation. We'd pack up the big station wagon with everything one needed and off we went to Bethany Beach. We also took family vacations to Florida, New England and once back to Canada. In high school, I did get the opportunity to travel to Europe with other students—to Spain and France.

Q: So, when you read about the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown, you realized that was something you'd want to do?

MILLIGAN: Yes. Now looking back and thinking about this interview, I wonder what it was at that time that motivated me to study international relations. Perhaps it is something inherent—in our makeup that leads us in certain directions. Even as a very young child, I wanted to go out, roam about and explore. I remember very well when we moved from Canada to the United States in 1970. The moving van pulled up in front of our new home. As the moving van was unloaded and everyone was engrossed with arranging boxes, I just went off on my own. I was five. I spent the afternoon exploring the new neighborhood. After some time, I realized I was lost and couldn't find my way back home. I saw a kid playing in his backyard and befriended him. His parents finally figured out where the new family lived who were moving in. I say this because perhaps the sense of traveling, the sense of adventure, the sense of exploring, of getting to see what's out in this world—perhaps that is something we carry inside of ourselves. And so, although I didn't have much international travel, I did have that desire to explore and find new adventures.

Q: Okay. That's good. So, you did then take off to the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown in 1983?

MILLIGAN: Correct. I must confess something. The other advantage of the School of Foreign Service was the lack of a math requirement. My math skills were never the best. Perhaps that's inherent as well? So, going to Georgetown was a slam dunk.

Our class in the School of Foreign Service was small--a little more than 200 students. As a result, you got to know your fellow students pretty well. I was fortunate. I spent three years at Georgetown, and one year studying in Paris at *Sciences-Po*. Georgetown has an amazing academic environment! We were exposed to some of the great thinkers of the time--the great minds of international affairs. For example, I attended a seminar taught by Jeanne Kirkpatrick and I was fortunate to be one of a handful of students in Madeleine Albright's Senior Seminar. At Georgetown, I was able to take economic courses and grew to appreciate viewing the world through an economic lens.

Q: Did you have any classes with Carol Lancaster?

MILLIGAN: No, I didn't. Unfortunately, our paths didn't cross. A loss for me—what an amazing career she had. Georgetown presented many opportunities. During my sophomore year, a group of students had organized themselves and dubbed themselves the International Leadership Foundation, which is not to be confused with another

organization with the same name today. After successfully receiving support from sponsors, we organized a two-week trip to study the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Traveling to Jordan and Syria, we met with a broad range of societal leaders, political officials, communities in refugee camps, etc. The following year, the group traveled to Israel. Unfortunately, I could not participate as I was studying at *Sciences Po* that year. The trip made me appreciate the complexities of international issues and the impact of U.S foreign policy decisions on distant communities.

Q: Was French your language in high school and in college, that you focused on?

MILLIGAN: Yes, it was. But no matter how good your high school or even college French is, it's not at the level required to study at *Sciences Po*. All our course work, from lectures to papers and exams, was in French. Interestingly, although I had really identified *Sciences Po* as the school I wanted to attend, the Georgetown language faculty discouraged me from applying. They recommended studying in a program in Lille under the assumption that students who went to Paris would not have as immersive an experience as they would in smaller cities and towns. I understand that but did not heed their guidance. Instead, I took a leave of absence, and I went to *Sciences Po* via a Sweetbriar program. Under this program, students would perfect their French by living with a family and studying for a month in the town of Tours in preparation for the *Sciences Po* entrance exam.

Q: And you were with French students, so they weren't special classes for the foreign students?

MILLIGAN: All the class lectures were in French with French students. The written papers were in French; the oral exams were in French. You were participating in the regular classes with the French students. At the time, you could opt into a subscription note taking service. After paying a small fee, you would receive bound copies of all the lectures at the end of the semester. While I was in class frantically trying to write everything down correctly in French, it was reassuring to know that I would receive the bound notes as well.

The whole year came down to a written exam and a fifteen-minute oral exam. I have to say, the oral exam was nerve wracking. After a whole year of work, attending lectures, writing papers and sitting through a written exam, the result would depend upon a fifteen-minute oral exam. Here's the way it worked. You walked into a room and at the head of the room a professor would be sitting behind a desk. On top of the desk were little pieces of folded paper. Each little piece of paper contained a theme, the exam's topic. You walked up to the desk, selected a piece of paper, and unfolded it to discover the topic. You then had fifteen minutes to prepare your exposé on the theme. And...it had to be done in the classic French way of presenting an argument; a correctly structured summary paragraph, two paragraphs that build the argument followed by the conclusion. All of this would be difficult enough. To make it worse, while you were at the back of the room trying to think clearly about what you knew on the random topic you selected and how you would present it, the student ahead of you is being interrogated at the same time

by the professor. You have to really focus so as not to pay any attention to this poor student who's probably about to crack under the pressure as you scribble down your own thoughts. Then, you're next. Up you go. You give your discourse trying not to make grammatical mistakes in French. You feel a bit relieved but then you have to field questions the professor has on the specific subject, or any other matter. If you are not able to answer correctly, or worse, if you say, "I don't know," then you have failed. You duck and weave and dance your way through the interrogation. I passed, but not without a lot of ducking and weaving.

Q: No better skill for a diplomat.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: Wow. So, what kinds of classes? Was it more on political theory or was there anything that was development oriented or was it more on international relations?

MILLIGAN: At Georgetown and *Sciences Po*, the classes were mostly on international relations and economics. At *Sciences Po*, the coursework naturally had a European focus; the French economy, the EU (European Union) and European integration, and those types of subjects. At Georgetown, there were mandatory courses on economics and on political geography. I really enjoyed the political geography course; it was fascinating and got us beyond the borders of Europe and the United States. I took a two-semester course on the history of the Middle East, but I didn't really have any specific courses on the development.

Q: Right. So, you finished up then in 1987, graduated from Georgetown, and then you—what did you decide to do next?

MILLIGAN: After graduation, many of my fellow students were going straight to graduate school. I didn't want to go to graduate school simply without a specific reason or because the momentum of my university studies brought me there. I thought I would like to take a break first. I really wanted to get overseas experience before going back to graduate school. I had considered signing up as a Peace Corps volunteer but understood that the application process would take a year followed by a two-year commitment. You know when you are the age I was then, that seemed like a considerable amount of time, and one didn't necessarily have a lot of patience.

I had learned about an internship program through CIPRA at Georgetown. CIPRA was the Center for Immigration Policy and Refugee Assistance. CIPRA ran a program placing students in internships with agencies assisting refugees. Here with graduation looming and I had not lined up my next thing. I interviewed with CIPRA, and they offered me a position in the Philippines. Originally, I wanted to go to Thailand or Kenya because I knew more about these places and didn't know much about the Philippines. CIPRA arranged an internship with ICM. ICM is now known as IOM, the International Organization for Migration and is part of the United Nations System. ICM is responsible for the management of many UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees) refugee camps around the world. Although it was the 80s, refugees were still fleeing Vietnam in boats, and many were heading to the Philippines. The Philippine First Asylum Refugee Camp was located on the very, very remote island of Palawan.

When I was selected for the internship, my parents were not completely thrilled. This was early 1987. The Philippines has just gone through a bit of political turmoil. People Power was still new. The Philippines was very unstable; many political candidates were killed during the election period. I was living in a group house and studying for my finals when my mom called and said that she would come by for a visit. I thought, “That’s odd,” because she knew it was finals and I should be studying. Mom showed up with groceries for the house and in the course of conversations said, “Well, I’m the member of the family who’s been sent to try to convince you not to go to the Philippines.” She presented facts about the turmoil and political violence. And I said, “Well, sorry, I appreciate your concern but I’m going. This is going to be an amazing experience. I don’t want to turn it down.” And off I went. I graduated and flew off to Manila. But to my surprise, there were two internship positions: one in Manila and the other in Palawan. And I wasn’t given the slot in Palawan. Instead, I was asked if I’d take the bureaucratic office job in Manila, basically doing paperwork. I tried it for a week or two, but I was unhappy.

Manila in the 80s was a challenging place to live and work. I had a small room downtown and would walk to work. My walk required me to pass through a part of Manila called Ermita. Ermita was at that time the red-light district, full of brothels. Also at that time, U.S. servicemen were based in the Philippines. I had to walk through the streets of Ermita witnessing the worst of human nature. The brothels were full of very young servicemen. Of course, being a young American myself and walking through the red-light district, many would assume that I was in search of a brothel as well and I was continually approached and aggressively propositioned. It was not what I had signed up for; not only a bureaucratic office job but also having to be exposed to the one of the worst sides of Manila city life every day. Particularly when I wanted the experience of living and working in a refugee camp. I brought this up Andrew Bruce, who was running ICM Philippines at the time, and much to my relief he agreed I could go down and work in the refugee camp in Puerto Princesa, Palawan.

The Philippine staff in Manila thought that I was nuts. Puerto Princesa was the end of the world in their eyes. It was as remote as one could be in the Philippines. Why would I leave Manila? They said, “Be careful Chris, it’s so remote that monkeys run all over the airport.”

Q: Is this an island?

MILLIGAN: It is. It is perhaps one of the furthest—one of the most southern islands in the Philippines. Palawan is west of Mindanao—between the Sulu Sea and the South China Sea. What a difference from the big city of Manila. I rented a bamboo hut, called a nipa hut, and drove a Jeepney to shuttle the refugees to the port or airport. My day would begin by pumping water and carrying buckets to fill a large plastic garbage can and then boiling and filtering some of the water. After a bucket shower, I had a short walk to the

refugee camp. At the camp, I was responsible for sanitation and for managing all the new arrivals coming to camp. I eventually oversaw the x-ray lab although I had no experience in the matter. Someone had to do it. In the evenings, I taught English. I helped Sister Lizzie, the Australian midwife, right up to the point of delivering babies. I was not actually in the room, but I learned a lot more about delivering babies than I ever would have. Those days in the refugee camp on the South Sulu Sea, well, they were in a way magical.

One time we were informed by headquarters in Manila that a boat of refugees leaving Vietnam had become stranded on a small island in the Spratly Islands. Territorial jurisdiction over the Spratly Islands was disputed by China, Vietnam, the Philippines and others. We made a plan to rescue them. We drove south for hours through the dense jungle on muddy roads to the small town of Quezon located on the southwest coast of the island. There, we rented a wooden fishing boat and set out into the open expanse of the South China Sea. It was risky. We set off during monsoon season to locate a small speck of an island more than a hundred miles out in the South China Sea without modern navigational equipment. We found the island, picked up the refugees, brought them back to the camp.

Q: Wow. That was a pretty intense experience, but certainly got you ready for a lot of your later USAID (United States Agency for International Development) experiences.

MILLIGAN: It did. I actually wrote my graduate school applications from the refugee camp, using the office's old manual office typewriter. My application essays discussed working in the refugee camp in the context of global relations. I thought to myself, "Boy, if this doesn't set me apart from other applicants nothing will?" I was accepted into SAIS (The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies) and was present with an option. SAIS Admissions said, "You can do two years in Washington, or if you like, we can give you a fellowship to study in Bologna. The fellowship will cover most of your tuition." "Wow," I thought, "Are you kidding me? That's fantastic. My Georgetown years had already given me enough time in Washington and now I had the opportunity of studying in Italy for a year. Off I went for my first year at SAIS at the Bologna Center in Italy.

Q: But you only did one year in Bologna?

MILLIGAN: It's a one-year program followed by a second year in Washington. In between the two years, I spent the summer on a State Department internship in Djibouti. By the time I began my studies in Bologna, I knew I wanted to focus on development studies. Living in the Philippines, working in two cultures, the Vietnamese and Filipino, really got me thinking more about development. Why do some nations progress and others appear not to? SAIS had a specific development studies program called Social Change and Development. It was run by Dr. Grace Goodell. She, well you probably remember those professors in your life that have really had an impact on you--she was one. An energetic, inquisitive and inspiring person, who motivated you to question

things, explore different viewpoints and dig deeper beyond the superficial academic cliches.

Q: Wow. Fantastic.

So, when you were in Bologna, were the faculty from SAIS?

MILLIGAN: Yes. It was a different educational environment from *Sciences Po*. At *Sciences Po*, we were American students studying within a French system and with a French student body. The Bologna Center was a SAIS campus. SAIS also maintains a campus in Nanjing as well as other locations. Therefore, the courses were all in English. They were SAIS courses. The Bologna Center had a very international student body. Most of the international students were from Europe, while a few others were from Africa and Asia.

Q: So, it does provide, then, an important different perspective when you're doing some of those international relations and political courses. You've got students that probably have different viewpoints?

MILLIGAN: Absolutely. I was also able to take non-Eurocentric courses, such as a course on Africa with a professor who had worked closely with Ruth First and had insights on the anti-apartheid movement.

Q: And I hope you also learned to do some Italian cooking while you were there.

MILLIGAN: The funny thing is, I really didn't take advantage of all I should have at the time. I really focused on my studies. Sure, I learned to make a mean tiramisu...but in hindsight, looking back at my academic experiences, perhaps I should have studied less and traveled more. Dean, my husband, was shocked that I had spent a year in Italy and had never been to Rome. I should have left the library more.

Q: (Laughs) That's a wonderful story. Then you came back to Washington for the second year of the Hopkins program, and that's when you really got into the social change and development part presumably.

MILLIGAN: That's right. Between those academic years, I spent the summer on an internship with the State Department in Djibouti. This was important. I was able to experience what it was like working in an embassy and understand the responsibilities of the political officer and the economic officer. Embassy Djibouti was of course quite small. As an intern, I was assigned some basic paperwork to do. When that paperwork was done, I had the freedom to explore Djibouti. In doing so, I learned a lot about the Afar people, nomadic herdsman that live just north of the Somali people in an area called the Afar Triangle. After interviewing several Afar, I wrote a short piece about Afar social structures. Interestingly, when I returned to Washington for my studies, the phone rang one morning, and it was the *National Geographic*. They were preparing for an upcoming article on the Horn of Africa and had called the embassy asking for Afar experts. They

said over the phone, “We contacted the embassy and they said that you’re the national expert on the Afar people”. I said, “You’ve got to be kidding. I was just there for three months.” I had researched Afar social structures because what I found fascinating was the relationship between their social structures and their physical environment. No one else has done research on the Afar for quite a long time. The Afar live in one of the most inhospitable environments in the world. It’s a desert with daily temperatures of 120 degrees, no water, and yet they survive due to their social organization. In any case, *National Geographic* asked me to come in and ground truth an upcoming article. Funny how all of a sudden you become an expert after a couple of months of work.

Q: So, when you were at the embassy then, as an intern learning about the Afar people, did you then decide whether you wanted to go into the State Department or USAID or what were you thinking your next career move when you left SAIS would be?

MILLIGAN: The State Department experience was eye opening. I saw how State Department officers have a heavy reporting responsibility, more than I had thought. Besides State officers, there was a USAID official in Djibouti. He got out every day, traveled to all the corners of the country meeting local officials and communities. He seemed to know the country better. He took me along on his field trips while the State officers were writing cables. At that time, I thought, “Boy, if I had to choose, I think I would go with USAID as a career. If I truly want a job reporting, I’d rather be a journalist, not a political officer.” I don’t mean to discredit the work of political officers and economic officers. I have seen firsthand how their work is invaluable to our foreign policy goals. And I did take the State Department Foreign Service exam while trying to find a way into USAID. One always must pursue all options when one doesn’t have a job.

Q: Right. And I have your paperwork in front of me and I know that you entered through the Presidential Management Intern Program. Was that—is that applying to a specific agency or is that more generic and then you—once you’re selected you then determine which agency you go to?

USAID Career Begins -- Presidential Management Intern (PMI)

MILLIGAN: Once you’re selected in the PMI program, you have to interview with various agencies to find a position. You are responsible for finding a position, and I was very fortunate. I knew I wanted to work for USAID. The agency had a hiring freeze. Consequently, the only way I could find into a career position was through the PMI program. The PMI program is now called the PMF program. It has a competitive selection process. One has to apply at the beginning of one’s second year of graduate school. I credit my roommate Bert Ulrich who flagged this opportunity to me. “Yeah, let’s just do this,” I said, although it seemed a bit early to think about a job. We were both selected. Then we had to contact different agencies and inquire about vacancies. At USAID, the office that was hiring PMIs at that time was the Office of Housing and Urban Development Programs. This was one of the most entrepreneurial offices at USAID so no wonder they had taken advantage of the PMI program to bring in new talent. I, however, had zero experience in housing policy or urban affairs. But I said, “If they’re going hire

me, this will get me into USAID. I'll take it." The program didn't begin until September of that year, and of course, I had bills to pay over the summer. The Office of Housing and Programs kindly picked me up as a short-term hire until my paperwork went through. I didn't know how lucky I was. It turns out that working for Peter Kim and his office was a once in a lifetime professional experience.

Q: Wow. Even though you hadn't really had any background at all in that subject matter. Interesting.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: The PMI program has been a great recruitment mechanism for USAID. I know a lot of outstanding people who advanced very well in AID over the years, including yourself, who came in through the PMI program. Is there a secret to the success rate? Is it just because it's so selective that the people are so good that success is inevitable? And I wonder, is there anything that differentiates it that makes it so successful in terms of people?

MILLIGAN: Perhaps there are several reasons. First, it is quite selective. Secondly, you enter the program with a cohort and form a network. You know as well as I do that is one of the things that is essential for success in a Washington career is a network. I joined the PMI program with others who went on to important positions in the interagency. Colleagues such as Kelly Clements, who was legendary for her leadership at PRM and now is the Deputy High Commissioner at UNHCR in Geneva. Roland de Marcellus, who's Deputy Assistant Secretary at State's Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs. Susan Reichle, who was the USAID Counselor and was in the PMI class behind me. You form a network of support and contacts, an interagency support group.

Q: Right. And interesting that the network involves multiple years of PMI/PMF cohorts. I don't think USAID has been able to do that with its own recruitment classes.

So, the Office of Housing. They picked you up on a short-term basis during that summer, and so then you learned something about the housing program.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: Quick immersion.

MILLIGAN: I believe the management philosophy that that office had was to attract talent and then the expertise could be developed. They did an excellent job of it.

Q: So, what part of the Office of Housing did you go into? What responsibilities did you have?

MILLIGAN: I have to say, my first assignments were not the glamorous ones. Honestly, I was a little bit disappointed, but I thought I'd hang in there. I was first assigned to work

on operating expense budgets. My parents were very excited to hear about my first day at work and what I would be focusing on. When they asked, I informed them, “Well, apparently I’m in charge of the expense budgets for nine regional offices.” My mom said, “Did you tell them about your math skills?” (Both laugh) Nevertheless, through the magic of Lotus and other software, I was able to make it work. No, it wasn’t glamorous, but understanding how the budget process worked was an invaluable education. I also became quite an expert on a credit mechanism called the Housing Guarantee. I assisted the bidding auctions, engaging with U.S. banks. The Office of Housing leveraged U.S. capital market funding to address urban poverty issues overseas. Many developing countries had significant investment needs in their urban sectors but couldn’t borrow funds at affordable rates. I think you remember at that time, interest rates in the eighties were around 8, 10, and 12 percent. Developing countries with poorer credit ratings, even countries like Chile, would be looking at interest rates of 20, 40, 60 percent on the international capital markets. Their governments couldn’t access funding required to invest in programs for their urban poor. The Housing Guaranty program provided a U.S. government guarantee on funds that governments would borrow for the purpose of improving the lives of their urban poor. The governments would on lend these funds to local institutions to generate low-income mortgages or urban grading such as water systems. It was an innovative program. I was able to see firsthand how the bidding auctions worked, how banks would come in and offer different interest rates and loan packages. So, besides doing the mundane work of making sure everyone had enough OE expenses to keep running, I was able to see the mechanics of housing finance and capital markets.

Q: Do I recall that the Office of Housing also—when you say OE operating expense money, didn’t they generate their own revenue that supported at least part of the office out of the fees earned? I always thought they had their own source of revenue as well.

MILLIGAN: There was a modest program budget as well as an OE budget. But they were separate. Besides the funding that was included as line items in the agency’s annual appropriation, the program budget portion would be supported by the client USAID missions. Again, these were modest amounts. In Zimbabwe for example, the program budget was around \$100,000 over the course of a year or two. The program budget would be used to create the conditions necessary for the private sector to invest in low-income housing which, in turn, create a local market and generate a greater impact from the loan. The program would set conditions precedent that would have to be met before any funds could be borrowed. These certain conditions could be things like moving to market-based interest rates or setting appropriate housing standards. Once the conditions precedent was met, the governments would qualify for a tranche of funding. Some countries like Chile not only borrowed funding to generate housing but would create a revolving fund. Chile borrowed \$10 million and generated about \$100 million worth of low-income housing. More importantly, it spurred the development of a low-income housing market that attracted private sector investment.

Q: So, in Washington, it was the Office of Housing and Urban Development, and there were the regional offices. Did things operate the way the rest of AID did with a regional

bureau and then missions with certain levels of delegations of authority and independence, was it more or less the same in the Office of Housing with its regional offices, or were they more autonomous, less autonomous? What were the dynamics of how Washington worked with the field?

MILLIGAN: At that time, the regional offices were more autonomous when it came to day-to-day operations. When I joined USAID, we relied on phone calls and faxes. There wasn't email. There would be a weekly Washington call to the regional office, and everyone would gather around the speaker phone. There didn't seem to be a Washington-field tension. The real intense dialogue with Washington would occur during a regular program review when Washington leadership would come to the regional office. It would entail an intensive series of daylong meetings. The back and forth with the field also occurred during the project approval process.

There was more tension between the functional bureau, the Private Enterprise Bureau, and the regional bureaus as well as tension between USAID mission and the corresponding regional housing development office. The regional office would have regional programs that engaged entities in countries with bilateral USAID missions. One had to be conscious of that and make sure that the bilateral USAID missions were always aware of the status of regional programs that engaged their counterparts. Communication was so important. But with respect to the relationship with Washington, the Director of the Office of Housing and Urban Development, Peter Kim, always had your back as long as you didn't let him down. Therefore, once you were overseas, you had a considerable amount of autonomy.

Q: Yes; when we get to your assignments then let's talk about that because I think there may be some more generic lessons on how to operate.

Just going back again to the office in Washington, Peter Kim had a wonderful record of hiring lots of great people into the agency, including a wonderful record on diversity. And I'm wondering, when you were there in the Office of Housing was it a diverse operation in terms of the people there? And was it more so than other parts of the agency? Or did you have any observations about that during the time you were there?

MILLIGAN: Looking back, yes, the Office of Housing was quite a diverse working environment. Not only diverse, but inclusive as well. I can't say whether it was more so than other offices at USAID although I assume it was. USAID offices were scattered through and around the State Department and Rosslyn. The Office of Housing in a building north of the State Department, was off on its own. Being a junior officer, I didn't interact extensively with many other USAID offices, so I am not able to say how diverse the rest of the Agency was.

Q: You were in universal north, weren't you?

MILLIGAN: We were in SA-2. This was just across Virginia Avenue from the State Department. But as you noted earlier, Peter Kim was a leader in many ways, and one was

in recruiting, retaining, and promoting a wide range of diverse and talented individuals. Peter was well loved, admired, and very trusted. He had become an institution when I joined the agency because of his ability to “work Washington” and advance USAID’s development mission. He had been with USAID since 1966. Peter believed in people’s ability, and he hired you for your ability. You feared him if you did not have your facts right, and he inspired you. You didn’t want to make a mistake. Keen-eyed, he didn’t miss important details. Like anyone you admired, you didn’t want to let him down. You didn’t want to lose his trust. I think that’s the way he viewed humankind. He believed in their ability and he believed that if given the chance, people could improve their life. That’s the philosophy he took when addressing the needs of the urban poor. He realized that if given the opportunity, the urban poor could improve their lives and their communities. What I find interesting is that today we are once again rediscovering what Peter knew--that development really is about building commitment and capacity. That it is about enabling people to improve their lives. That it is about investing in local organizations. Peter was a hard negotiator with governments. I mentioned the conditions precedent—the policy reforms governments had to undertake to be eligible for funding. When we had difficulty getting governments to meet those condition precedents, we knew we could call on Peter if necessary. He would be able to hold governments to their commitments to address urban poverty. He would convince them to enact policy changes that enabled the energy of the private sector to invest in the urban poor. And that’s something that we’re once again rediscovering, the importance of creating an enabling environment for the private sector to address development challenges. At the end of the day, the Housing Guaranty Program generated over \$2 billion of private sector funding at very little cost to the U.S. government.

Q: And it mobilized people to solve their own problems in many ways, for example by using housing guarantees to provide home improvement loans.

MILLIGAN: Absolutely.

Q: Simply giving people resources so they could make the changes that they saw they needed to make their lives better, which is—

MILLIGAN: in a way obvious but...

Q: —sort of a very revolutionary idea.

MILLIGAN: Not only would it make their lives better, but it also moves a large number of families, entire communities, from the informal sector into the formal sector. When families would access a mortgage for a house or home improvement means, they would also open up a bank account for the first time. It was a very satisfying program to work on because you could see the progress. Over the course of several years, you could witness entire neighborhoods change and the livelihoods of their families improve.

Q: Indeed. I think it’s still a program area of USAID that has not been documented well enough. Perhaps you, Chris, should write the definitive book about it.

MILLIGAN: That's true.

The other thing that we were now once again rediscovering, is the importance of local organizations. The current term now is "localization." This is not new of course. The billions of dollars made available through housing guaranty loans went through local savings and loans, local institutions, and local NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). They also strengthened local governments and the local private sector. We didn't hire a contractor or an international NGO to administer the loan; we used the local financial institutions.

Q: Right. So, again, I think it's a very important history and a lot of lessons learned there.

Looking at your CV, I see there's one thing here that was not part of your Office of Housing responsibilities, but it says something about Rwanda. Did you go there?

MILLIGAN: Yes. It came, as many opportunities do at USAID, as a surprise. I was sitting at my desk in the Office of Housing and OFDA when the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, the humanitarian assistance branch of USAID, issued a call for someone who spoke French, who's worked with refugees and knew basic shelter issues. I thought, "Okay, that describes me". Within a couple of days, I was on an airplane flying to Rwanda. Fortunately, I accompanied a real professional; his name was LeVonne Harrell from OFDA. We were traveling to Rwanda during the civil war, just before the genocide which occurred in April of 1994. The Tutsis, who had been displaced from Rwanda during past violence, had formed the Rwanda Patriotic Front. They were now pushing into the northern part of the country and had occupied about a third of it. Hundreds of thousands of Hutus fled their homes in these areas creating a considerable humanitarian assistance need. OFDA was tasked to respond.

I remember flying over Rwanda and arriving in Kigali. We studied the Hutus and the Tutsis in our political geography course at Georgetown. Rwanda, despite being considerably rural with a population largely dependent on subsistence agriculture, was the most densely populated country in Africa. Flying over the country, one saw a carpet of small landholdings and could realize how resource scarcity could fuel conflict. We landed in Kigali which was under a constant evening curfew. In the following days, LeVonne Harrell and Gary Nelson, the mission director, and I traveled up north to the areas where the Hutu displaced communities had fled. Fortunately, we did not encounter direct fighting. In hindsight, we were lucky. I think at one point we crossed the front lines in error. It was a fluid boundary.

I remember in one community, we were talking to many of the Hutus to assess their needs. They told us that the Tutsi forces came so quickly that they could only grab a few things. If they had two arms, they could pick up two of their children. They couldn't take everyone. And as for their possessions, they only could grab what they could carry, such as a few pots. These people had absolutely nothing. Some of them sought shelter in school rooms. Rural schools were made of mud thatch. I was standing among them when

we heard the boom, boom, boom, of mortar fire coming down from the surrounding hills. I thought, Oh, boy. I'm not going to panic because these people have been running from the Tutsi forces and they know when one has to run. I won't start running until they do. A gentleman looked at me and said in French, "That's the attack." And then I hear this enormous and deafening boom, boom, boom, boom, and he looks at me and he says, "Ah, that's the counterattack." I knew then it would be okay. (Laughs)

So, we finished our assessment. We arrived safely back to Kigali. But to my surprise, LeVonne said, "I have to fly immediately back to Washington. There's been a natural disaster in the Caribbean, they need me to go there. We've done the needs assessment. There's 300,000 people that are in dire need of shelter and other things. I've put in the order. There will be four airplanes flying. You have to stay behind for a month and run the airlift." I looked at him incredulously and said, "Run the airlift?" I was new to the Agency and still a bit green. I was in my twenties, and I'm like, "Run the airlift?" What a challenge. But this happens over and over in one's career at USAID. You are asked to do things and are stretched in ways you never thought possible. I remember staying in the Hotel de Milles Collines lying in the bed with my eyes wide open, staring at the ceiling and thinking aloud, "Can I do this?" I recalled what LeVonne had told me, "Remember, you can't lose any of the relief supplies because if you do, lives will be lost." The airlift would begin and the planes would be arriving one by one. LeVonne said "Chris, the planes will land and will offload as quickly as possible due to the civil war. They're not going to want to stay on the tarmac, they're going to get out as soon as possible so you need to have the trucks at the airport ready to pick up the supplies and go." Managing the airlift meant you also had to step in wherever was necessary to keep things moving. For example, the American pilots that landed the planes didn't speak French. I would have to go to the air control tower to file their flight plan. Working with a committed group of committed and experienced international NGOs, we moved all the relief supplies quickly to secure warehouses and we didn't lose a thing.

Q: (Laughs) That's very good. Wow. So, this was all then before the Rwandan president's plane crashed and everything exploded?

MILLIGAN: It was about a year before. During my time in Kigali, I worked closely with several of the USAID mission FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals or local staff) and I got to know them quite well. Like all our efforts, the mission's local staff were key to the success of the humanitarian operation. USAID lost about a third of its local staff during the genocide. Some of those I worked with made it, and some didn't. It is hard to comprehend that, even today.

Q: Did that include Bonaventure?

MILLIGAN: Yes it did, and I loved reading his oral history. I recall that I have a photograph of him at the airport during the arrival of the relief supplies.

But there was another individual named Leo. I don't recall his last name. He was so kind to me. Before I departed, he took me to the local handicraft stores so I could buy gifts for

family and friends back home. Tragically, I was told he didn't make it. The Americans at the USAID mission managed to get out several days into the genocide by driving in a convoy to Burundi. To me, it was a bit surreal to be in such a tense and dramatic environment, and then in a month, find yourself back at your desk in Washington pushing paper and filling out spreadsheets.

Q: Wow. That's amazing. Well, those French language skills can get you into a lot of places. (Laughs)

So, you were there, then, a month or two probably between the assessment time and the—

MILLIGAN: Although they said they only needed me for a one-week assessment period, it grew into a month. The mission needed help running the airlift after LeVonne's expertise was required in Central America, so they kept negotiating to keep me in Kigali. I got to know the Hotel de Mille Collines quite well. Overall, it was very rewarding. We formed strong teams and could see the immediate result of our work. On the other hand, I wonder what remained given the violence that would occur later. We did the best we could.

Q: Yes, but it also gave you experiences which I'm sure you drew upon later in your career a number of times—

So, you were in Washington then in the Office of Housing for—it was close to three years?

MILLIGAN: I was. As a PMI, you're supposed to do rotations. Ideally, one should rotate to another federal agency to gain broader interagency experience. That's a really good idea. But you know, Washington offices are perpetually understaffed and once an office has you, they don't want to let you go. There's always more work than there are people. I said, "Hey, what about my rotation?" Office leadership suggested a rotation overseas in our regional offices. And I said, "That's great." I was able to work for two months in Morocco and another month in Tunisia, back-to-back. In Morocco, I worked with Harry Birnholz designing a slum upgrading program in Tetouan. Do you know Harry?

Q: Uh-huh.

MILLIGAN: I learned a lot from him, the way he interacted and the way he pushed things through and got things done. He's a real people person. I am naturally an introvert.

And then, in Tunisia, I worked with David Painter and Lane Smith—real professionals in the area of housing finance. Importantly though, I was able to travel throughout Morocco and Tunisia and learn more about their cultures and history. It was fascinating.

My term as a PMI was wrapping up and I would be assigned to a civil service position in Washington. But I really joined USAID to be overseas. There was an indirect way of moving from the civil service to the foreign service. I applied to the IDI (International Development Intern) program, and they credited my Washington time so I was eligible to

go directly overseas. Shortly thereafter, this opportunity of converting from the PMI program to the IDI ended.

Q: That's really too bad, I think, because I think it was a great way to get strong people in the Foreign Service.

Conversion to Foreign Service -- International Development Intern

MILLIGAN: Absolutely. I took advantage of it and so did others like Scott Dobberstein, Susan Reichle, and Kim Delaney. We all did it; that was the way into the Foreign Service. You still had to apply and take the entrance exam. I remember taking the exam on a Wang computer—it was that long ago! I passed the interview and became an IDI in the Office of Housing, Urban Development.

Q: Fantastic.

And then, did you—was there an IDI training program at that point when you came in? Was it an IDI class that you bonded with in some way or—?

MILLIGAN: Unfortunately, there wasn't. I think I may have had two weeks of new entry training, but it was very basic and covered things I already knew since I had been working with USAID for several years. At that time, I did not join with a class like we have today for our incoming foreign service officers called C3s (Career Candidate Corps). The training they receive today is invaluable not only for the content but also because they form peer networks that they can turn to for assistance throughout their career.

As a newly minted IDI, I was supposed to be assigned to Tunisia. I spoke French, I studied modern Middle East history in college, and I completed a PMI rotation in Morocco and Tunisia. It made sense and I was very excited. But at the last minute they said, "Oh, guess what? You're going to Ecuador". I said, "Whoa. I don't speak Spanish. I don't know anything about South America, but yeah, okay."

Q: So, did you study Spanish before you went?

MILLIGAN: There was an immediate vacancy in Quito, and they wanted to get me there as quickly as possible.

I enrolled in language training at FSI (Foreign Service Institute), but I didn't complete the full term. Instead, I broke up my FSI training with a long TDY to Ecuador due to the need to cover staffing gaps. I returned after a stint in Ecuador, studied Spanish for a couple more weeks, tested at a three/three level and headed out. Having French language skills, and perhaps memories of high school Latin, helped me pick up Spanish more rapidly.

This was my first overseas posting with USAID. Although it was supposed to be Tunisia. I was not disappointed—I was even in some ways grateful. This probably occurs to many officers in their career. Here's why. I knew so little about South America. Living in Quito and traveling around the region, I was exposed to so much about the history, the cultures, the music, the people, the literature...and more. A career at USAID is one of constant learning and engagement, learning about the world and the people in it. I think looking back on it, how I was so gung-ho and ready to go to Tunisia, but how a little bit poorer my life would have been had I not gone to Ecuador and learned about a different region of the world.

USAID/Ecuador (1993-1996)

Q: Yeah, no, that's a great point.

So, you went. Do you remember what time of year you went in 1993?

MILLIGAN: September.

Q: September 1993. So, you arrive in Quito. Who was the mission director then?

MILLIGAN: The mission director was the legendary John Sanbrailo.

Q: Oh, okay. John Sanbrailo.

MILLIGAN: Right. The RHUDO (Regional Housing and Urban Development Office) director was Billy Yaeger. His wife, Ellen Leddy was in the health office. Ken Yamashita was the director of the health office. It was a dream team. I was so fortunate to work with Bill. I was lucky to once again have a boss who had my back and gave me enormous opportunities. In fact, I had been in Ecuador for a very short time, I'm guessing maybe two weeks, and he said, "There is the Latin American conference of ministers of housing and urban development. It's in Cartagena. We have a big speech to make. I want you to go and represent us and make that speech."

Now, my Spanish was at the 3-3 level which is not that sophisticated. I worked with Marino Henao, the head of our Latin American Center for Urban Management, a division of the RHDO. He wrote a brilliant speech, but the sentences were very long and complicated. I had to practice and practice, working through the complex sentence structures and sophisticated language phonetically. I got up on stage in front of hundreds of people and ministers and was relieved when I got through it. I was ready to dash off the stage. I didn't know there would be a Q&A in Spanish. (Laughs) I got through it, but not without a hiccup or two—.

Q: (Laughs) You've had some good experiences where you've just been dumped in a challenging position.

MILLIGAN: Thrown into the deep end. But sometimes that's the best way, isn't it?

Q: Well, yeah, you did the offloading of the planes in Rwanda, and you did a speech. (Laughs) That's an amazing story.

So, the housing program in Ecuador. You mentioned earlier that most of the housing and urban development programs had significant policy elements to them. Was that an important part of the Ecuador program as well?

MILLIGAN: It was. I was initially responsible for the Chile portfolio.

Q: Oh, because it's a regional office.

MILLIGAN: Yes, a regional office based in Quito for Latin America. There were two housing guaranty loans in Chile.

Q: Was there an AID mission there then or had it closed?

MILLIGAN: There was a USAID country office. It was small and was closing. The former director, Paul Fritz, had left and was now part of our RHUDO team in Quito. The USAID representative was Tom Nicastro. The Chileans were extremely sophisticated and really did not need much support. They were able to manage the \$10 million in guaranties as a revolving fund and generate over \$100,000,000 of low-income housing.

Q: Was this—was Pinochet still—?

MILLIGAN: No; he was no longer there. He had stepped down. This was in 1993; Pinochet left in 1990.

Q: Okay. Because Chile was where the "Chicago boys" were heading up the economic ministries -- is that right?

MILLIGAN: Right.

The program was very much private sector based. Chile had a developed private sector one could work with, and at the same time, a social conscious public policy. So, it was a fantastic environment in which to work.

Besides Chile, we worked throughout the Latin America region. Billy Yaeger was brilliant. He had a background in finance and was a fluent Spanish speaker. Bill was a person who was always actively thinking. He had a silly and wonderful sense of humor. As my supervisor, Bill wanted to see me grow professionally, develop key skills and thrive. Who could ask for a better boss?

Bill recognized the essential role of governance in a country's development progress. Later on, he was instrumental in the early and formative days of the new Office of Transition Initiatives, building the Agency's capacity to quickly respond to windows of

opportunity for democratic reform and peace-building. And he continued to further the Agency's work while serving in senior positions in the Bureau for Democracy Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance.

Bill broadened the way I thought about development. We all appreciated Bill for his well-known and inexhaustible intellect. Bill inspired others to continue learning and supported them as they took on new challenges in their careers.

With respect to Ecuador, I didn't manage the housing guaranties for that country, but I was able to focus on urban environmental issues, one of which was clean water.

Q: In Ecuador or—?

MILLIGAN: Yes, in Quito. And Bill Yaeger came up with the innovative idea that the Quito Water Authority could add one dollar to every customer's annual water bill. The additional dollar be used to buy land in the surrounding mountains and protect the watershed. Quite visionary, right? We had been working with the Quito Water Authority on cost recovery and investments in poorer neighborhoods. We had a good working relationship with them. The Quito Water Authority adopted this idea, and with the additional resources, the watershed was protected. Quito could rely on a stable supply of pure crystalline water. We also worked to support a new local urban environmental NGO, OIKOS. With our assistance, they were able to get up and running. Thirty years later, OIKOS, is still operating in Ecuador. It was also while working in Ecuador that I was able to expand professionally beyond a focus on housing into the area of governance, particularly local governance. The critical role of local governance as a basic building block of development is something that I have considered throughout my career with USAID.

Q: Yeah.

MILLIGAN: Democracy is more than an election. An election is an event. Democracy is the interaction between citizens and government that happens between elections. Effective governance means locating authority at the appropriate level, whether national, provincial and local. There are some functions that are best provided by the national level of government, such as defense and monetary policy. And there are others that are best located at the provincial or local level. For example, if your water's turned off, you're not going up to see President Biden. You're going to your local official. So water authorities should be local or regional because it is at that level that the service can be provided more effectively and accountably. In Ecuador, I learned a lot about local governance from my colleagues in the Latin America Center for Urban Management which was part of our office. This center was headed by Marino Henao, truly a brilliant, big thinker and extraordinary communicator. The center was cutting edge. It was able to create associations throughout Latin America to strengthen governance. For example, it sponsored an association of Latin American women municipal leaders, providing them with grant money for projects and creating a network so they could work with, learn from and support one another. This was in the nineties. What we were doing in Ecuador,

advancing women leaders, leveraging the U.S. capital markets, strengthening the local private sector, building local organizations, these are the same priorities we have today. Yet today, we forget about our past successes and scratch our heads and saying, “How do we do exactly do that?”

Q: Yeah.

It's interesting. I've not thought too much about the fact that the Latin American bureau had a long history of doing municipal development. I was in Costa Rica in the late seventies and one of our main Costa Rican partners was the Institute for Municipal Development. And it's interesting that much of this evolved out of the housing guarantee program as well because it was doing infrastructure.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Latin America was and probably still is the most urbanized region of the world. And because of that, Latin American cities, their politics and even stability were impacted by this enormous informal sector. Hernando de Soto wrote about this and the lessons learned on how best to transition communities from the informal to the formal sectors. Africa is now rapidly urbanizing. Its cities are going through a similar process to that which Latin America went through decades ago. There are lessons learned that could be applied in Africa and in other regions of the world.

Q: So, in Ecuador then, you began to do work on the governance front.

MILLIGAN: Right.

I was only in Ecuador for three years. I never really bid on my onward positions throughout my career at USAID. Originally, I was supposed to go to Tunisia, and I was told, “Hey, how about Ecuador?” I’m like, okay, and I went. It should have been a four-year tour in Ecuador but in my third year, they said “We really need you in Zimbabwe. The person who is there is leaving and there’s an immediate gap. Would you go?” Once again, I was heading off to a country that I really had no background in. I knew not to nothing about Zimbabwe. But I packed up and went.

Q: Yeah. But before we leave Ecuador, maybe if you could talk a minute or two about the relationships between the RHUDO and the AID mission itself because it was not always an ideal relationship in all missions.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: And if you could just comment on that.

MILLIGAN: It seems to me that constructive relationships come down to communication and personalities. The relationship with the Ecuador mission was first rate because the RHUDO was co-located in the USAID mission building. The mission was located in a

large multiple floor building. There were many opportunities for the RHUDO and the USAID mission staff to meet and work together or have lunch together. Friendships were made. And RHUDO staff went to mission meetings. Communication was excellent. Naturally, maintaining this high level of communication was more difficult with other bilateral missions located in other countries. We did have an excellent relationship with the AID office in Chile as well as with the mission in Paraguay. They appreciated the support they received from us. Once, I traveled to Paraguay to help the mission think through a potential program of local government support. The goal was to assist Paraguay as it transitioned out of the Stroessner years. Getting back to overall relationships though, personalities play a big role. Particularly because there can be tension when programs managed regionally operate in a country with a bilateral mission. These missions don't want to be surprised. They need to know what is going on that affects communities in the country where they are located. You've got to work hard to make sure that that relationship is a solid one, build trust with your bilateral mission counterparts and maintain proactive communications. A bilateral mission should never be surprised to learn of a regional program's activities in its country—that would be a failure.

Q: Yes; and since you were working on municipal governance and beginning to deal with local governance issues, did you have much contact with the embassies? Were you involved at all in any sort of interagency work, either in Ecuador or in Chile?

MILLIGAN: No. Not really. I knew my counterparts in the embassy. We were not co-located with the embassy. It was across the street. Being a junior officer, I never attended country team.

This lack of interaction with my embassy colleagues perhaps was indicative of the time period. Before 9/11, there was less appreciation for USAID's role in advancing our national security. Embassy colleagues looked at USAID's work more as good deeds rather than as an important tool promoting our key foreign policy objectives.

This has evolved during my career at USAID. Today there is a greater understanding by the interagency of the importance of USAID to our national security and our overall foreign policy. When I was in Ecuador in the nineties, development was seen as a nice thing to do. After 9/11, people realized that our national security is threatened by fragile states and the ability of our enemies to operate out of ungoverned areas. This led to a greater understanding that good development equals national security, and that those AID guys and their programs are important to our foreign policy goals. This continues up through today. The world is rapidly changing and so are our foreign policy challenges such as global pandemics, climate change, and the efforts of authoritarian governments seeking to change the global political and economic order. What we do is more critical to our national security than ever before.

Q: Right.

I know that Ecuador over a very long period was almost closing, was graduating, and then not. And it may have even closed once or twice and reopened. Was any of that going on while you were there or was that a period of stability?

MILLIGAN: It was a period of relative stability. Ecuador did have a border skirmish with Peru at the time. When I was there, we celebrated 50 years of a development relationship with Ecuador. On one hand, we want to celebrate this relationship, but on the other hand, perhaps 50 years of development assistance isn't something to celebrate if we are still providing assistance. Perhaps we should have sought ways to use the 50th anniversary to reflect on and evolve the relationship. We could have said that we would stand with them but move to a different kind of relationship that was less of a donor-recipient one. Perhaps more of a focus on higher education or medical research, or on biodiversity in the Amazon, rather than on basic human needs.

At one point, USAID left Ecuador. I think we were invited to leave as a result of a political turn. But now I understand we have reopened the mission.

Q: (Laughs) Okay, good. Right. In the late seventies they closed or came very close to closing it. It was very small. Anyway, so interesting.

So, is there anything else you want to talk about on Ecuador, or could we move on to your surprise assignment to Zimbabwe?

USAID/Zimbabwe (1996-1999)

MILLIGAN: Right, a surprise assignment. Like I mentioned, I didn't bid on Harare and so didn't know very much about Zimbabwe in advance but found myself there shortly after being asked to consider the posting. And once again, I feel very grateful. Zimbabwe is an inspiring place to work. The Zimbabweans are an impressive people. The country itself is gorgeous.

When I arrived in Zimbabwe in 1996, there was still considerable country capacity. Things worked. It has a vibrant private sector and a very high level of literacy. You could even drink the tap water. This enabled us to do some sophisticated programs like municipal bond lending or securitizing mortgages. Securitization is a very advanced financial procedure. I would joke with my RHUDO counterparts in South Africa, Joel Kolker and Carleene Dei, that the Zimbabweans were going to beat the seemingly more sophisticated South Africans in securitizing mortgages. The Zimbabweans would lead the way.

Q: Was it a regional or bilateral office?

MILLIGAN: Bilateral.

Q: —bilateral housing, so you were only working on Zimbabwe, it was not a regional position.

MILLIGAN: Yes, that's correct. I was a member of the USAID mission but also reported back to the Office of Housing and Urban Programs in Washington.

In many of the countries where we had significant portfolios, such as large housing guaranties, the Office of Housing and Urban Programs would place an officer. Bureaucratically, in terms of the mission structure, I was the co-lead of the Private Sector Development Office.

Q: What did that mean, co-lead? With someone else?

MILLIGAN: Yes, the other co-lead was a more senior Foreign Service officer. This could have been awkward, but we made it work eventually.

Q: Wow. So, does that mean that the housing program was within that office and that's why you were co-lead of it? So, rather than have it be a separate office they made you a co-lead of the private sector office?

MILLIGAN: Yes. I imagine there were a limited number of office or management units the mission was permitted, so this was a combined office. While our portfolio worked with the Zimbabwe private sector, finance institutions and builders, I didn't have much to do with the other portions of the private enterprise portfolio. I didn't manage their staff nor attend their meetings. They had little to do with our housing development team. We were not even in the same building. Our office was located across the street. We were a small team which besides me included two FSNs and a Foreign Service officer. Tina Dooley-Jones was the Foreign Service Officer who was there when I arrived. But on the mission org chart, we appeared as one office—the Private Enterprise Office.

Q: To be at the same level.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: I suspect that there were some serious negotiations going on with Peter Kim.

MILLIGAN: I'm sure there were serious negotiations, but I didn't hear about them.

Q: Okay. I'd never seen a co-director position before.

So, you're working on these programs in a great environment to advance a lot of great stuff on the housing and finance front, but meanwhile Zimbabwe being Zimbabwe, the politics began to change during the period you were there.

MILLIGAN: Yes, it became clearer which way Zimbabwe was heading. Funny enough. A tell-tale sign at least for me was when Mugabe remarried. That to me indicated that he had no intention of handing things off to the next generation of leaders. I thought that was a signal of where the country was going to go. Nevertheless, when I was there, you could

get so much done. And we did. We had been making considerable progress since the program began in 1992. In particular:

- low-income families became home-owners in greater numbers than ever before in the history of Zimbabwe;
- the provision of serviced, low-income plots increased by a factor of three;
- over US\$35 million in local private sector resources were leveraged for low-income housing;
- the number of low-income mortgages expanded by a factor of thirteen;
- policy reforms decreased the construction price of a minimum standard house by 96%;
- US firms entered the Zimbabwean low-income market and then negotiated expansion to other low-income markets in the region; and
- Local organizations participated and were strengthened-- two new indigenous building societies were formed and at least 6 new indigenous land survey firms benefited from the program.

Our FSN team, though composed of only two people, was amazing. Tafagombe, Taffy for short, was our lead FSN. He was far smarter and more talented than I. I learned so much from him. A supportive mentor, Taffy made sure I did a good job. He gave me the right steer on issues in advance, providing wise advice, or a whisper in the ear at the right time. And he was a smooth negotiator and polished communicator.

Q: And so, you had some existing housing guarantee programs that were in place?

MILLIGAN: Yes, we did. I inherited a portfolio of housing guaranty programs. They provided credit from U.S. banks to the Government of Zimbabwe which then on lent the funds to local savings and loans called building societies. The Government of Zimbabwe has to meet certain conditions precedent to be eligible for the housing guaranty. By the time I departed Harare three years later, the program had financed over 50,000 low-income homes all across Zimbabwe. That is impressive because the mortgages were provided at market rates through the private sector to families whose members earn a maximum of U.S. 50 cents a day. Remarkably, the default rate was less than one percent. If the poor are given an opportunity that they have waited for over many years, they will do whatever it takes to preserve that opportunity. Hence the incredibly low default rate.

In Zimbabwe, because our program worked directly with local governments, I was able to observe more clearly the linkages between improving local governance and the overall success of the broader USAID portfolio. I argued that the impact of USAID investments in economic growth, health and the environment depended upon the ability of local governments to effectively represent their people, articulate their priorities and implement that agenda. Sometimes the success of our sector specific program is limited because we do not consider the wider context which in many cases is local governance. Municipal finance, I believe, provides resources for local governments to meet citizens' needs. In Zimbabwe, I was able to reach out and work with World Bank colleagues on expanding the municipal finance sector to increase the options available to local authorities for

providing critical services. Our technical assistance, though limited, leverages \$100 million in World Bank capital funds. To me, local governance is the basic building blocks of democracy because it is there that the citizen first comes into contact with an elected official. Effective fiscal planning and improved local government management allows for increased citizen participation in the budget process and the prioritization and allocation of local expenditures. As a result of the changes we were putting in place, Zimbabwe's residents were able to benefit not only from improved urban services but also greater accountability, transparency and good governance.

Working in Zimbabwe provided me with several ah-ha moments. One ah-ha moment was that it is not just what we do but how we do it—about linking the specific development intervention to a larger goal. This aha moment occurred when I took the Mission Director Rose Marie Depp to see one of our low-income housing sites called Kuwadzana. This one was quite large; it was being developed by a California housing company and U.S. expat, Ted Galante. Ted was based in Zimbabwe and brought U.S. investment and new construction technology to the local market. This site was impressive. Originally, the site was included as a stop for First Lady Hillary Clinton's trip to Zimbabwe, but it was replaced by another site.

Rose Marie Depp and I were standing on top of a hill overlooking the enormous housing site below. As she is looking at the hundreds of new houses, she is realizing that we were looking at more than just houses, what we were looking at were essentially thousands of individuals who were opening bank accounts and taking out mortgages for the first time. Turning to me she said, "I get this. This isn't a housing program. This is a democracy program." She was exactly right. By incorporating families into the formal sector, paying for a mortgage and for local services, we were also giving people a stake in the economy, in progress, in politics, and in better government. Years later, it was the urban communities that pushed back hard on Mugabe. Mugabe enjoyed support in rural areas because he could buy poor rural families off with the false promise of land reform. At USAID, it is not just what we do, it's how we do it. If all we were doing with a housing program providing more shelter, that is a start. But a true development program takes it further. It leverages larger changes, catalyzes the local private sector, strengthens governance, and advances larger reforms. Rose Marie got it. I was just so inspired when she said that. I have remembered that moment over many, many years.

Q: (Laughs) Right. And are there tips on how you parlay it into something bigger?

MILLIGAN: Yes. It begins with a strategic vision and a theory of change and then figuring out how an individual project can promote that change. I can fast forward to an example from Burma. We reopened our Embassy and USAID Mission in Burma in 2016 during the military government. Our goal was promoting democratic and economic reforms. I often told my team that we did not have a development goal. We were not there as a typical development mission. Instead, our aim was to use the tool of development to leverage political and economic reform. Besides our democracy and economic growth programs, we also had a large health program. I told our health officer at that time, if all we achieve through our health interventions is better health outcomes, we have failed. We

need to leverage all our investments, including those in our health program, towards promoting democratic and economic reforms. It was the how, by programming health funds in a way that empowered a new generation of local leaders, that strengthened communities' ability to hold government accountable, that introduced and advanced key concepts of transparency and accountability. When you are in a USAID mission, you often don't receive the kind of funds you ideally require. You are left trying to figure out how the individual jigsaw puzzle pieces can fit together across different sector and functional accounts. You may be caught in a straitjacket but you can create that bigger change.

Q: Right. Every program should probably have some element of systemic change within it.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: Yeah. Yeah. No, that's a very important lesson and recognition that you and Rose Marie had, and disappointing that Hillary Clinton didn't go see that site.

MILLIGAN: My team and I were greatly disappointed.

Q: In fact, I was on that trip, and I don't remember what we did in Zimbabwe.

MILLIGAN: One of the places the First Lady visited was the Dorothy Duncan School for the Blind.

Q: Ah, right, yeah.

MILLIGAN: I was the site officer for that portion of her trip. (Laughs) It's ironic because it wasn't a U.S. government program at all.

Q: Funny, but you always must know where those kinds of programs are. They are what visitors like to see.

MILLIGAN: Our ambassador was Johnnie Carson.

Q: Yes, right.

MILLIGAN: I have had the good fortune of interacting with Ambassador Carson at certain points throughout my career. He was the Senior Vice President of the National Defense University when I was studying at the National War College. He is someone who inspires so many. He gave me the privilege of being one of the control officers for the African American Congress summit which was held in Harare.

Q: Ah, the summit, yes.

MILLIGAN: Yes, in Harare. I was asked to take on the additional work of assisting the summit planners as they were putting their plans together. Because of that, Ambassador Caron said, "Chris, you've done a lot of work for the summit, would you be the control officer for some of the VIPs guests?" The summit began with an opening cocktail event at the ambassador's residence. I was blown away. As I greeted the guests, I met the who's who of our U.S. civil rights movement. I was even able to meet Coretta Scott King as well as other luminaries of our own American history. Just remarkable.

Q: So, you mentioned that the housing program ran quite separately from the rest of the private sector program. Did others in the private sector office see how their work related to the broader democracy objectives of the mission -- as Rose Marie saw with your program? Did the mission more generally talk about how everything you were doing fed into that broader objective?

MILLIGAN: To a certain degree perhaps. The USAID mission at the time was spread out across three houses in a garden district area of Harare. My office was a converted tool shed behind one of the houses. (Laughs) It was a large toolshed. But it was very nice. We loved it. But we were physically separated from the other offices which impeded collaboration. This changed after the embassy bombings in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. New security requirements mandated a stronger door on the toolshed. The toolshed was made of plywood (laughs/indiscernible) so it couldn't hold the weight of a heavy security door. They wouldn't allow us to remain in our converted toolshed.

Q: As I recall, wasn't the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) across the street or something?

MILLIGAN: It was, yes.

Q: Yeah, there was someone who—that also added to the security concerns in the neighborhood.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: So, your office was a little bit separated, but it was a really strong mission.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: And was Stephanie Funk in the Democracy Office during that period?

MILLIGAN: She arrived as the head of the DG office probably a year after I got there. The program officer was Melissa Williams. Melissa is very strong. Peter Benedict was the first mission director when I got there.

Q: Yes, right, right.

MILLIGAN: And then, Rose Marie replaced him.

Q: Did you ever consciously do any programming with the democracy governance folks?

MILLIGAN: No, we didn't. We didn't have a large program budget and we were a very small team. We were aware of the work of our other colleagues but without additional resources and staff, we couldn't take advantage of opportunities. We focused a lot on municipal management and local governance. For example, we would strengthen the association of local mayors with a focus on improving key municipal services while the democracy program focused more on human rights issues.

Q: Okay. I see a note here that after the bombing in Tanzania you went up to Dar es Salaam?

MILLIGAN: Yes. If you recall, the embassies in Dar and Nairobi were destroyed by terrorist attacks in August 1998. The embassy in Dar was in a residential neighborhood. Besides the embassy, many houses were destroyed or damaged. The idea was to see if the U.S. could provide some sort of assistance to help families who had lost a house or whose home had been damaged by the bombing.

When I was asked to travel to Dar and come up with a plan, I was a little overwhelmed. I called my RHUDO colleague Joel Kolker in South Africa. I said, "Joel, this is overwhelming. What am I going to do?" Joel gave me excellent advice. Joel said, "Just go, Chris, and you'll find out you're the smartest person there, that you'll know more about housing financing than they do. Just go and do it." He was absolutely right.

After being on the ground, I came up with a plan that could be financed to help reconstruct and rebuild the neighborhood that had been destroyed. I was subject to congressional funding which, I am told, was never approved

Q: Ah. Interesting. But it never got funded?

MILLIGAN: That is my understanding.

Q: Oh. Did we do anything about those houses that were destroyed?

MILLIGAN: Once I returned to Zimbabwe, I wasn't able to follow the events in Dar so I really don't know.

At the end of the day, what I love about working for USAID is it is a career that will challenge and bend you in many ways; it is unlike anything else in public service. There are times that you will be presented with a challenge and you will say, I can't possibly do that. And you will take it on and succeed. Challenges like creating a plan to rebuild a devastated neighborhood or run a humanitarian airlift in Rwanda. Working overseas, you continue to learn every day about a myriad of things—development, conflict, cultures, languages, but most importantly, you learn more about yourself, and what you can do that you never thought possible.

I also had another aha moment in Zimbabwe. This first one which we already discussed is about to link a specific development project to a larger goal. The other lesson that I've always carried with me from those days is that people matter more than the work—and that if you are not careful, you can easily lose sight of this. Especially in our culture which prioritizes efficiency. I learned this from two people. One was Kudzi Manungo, who was my secretary or executive assistant. I lived the furthest from town. I had a twenty minute commute. It was an easy commute, affording me time to think as I drove in and mentally prepared for the day. One day, as I was driving in, I kept thinking about an important fax communication. I really wasn't sure if Kudzi had sent the fax the day before. While driving in, I keep thinking over and over, "Did Kudzi send that fax? What if she didn't. Maybe she didn't send that fax..." As I arrive in the office, I open the door, look at Kudzi and ask, "Hey Kudzi, did you send that fax yesterday?" And she looked up and said, "Oh, good morning, Chris." That just stopped me immediately. I hadn't even greeted Kudzi and had launched straight into work. I apologized. "Kudzi, I made work more important than people. I thank you for showing me that." I've always carried that lesson with me. Sometimes our American culture prioritizes productivity and efficiency to such an extent that we overlook the human side. I also learned this from another wonderful colleague Larry Foley. Larry was one in a million—such a wonderful human being. Foley's residence was always full of life. Virginia and Larry often hosted mission parties. They enjoyed getting a group together to go camping in Zimbabwe's remarkable national parks. As you are aware, Larry was killed by terrorists in Jordan. Although this was twenty years ago, I am still at a loss for words today. I happened to be in the United States when Virginia arrived from Harare, escorting Larry's casket back via Andrews Air Force Base. It was a chilly autumn evening marked by a cold drizzle and mist when the gray C-130 landed. Out of all the shades of gray emerged the bold colors of the American flag draped over Larry's casket as it was wheeled out the plane's rear bay door. A memorial service was planned at the Universal Unitarian Church. Stephanie Funk was in Zimbabwe and couldn't go so after the service, I called her to let her know how it went. To this day, I have never been to such a service. Larry was a people-person. He loved the wide variety of personalities and quirks that make us all up. Many of his friends were there. One by one, they got up and shared heart-felt stories about how Larry had impacted their lives—how he had made a difference to them. I recounted this to Stephanie over the phone. She replied, "That's the lesson of Larry. What matters most is how you treat people." Yes, that is the lesson of Larry. At the end of the day, what matters is not how productive you were, or if you were promoted, what matters is how you treat people. This is how you will be remembered. In Zimbabwe, there were many lessons. The professional ones like the importance of local governance or linking projects to greater outcomes; and the human ones that Kudzi and Larry showed me.

Q: Right. Right, and Larry was the head of the management office, right, in Zimbabwe when you—?

MILLIGAN: Correct.

Q: And he was there for a number of years, so I think he really had an impact for a long period of time. That's an important lesson, probably the most important lesson you learned.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: And earlier on than some people learn it.

MILLIGAN: Yes. And some people never do. (Laughs)

Q: Right. So, just one other question before we leave Zimbabwe and then we might want to close off for the day, but you had mentioned that Ambassador Carson had asked you to be the control officer for the African American summit, so that would suggest there were good relationships with the embassy and that—

MILLIGAN: Oh, yes.

Q: —there were good relations and things worked well and that you had good access to the embassy officers there.

MILLIGAN: Yes, and this is because leadership starts from the top. The USAID mission was a bit of a distance from the embassy. A short drive, you couldn't walk to it. But it took a conscious effort to get in a car and drive. Nevertheless, Ambassador Carson came over to the mission and made a point of knowing everyone by name. He made us feel included and part of the larger embassy community, even though we were not co-located.

Q: Okay. Well, it almost sounds too idyllic, your time in Zimbabwe.

MILLIGAN: I do rave about it, but that is because of who we were as a community and what we were able to get done. Our Zimbabwe colleagues were true professionals. At that time, I believe that Zimbabwe had a literacy rate that was higher than many western countries. Zimbabweans worked hard, they sacrificed, and sought to better themselves. This is why what is happening in Zimbabwe is so heartbreaking today.

Q: One of the themes that I hope you will remind me to make sure we talk about on all the assignments is working with local institutions and trying to extract lessons that can be helpful to AID today as they create their localization strategy. And again, it sounds like in Zimbabwe you were working directly with local organizations and found ways to do it constructively.

MILLIGAN: There is a lesson I learned in Burma that was applied to our work in Zimbabwe as well. It is about accountability. Successful local organizations are accountable to the communities they serve. Many times, the introduction of donor funds twists that relationship and these organizations become accountable to the donors. This can create a donor dependency. We didn't create such a dependency with local organizations in Zimbabwe. The funds through the housing guaranty funding were

borrowed by the national government which then on lent in the local currency equivalent to local savings and loans called building societies. The building societies issued mortgages, paying back the national government with the proceeds. It was a model based on market-based financing rather than donor grants. When we reopened the USAID mission in Burma in 2012 the country was still under the control of an authoritarian government. Nevertheless, I was surprised to find a very active and organized CSO (Civil Society Organizations) community at the grassroots level. Initially, the CSOs were divided regarding engaging with and working with the newly arrived international donors. These organizations did not want donor funds to distort them from being accountable to the communities that they work with and serve. So, there's another lesson learned, namely about how to work with local organizations so as not to distort their accountability and create a dependency.

Q: Right, that's very important.

Did you have to do any kind of special financial analysis or any things—

MILLIGAN: Yes

Q: Well, I guess they were all financial institutions, so their records, I mean, you could tell whether they were viable or whether their systems were appropriate to absorb the funds and the integrity of the financial systems.

MILLIGAN: In Zimbabwe, these were existing savings and loans with established accounting systems and audited accounts that served the formal sector. We wanted to prove to them that there was a market in providing low-income mortgages. Because these were established local financial organizations, we were able to track every dollar through their audited financial systems. Besides the funding, a key issue was affordability. Zimbabwe's housing standards were based on those from the U.K and pushed the cost of housing well beyond the reach of most citizens. Negotiating more realistic building standards was very difficult. The government wanted the private sector to build three-bedroom houses, when most families could only afford a more modest one or two room house. I remember a government saying it would be immoral to have such a small house because "boy children and girl children would be sleeping together in the same room." Of course, given the lack of housing and resulting high densities, families jam packed with multiple families in one house. We were able to get the revised housing standards approved and the cost of new houses dropped dramatically. And once a family moved into a one or two room house, within six months many had built an additional room. The house provided them with additional income, whether it served as a place of business or if they built and rented out an additional room. But negotiating those standards was incredible.

The houses that were constructed in developments with potable water and sewage treatment. Many wealthy countries did not have the sewage treatment levels that Zimbabwe had at that time. I remember one time when I was walking around one of the housing developments talking to the residents, I met a widow. After years and years, she

finally fulfilled her dream of home ownership. As a widow, she lived on a fixed income and did not have many assets. Part of her mortgage bill covered the sewage connection and the water bill. I told her how impressed I was. I told her, "In many countries they don't treat sewage." She asked, "Well, what do they do with it?" I said, "They let it go into the river." And she said, "Oh, but that's wrong." (Both laugh)

Q: Simple truths.

You talked about negotiating the building standards. Could you talk a little bit more about that and how perhaps you worked with your FSN staff in figuring out how best to do those negotiations, or did they play a role in it as well, how you went about negotiating.

MILLIGAN: Our FSN staff were the reason for USAID's success. I mentioned Taffy earlier. He knew everybody in all the ministries and would quietly work out problems before they grew into bigger issues. The first meeting I had in Zimbabwe with a Permanent Secretary was a disaster. We could not agree on some of the basic policy reforms. He ended the meeting declaring, "Well, if you don't concede on this, your program is dead. Dead, dead, dead." Oh, my goodness, my first week on the job and this guy is going to kill the program. And he called it *my* program, when it was *our* joint program with his ministry. The meeting did not go well but I watched Taffy. His discreetly signaled me to back off. And I did. I backed off before significant damage could occur. Then, he worked on the issue quietly at the ministry. Because of Taffy, I was eventually able to have a positive working relationship with perm sec and many future constructive meetings.

Q: Yeah. It's important to be able to feel that confidence to ask your staff about a better way to do this or how we should approach it if it didn't succeed the first time.

MILLIGAN: When a housing development was completed, the government, savings and loans and community would join together in a handover ceremony. Everyone would give a speech. Eventually, I asked Taffy to write down a short speech for me in Shona. The community would be thrilled and would chuckle as I stumbled through the sentences. But it was about showing respect.

Q: Yeah, yeah. No, that's great.

Let me ask you just one other question about Zimbabwe because you were there during another difficult time vis-à-vis HIV-AIDS, and, while your office was not working on the issue, I wonder the degree to which your own staff was grappling with this in their own families and homes and how that affected the ability of the mission to work.

MILLIGAN: Zimbabwe had one of the highest rates of HIV-AIDS in the world, if not the highest. Among adults, the infection rate was close to 25 percent. Many private sector firms would hire two people for one job to ensure continuity. If you worked for USAID, you received information and knew how to protect yourself from HIV-AIDS. I think the

impact was more on embassy families' household staff, such as a housekeeper, a driver. The situation was dire for many Zimbabwean women. Many men worked in cities while the women remained in rural areas raising a family and farming. Many of the men were not faithful and many of those would not wear a condom. Some female housekeepers confided in their employers that it was like "taking a gun to their head every night, spinning the barrel and pulling the trigger." I had good friends whose housekeeper tried to leave her husband who was unfaithful, but her own family wouldn't support her and even blamed her. Because she knew her husband wasn't faithful, she was concerned she was going to get AIDS. At the USAID mission, staff were well informed and had access to condoms if need be, they were discreetly left in bathrooms, we didn't have the prevalence that the rest of the population had. But we did see what was going on in the wider society.

Q: Okay, I was just curious about the degree to which it affected the staff as well.

MILLIGAN: Yes. We had a solid Health Office led by Roxana Rogers. Mercia Davids was also part of the team. She was an FSN local hire who's now in South Africa. We stay in touch even to this day.

Q: Before we conclude today, perhaps you could say a word or two about your next assignment to Indonesia.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: Did it also just come out of the blue?

MILLIGAN: Yes, like my postings to Ecuador and Zimbabwe, it came out of the blue.

USAID/Indonesia (1999-2002)

MILLIGAN: I didn't complete my four years in Zimbabwe though I would have loved to. There was a critical need in Indonesia. At that time, the Asian financial crisis caused turmoil, protests and rioting in Indonesia. The unthinkable happened; Suharto stepped down. At the time, there was a vacant RHUDO position in the mission that they needed to fill urgently.

By the time I arrived, Suharto had stepped down and an interim government, which was run by a blind cleric named Gus Dur, had passed two decentralization laws. Why did they do this? Indonesia is an archipelagic nation formed by the Dutch colonial power. It comprises 17,000 islands, five of which are very large including Sumatra, Sulawesi, parts of Borneo, and Papua. During the authoritarian governments of Sukarno and Suharto, the outer islands' perception was that they had been colonized by Java and the Javanese. They believed that for decades their natural resources had gone to fund the development of Jakarta rather than benefit their own provinces. When Suharto stepped down,

Indonesia was on the brink of balkanizing. Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Sumatra and others were considering going their own way. The interim national government asked, “If we pass these decentralization laws and move more authority to the provincial and local levels, will you stay in this construct of Indonesia?” They agreed. The national government rapidly passed two decentralization laws that were to be fully implemented within two years. This rapid approach to decentralization was called “the Big Bang” approach. The national government had no experience with decentralization and welcomed our assistance.

The office I was to lead at the USAID mission was the Urban Environmental Management office. Given the quickly changing situation and opportunity to support substantive reforms, I transitioned this office into the Office of Decentralized Local Government. Doing so, I fundamentally repurposed the—

Q: You mean you made that decision?

MILLIGAN: Yes. But it was not just me. We had a lot of great thinkers who recognized the rare window of opportunity and the considerable needs. One was John Wegge, a brilliant thinker, strategist, and excellent writer. Terry Myers was the mission director who recognized the changing dynamic as well as opportunities and was supportive. And so, we became the Office of Decentralized Local Government focused on assisting the government of Indonesia with its decentralization reforms.

Q: But you didn't get recruited there or sent by Peter Kim in the Office of Housing. They didn't say, Oh, we need someone with decentralization experience, and we know Chris is the guy to intellectually help lead that effort. That wasn't behind the thinking of you going there.

MILLIGAN: I'm not sure if it was. There certainly were others with more experience in decentralization. I think it was more of a personnel issue--moving me to fill a critical gap.

Q: Was it solely using the Office of Housing instruments, the housing guaranty program? You were using other development resources then?

MILLIGAN: Our program support in Indonesia was different from what I had experienced previously. While in Ecuador and Zimbabwe, we relied on the housing guaranty, our office in Jakarta tapped into bilateral mission program funds. I believe we received about \$12 to \$15 million a year, but I'd have to confirm that.

Q: Was this your first time working outside of the housing guaranty?

MILLIGAN: Yes.

The housing guaranty was not the right tool for what was really a political stabilization intervention. Supporting decentralization reforms was quite controversial, even in the USAID mission. The economic growth team and the economists in the USAID mission

strongly opposed it. The IMF (International Monetary Fund) was concerned that decentralization would provide borrowing authority to provinces and local governments which would borrow uncontrollable and rapidly increase the debt burden. John Wegge sagely observed, and I often quoted him, “You can reschedule debt, but you can’t reschedule democracy.” He got it. Decentralization was about dismantling the structures of decades of authoritarian government. It was about democratic reform. What I saw in Zimbabwe, I saw again here in Indonesia. The basic build blocks of democracy occur at the local level. It is there where citizens first engage with officials and where the concepts of accountability and transparency take hold. And that’s also where the next generation of national leaders come from. We put in place support at national, provincial, and local levels. For example, we provided technical experts to key ministries to assist with the necessary implementation guidance and accompanying policies. We also worked with 110 towns and cities providing key support through six regional offices.

The support we provided to the towns leveraged further governance reforms. For example, before a local government would be eligible for our assistance, it would have to agree to publish its budget and have a hearing on this budget. This was really a big step in what had been a centralized authoritarian system. Once a local government agreed to this, we assisted them with the budget process, as well as helping them publish the budget and conduct a productive hearing. At the same time, we worked with civil society groups so that they would better understand budgeting, municipal issues and financial tradeoffs and could therefore engage more constructively in the hearing, rather than just stay on the margins and throw rocks. The cities and towns we worked with all engaged in a robust participatory planning process that began at the neighborhood level and was aggregated into a city or town wide plan. Not only would this assist the local authorities in understanding their communities’ priorities and include them in the budget, but it also taught the local communities about trade-offs. Finally, because reforms must create a positive change to succeed, a real felt change, we focused on a few key services. We retooled an existing water program to support local government service delivery under the new decentralized system. This program was followed by one that focused on education.

To sustain the reforms, we created associations of provincial leaders as well mayors of cities and municipalities—called kota and kabupaten. Linking them together not only helped them for a network of self-support, but it also created a counterweight for the inevitable push by the central government to claw back power and recentralize. After Abdurrahman Wahid, or Gus Dur as he was more popularly known, was removed from office, Megawati, his vice president became president. Megawati was the daughter of Sukarno. And at one point, she tried to recentralize authority and pull administrative power back to Jakarta. Who stood up to oppose this? The associations of provincial and local government. At one point, I am told that when President Megawati attempted to travel to Surabaya to begin to pull back power, the local government didn’t allow her plane to land. At least that is what I’m told. In any case, there were quite a few animated meetings between local governments and the national government. In one meeting, when the discussions were not proceeding, some local government representatives stood up and began chanting, “Tear it down. Tear it down.”, They were referring to the centralized

authority structure and the need to keep pushing on decentralization. Creating a counterbalance to centralization was fundamental to sustaining democratic reform and dismantling Suharto's centralized apparatus of control. And therefore, to preserve the territorial integrity of the country. Imagine if Indonesia had balkanized into a collection of individual island nations. Imagine the security implications? We were pushing forward on democratic reforms, which because they dealt with the mundane issues of budgeting and water services, did not appear very exciting, but were essential to the country's democratic trajectory.

Q: Did the mission strategy change? It would seem to me you were driving a wedge through everything that the program was doing.

MILLIGAN: Yes. Of course, this was required. The embassy leadership and USAID understood the importance of decentralization in the context of broader political changes. What was interesting to me was that those at the USAID mission managing traditional development programs did not immediately see the opportunities that these reforms presented. For example, although decentralization should be seen as an important democratic reform, our democracy office would not work on the issue. After decades of empowering civil society in an authoritarian environment, my democracy colleagues were reluctant to work with government officials. Supporting decentralization required working closely with central ministries and local governments. Our economic growth colleagues believed that decentralization would lead to economic instability and did not share the same point of view as to the pace and scale of the reforms. The result internally in the mission was that there was a huge space to engage in and to shape the overall mission's support to the important decentralization reforms.

Q: That's extraordinary; what you were doing was so impactful.

MILLIGAN: Yes, particularly in hindsight. And while it was important, the core work was not the sexy high-profile initiatives but rather basic actions like supporting budgeting, community planning or the drafting of technical implementing regulations. I continued to learn so much on decentralization and was able to meet some of the leaders in this area, like Roy Bahl of Georgia State University. But as I mentioned before, the work was not about the exciting issues like elections or human rights, but no less meaningful. I'll give you another example.

I was on a field trip to the city of Manado with our natural resource officer, Fred. Manado has one of the most pristine coral beds in the world. It is known for its biodiversity. Fred was traveling to oversee the implementation of a project protecting this unique and valuable coral reef while I was meeting with local government officials. Since we both had meetings up in Manado, we decided to fly up together, overnight and then fly back. When we land at the airport, Fred heads off to check the condition of these pristine coral reefs and talks to local communities. Meanwhile, I go off to meet local authorities at the wastewater treatment plant. Fred sees beautiful coral and fish; I look at sewage. (Laughs) So, it's not glamorous work, right? But if that sewage was dumped into the water, then

the coral wouldn't have been there. When you focus on basic municipal services, it may not be that exciting, but it is about issues that really matter.

Q: Yeah. But if you can get the governance right at that level the likelihood of getting that governance up higher.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: It's interesting. Did the democracy office ever see this?

MILLIGAN: Not while I was in Indonesia.

Q: Never saw—because they were focused not on governance. And I think as time went on, do you think that USAID democracy governance officers began to see both sides of that coin?

MILLIGAN: I think they did. Back in Washington, the initial work on local government at USAID was done by the Office of Housing and Urban Development. Governance was key to better services and positive urbanization outcomes. Some of the key thinkers were people like Sonia Hammam and others. In time, USAID's Democracy Center recognized this, but at that time at the USAID mission in Jakarta, the democracy office maintained a focus on elections, human rights, and civil society. This focus overlapped with the work of OTI (Office of Transition Initiatives) causing a bit of friction.

Q: So, OTI with the democracy folks, a conflict there, not with you?

MILLIGAN: Neither OTI nor our democracy colleagues had a focus on decentralization so there was no potential for conflict.

Q: OTI wasn't trying to do anything on decentralization?

MILLIGAN: No, they were not.

Q: I did an interview with one of the FSNs who worked in the democracy office, and I remember her talking about a USAID office outside of Jakarta. Maybe it was an OTI office.

But that had nothing to do with you?

MILLIGAN: No. This would have been difficult since we were part of the embassy and under chief of mission authority. USAID direct-hire staff would not have received permission to set up an office outside of the embassy compound due to security constraints. The offices we did set up were through our program implementers like RTI and staffed by them. But they were fully branded with USAID logos.

Q: Okay.

MILLIGAN: Working with RTI, I believe we set up seven regional offices through the archipelago. Our other programs could partner with RTI and base staff in these spaces as well. Working through regional offices, we provided assistance to 110 municipalities and cities. This is a model I later brought to our work in Iraq.

Q: I was going to say, this sounds quite similar to what RTI was doing in Iraq with Peter Benedict and Aaron Williams and folks, yes.

MILLIGAN: Yes. It was based on our experiences in Indonesia.

Q: Right, right. Okay, so, but this was the beginning of really thinking about how you do decentralization in local government to allow it to build a better democratic framework for a country.

MILLIGAN: And the recognition that we couldn't do it by sitting in Jakarta, that we had to have regional offices. We complemented this support with other initiatives, such as the Resource Cities Program, a program that I had also overseen in Zimbabwe and Latin America. The Resource Cities Program is similar to a sister cities program, but is focused at the city manager level. This gives it a more practical focus.

Although I was assigned to Indonesia, I also had regional responsibilities. If a USAID mission needed assistance from the Office of Housing and Urban Programs, they would call upon me. I went to the Philippines several times to help the mission think about a possible housing guaranty that would catalyze municipal lending. The potential program would work with the Banking Association of the Philippines. We designed a very promising program that would encourage local government financing of key infrastructure. Unfortunately, the program didn't go forward. The reason why is because it competed with the World Bank's local government finance program that provided subsidized lending to local governments. We insisted on market rates and had teed up potential projects that generated a stream of income and were feasible. The World Bank program provided a limited pot of subsidized funding. It could not meet the enormity of the local government infrastructure needs. Tapping into the local financial system would be more sustainable and provide a greater pool of resources. Nevertheless, our program, though well designed, didn't go forward because local governments would prefer to wait for subsidized funds...a setback to the development of the private capital market. Even worse, the pool of subsidized funding provided by the World Bank was limited. A lot of potential infrastructure that could have been built at market rates never was. In some ways, that was a setback.

I also traveled to Vietnam and to help stand up initial USAID programs there. Working with a colleague, we partnered U.S. cities with Vietnamese cities through the Resource Cities program. Seattle and Haiphong were paired up on port management, and Hue and Honolulu on tourist promotion.

Q: Right. Did these end up then being sort of short-term exchanges between practitioners from the port authority coming over, so it—was it almost on like a volunteer basis?

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: I love those programs. I think they're some of the best technical assistance.

MILLIGAN: What we found is that city managers, no matter where they're from, speak the same language. They deal with the same set of problems every day.

Q: Yes; practitioners speak the same language, as you said.

Let me go back to Indonesia for just a minute. This is quite extraordinary what you were doing. Was—and you had mentioned the World Bank a minute ago. Was the World Bank doing anything to support this or were there other donors who were involved with this decentralization?

MILLIGAN: Yes, other donors were providing important assistance, but not the World Bank. The World Bank was very concerned about the potential risks. Their experts did provide recommendations, some of which were quite constructive, but others, like the recommendation of a phased approach, would have ended Indonesia's decentralization experiment and was not politically realistic. Countries that have tried a phased approach have not successfully decentralized. The center inevitably holds on to power and the process slows to a halt. Indonesia's "Big Bang" approach was required to break the center's hold.

Q: Oh, the economists, yes, right. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Right. Years afterwards, the World Bank recognized that decentralization was a reality and became more supportive. Our key donor counterparts were the Germans, the German development assistance program. We closely coordinated with them on very important issues like the placement of international advisors in ministries. They understood the importance of Indonesia's decentralization reforms. And the critical issue of timing, of taking advantage of the reform window that was now open. Perhaps because Germany is a federal system like the United States, it was a natural fit.

Q: Okay. And there was a basic agreement on how it would be done, so that—

MILLIGAN: Yes...the general framework for decentralization had already been determined by the two decentralization laws that were immediately passed after the downfall of Suharto. Nevertheless, it was a race against time. First of all, the two laws would take effect within two years. All the relevant authorities would move to the local level at that time. This meant moving two thirds of Indonesia's civil servants, over 2 million individuals, from the central government to local authorities' management and payroll. As the implementation deadline approached, there were panicked predictions of worst-case scenarios, grim predictions of cities shutting down, water not working,

hospitals closing, employees not being paid etc. Some said we were driving off a cliff. A key debate in decentralization reforms is the speed at which to undertake them. Indonesia opted for the “Big Bang” approach. Others, like the Philippines, tried a gradual approach and did not succeed. The issue with the gradual approach is that you can lose momentum, you lose political will, and you are left with a hybrid system that doesn’t work. Eventually, the reform window closes, and the center pulls authorities back. We went into our work with eyes wide open and the understanding that the reform window would not be open indefinitely, we had to move fast, and, very importantly, we had to prepare a counterweight to the eventual push by the central government to claw back authorities.

An argument we heard frequently was the need to support a gradual approach because local authorities lacked experience. What John Wegge said, and he’s right, is that by not providing local governments with the actual responsibilities, the argument becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. They can’t do it because they haven’t been allowed to do it. Local governments need to be provided the support as well as the responsibilities. Another argument we heard frequently was that we were just decentralizing corruption. We know that decentralization reforms will not clean up corruption overnight. But what they do is change the accountability relationship. By moving the appropriate authorities to a lower level, these reforms provide a greater opportunity for citizens to engage on issues of corruption, voice their concerns and priorities, and hold local leaders accountable. It’s not an overnight panacea, but it does set a new course with increased possibilities for good governance and progress.

Q: Was all of the program done through the contract or grant with RTI or were you doing any direct grants with local organizations?

MILLIGAN: We didn’t provide direct financing to local organizations. We worked with RTI, the Urban Institute, Chemonics, and with ICMA, which is the International City/County Management Association.

Q: Okay.

MILLIGAN: Picking back up on the issue of corruption, I recall one meeting that happened in the Mission Director’s Office. I was in Terry Myer’s office, when the head of a local NGO expressed her concern on decentralization. She said, “This decentralization, it’s a failure.” “Why?” “Because the governor’s office just published their budget, and do you know what? The governor of Jakarta is spending more on his wardrobe allowance than on support for street kids.” I responded, “Yes. And now you know.”

Q: (Laughs

MILLIGAN: The public had never known that before. Decentralization reforms will not resolve problems immediately, but they can inform and empower people to work towards a solution.

Q: Right. No, that’s wonderfully—a wonderful anecdote.

And your Indonesian staff, I assume, played an important role in this. Did you end up learning Bahasa or were you dependent on your FSNs?

MILLIGAN: I did. I really appreciated the opportunity to learn such a wonderful and expressive language. I was able to study the language for one month in Yogyakarta. It was an immersive Indonesian experience. I also made many Indonesian friends. Quite honestly, to get to a basic level in Indonesian is not very difficult. To get beyond that is. I never got to the level in Indonesian I was able to get to in Spanish. But I did gain an appreciation for the language. Indonesians enjoy making puns, plays on words, and combining words with different root words. I knew enough to be able to engage people and make friends.

Q: So, was your language skill enough that when you were out with local governments that you could conduct meetings in Bahasa or did they have English as well? Or were you using staff for translation?

MILLIGAN: We would have to use staff for interpretation for meetings on complex issues. The international experts we placed in the key ministries were fluent in Bahasa. My Bahasa was good enough to go shopping or order in a restaurant...chat with friends, good enough to do basic things.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: But if I were to talk about implementing financial regulations or government authorities, I would be quickly over my head. Indonesia is a very modern and logical language. Pronunciation is very straightforward. If you speak Spanish, you can pronounce Indonesian very easily. The language uses core root words to build vocabulary. For example, you can make a root word a verb by adding a prefix, or a noun by adding a suffix. The words can grow longer and more complex very quickly. I would have required more of an immersive experience to be able to be professionally competent in Indonesia.

Q: Interesting. Obviously, what you were doing was really important for the country, but also I'm sure the embassy was quite interested in what you were doing as well. Did you have a lot of direct contact with the embassy as you were moving forward on all of this?

MILLIGAN: I did, in a sense of informing the political officer, the econ officer, and others. We were co-located within the embassy compound but located in a separate building. The lunchroom was the area where everyone would come together. There, you could sit down with your embassy colleagues and get updated. I did go to country team several times and certainly briefed the ambassador and the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) on the status of decentralization.

Q: East Timor was happening at that time, too, was it?

MILLIGAN: Yes. The East Timor referendum was in August of 1999 shortly before I arrived in country in September.

Q: What an exciting time to have been in Indonesia.

MILLIGAN: The other entity that had a focus on decentralization was the Asia Foundation. The Asia Foundation in Indonesia was led by Doug Ramage. I've always been impressed with the work of the Asia Foundation. Their professionals really understand governance issues and drill down and contribute important scholarly work on the issues, like they did in Indonesia, and in Burma when I was there.

Q: So, they were working on decentralization as well then?

MILLIGAN: They were—in a sense of elevating the discussion.

Q: Okay. Because I knew in talking with Gartini she told me about the work that Asia Foundation was doing on Islamic issues and on religious tolerance, and so, they had a wide swath of different kinds of programs that they were working on.

Okay. Looking at my notes to see what else I might want to ask you about. Anything else you think of right now?

MILLIGAN: Nothing else, except how I left Indonesia, which was due to the Bali bomb blast.

Q: And that was after because this is—we're now in—you went to Indonesia in 1999, so it's now 2002.

MILLIGAN: Yes, 2002.

Q: So, this is after 9/11.

MILLIGAN: Yes, a little more than a year later. I remember 9/11. I turned on the TV when I got home from work. It wasn't clear while watching the first burning tower what was happening, and then the second plane hit. I called Sharon Cromer; Sharon was the deputy mission director to make sure the mission leadership was aware. We still didn't know it was a terrorist attack as we watched the early moments of the event. But then it became clearer. The next day the Indonesians had come to the embassy which occupied an enormous city block and placed so many flowers along the fence. There was a tremendous outpouring of sympathy and solidarity. The Bali bomb blast occurred on October 12. Over the past summer, I could sense that the internal situation in country was getting worse. There were growing links between local extremist groups and international terrorist organizations. The United States was encouraging the Indonesian government to take the issue more seriously. In this environment, it was reasonable to assume that there would be something that could possibly trigger an evacuation. Before the Bali bomb blast, I went to Terry Myers to say, "I think we all know where this is going. I live very

close to the embassy. I speak the Bahasa more or less. I'm single with no family. If there is an evacuation and if you have to pick someone to stay behind, can it be me? Please." I enjoyed living and working in Indonesia. Who wants to be evacuated, right? He said yes. Fast forward to the terrible Bali bomb blast which killed over 200 people. A mandatory evacuation is ordered. The embassy has to go down to twelve or thirteen people across the entire interagency. USAID could have one person remain which Terry said could be me. My deputy had just married an Indonesian and she was placed in a difficult position. She was being required to evacuate and so was her spouse. After raising the issue with Terry, he advised me to inform the chargé whom I had a meeting with later. In my meeting with the chargé, I asked him if he could expand the number of those who could remain at post because of a Foreign Service officer who was being forced to choose between her career and her family. He said, "Well, if you feel so strongly about it, take her place on the plane." I said, "Okay, I will." That was the end of Indonesia for me. My deputy stayed and departed post immediately. (Both laugh)

Q: Oh. That's a wonderful anecdote.

Well, I'd forgotten that they were evacuated for a very long time, is that correct? It was months, wasn't it?

MILLIGAN: Yes, at least six months. I never went back. This would be the segue into Iraq.

Q: Yeah, right. Well, no, we can't get started on that.

MILLIGAN: No, we'll be here forever.

Q: Yeah, difficult times. But an extraordinary assignment and extraordinary opportunity for you after having done some very meaningful work.

MILLIGAN: Like I said, I've been so fortunate throughout my career to have had supervisors give me the space and support and to have worked with such brilliant colleagues. I've been blessed in many ways.

Q: Yes. But you had the vision to recognize what was really important to do at that time and important for Indonesia and important for the U.S.

So, I'm going to suggest that we've gone far enough now. When we reconvene, you can add anything more about Indonesia; otherwise we'll talk about how you got on that airplane and would continue when it landed in Washington.

MILLIGAN: You bet.

Q: Okay, thank you. This is February 4, 2022, and this is interview number two with Chris Milligan.

So, again, welcome Chris.

MILLIGAN: Thank you.

Q: When we finished up our discussion the other day you had talked about how everyone from AID except for one person was evacuated out of Indonesia following the Bali bombing. And I wonder if we could just pick up there and talk a little bit about how that evacuation went. Only one person was left and the rest of you went off to Washington. How much of the program continued and how was it managed? How does it work when there is such a massive evacuation?

MILLIGAN: How it works is that you must rely even more on your local staff. It wasn't only the U.S. embassy staff who were ordered to evacuate, but also the expat staff of our implementing partners. Contractors fall under chief of mission authority. Sometimes, depending upon the country, this can apply to grantees as well. It can get a bit murky. In our case, not only did the USAID American mission staff evacuate, so did the international members of our implementing partners. All of us had to rely upon our local staff. As we talked about the previous interview, we always rely a lot on our local staff; now we had to do so even more.

USAID was permitted to leave one person at post. After a time, this was expanded. Terry Myers returned to Jakarta, and I believe an additional staff member. An evacuation creates incredible uncertainty and stress because it is not for a defined period of time. The evacuation order is reviewed every thirty days. At that time, the Undersecretary for Management determines whether the evacuation will be extended for an additional thirty days. As a result, families are left in a kind of limbo. It is difficult to plan. You cannot say well, this is going to be three months, so I will respond accordingly. It could be one month; it could be six months. The uncertainty is a drain on morale.

There's another dynamic that impacts on morale and teamwork that involves those who depart on evacuation orders and those who remain at post. You want to maintain the sense of an overall team, and that is difficult to do, especially when there is such a large time difference. Those who remain have to shoulder an incredible burden of work. They may feel resentment towards those in Washington for picking up the increased workload associated with their departed colleagues. Those in Washington, however, are envious of their colleagues who could remain at post without the uncertainty and disruption to their families. While in Washington, they have to make due with cramped temporary quarters, and have to scramble to get their children into a local school without knowing how long they will be there or really where they will be in three to six months. You want to make sure that negativity or resentment doesn't build up between those who stayed and those who left. You want to maintain the unity of the overall team. It is also important to keep those who departed together as well. When we evacuated, we were provided with office

space for the entire mission and that helped keep those in Washington on evacuation orders together.

Q: Do you recall exactly when this was, the—not the specific date but the month and year?

MILLIGAN: Yes, the evacuation occurred in October. Families departed immediately. By mid-October we were all back in Washington and really set up in our temporary office space by early November.

Q: November. Okay.

MILLIGAN: Once we were all together in our temporary space, the Assistant Administrator of the Asia Bureau, Wendy Chamberlain, came and talked to us. I was impressed by her leadership, her straightforward communication and what she had to say. She needed to control expectations and advised us to prepare for an evacuation of several months. So, with that in mind, I rented a furnished apartment and a car and joined a local gym because I knew living in a hotel with anticipation that things would return to normal quickly didn't make sense. To end an evacuation requires that the Under Secretary make the determination that the conditions that triggered the evacuation were no longer in play. What triggered the evacuation was the Bali bomb blast and the government of Indonesia's reluctance to take the threat of growing Islamic fundamentalism seriously. How do you measure that? How do you know when those conditions have been met? In the meantime, we would try to keep our office together. We had excellent FSNs, and my deputy remained in Jakarta. I think it was easier for our specific office. But it was extraordinarily difficult to maintain a cohesive team across the entire mission, but I think we did as best we could.

Q: Right. And the local staff that remained in Indonesia, they were going into the office—

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Our local staff and counterparts found it difficult to understand why the U.S. embassy staff were on an ordered departure. The bomb blast occurred in Bali, another island an hour away by plane. There wasn't civil unrest, nor rioting or a coup d'état nor a military takeover. Life continued in Jakarta as it always had.

Q: Wow. It would seem like it was almost an overreaction on our part. (Laughs) Chris seems to be acknowledging that.

MILLIGAN: I think it was an opportunity for the U.S. government to make a strong signal to Indonesia that it needed to take domestic terrorism more seriously.

Q: Right. But once these things start it's very hard to correct.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: But I suspect in the long term it created significant issues for implementation of the USAID program over time.

MILLIGAN: It did in many ways. For example, you had to rebuild the mission once the evacuation is over. By the time the evacuation did end, I was actually en route to Iraq. This puzzled my Indonesian friends. They pointed out, " Help me understand this. You were evacuated from Indonesia because it wasn't safe, and then they sent you to Iraq in a war."

Q: (Laughs) That insight. There are ironies in our business.

MILLIGAN: Yes. When you are ordered to evacuate, you only have twenty-four hours to prepare.

Q: Yes.

MILLIGAN: You really need to have planned in advance for the eventuality of an evacuation. Every Foreign Service officer needs to have a plan in advance, no matter how nice the country. For example, I made arrangements to continue to pay my housekeeper. When you depart, you must go with the understanding that once you close that door and leave your belongings behind, you may not return. It may be someone else who eventually packs your things up and ships them home.

Q: Right. On the program side, did the local government decentralization program continue over this period or did it dissolve?

MILLIGAN: It continued. My deputy was the individual from the mission who was permitted to stay. Jessica is very bright and had an excellent grasp of the program issues. While the expat staff of our implementing partners were on evacuation orders, some of them went to their designated safe havens. For U.S. direct hires the safe haven was Washington, DC. For some of our implementing partners, their safe haven was nearby in Singapore. Singapore is not even an hour flight from Jakarta; it's in the same time zone. Communication is very good. This helped us keep our programs on track. And other embassies, like Germany, remained and continued their support.

Q: That's an important variable.

Thanks very much for filling in a bit more about how the evacuation worked.

So, you returned, then, to Washington. Wendy Chamberlain made it clear this was going to last for a while. You took the needful steps. And at some point, you were approached to look at what was happening.

So, this was now November, December 2002.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: Approaching the beginning of 2003, and there was planning that was beginning for a post-war Iraq?

Iraq -- Pre-War Planning, ORHA, CPA, USAID (2002-2005)

MILLIGAN: That's right. The interagency planning for the possibility of a war with Iraq was well underway when I returned to Washington and began engaging in this process. At that time, no one knew if there was going to be a war or whether Saddam Hussein would give up the weapons of mass destruction which he was thought to possess. It was a time of brinksmanship. I think you recall the famous presentation by Secretary Powell at the UN. USAID was involved in an interagency policy process headed by the Executive Steering Group that was chaired by Frank Miller. USAID engaged mostly in the planning portion that was led by Robin Cleveland, who was at OMB (Office of Management and Budget) at the time.

Q: How did they happen to reach out to you? Was it Andrew Natsios himself that reached out or how did this happen?

MILLIGAN: Good question. Here's how it happened. When John Wegge and I arrived in USAID/Washington on evacuation orders, we wrote a paper on lessons learned from dismantling Suharto's centralized apparatus of control that could be applied in a post-war Iraq—in the event of a war. There are commonalities among systems of authoritarian government. In the paper, we applied the lens of lessons learned from Indonesia to a potential post-war Iraq environment. We provided this paper to the Assistant Administrator for Asia, Wendy Chamberlain. I believe she appreciated it because the next thing you know, I was working on Iraq.

Q: (Laughs) Okay.

MILLIGAN: Not only was I involved in the policy process at the NSC (National Security Council), but I also led an intra-agency team developing scopes of work for possible programs in Iraq. Ross Wherry was a key person in the Asia Bureau who was also overseeing these efforts.

As I mentioned, at that time, going to war was not certain. We couldn't let it be known that we were writing scopes of work for relief and reconstruction in post-War Iraq because it would signal that the U.S. government was planning a war regardless of any diplomatic efforts. We were in a difficult situation. Putting contracts and grants in place requires months of work. We needed to have something in place to be prepared. We could not wait for the outbreak of a possible war to initiate the award process because by then it would be too late.

To address this constraint, we wrote scopes of work that could be applied for the Middle East region. They never mentioned Iraq, but could be used for recovery, stabilization and reconstruction there should the need arise. If not, they could provide general support to other programs in the Middle East. Andrew Natsios approved of this approach. Fortunately, by early 2003 contracts and grants were in place for all the key sectors.

Q: Right. And these were—they were competitively let, is that correct?

MILLIGAN: Yes. I don't recall if some were limited competition or not, but they were competitively awarded. The intra-agency teams were doing a terrific job of designing the sectoral programs, like health, agriculture, and education. The one that I particularly pushed for and was focused on was the local government piece.

This brings back memories of the Executive Steering Group meetings and the subgroup that we were in which was led by Robin Cleveland. In one meeting we were asked to come up with metrics on the number of schools that we were going to rebuild according to a fixed timeline. When I was asked the question in the meeting, without any warning so I could prepare, the number of schools we would have reconstructed by a specific date, I responded, "Well, I don't know. It depends on how many schools are going to be destroyed in the war." (Laughs) "I can't answer that question." I was reprimanded. (Laughs)

Q: A question in that early planning, do you recall whether people consciously looked to see if there were lessons learned from Vietnam or lessons learned from the earlier Afghan experience? Was there any conscious effort? And I ask in part because I actually did a little searching online yesterday in preparation and saw that there was a UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) report that was done in 2002 on lessons learned in crises in post-conflict situations. I'm just curious because we always say we never learn from our experiences, but do we ever even try to look to see if there are lessons learned before we start?

MILLIGAN: No, not from what I saw. It was all moving so quickly. I do recall that once we were in Iraq, CPA Leadership, the Coalition Provisional Authority, drew some parallels with Vietnam, but only in the sense of losing American public opinion, not in any strategic or operational sense. I really think that the senior level government officials were not thinking about Vietnam but were instead influenced by the spread of democracy in Eastern Europe following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

But since you brought up planning, before the war, the State Department had formed the Future of Iraq Project, which I think in the literature has been a bit misunderstood. Some point to this effort and believe that the State Department had a plan for post-war Iraq. This is not the case. The Future of Iraq Project did not produce plans. It pulled together a series of meetings with expat Iraqis centered along key sectors and themes. The result was volumes of detailed information for some sectors, while the information produced for other sectors was a bit scant. The final product was a thirteen-volume set of information that you had to sift through to gleam particular perspectives on Iraq. Some of

these reports were useful as backgrounders, others less so. For example, I gave the infrastructure one to my infrastructure team and they didn't find it very helpful. The Future of Iraq Project was a process, but in no way did it produce a plan. I believe it was used as a way of engaging expat Iraqis prior to the war.

It was the Executive Steering Group that brought the interagency together. Meetings were very output focused on what we could do and by what date. In hindsight, the meetings were based on flawed assumptions, namely that coalition forces would go in and very quickly, in a matter of, like, sixty to ninety days, hand the government over to a group of Iraqi leaders, perhaps expats like Chalabi and others. There was no assumption that we would actually have to administer Iraq.

Q: Yeah. Two questions: did folks ever look at the capacity of institutions? Did people ever talk about that, whether the institutions were strong, weak or whatever? And was there discussion of the potential for divisiveness within the country and the ethnic divisions and the religious divisions? Did people talk about that in advance at all?

MILLIGAN: Since we did not have a presence in Baghdad, there was no one with firsthand knowledge of Iraqi institutions. There was an awareness of the ethnic divisions and the internal divisiveness; we were acutely aware of that. After all, ORHA was stood up in January by General Garner who had conducted Operation Provide Comfort which was a relief effort in Kurdish areas. We were very aware of the Sunni-Shia split, perhaps though not all the complexities. Our knowledge was limited by the lack of an on the ground presence prior to the war. We had no USAID mission. We knew anecdotally that Iraq was a functioning, wealthy country, that for example, had hospitals performing complex surgeries. The lack of accurate data made planning challenging. Let me give you an example. I remember at one point, I had an immediate deadline to get information back to the NSC on roads and bridges. I was given a matter of hours to determine how many kilometers of roads and bridges would we have open in thirty days, forty-five days and ninety days. I knew from my past experience when I raised a question on metrics on school rehabilitation that what was required was a best guesstimate. I went down to the USAID library, and miraculously found a reference book that, to my relief, listed the actual kilometers of roads in Iraq. Not knowing how the war would be conducted, or even our funding levels, I had to do my best in a matter of minutes to provide a response. "Well, I guess we'll have 50 percent open at a certain point," I put down the number of kilometers based upon a statistic in a reference book. That was the kind of analysis that was going on. It really wasn't terribly in-depth. Interestingly, there was very little road damage during the war, so my guesstimate turned out to be very conservative.

Q: You've just been talking about ORHA, but you first got involved because of the paper you wrote for Wendy Chamberlain. There were task forces; then you went to ORHA. Can you give us a bit more about how everything was organized?

MILLIGAN: ORHA was stood up quite rapidly in January 2003. In hindsight, what happened was remarkable because the interagency planning process moved from the White House to the Department of Defense. Remarkable. The planning for Iraq had been

done out of the White House under the Executive Steering Group. In January, the president signed NSPD-24, or National Security Presidential Directive 24. NSPD-24 essentially stopped the NSC process and moved it over to the Department of Defense. Obviously, this increased the friction between the State Department and Department of Defense. NSPD-24 charged the Department of Defense with standing up a post war planning office. Although it noted that the Office would receive policy guidance and direction from the NSC-chaired interagency Executive Steering Group (ESG), the Deputies Committee (DC) and the Principals Committee (PC), essentially the NSC role of coordinating the interagency moved to the Department of Defense.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: The president signed NSPD-24 on January 20, and ORHA was quickly stood up as the post war planning office called for in the presidential directive. ORHA was the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance. It was called an office because it was bureaucratically an office in Department of Defense. I have to say again how remarkable this was that one department would take over the NSC interagency coordination role.

Because of his previous work providing assistance to the Kurds under Operation Provide Comfort, General Jay Garner, who had retired, was placed in charge of ORHA. General Garner knew of USAID capabilities from his work in Kurdistan. One of his first actions was to meet with Wendy Chamberlain at USAID. I was in the small meeting with General Garner and his assistant, and Wendy Chamberlain. General Garner began by summarizing the NSPD, told us that he did not want to begin interagency planning all over, but rather move what had been done already into what would be the ORHA processes. Wendy Chamberlain noted, "The president has decided this. We're here to support you. Chris, tomorrow you will start at the Pentagon." The very next day, I was at the main entrance to the Pentagon getting badged in. ORHA existed only as a requirement of the NSPD. It had no structure or personnel. Those who were onboard were General Garner, his colleagues General Bates and later General Adams, and a colonel named Tom Baltazar. And me. That was ORHA in late January of 2003.

My first task was to help think through the structures of ORHA, considering how an organization with ORHA's mandate should be designed. We set up three pillars. One was humanitarian assistance. This was an obvious priority. At the time, most believed that humanitarian assistance needs would far dwarf anything other post war requirements. The other two pillars were reconstruction and civil administration. I then tried to move the months of USAID planning into this new structure. I was able to do so because Wendy Chamberlain was backing me up as needed. ORHA started to grow exponentially. General Garner was able to access military support, bringing a set of colonels on board. Standing up a new organization presents countless challenges. For example, ORHA initially lacked office space, desks, and computers. While I was not responsible for the physical requirements, it was a messy working environment at first. Startups usually are.

So, at the same time, our DAA, Gordon West. A real pro, a real expert. Gordon was able to source technical support from IRG, an institutional contractor. Through IRG, we brought on technical experts to staff ORHA.

Q: For all of ORHA then?

MILLIGAN: Not for all of ORHA, but for key positions that USAID was responsible for in the relevant pillars.

Q: Okay.

MILLIGAN: For example, the areas of agriculture, education, governance... those areas where USAID brings expertise. Our USAID staff grew and grew, predominantly with IRG folks. After defining the structure in January, staffing up in February, we were then re-tweaking our plans as we continued to bring people onboard. I was running back and forth from the front doors of the Pentagon to the ORHA office every day, bringing in people, giving them a mini orientation, reaching out to the military folks, telling them what USAID can do, cannot do, trying to refine our organizational structures and plans. At that time, the agency reached out to Lew Lucke to be the head of the reconstruction pillar. When we stood up the ORHA structure, we pushed hard for USAID leadership in key areas.

Q: Okay. Let me just ask and then we'll go to Lew Lucke. During this period is also when you were doing the scopes of work for these contracts?

Once I moved to the Pentagon, I stepped away from the day-to-day process of overseeing the scopes of work. Ross Wherry took that effort across the finish line at the Ronald Reagan Building.

Q: Okay.

MILLIGAN: I stay in close contact with Wendy Chamberlain. She was an insightful and strategic thinker and a person of action. She was masterful. I was impressed with her keen political intellect. In the mornings, she'd have the *Washington Post* in front of her and she would point to two or three different articles, correlate their information and, "Okay, here's what really must be going on." She saw the bigger picture and knew how Washington worked. When we moved our USAID work under the Pentagon's umbrella, she asked me to make sure that we weren't run over. And she would remind me, "Let me know, Chris, if I have to do any wire brushing." Wendy knew how to handle people, particularly with the folks at the Pentagon. Because of her interventions at key times, we were able to preserve the integrity of USAID's contributions. This was not preserving turf; it was ensuring that the comparative advantages that USAID brings to ORHA could be delivered when the time came—particularly in the humanitarian and development related areas. Whenever I had to pick up the phone and say, "Help, Wendy", she was there.

Q: That's fantastic.

Now, and then I interrupted you. You were saying that Lew Lucke was asked to head up the reconstruction pillar.

MILLIGAN: Yes, but it was not easy to propose USAID leadership for these pillars. Some senior leaders at the Pentagon were suspicious of USAID. I also don't think that there was an appreciation of the difference between international development and the work that domestic agencies do. International development work requires a unique expertise. Some thought that, for example, the Department of Education should take the lead in the education sector without understanding that this department doesn't actually manage education services, doesn't have the experience of working in the development world, etc. We were allowed to be in charge of the Reconstruction pillar, but, oddly enough, not the Humanitarian Assistance pillar. Since USAID is the lead federal agency on humanitarian assistance, you would think we would have been the lead for the Humanitarian Assistance pillar. We were able to place a deputy in that pillar, but the pillar was led by Ambassador George Ward. Ambassador Ward was and is a well-accomplished, respected diplomat and a former Marine.

The plans were coming along. In February, we participated in a rock drill at the National Defense University. A rock drill a walk-thru of the plans for a conflict. The room was quite crowded. During the rock drill, we were going to be briefed on the military plan. General Garner was there, General Bates, General Adams, me, and other key ORHA staff. We listened as the war plans were explained to us. There had been a shift in strategy. I think you may recall that the original plan was to conduct a pincer movement through Kuwait and Turkey. The government of Turkey did not permit this, and the war strategy shifted.

I was sitting next to my colleagues from PRM, who were in the Humanitarian Assistance pillar while we were briefed on the revised military plans. The military briefed that they launch operations from Kuwait and rapidly move all the way to Baghdad. Upon hearing more about this plan, my PRM colleagues looked at me in amazement, and one said, "They're not leaving anyone behind for security." I raised my hand and I asked, "Excuse me sir. You are moving quickly to Baghdad, are you leaving forces behind on the ground for stability operations?" Their reply was "We're not." And I added, "But we're bringing in tens of millions— (I was naïve at the time to assume only tens of millions) --of dollars of humanitarian assistance supplies and we will need some security." And the reply was, and I remember the exact quote, "You expect to lose things in a war." I turned to my PRM colleagues, and I said, "We're on our own." That was the first indication that the planning assumptions were wrong in Iraq. It was going to be a race to Baghdad, then taking out the leadership or cutting off the head of the snake, handing the state over to an enlightened leadership and departure. This obviously didn't go as planned.

Q: (Laughs) It didn't work. Well. Hmm. Interesting.

So, this was in February before anything had started, but the roadmap was there.

MILLIGAN: At that point, it was obvious to many that we were moving closer and closer to a war. Preparations continued. Because of the threat of chemical and biological warfare, we were vaccinated for anthrax and received specialized training at Fort Meade. The training included how to put on a gas mask within 3 seconds as well as how to quickly put on a chemical hazard suit. They even took us to a firing range to practice firing guns. (Laughs). We were given our duffle bags and military equipment, helmets, ceramic plates, body armor. Back at the Pentagon, a small group was asked to brief Secretary Rumsfeld on ORHA's plans. I briefed him on two key sectors. The briefings were very output focused, this many schools repaired and so on.

ORHA staff was then told to prepare to depart. We would meet at the Pentagon parking lot. I think it was March 16. We could tell our families to come to see us off. ORHA had grown to nearly 200 people. We couldn't tell anyone but our immediate families. It was close hold. My parents came to the Pentagon parking lot. There was quite a crowd, 200 folks and their families. Large buses all lined up in a row to take us to Andrews Air Force Base. To everyone's surprise, Secretary Rumsfeld showed up and made farewell remarks. We got on the buses. You can imagine what it must have been like for my parents sending their son off into the unknown. One of the acts of kindness I will always remember was when Colonel Tom Baltazar, a good friend as we were the few original members who had built ORHA, leapt off the bus, made his way to my parents and reassured them, "Don't worry. We'll take care of him." That meant a lot to me.

Q: These are the parents who were reluctant to have you go to the Philippines.

MILLIGAN: Oh yes. I really appreciated what Tom did.

The buses rolled out of the parking lot, and we arrived at Andrews Air Force Base shortly thereafter. We immediately boarded a plane, flew off and later landed in Kuwait. Once we arrived in Kuwait, the air space was closed, and the war started.

Q: How many people from AID were part of this? You were there and was—and Lew Lucke. Were there other AID staff also as part of ORHA at that point?

MILLIGAN: Lew was not based in the Pentagon.

Q: Oh, okay.

MILLIGAN: Lew had deployed much early to Kuwait and went about setting up things there. Although I was the deputy for reconstruction, I was the lead USAID guy at ORHA in the Pentagon. There were quite a few USAID staff on the plane, but most were technical experts from IRG.

Q: Okay.

MILLIGAN: Our pillar, reconstruction, contained quite a few interagency colleagues such as those from USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) and other agencies. We considered ourselves one team.

Q: Okay.

MILLIGAN: I think we landed on the seventeenth. That was St. Patrick's Day. President Bush issued Saddam Hussein a final ultimatum to leave the country. The war began on the 19th with an airstrike.

ORHA set up operations in the Hilton Hotel. Lew, who had been based in Kuwait for weeks, had found USAID accommodations at the Radisson Hotel. We spent a considerable amount of time driving down to the Hilton to work with ORHA teams on final plans. No one knew if Saddam Hussein had chemical weapons or not. He launched several missile strikes on Kuwait. Some during the day, but quite a few in the evenings. You always slept with your gasmask next to you. There were quite a few times when the air raid sirens would blare, and you had to wake up, put on your gas mask, and dash down the steps to the hotel basement. The hotel itself had sealed up all the doors and windows to mitigate the possibility of gas entering the building. I'm not sure if it would have been effective though. Even in our daily meetings, your gasmask was always strapped to your leg. At times, I would practice making sure I could get it on correctly in a matter of seconds. I was in one meeting with local counterparts when the air raid sirens went off. We were all seeking shelter in a room. There were those wearing gas masks and those that did not have them. It is awful to sit there in silence waiting for the all clear, looking at those who didn't have a mask and hoping there would be no chemical attack. Really awful. Fortunately, none of the missiles had chemical weapons. They also did not do much damage. We could also hear the Scud missiles taking out some of the incoming Sidewinders. Impressive.

Those weeks, the early days of the war, we spent time rehearsing and reworking our plans. At this point, the USAID contracts that we had been working on months earlier, were being awarded. Some of our implementing partners had begun to arrive in Kuwait. We got them situated, updated, and ready to be deployed.

Q: Wow.

So, this is the middle of March. You said you arrived on the seventeenth and they got to Baghdad very quickly, as I recall.

MILLIGAN: The military forces arrived in Baghdad in early April and Baghdad fell on April 9th. On that day, Iraqi civilians and U.S. marines toppled the statue of Saddam. Shortly after, before the rest of ORHA moved up, I flew up in a C-130 with Lew Lucke and Joanna Giordano, who was our public affairs officer.

Q: Yeah, I remember. Into Baghdad you said?

MILLIGAN: Into Baghdad. We arrived at the Baghdad International Airport on a C-130. There was an eerie silence inside the empty airport. Airports are usually noisy and crowded places. While the arrival and departure signs were lit, the hallways, ticket counters and luggage areas were vacant. It feels odd to walk through an empty airport. Outside we saw U.S. military helicopters and planes. We hitched a ride to Saddam Hussein's Republican Palace which would become the center of ORHA and later CPA operations.

Before then, General Garner was concerned with finding a physical space for ORHA. The palace that would serve as ORHA's base and later that of CPA and the Embassy, was enormous. It was like the size and scale of the National Art Gallery. The main entrance consisted of a giant rotunda with wings going off in two directions. There were ballrooms as well as many other rooms. Although it was a palace, when we arrived, there was no power or water. All the rooms were basically empty. I scoped out a space for USAID on the left wing second floor area and went down one hallway slapping USAID stickers on the doors... bam-bam-bam-bam-bam-bam-bam. I was staking out territory for our offices and our staff in advance. The palace then was immense and empty besides me and a few others. We'd be opening doors and just peering in with flashlights exploring this abandoned palace. Surreal...

Q: And it was all furnished and everything was sort of there? Or was it empty?

MILLIGAN: It was mostly empty.

And coated with dust. There were a few chairs in a room or two and an immense banquet table that seated hundreds, but other than that, pretty much empty. ORHA managed to get trucks up from Kuwait with cots. We lived and worked in the palace. You had to be judicious about where you would sleep. I made sure I picked a smaller room that could hold only five people. Some of the rooms were immense and could hold thirty, forty, or even fifty people. With such large numbers, there was the inevitable risk of a loud snorer. This is why you had to be judicious about finding a good spot. I remember when Peter McPherson, the former USAID Administrator and president of Michigan State University, arrived as an economic policy advisor. He was initially placed in one of the large, crowded rooms known to contain a very loud snorer. We were to find a smaller room for him so he could eventually get a good night's sleep. Sleeping was tough. It was very hot and dusty. At first, there was no power, no air conditioning, and no water for showers.

Q: And so, ORHA was at the palace, and you had the three pillars.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: And so, you said you were staking out USAID office space for the reconstruction pillar.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: And USAID was in lead for reconstruction; then there was the humanitarian pillar and also the civil administration group. Were they also components of ORHA?

MILLIGAN: Yes, they were components of ORHA and began to arrive in the palace. But now without controversy. The DART (Disaster Assistance Response Team) did not deploy when ORHA moved up to Baghdad. Representatives from DART had been in Baghdad and determined that it was not a safe or permissive environment. The DART remained in Kuwait. Since March, the DART had been reluctant to coordinate with ORHA. It kept ORHA at arm's length and only reluctantly and when forced to, attended ORHA planning meetings. Its stand-offish attitude tarnished USAID's reputation among all the agencies supporting ORHA. And made Pentagon leadership increasingly distrustful of USAID.

Lew also returned to Kuwait after a day or two and left me to set things up in Baghdad. I began calling forward what was required. Meanwhile, General Garner could not convince the DART to move to Baghdad with the rest of ORHA. He informed Secretary Rumsfeld, saying that he didn't understand why the USAID reconstruction folks were in Baghdad while the DART remained in a five-star hotel in Kuwait. Secretary Rumsfeld called Secretary Powell and I am told that it was not a very pleasant conversation. Colin Powell called Andrew Natsios. The DART quickly found its way up to Baghdad. While it is true that there was uncertainty on how permissive the environment was, this added to the overall mistrust of USAID. Some did not see USAID as a team player.

Q: So, it had been the DART that determined it wasn't time to go in?

MILLIGAN: Yes. The DART believed it needed to maintain the integrity of the humanitarian assistance response not fully integrating with the larger USG effort. This created considerable tension. A few members of the DART did not appreciate what I had been doing, integrating USAID plans into the larger effort. They thought that I had sold out. When they arrived in Baghdad, they even left a message written across my dusty desk to reinforce that point. I knew though that we had to integrate USAID into the overall effort, or USAID's work would be done by domestic agencies who did not have the same experience, skills and capacity. And it would not be done well. USAID is the lead federal agency for humanitarian assistance, as well as relief, reconstruction and development. My job as a government employee is to support the policy decision, whether I agree with it or not, and ensure that USAID brings its capacity to the overall effort. Iraqi lives depended on it.

Q: Yes.

MILLIGAN: The living and working conditions in the palace were very basic for the first several weeks. There were no showers for probably a month. We ate MREs (Meal, Ready-to-Eat). My colleagues and I became quite experienced in knowing which MRE menus were the best. Thai chicken, that was really good. Once power generators were hooked up, we could run fans, but it would be a while before we had air conditioning and

the Iraqi summer was fast approaching. Eventually a few of the offices became air conditioned, trailers were set up and people could start moving out of the palace and into better accommodations. Many of our staff moved into Rasheed Hotel, which was on the edge of the Green Zone.

Q: Now, on the reconstruction side, there were some contracts that were in place so you could tap into—

MILLIGAN: Yes, that is correct.

Q: —individuals. Now, I know that there were a lot of people who came out and played various roles—Peter McPherson being one.

MILLIGAN: Right. Rodney Bent was another. He arrived several months later.

Q: Rodney Bent. Somebody came out and was the mayor of Baghdad. There were various—

MILLIGAN: Barbara Bodine.

Q: Yeah, Barbara Bodine. Was that all part of your—was that part of the reconstruction effort? And how did that happen or was that the civil administration people? And it seemed kind of strange in a sense that there were all these people flooding in and playing governmental roles on behalf of the Iraqis.

MILLIGAN: The ORHA structure had a few flaws. These flaws became more evident when OHRA transitioned to CPA and the original structure evolved into one with ministries, a humanitarian assistance, and a reconstruction pillar. In some cases, this separated the support for ministries from the administration. The reconstruction pillar was programming billions of dollars in reconstruction activities associated with ministries that were structurally under a different pillar. This created tension. Under ORHA and CPA, each ministry was led by a senior advisor, who really became the person responsible for administrating and running that ministry in many ways. Many of these people didn't have regional experience or even overseas experience, or development experience for that matter. They may have had domestic experience on a topic, but that is very different from working in a post war country overseas. Not only did these individuals have different levels of experience, but some also rotated in and out very quickly. Some stayed for a matter of months. USAID personnel did not. Our expectations were different. When I got to ORHA, the plans were based on short time intervals, thirty days, ninety days etc. The planning assumption was for a temporary presence. Our interagency colleagues were always a bit surprised when we told them we were planning for a longer term presence. We knew that reconstruction and development take years and that we would likely have a USAID mission for years to come in Iraq. Our staff's assumption was that they would stay for at least a year, whereas others rotated out after three months.

Q: Yeah.

Now, you were the deputy for reconstruction at ORHA.

MILLIGAN: Right. Initially I was the deputy for reconstruction and later became the USAID liaison to CPA.

Q: But you were also helping to set up the USAID mission or was that Lew? Lew then became the USAID mission director, right?

MILLIGAN: Yes. Here's what happened. We were all initially based in the palace. Lew and almost all of the mission initially remained down in Kuwait. I was the lead in Baghdad. USAID recruited Earl Gast to be the deputy mission director. By the time Earl arrived in Baghdad, we had moved into office space outside of the palace. We had been given office space in the old convention center. This is where Andrew came to visit us that summer. There is a photo of Andrew with the new USAID mission taken on an interior staircase of the convention center. Initially though, I was the lead in Baghdad, while Lew was down in Kuwait. I would call forward our implementing partners as needed from Kuwait. The actual setting up of the mission, that complex and difficult job was done by Earl Gast—and quite masterfully. While Earl and Lew operated out of the convention center which was about a mile from the palace, I remained at the palace operating a small office which focused on USAID's engagement with CPA.

Q: Right. So, you had broader responsibilities?

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: You were in an interagency job, but obviously working very closely with USAID and probably got caught in the middle quite often.

MILLIGAN: Right. Well, I was definitely a USAID guy and I reported to Lew, but I also maintained the USAID office that—

Q: Oh, okay, so you did report to the mission then?

MILLIGAN: Oh, absolutely.

Q: Oh, okay.

MILLIGAN: ORHA didn't last very long. By May, Ambassador Bremer had arrived and ORHA transitioned into CPA. I became the USAID representative for CPA. For example, I would attend Bremer's morning meetings, and I would be the face of USAID for everyone in the palace. The palace became a hive of activity. There were 2,000 people or more working there. If anyone needed to engage USAID on an issue, they would stop by the USAID Office in the palace, and I would help them or connect them to the USAID staff member in the mission located in the convention center.

Q: And then you would communicate with the AID director?

MILLIGAN: Correct, yes.

Q: Oh.

MILLIGAN: Lew had a desk in our office, but he spent very little time there. He spent most of the time over at the mission where all of the USAID staff were located. Lew would also have a weekly meeting with Bremer at the palace that I would help him prepare for. I attended it with him.

Q: Yeah.

MILLIGAN: USAID resources came largely from two supplementals. A lot of my work focused on resources, working to secure funding from the supplementals, helping all our programs navigate the CPA bureaucracy, setting expectations etc. For example, early on, Ambassador Bremer did not understand OTI's capabilities or how it could advance U.S. objectives. There was a lot of bureaucratic infighting in the palace. It was pretty intense given the potential funding that was available. OTI was going to be given \$35 million out of the first supplemental. Quite a substantial amount of funding. Suddenly, this funding was zeroed out due to a lack of understanding of how OTI functioned. Because I understood how CPA worked and how USAID worked, I was able to set up a meeting with OTI's Fritz Weden and Ambassador Bremer. Fritz and I rehearsed in responses to Bremer's concerns. You could say it was a success. Not only was the \$35 million in funding restored, but Bremer turned to Fritz and asked, "Can you program \$75 million by the end of August?" Fritz says, "Yes, we could do it." And boom, OTI's budget yoyoed from \$35 million to \$0 and then up to \$75 million. This was an example of my role. Figuring out how USAID could best advance U.S. objectives and working within the complex CPA structures to ensure that USAID could do its best.

Q: Just for the record on the Rasheed Hotel, was USAID there between time in the palace and the convention center?

MILLIGAN: Initially, we all lived and worked in the palace. Later, we moved out of the palace and set up offices in the convention center, and we lived in the Rasheed Hotel. The Rasheed Hotel also happened to be closer to the USAID offices at the convention center.

Q: Ah, okay. Sorry. Right.

MILLIGAN: The Rasheed Hotel was quite a large facility, and it housed a lot of CPA staff. There were not enough trailers back in the garden area of the palace, so quite a few people lived at the hotel. The hotel was on the border of the Green Zone. I will go back to say more about the day that came under a rocket attack, but when we left that hotel, we had to scramble and find places for the USAID folks. We were on our own in many ways. We were able to negotiate leases from Iraqis for five houses that were in the Green Zone. The Green Zone didn't exist when I originally arrived in Baghdad in April. But as the

security situation worsened, the t-walls and security check points went up. It was not an exclusive CPA area but contained private Iraqi homes as well. The security situation was deteriorating rapidly from when I had first arrived in Baghdad. Driving around the city in April when I first arrived was like driving around a ghost town. Everyone remained in their homes. No one was leaving their houses. Everything was quiet. Twice, I flew down to Kuwait to brief people and drove back to Baghdad in a soft skin convoy. Back then, we had greater mobility before the situation deteriorated over the summer.

After the Rasheed hotel was attacked by rockets, USAID staff moved into the five houses that I mentioned. Naturally, staff were quite concerned about the security environment. And strange things began to happen. For example, cloth was left tied on fences around some of the houses. Staff believed that this could be an indication that terrorists were marking our houses. These houses were not a long-term solution, but they did provide a needed refuge following the attack on the Rasheed. While staff were located in the five houses, the mission identified seventeen acres of undeveloped land within the Green Zone. We knew that if we just had that land, we could build our own secure compound. Since I was the USAID liaison with CPA, I met with Pat Kennedy who was serving as the chief-of-staff for Ambassador Bremer. I told Pat that the status of USAID personnel would be one less thing he would have to be concerned with if he would allow us to build a compound on the seventeen acres. He agreed. With that, Earl Gast and Fernando Cossich began work on the USAID compound. The compound became the envy of CPA staff in the Green Zone with its hardened houses, a mini gym and a restaurant that served excellent food. Elsewhere, our CPA colleagues continued to live in unfortified trailers that were sandbagged to avoid collateral damage. It took time to build all the houses. The site was a mix of houses and trailers for quite some time. We continued to use the trailers as offices until we could build a large, fortified office space, which wasn't completed during my two years. Our office trailers were surrounded by sandbags. These were not only to protect you inside in case something blew up outside, but it was also to protect those around you in case your trailer was hit by a rocket or mortar. Rocket and mortar attacks were frequent. I quickly was able to distinguish between the two. During the CPA days, the palace was rocketed many times. We would perform a duck and cover, going under the desks, and then climbing back out to resume work.

One got used to ducking and covering so much that it became a reflex. The convention center where USAID offices were located lacked windows for quite a while. It was a modern building that originally had large plate glass windows—the floor to ceiling kind. The windows were blown out during the war, but the building remained intact. The empty window spaces were covered by enormous sheets of plastic.

I remember Spike Stephenson's first day in the office. He arrived as the new Mission Director upon Lew's departure. I was still based in the palace and came over to the convention center to brief him. His office desk backed up to a plastic covered window. I was sitting in front of this desk when a rocket exploded on the t-wall just outside his window. It made an incredible sound. Everyone knew what to do and immediately ran into the interior of the building. Most huddled in the bathrooms because they were safer given the lack of windows. Spike said he heard a tremendous boom; he looked up to

where I was and saw that I had simply disappeared in that split second. I had immediately hit the ground. It was a reflex. You instinctively hit the ground anytime you heard a rocket or mortar...or gun fire. You didn't even think about it. We went through so many rocket and mortar attacks.

Q: There has to be a certain element of youth here to keep people nimble enough so they could hit the ground. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: You could get rug burns from hitting the floor so quickly. That occurred to me the day the Rasheed Hotel was attacked by rockets. I remember that day very well. It was October 26 and just a few minutes after 6:00 in the morning. I had just woken up. I had considered doing a morning walk to get some exercise but then reconsidered. I was lying in bed when the rockets began slamming into the building and exploding. The building would shudder, and the rockets kept on coming. I found myself on the floor behind the bed, wedged between the bed and the bathroom wall. It was that reflex of hitting the floor. Usually, rockets would come in a short series, two or three, and be over. These ones kept coming and coming. I believe there were 28 in total. They would slam into the building and explode. The building would shake every time a rocket would hit it. Huddled in the room, I could hear people screaming as the rockets would hit different parts of the building. I knew I had to get into the bathroom because that was the safest area, but I was pinned down behind my bed. Keeping a low profile, I managed to crawl into the bathroom and wait for the rockets to stop. I then quickly threw on some clothes and made my way into the hallway and down the stairs. Water was leaking from broken pipes, the lights were flickering, and people were filing down the stairs. I was on the eighth floor. It took some time to get down. My first thought was to get our people together in one place as they emerged from the stairwell and do a head count. The shock of the attack affected people differently. It was very traumatic. One of my colleagues was very, very upset. Her panic and anxiety were beginning to infect others. I realized the best way to keep everyone focused was to assign tasks. Have people focus on a job that they could do rather than sit and worry. I ripped off a piece of posterboard and handed it to her saying, "You have a job to do. Your job is to write everyone's name down on this poster board. Go take everyone's name down." Finding ways that people can be engaged in an emergency helped keep the team calm and organized.

Q: That's a very important lesson learned there.

MILLIGAN: She finished her accountability check and determined that we had one colleague remaining in the building. I said, "Please stay here, I'm going to go up the stairwell and look for them." I went through the lobby of the hotel and coming down the staircase I nearly bumped into someone who looked just like Wolfowitz. His trip was kept very quiet. Very few people knew he was in Baghdad and overnighting in the hotel. Another surreal moment.

Q: (Laughs) Maybe someone else knew and that's why it was targeted?

This is truly amazing. Well, what was your job title, out of curiosity? You were a USAID employee, you reported to the mission director, but you were actually working out at the CPA—his representative at the CPA.

MILLIGAN: I read Lew's oral history and he was kind enough to say that he had two deputies. He had a deputy at CPA, and a USAID deputy, Earl Gast. Earl Gast was the true USAID deputy. He was responsible for the success of establishing the USAID mission and ensuring that the initial programs were functioning well. I could have been called deputy for CPA but my title was CPA liaison. For me, I don't care much about titles.

Q: No, I'm sure that you didn't. I mean, you were doing exciting work. But I ask in part because when I mentioned to someone that I was interviewing you and the person reminded me that Andrew Natsios was very unhappy that it took you longer to be promoted than you should have been. And so, I was curious what your job title was and sort of how you were evaluated and by whom.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: And were you put at a disadvantage because of inattention to some bureaucratic realities—did AID not have enough understanding of the bureaucratic importance of position titles? This could be a lesson learned for the future when someone gets put into the kind of role you were put into.

MILLIGAN: I believe that my formal title was USAID Coordinator to the Coalition Provisional Authority. It's true I was not ranked for promotion while I was in Iraq. Despite a well written and compelling evaluation that detailed my work standing up USAID's presence in Iraq, I received a B. Andrew personally called me up and apologized. The U.S. role in Iraq was quite controversial. Some people believed that USAID was enabling the war through its presence on the ground, which of course was not the case. There would be a war regardless of USAID's presence. I mentioned before that when I came back to the convention center from the palace, someone wrote "traitor" in the dust on my desk. There was not a universal appreciation for the importance of what we were doing. I was told this may have affected the evaluation panels.

Q: Yes. Very complex looking at the skills needed to play the role that you played, because you really were in two camps and the liaison between them. I think it's a role that probably very few people could play and do very successfully. It would have been very easy for you to get drawn into a lot of controversy and tension between the CPA and USAID.

MILLIGAN: Well, I definitely remained and continued to identify as a USAID employee. I was not interested in jumping ship to the mainstream CPA. A lot of what I did, my value added besides ensuring we had resources and providing advice to CPA, was also providing advice to USAID folks on how to engage effectively in this complex and rapidly changing environment. I had been working on all of this from the beginning, from

when we were four or five people at the Pentagon, through the days of ORHA, and then CPA and could explain most things to my colleagues as they arrived.

Another one of my responsibilities was to represent USAID on the Program Review Board. The PRB was set up to administer Iraq funds. It was composed of the senior personnel of the CPA and had the authority to review and make recommendations about the awarding of contracts to Ambassador Bremer. The funding came from both the Development Fund for Iraq which the Coalition Provisional Authority administered in trust on behalf of Iraqi people, and the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund, which was the \$18 billion U.S. supplemental.

Q: The food for oil?

MILLIGAN: The Oil for Food program ended in 2003. In May 2003, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483 granted CPA the authority to use Iraq's oil revenue. The \$10 billion remaining in the Oil for Food program was transferred to the Development Fund for Iraq. The Development Fund for Iraq also received funding from seized and "vested" Iraqi bank accounts and funds seized by coalition forces.

My work in the palace required that I be involved in certain CPA administrative issues. I made sure I was involved in discussions on a potential supplemental. One wasn't asked to be included, you had to find out about it and get yourself inside the room. I provided advice on the design of the supplemental funding request before it went forward to Congress. For example, after looking at the first draft, I argued that CPA should not submit a request with hundreds of specific project line items or CPA would be locked into a very rigid funding structure. I also noted the absence of funding for democracy promotion, education, agriculture, and key elements of economic transition support. The supplemental was being pulled together by a former DOD Rear Admiral David Oliver. David has served as the Principal Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, and once in Iraq, as the Special Advisory to the Minister of Finance, and then as CPA's Director of Management of Budget. He was a respected expert on DOD budgeting. I made it a point of seeking him out and providing input. My advice was included in the draft supplemental that I reviewed. But then, without my knowledge, my inputs were removed in the final version that went forward to Congress. This version removed portions of the draft supplemental critical to nation-building which I believe would have assisted coalition stabilization efforts. Instead, the draft supplemental was dominated by a collection of rapidly compiled infrastructure projects. The CPA budget office structured the request in a narrow line-item format, rather than in broad flexible categories. Congress approved the Administration's request almost exactly as it had been submitted-with a few additions such as \$100 million for democracy building and limited funds for education. More importantly, Congress approved CPA's line-item format, locking the Administration into a shopping list of hurriedly prepared potential projects. Flexibility to adjust CPA's strategic approach would not be possible without a time-consuming approval from Congress. CPA became wedded to implementing a flawed strategy that could not be recalibrated to respond to changing conditions in Iraq.

The supplemental diverged widely from the Administration's goal of democratic transformation. CPA did not request any funding for democracy building. The \$100 million added by Congress was only half of one percent of the total \$18.4 billion available. Congress allocated \$15.89 billion (86% of funding) for security and infrastructure projects, against the CPA request of \$16.95 billion. Not only were insufficient funds initially allocated to transform Iraq into a democratic and market-based nation, because of a lack of funding to build the capacity of Iraqis to manage the new infrastructure, it has already begun to deteriorate.

Due to limits on funding for transformation programs, the few existing nation building programs were never guaranteed a fixed level of resources. Operating in this uncertainty, contractors had difficulty attracting and retaining skilled staff because they could not offer them longer-term contracts. Key programs had to shorten their planning horizons, running at times on a month-by-month basis, reinforcing an emphasis on short-term tactics rather than long-term strategy.

Without a strategic plan to guide resource management and staffing, ORHA and CPA could not recruit sufficient personnel with the appropriate skills, and inadvertently created an organizational structure that eroded unity of effort. Though the halls of the Republican Palace were awash in people, key offices were chronically short of qualified personnel. Individuals with no experience in post-conflict situations, nation-building, the Middle East region, or even service overseas were put in positions of extraordinary power. By June of 2004, these individuals had spent, or allocated, \$19.1 billion of Iraqi funds, and billions more in found, frozen or seized assets. Though well intentioned and hardworking, their enthusiasm could not compensate for lack of experience. Unable to account for the number of staff or even their quarters and vehicles, CPA lost control over the personnel process. The negative impact of a lack of both internal controls and strategic staff management was compounded by the short length of CPA staff service. Even at the senior levels, service of only three months was not uncommon. Service of nine months was extremely rare. Short staff tenures reinforced a premium of tactics over strategy as the newly arrived would set out to accomplish those objectives that could be completed during their brief stay.

When I was able to see the final supplemental request, I was very concerned. Ambassador Bremer was in Washington, so I met with Clayton McManaway, his deputy. I explained that the supplemental lacks sufficient funding for key priorities such as the necessary resources supporting a democratic and economic transition. He was shocked and said that could not be the case. I replied that maybe I was mistaken, and he said no, adding that I always came prepared. He then read through the detailed supplemental and was taken aback. He swore out loud.

Rodney Bent then arrived to oversee CPA's financial administration. I would work quite closely with Rodney. His experience was exactly what CPA needed.

Q: And was Rodney, he was an OMB employee at that point, right?

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Being from OMB, Rodney knew USAID and our capabilities. I also spent a lot of time working with the Governance Team, which was headed by Scott Carpenter. His Deputy was Judy Van Rest from IRI.

Q: Yes, Judy Van Rest

MILLIGAN: Judy and I became good friends. She also understood what USAID could do. The governance team had a lot of influence over the budget allocation as well, and so I would make sure that I kept in regular contact with this and other key offices in the palace.

Earlier, you had asked about the administration of Baghdad and surrounding areas. Standing up a governance structure to get Baghdad functioning was a key priority that I focused on from day one. We arrived in Baghdad in April. General Garner looks at me and says, "Ok Chris, you're the lead for reconstruction up here. There is no power or water, no phones and there's rubble everywhere. Get to work." I thought, "Wow. I am just one person up here. I began calling forward our key contractors who had arrived in Kuwait.

One of the priorities for re-establishing services was thinking through the administration of Iraq. The lack of telecommunications presented considerable challenges. I did have access to a sat-phone to call Kuwait. But setting up meetings with colleagues in the palace was a challenge. In those early days, in the palace you had to run around and bump into people and say, "Let's go talk, let's do this". While we had sat-phones, none of the Iraqis had phones. Barbara Bodine was the ORHA lead for Baghdad. There was a bit of back and forth as to whether this was for the city of Baghdad or the larger province. I met with Barbara and said, "Barbara, we've got to get the city administration back up and running because we need to restore essential services. There's no power or water. There's rubble choking the streets. Schools are closed. The difficulty we will have, Barbara, is that we will have to work with the city administration. They've got the skills and capacity. And we know that the city administration is run by Ba'athis." I told her about an idea of standing up a counterbalance to the city administration. I recommended that we meet with the city officials and figure out a plan.

We informed the local coalition military commanders that we wanted to meet representatives of the city administration. A meeting was set up. We arrived at the city hall in a convoy of Humvees. We pulled up to the plaza and the partially destroyed city hall. There were burnt out cars and military equipment nearby as we stepped over large sections of broken glass and went into the building. At the other end of a large room were the members of the city administration. They looked at us, we looked at them. They probably didn't know what was going to happen to them. Perhaps they thought they were going to be arrested? And I didn't know what they were going to do to us either. (Laughs) We did have a few armed military colleagues with us. But we said, "Okay, let's get to work. Let's get the city running again."

I was able to form a trusted professional relationship with a younger Iraqi in the city administration. While the top leadership was die-hard Ba'athi, not all the staff were. Many were just city administrators. My Iraqi colleague explained that the city was divided into a system of neighborhoods that were grouped together under larger sub districts and then districts. We came up with a plan. I proposed, "Here's what we need to do. We have to keep the city administration running, and we need to retain those with the capacity to do so, but they're the old guard. What we can do in the meantime is set up neighborhood councils that vote for representation on subdistrict councils and then for the larger district councils so that eventually we can have a representative city council. I convinced Barbara and CPA leadership of this idea and then had to figure out how to get it set up and to make it work. RTI had been awarded the contract for local governance. They sent an Iraqi-American anthropologist and governance expert up to Baghdad from Kuwait. Her name was Amal Rassam. Together, Amal and I piloted the concept. Amal and I went to two neighborhoods and presented them with the idea of selecting representatives who would then vote and select higher representatives...all the way up to a city council.

The first neighborhood meeting didn't go well—it was a very rough start. The first neighborhood that we selected for a pilot as an affluent one. We met with neighborhood representatives and Amal introduced the idea of a neighborhood council. I further explained, with Amal interpreting, the idea of a neighborhood council to provide input on local priorities. I added that we wanted to hear their priorities. Did I ever get blowback! "Who do you think you are? You come into our homes after bombing our country and ask us what we think? There is no electricity, no water or even security. Our daughters can't walk outside because it is not safe and you come here and ask us what we think?" I recognized that I had to let the community express their frustrations. And they did, for about an hour it seemed. They were not keen on the idea of setting up a neighborhood council, but I had to let them vent. It was just exhausting. At one point, I said, "Okay, I understand. I want to let you know that we will be going neighborhood by neighborhood to set up councils so that communities have a voice. If you don't want to participate, that's fine. It is your choice and your neighborhood doesn't have to be part of this. But when reconstruction begins, we won't know what your priorities are." By the end of the meeting, they were supportive of the concept. We then moved to another neighborhood and repeated the process.

The problem we faced was that there was just two of us, and more than seventy neighborhoods in Baghdad. It would have taken months for Amal and me to go neighborhood by neighborhood to set up the first level of councils. We needed a faster solution so we could set up the overarching city council and get it running as quickly as possible. I realized that the coalition local commanders were the ones who knew the communities the best. They could help us. I set up a half-day seminar on local governance for the military commanders. I walked them through the process of how to hold community meetings, and the result being an elected city council. Then, in a matter of a few short weeks, we had a city council. Ambassador Bremer opened their inaugural

meeting. We had set up a structure that balanced the capacity that had been in place, with increased transparency and integrity.

Q: Yeah, no, that's fantastic.

You talked about walking in for that first meeting with the city council, the original city council. How soon after you went in was this? Was this a month or two months or three months or weeks or how quickly do you think?

MILLIGAN: It took more than a month. And it was not perfect. Moving quickly, things will not always be perfect, but it is important to get the principles right from the beginning and stick to them. And that was what we were doing.

Q: I know nothing about Iraq but the one neighborhood or area that was obviously in the news a lot was Sadr City. Is that one of the neighborhoods in Baghdad?

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: So, it's that sort of structure.

MILLIGAN: Yeah. And Sadr City was larger than one neighborhood. I believe it was a district composed of several neighborhoods.

Q: Yeah, okay.

MILLIGAN: At the same time, we wanted to make sure that we were able to touch base with communities all over the country. Early on, speaking to General Garner, I proposed the idea of establishing governance support teams in every province. I recognized the capacity that our RTI implementer had based on their work around the world, including the regional office model we had used in Indonesia. Governance Support Teams could provide assistance to local governments to restore services and get cities and towns back on their feet. The GST model could include a local governance element and humanitarian assistance element. We were able to get this structure up and running. Eventually the GSTs morphed into more formalized PRTs representing CPA. Few people realize the origin of the PRT model in Iraq and how it was based on a lessons-learned from Indonesia's decentralization.

Q: Interesting.

MILLIGAN: Standing up the Baghdad City Council was a positive step. But the overall situation was deteriorating. What cannot be underestimated is the impact of looting on the overall security environment. Looting was not limited to a day or two. It went on for weeks...and weeks. Neither CPA nor the coalition forces could effectively control it. Looting was not just grabbing items off store shelves. The looter stripped everything out of government buildings. They took the copper wire from electrical lines, the infrastructure of sewage treatment plants, the desks and chalkboards from schools. And

then, they lit fire to the buildings. They sacked the warehouses; they took down all the electrical cable connecting cities to the power grid. The looting went on for weeks...and weeks...and weeks. I recall being in a CPA meeting where I was the lone USAID representative. The CPA leadership and coalition forces were reluctant to stop the looting by force. As the USAID development and humanitarian guy, I said, "I think you're going to have to shoot them." How strange, the USAID guy is saying you need to shoot the looters and the military was reluctant to do so. In any case, we weren't able to control the looting and that was a critical point, just as critical is disbanding the Iraqi military or deba'athification. Not only did looting damage and destroy the physical ministry buildings, but also the capacity for ministries to provide services and to run the country. The assumption that the coalition forces would quickly hand Iraq back to an enlightened Iraqi leadership hit reality. Everything had been dismantled. Worse still, the inability to control looting indicated to everyday Iraqis a weakness in restoring law and order.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: I think we need to go back and discuss the assumptions that were made prior to the war. Pre-war assumptions largely determined the conduct of OIF and reduced the Coalition's success in the post-conflict environment. Assuming that the Coalition Forces would be liberators expeditiously transferring power to a new Iraqi authority, Pentagon and CPA leaders limited planning to those tactical measures required for regime change and neglected a broader strategy for democratic transition and economic reform.

The pre-war assumptions regarding Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) are as follows: The Iraqi leadership can be quickly removed. By cutting off the head of the snake, the Ba'athi regime will crumble without sustained resistance. Coalition Forces will be welcomed as liberators. Authority can be handed over to a new Iraqi leadership, including pro-Western exiles, who will be perceived as legitimate. There will be no breakdown in authority or overall bureaucratic and administrative structures, thereby permitting the new Iraqi authority to quickly take charge. While government services will be interrupted during the war, they can be quickly reestablished. A large humanitarian crisis may require significant USG resources, but the new Iraqi Government will pay for overall reconstruction through oil revenues. Limited USG resources will be required only to return services to pre-war levels. Post-conflict Iraq will be a stable and secure environment. Law and order can be rapidly restored. The establishment of this permissive environment will not require U.S. forces. U.S. forces can begin to draw down sometime after the handover of authority to an Iraqi government.

These assumptions were grounded in an idealistic worldview that perceives liberal democracy as a universal value and a powerful idea. Leadership planning for the war believed that because it is desired by all peoples, liberal democracy can be established through regime change, military action that replaces tyrants with more progressive leaders. Consequently, the very idea and desire for democracy is strong enough to transform newly liberated nations. I would call this liberalization before transformation, namely the idea that Iraq could be made into a democratic free-market society before the underlying institutions themselves had been transformed.

Moving forward with these assumptions, pre-war planners were unable to accurately foresee the risks and consequences of OIF. Because the USG believed that a secure environment would not be dependent upon U.S. force levels, the Coalition could not control looting or secure the Iraqi borders. Working within the limits of the above assumptions, pre-war planners could not anticipate the looting that dismantled Iraq's administrative and bureaucratic structures, created an environment of lawlessness, and weakened the Coalition's authority. With most government institutions looted and burned, little remained to hand over to an Iraqi authority as originally planned.

Looting created an unexpected political vacuum. Under Iraq's tightly centralized system, ministries had controlled decision-making and funding down to the most remote village. The administrative structures of Iraq dissolved, prolonging the breakdown of central government. Essential services stopped. Throughout Iraq, Coalition Forces found themselves continually switching from soldier to public administrator, a role they had not trained for.

Looting changed pre-war plans in three ways: infrastructure development became an overriding priority and eventually a strategic end in itself. Re-establishing government services was critical for stability and order. Services, however, could not be restored without repairing the damaged infrastructure and reequipping ministries. Reconstruction became a massive, billion-dollar endeavor dominated by large-scale, multi-year infrastructure projects. CPA drew its attention away from strategic nation-building priorities, such as rule of law and ministerial reforms, and focused on construction projects instead.

Looting spread into general lawlessness that irrevocably damaged the Coalition's credibility. As criminal activity spread across Baghdad's neighborhoods, the Coalition was perceived as weak in a society conditioned to rule by force. Families learned not to depend on the Coalition for law and order, arming themselves instead. The perceived Coalition weakness prompted Iraqis to return to a "sit on the fence" attitude used to survive decades of brutal rule, rather than support the Coalition. Fence-sitting proved an ideal environment for the rapid rise of the insurgency. Several months later, the lesson continued to be reinforced as the nascent insurgency stepped up assassinations of those cooperating with the Coalition.

Believing that the Coalition would be welcomed as liberators and that a permissive environment would not be dependent on U.S. force levels blinded the CPA leadership to the consequences of disbanding the Iraqi military. Adding hundreds of thousands of unemployed Iraqi men to the streets, CPA reversed ORHA's policy and dismissed a force that could have contributed to law and order, patrolled the borders, and maintained stability. The demobilization of the military, combined with the collapse of government authority, increased the power of non-national actors: local militias, tribal groups, and organized crime. Unable to control looting, CPA resorted to paying armed local tribes to patrol infrastructure networks. By disbanding the military, CPA dismantled one of the few national institutions that could have contributed to unity in a highly fractured state,

and instead, decentralized the legitimate use of force to nonnational groups. When authority was eventually transferred from CPA to an Interim Iraqi Government (IIG), the IIG's legitimacy was already undermined by a lack of a monopoly on the use of force.

Facing a rising insurgency, but possessing limited security assets, CPA officials' movements were increasingly restricted to the Green Zone. Over time, personnel became more disconnected from their Iraqi counterparts and the conditions on the ground. The portion of reconstruction resources now diverted to additional security costs, including building a new Iraqi army, ballooned to several billion, leaving less and less available for nation building priorities.

Pre-war planners viewed the Coalition Forces as liberators. Liberators are not rulers. Consequently, there was no plan for the administration of post-conflict Iraq. ORHA was structured around three functional three pillars: Humanitarian Relief, Reconstruction and Civil Administration. Led by a former law associate of the Undersecretary of Defense, the Civil Administration Pillar never developed a strategy, recruited sufficient experienced staff, nor secured resources. Demoralized, the few experienced staff in this Pillar left and found work elsewhere. I remember a Newsweek reporter writing notes, *"Garner's staff probably never had the expertise required for the mission. The Pentagon filled the top ranks of ORHA with Defense officials and retired generals; the State Department added a handful of ex-ambassadors, most with backgrounds in Arab affairs. Neither contingent had hands-on experience in nation-building."* With no plans, experienced staff, or resources, the Civil Administration Pillar dissolved shortly after arrival in Baghdad. The Pillar's critical functions were transferred to a new "Ministries Pillar" that quickly became consumed with the urgent work of "standing up" devastated ministries that focused on tactical tasks such as identifying alternative workspace, paying salaries and re-equipping offices. The Ministries Pillar and its follow-on CPA offices never moved beyond this focus. The defining task continued to be "standing up" ministries and handing them back to the Iraqis rather than governing Iraq or laying the foundations for more accountable and effective government.

Planning for the democratic transition of Iraq was the responsibility of the Governance Group. Formed under the direction of Elizabeth Cheney at the State Department, this group began working separately from ORHA before the war, arriving in Baghdad in early May 2003. Because of the flawed planning assumptions, the Governance Group did not develop a strategy for administering Iraq. Instead, it pursued a series of steps that would lead to the handover of authority: the formation of an Iraqi Governing Council, the drafting and signing of the Transitional Administrative Law--an interim constitution that put forth a timetable for elections and broad democratic ideals--and the handover of authority to an Interim Iraqi Government. Meanwhile, on the ground, the six major subordinate commanders (MSCs) operated in a political vacuum created by the breakdown of Iraqi administration. Lacking guidance from ORHA and later CPA, the MSCs were forced to create ad hoc solutions as problems presented themselves. Various governing systems emerged at the local level with differing authorities. A report from the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) comments on CPA's strategy, "Evidence suggests

that the military units received only very general guidance about how they were to carry out their post-combat missions. In the absence of preplanning or guidance, commanders were left to freelance, making it up as they went along.”

CPA did not address the confusion over the authorities of ministries, governors, mayors and corresponding councils. Though drafted months earlier, CPA did not release an order clarifying the responsibilities and authorities of the various levels of regional government until April 6, 2004, a year after coalition forces entered Baghdad. The failure to address governance issues and administer Iraq as a unified system increased regionalization and regional tensions, undermining national identity and cohesion.

Absent a strategic plan, both ORHA and CPA leadership instituted short-term timelines of tactical “wins” required to hand over authority. Under such conditions, tactics eventually became strategy. The attempts to establish democratic governing structures were ad hoc and subject to reversals.

The confusion and emphasis on tactics in the political administration of post conflict Iraq mirrored events in the economic sphere. While initial interventions successfully prevented economic collapse, the Coalition lacked an economic strategy necessary to transition Iraq from a centrally planned to a market economy. Strategy was replaced by an undisciplined, piecemeal approach, a patchwork of unconnected tactical measures implemented by a revolving staff with little relevant experience in transitional economies.

The belief that economic liberalization could occur before institutionalization of reforms underscored CPA’s approach. Sheltered behind fortified Green Zone walls, CPA busily drafted new policies to liberalize Iraq’s economy without integrating these initiatives into a larger strategic plan. These policies opened up the economy to foreign investment but failed to address related issues of rule of law, property rights and the capacity of Iraqi institutions. Once announced, the new policies existed mainly on paper. Some, such as privatization, were even retracted. Iraqi ministries lacked the ability to translate reforms into specific regulations that could be implemented and enforced. Because they were stand-alone actions unsupported by a larger strategy of economic assistance, new policies were seldom successfully implemented.

Absent an overall plan, ideological principles often prevailed over strategic logic. I recall that when CPA terminated financial support to state-owned enterprises which were some of the largest employers in country, Iraq became an importer of essential products it previously produced domestically. In another case, when CPA abolished agricultural subsidies, farmers could no longer afford fertilizers and pesticides and left their fields in search of employment elsewhere. Military commanders informed USAID that unemployment in agricultural areas had strengthened the insurgency. By putting faith in the power of liberal economic principles without providing the requisite assistance to transform the Iraqi institutions and create long-term jobs, CPA unwittingly contributed to the insurgency.

I also recall a meeting where CPA leadership was mistakenly briefed that Iraq's employment problem could be resolved through infrastructure projects and predicted a significant shortage of workers in some categories. Resources that would have been better spent promoting economic transformation and creating long-term jobs funded infrastructure projects instead. And of course, the level of promised infrastructure jobs never materialized. As the insurgency grew in an environment of persistent unemployment, CPA became hostage to financing alternative employment fixes, expensive short-term public works programs, further putting off any long-term recovery strategy that could create sustainable employment.

Lacking a management plan tied to an overall strategy, ORHA and CPA's organization structure encouraged conflict, promoting distrust and eroding unity of effort. After the termination of ORHA's Civil Administration Pillar, responsibilities for all ministries were transferred to a new Ministries Pillar. Nevertheless, the programs and resources devoted to reconstruction and supporting technical areas of key ministries (health, finance, local government, electricity, water, etc.) remained in the Reconstruction Pillar. Separating responsibility for a sector from the corresponding resources and programs led to divisive conflict. CPA built upon this flawed structure. Tensions escalated between development experts with long-term strategic perspectives and CPA staff valuing shorter-term tactical efforts. Unity of purpose was compromised. With frequent staff rotations, incoming CPA Ministry Senior Advisors would arrive to find USG programs already underway. Frustration and confusion increased. The viewpoints of many technical staff with experience in nation-building were seen as suspect, discounted and marginalized. The distrust built up to a point where it impeded reconstruction, delaying the funding of reconstruction contracts at a time when CPA was being sharply criticized by Congress for not disbursing the emergency supplemental funding rapidly. Bureaucratic differences had a costly price.

All this time the Iraqis were watching and sitting on the fence. I mentioned to you that on the first day we landed in Baghdad and for several days afterwards, we wouldn't even see a car on the road. The Iraqis were all hunkered down behind their houses waiting to see what we would do. Yes, some brave people stepped forward to work with the coalition, but most were waiting to see what would happen. Perhaps it was learned behavior. In Saddam's time, there was little to be gained sticking your head up above the crowd. The Iraqis watched us and saw that the coalition would not restore law and order, did not have a plan for administering Iraq and made a series of poor decisions that contributed to a deteriorating situation.

Q: There was no sense in the planning process that this could happen. I mean, no one anticipated it.

MILLIGAN: No. Because the assumptions that the war planning was based on were wrong. Wrong assumptions like we would be welcomed as heroes and liberators. If you believe you will be welcomed as heroes and liberators, then why plan for significant stability operations or for countering looting. There's not going to be looting. There'll be parades.

The military often says you fight your last war. The experiences of your last challenging situation color how you view the next challenge. A strategic dissonance. Your thinking gets influenced by what has happened and you may not then anticipate what could happen. I believe that our pre-war thinking on Iraq was influenced by experiences in Eastern Europe. Eastern Europe at the time was a success story. Those countries appeared to have smoothly transitioned from authoritarian soviet rule to democracy. This reinforced the belief that the very idea of democracy was so powerful that just the desire for it is enough to ensure a transition, even without the institutions in place. Iraq was a relatively modern country with an educated population. Therefore, all we had to do was cut off the head of the snake and there'd be 1,000 points of light firing and beaming. Iraq would be a democracy and showing a way forward for others in the Middle East. We would be welcomed as liberators, we would not need to leave soldiers behind for stability operations or for law and order, we wouldn't need to have enough forces on the ground to administer the country and so...there were no plans to administer Iraq.

Q: Right. Yeah.

MILLIGAN: So, to answer your question, did they anticipate the looting? Succinctly put, they didn't plan for it because their assumptions were wrong.

Q: Certainly, when people look at retrospective mistakes made, one of the things that is often cited, again on the institutional side, was the de-Ba'athification—

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: —decision, which was a CPA decision. Were you involved in any of those meetings when that was discussed?

MILLIGAN: Yes. I attended some of those meetings where it was discussed.

Q: Were the pros and cons discussed? Because I've heard indirectly that there were people who said this is a mistake.

MILLIGAN: Yes, I was in those meetings when these issues were discussed. But I was not an active participant. Generally, the voice of USAID was not always listened to. I'll give you one example before I come back to de-Ba'athification.

The voice of USAID and the voice of development experts weren't always listened to. I already mentioned the example of the supplemental. At CPA, I focused on how USAID could best contribute to U.S. foreign policy goals. A key concern was the lack of Iraqi government capacity. There was insufficient funding for capacity building in the supplemental. Any reprogramming to make funding available would have to be approved by CPA leadership. I drafted an action memo to CPA leadership to secure resources for institution building in the key ministries such as agriculture and education. I was unsuccessful. The response I received was that institution building would be the job for

the Iraqis after CPA departed. Perhaps I could have written a more compelling memo? In any case, it was explained to me that the goal was to get things in order to the point where we could hand CPA's mandate back to the Iraqis. The focus was on physical reconstruction, what had been lost in the war and looting rather than strengthening institutions and key processes.

Regarding de-Ba'athification, I was in the larger meetings when it was up for discussion. I was also in the meetings on disbanding the military. To me, disbanding the Iraq military appeared as a policy shift. General Garner did not have a policy of de-Ba'athification nor of disbanding the military. He had privately mentioned to me with respect to de-Ba'athification that the Iraqis would likely handle this issue themselves. With respect to the disbanding of the military, my memory is that General Gardner sent out ORHA representatives into Baghdad early on to find members of the former military and to ensure that ORHA kept them paid. From my perspective, disbanding the military was a policy shift. I think it occurred because we viewed Iraq through a lens of morality. It wasn't Kissinger realpolitik approach. After all, the war was justified on moral grounds—on the basis that we were going to liberate the Iraqi people from a dictator and enable Iraq to become a vibrant democracy. If you justify it on moral grounds, then you view complex issues as black and white and not gray, and then you disband the military and you have a policy of de-Ba'athification.

Q: Yeah. And we probably thought that the Iraqi Americans, the expat Iraqis who were living in the United States would be better received if, when they returned home than was the case.

MILLIGAN: That is true. And the expat Iraqis had their own motivations as well.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: And they might not have been the same as ours.

The other assumption used to justify the war, and I think you've heard of this, is that the war will pay for itself. The first Gulf War was one of the shortest wars and the costs were offset by allied contributions.

Q: Yes.

MILLIGAN: The assumption was that Iraqis have access to oil reserves so they can rebuild their own country. We can come in, liberate the country and leave.

Q: Right.

*You didn't give Andrew the talking point for how much it was going to cost, did you?
(Laughs)*

MILLIGAN: I don't...

Q: You do remember what I'm talking about, when he was interviewed on the U.S. media.

MILLIGAN: I do remember that. I believe Andrew was using an estimate based upon the contracts we had prepared. The interview was in April just prior to the war.

Once we were in Iraq, a media faux pas in Washington could create a very bad day for me. Because most of USAID was not physically based in the palace, there was a bit of distrust of USAID by some in CPA. Early one day, I was walking into the palace and a CPA colleague rushed up to me and told me to lock my office door because it's going to be a bad day. The evening before in a press interview in Washington, USAID highlighted the work it was doing in Iraq, scooping CPA on the announcement. CPA didn't appreciate USAID taking credit for activities funded by CPA through the supplemental.

Q: (Laughs) Another lesson learned.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: And again, I've looked at some papers, and one of the things that struck me is a very interesting point related to the politics of the invasion of Iraq and lack of a blessing by the United Nations and Security Council. In this kind of post-conflict situation often the UN, when there is some kind of governing gap, a UN special counsel or someone will play a role, which ends up sometimes being a bit more palatable to the local country than having an American government employee doing that. Did you see that at all? I say that while also remembering the tragedy of the UN presence and death of Mr. de Mello in the bombing.

MILLIGAN: Right.

The UN's ability to play a more active role was affected by the bombing of the UN Assistance Mission which had been set up in the Canal Hotel in Baghdad. The Canal Hotel has been used by the UN since the 1990s. After the bombing, UN staff worked remotely from Amman, Jordan. The UN chose to work out of the Canal Hotel rather than be located inside the Green Zone as to distinguish it from the U.S.-led war effort. We worked closely with the UN on a lot of our programs. USAID staff were used to coordinating and working with their UN colleagues in other countries. Our officers would frequently go over to the Canal Hotel to coordinate on health, education and other programs. In fact, some of our team were there earlier the day the bomb killed Sergio de Mello and twenty-one others. I remember that day. When the enormous truck bomb went off, we could hear...almost feel the explosion... as it rattled the palace windows. When a large bomb would detonate in Baghdad, you could hear it from quite a distance. On that afternoon, we heard the explosion but did not know immediately that it was the Canal Hotel.

Q: And they were working on reconstruction as well as humanitarian or mostly humanitarian?

MILLIGAN: Our team had a very constructive relationship with their UN colleagues. In 2003, we provided roughly \$25 million in grant funding to UNESCO and UNICEF in the education sector. These grants provided support in basic education including: providing five million revised textbooks; teacher and student kits; teacher training; and accelerated learning.

Q: If the initial assumption was that the Iraqis would take over in ninety days, how did that fit in with the notion of a CPA, which is a provisional authority that gave responsibility to the U.S.? Am I misunderstanding something or was there an inconsistency? The CPA was created early on, wasn't it? We didn't know how weak the institutions were at that point, did we? Or did we?

MILLIGAN: That's a good question. I can only provide an answer from my own perspective, which of course is not the whole picture. No one was aware that Ambassador Bremer was arriving and that ORHA, which had been in Baghdad for about three weeks, would be dissolved and morphed into CPA. It is my understanding that General Garner had not been fully briefed on this decision. This created a bit of confusion at first. During the brief overlap, there were parallel processes. For example, we would attend the ORHA morning meeting with General Garner, which would be followed by a morning meeting with Ambassador Bremer. Nevertheless, it soon became very clear. I bring this up because perhaps at this point, Washington had realized that the underlying assumptions dictating a relatively quick exit were incorrect.

Q: So, they quickly made that determination?

MILLIGAN: That's my assumption. I also believe that Washington wanted to project a different image. Ambassador Bremer is a very polished diplomat, well dressed in a suit and tie.

Q: Yeah.

Now, you were there a total of two years?

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: You started out as the ORHA person; then became the USAID coordination person at CPA. But then you moved over to be the USAID deputy mission director?

MILLIGAN: Yes, that's right. USAID staff were assigned to Iraq for one-year tours. My tour was ending, and so was everyone else's. Such a large turnover of staff at a critical moment was risky. With the security situation deteriorating quickly, institutional knowledge was vital not only to safeguard staff but also to ensure programmatic success. At this point we had moved into a fortified USAID compound located inside the Green Zone. Traveling outside the Green Zone was extraordinarily difficult. There were considerable threats and risks. I decided to extend for another year to help transfer my knowledge to keep our staff and partners safe, and our programs on track. It was

exhausting considering the first year of eighteen-hour days, every day of the week, under considerable stress and uncertainty. So, I knew full well what the second year would be like. During this time, I transitioned to become the Deputy Mission Director under Spike Stephenson. I was so fortunate to be able to work directly with Spike.

Q: Okay, so you were Spike's deputy. And then you—so then you were totally at the USAID mission.

MILLIGAN: Right. By this time, the USAID mission was moving out of the Convention Center and into temporary trailers in the compound we were developing inside the Green Zone.

Q: The CPA continued to exist. Was there another USAID person who was assigned to the CPA or did the mission then do its own liaison with the CPA?

MILLIGAN: We maintained our USAID office in the palace for several months.

Q: Okay.

MILLIGAN: CPA existed until June 28th. At that point, USAID became part of the US embassy.

Q: Embassy, right. I had forgotten the shift. Was Negroponte the first ambassador?

MILLIGAN: He was the first ambassador.

Q: Okay. So, you probably as the deputy still continued to do a lot of liaising with CPA, would be my guess. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Yes, while CPA still existed. We continued our weekly USAID meeting with Ambassador Bremer. Ambassador Bremer is a brilliant man who was given...or perhaps inherited... an extremely challenging task. I would attend the general CPA morning coordination meetings, but we also had a one-on-one USAID meeting with Ambassador Bremer once a week. I would provide pages of information in advance of these meetings detailing the status of USAID supported reconstruction projects. Ambassador Bremer was always well prepared and no matter how busy he was, he had reviewed and analyzed all the documentation. I believe that Ambassador Bremer must have a photographic memory. He would remember the data metrics from the previous week and ask about any discrepancies. At USAID, we sometimes get mired in USAID-speak. Presenting Ambassador Bremer with the metrics in plain English and numbers helped build his confidence in our work. He particularly enjoyed reading through the weekly OTI reports, which would list hundreds of grants provided on a weekly basis. Ambassador Bremer held us to meeting key milestones. One was to get the schools open in time for the school year which meant rebuilding and refurbishing thousands of schools that had been destroyed by looting. So many schools were just burnt-out buildings containing heaps of rubbish or mangled school desks. And the

curriculum from the Saddam Hussein era was not appropriate. It had to be revised and thousands upon thousands of new textbooks printed before schools could open. We reported back to Ambassador Bremer every week on how many schools had been refurbished, when they would open and how we would make the deadline. All this as the security situation made it more difficult to work.

Another key metric was electrical power generation. USAID was able to quickly award reconstruction contracts for infrastructure. Bechtel was the primary awardee. A tremendous effort was made to restore electrical capacity generation and distribution. We were always battling to get the electrical system back up and running to meet the growing demand, particularly since the distribution cables continued to be stolen. We also worked on construction of bridges, water and sewage treatment, even reopening and modernizing the port of Basra.

Q: During that period, I was back in Washington and was in your old job as Counselor: The Administrator, Andrew Natsios, had daily meetings on Iraq. There was also an Iraq office.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: I believe it was only Iraq and he met daily with them. Just curious about how it all worked. I mean, you were coordinating with the CPA, there were a lot of actors in Washington. If you could talk a little bit just about how the communication and decision-making process worked with so many different actors involved, and whether there are any lessons learned from that. I would have thought it was sometimes a bit overwhelming. You were probably getting instructions from lots of different people.

MILLIGAN: Yes. I guess that had always been the case. I also knew who the right people to get instructions from were—who were the people that mattered. That was important. The palace had hundreds of people filling the hallways and running between meetings. You just knew who the critical people were.

Q: Yeah, right.

MILLIGAN: We had a weekly phone call with Andrew Natsios. Andrew always had our back. He listened to us. I greatly appreciated his active support. This enabled us to do our work. From our perspective, the internal coordination in USAID worked well. The friction came from within CPA, the fighting over turf, authorities and resources. I mentioned previously that the CPA pillar structure and conflict built into it. For example, the ministries pillar contained the ministry of education. USAID, which was not under this pillar, was the lead for rehabilitating schools. We were also working with our grantee, UNICEF on revising the basic education curriculum. You can imagine that the CPA lead for education in the ministries pillar would not understand why he or she could not oversee USAID contracts and grants. Unfortunately, the structure made some conflict inevitable and undermined unity of effort.

Q: Yeah, right, because there's always going to be some conflict and confusion, so you should at least try to minimize it and avoid having multiple layers of it. That's a good point.

Were you involved in recruitment of staff for USAID? I don't know who had the idea of doing it, but that there was considerable recruitment of Foreign Service Nationals from other parts of the world?

MILLIGAN: Yes, there was.

Q: And was that something that was thought of very early on or was that later and do you have any observations on how that was done and how it worked?

MILLIGAN: It was a bit later on, once we had the compound constructed. Initially, we were staffed through IRG and by rotations of Foreign Service officers from other missions. For example, Bruce Abrams came out from Colombia for a six-month detail. Once we had the USAID compound constructed and could provide adequate housing and office space, we were able to recruit FSNs from other USAID missions. It was a great idea. Of course, very early on, when the mission was located in the convention center in early 2003, we hired our own local FSNs. I wasn't involved with the recruitment or the training of our local FSNs, but I was impressed with their bravery and commitment. Here's an example. One afternoon, I had just left the cafeteria in the Rasheed Hotel. This was after the initial bombing. I was walking with my colleague Bob Macleod. Bob headed up one of the most difficult portfolios, the multi-billion dollar infrastructure program. He did an amazing job and also spent two years in country. Bob and I were walking away from the building when we heard a tremendous boom. A car bomb had just gone off a few hundred yards away. We were protected behind the t-wall barrier. But I saw the car hood fly up above the t-wall. The car bomb was targeting an entrance gate to the Green Zone. Our FSNs had to line up at certain gates to come into the Green Zone. We were concerned for their safety. Although we did what we could to try to ensure their safety, our local FSNs could easily become targets. On that afternoon, two of our FSNs had lined up to enter the Green Zone at the gate that had been targeted by the car bomber.

One FSN, Ilham, later told me, "Oh, yes. I was there. I was in line to come into the Green Zone." She said, "I put my pocketbook over my head as the bomb went." She remained at the gate and still came into work. Another FSN was sitting in his car. The cars were lined up. He saw the car bomb explode and rip through the cars lined up in front of him. And he still came to work.

Q: Wow.

MILLIGAN: That's commitment. It really is. Not only a commitment to the work of USAID, but a larger commitment to the betterment of one's country.

Q: That is commitment, indeed.

MILLIGAN: This is true of our FSNs worldwide, isn't it? I can tell you from my experience in so many countries. Who helped build USAID's Mission in Burma? Not only the brand new and committed FSNs from Burma, but also FSNs who came from Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, India, Mozambique, Malawi, Serbia, Georgia, the Ukraine, Nepal and the Dominican Republic. And I saw the same dedication and professionalism when we opened our USAID mission in Iraq. FSNs from around the world stood shoulder to shoulder with us in Iraq, through rockets and mortars, to get the job done.

Q: That's good.

One of the other things that people have talked a lot about with regard to working in Iraq and Afghanistan and post-conflict countries more generally is the one-year tours. Many have said that it's too short a period. Do you have thoughts on that issue?

MILLIGAN: It's too short. Perhaps serving for two years would give me that perspective. Not only is a one-year tour too short, but it is also interrupted regularly by multiple R&Rs (Rest and Relaxation). During my second year, I took very few R&Rs. Not only because it would interfere with what we were trying to accomplish. But also, because it was becoming more and more dangerous to travel to the airport. At one point, Route Irish, the 7.5 mile stretch of road to the airport, was called the most dangerous road in the world. Some gave it the name I.E.D Alley. Eventually, embassy personnel were required to ride in an armored bus called the rhino. The rhino crawled along the route—a nerve racking experience. The day I departed Baghdad was the same day as Spike. We were fortunate to be able to fly out to the airport on a helicopter. Getting back to the question about the one-year tour which is punctuated by multiple R&Rs, I think it is detrimental to our mission. By the time you come back from an R&R break, you're hitting restart all over again. You're not building trust and relationships—and that is what is essential for stabilization programming, namely building trust with local actors. If your local counterparts know you are going to be on the ground for less than a year, are you going to gain their trust? Usually, our local counterparts are the ones taking enormous risks while we rotate staff in and out. This doesn't build their confidence in us. And how can we really focus on building institutional knowledge and mission capacity? I do understand that there are equity issues that come into play with longer tours, but we need to find a better way.

Q: Was USAID still grappling with it when you retired? Was it still there as an issue or has AID made progress on it?

MILLIGAN: We have not made progress. We've been using the same model more or less since the early days of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Q: Yes; it is obviously a critical point.

MILLIGAN: It's also an issue that would have to be discussed a lot more broadly with AFSA (American Foreign Service Association) and other stakeholders.

Q: Yes. Are there other things that we should talk about? I'm looking through my notes right now.

MILLIGAN: I haven't really talked much about my experiences in Iraq over the years, so I am probably talking too much about now.

Q: I just want to make sure that you have a chance to make key points that you—

MILLIGAN: There are a few other points that were unique about our experience in Iraq. One of the things we did was very innovative and essential to our safety and success. While we were under ORHA and CPA authority, we managed our own security operations. Not only did we hire our own security forces, but we also created an intelligence fusion cell. Because USAID had implementation partners countrywide, we had access to the security situation in local areas across the country and in real time. Our partners would let us know about local security issues. This information would be fed into our intelligence fusion cell and analyzed. Not only did this help keep our own staff safe, but we also shared this information via regular security updates with all of our partners. This enabled us to stay a step ahead of the insurgents. At times, the security situation became quite serious. When it did, one of my responsibilities as deputy mission director was to approve every staff travel outside the Green Zone. I had to weigh whether the trip was worth the risk. That's an enormous responsibility. Our AID officers were very eager to get out of the Green Zone and engage their Iraqi counterparts. I had to determine whether the outcome of the trip was worth the risk, and factor in variables like how long they would be in the ministry building and the location of the meeting or site visit. Staff needed to apply for travel permission several days in advance so our security team could analyze the route and do a dry run.

Our security details took a different approach to those used by the rest of CPA. Ours were lower key. We tried not to draw a lot of attention to our movements around the city. And we never lost a person which is in hindsight extraordinary. I don't take the credit for that. I had a role to play and contributed to this outcome but it was the result of many peoples' work.

Q: Yeah. Did you also pass that information on to the CPA more generally or was it really just for your own purposes?

MILLIGAN: We would alert CPA to major issues that we became aware of.

Q: Yeah. So, you had your own security; was the military, U.S. military at all involved in any of your security?

MILLIGAN: Very early on we relied on the U.S. military for our security. In the initial weeks of ORHA, while we were working and living in the palace, if we needed to move about town, we would arrange a ride with a local commander or find a ride with a Humvee and drive off to a meeting. Our teams also consisted of a few Civil Affairs

officers. They carried weapons and once we had our own vehicles, we could travel with them in the SUV.

ORHA and then CPA eventually had unarmored Suburbans. In time, USAID procured its own armored vehicles, as well as unarmored “soft skins.” The USAID armored vehicles saved our staff’s lives several times when they were ambushed. My own unarmored SUV was damaged by rocket shrapnel twice. Fortunately, I was not in those vehicles at the time they were hit because the shrapnel went right through the vehicle. In any case, after a couple of months, we had assembled all the pieces we needed for our staff security; a security unit, an intelligence fusion cell, armored vehicles, while work continued on constructing our secure compound that would have t-walls and eventually fortified houses. When we built the houses, we quickly realized we had made a design flaw. Windows! Shrapnel from missile or mortar strikes could easily pass through these windows so we built concrete barriers in front of them.

Q: Now, you had mentioned that OTI was working all over the country. Did they then have offices in different parts of the country, and did AID itself have offices anywhere else in the country?

MILLIGAN: ORHA initially set up two regional offices, one in Hillah and another in Basra. And then a third in the Kurdish area. We placed USAID officers in Hillah and Basra. They would help coordinate USAID activities in their respective areas. Tom Staal was in Basra, which was actually where he was born. Besides an overall USAID rep, there were USAID/OTI reps in these areas as well.

Q: And one other question that I remember Andrew Natsios was quite interested in, I believe, and that was on the marshlands and agriculture. Was that something that USAID got involved with? I know that it was discussed. Whether we actually ever began a program there I don’t recall.

MILLIGAN: Yes. Restoring the marshlands was a priority. USAID provided support not only to restore the marshlands but also economic and social support to the traditional communities who lived there.

Besides restoring the historic marshland areas, USAID also focused on rehabilitating water and sanitation services. Not only were many water treatment and sanitation plants not running at full capacity before the war, they had also been thoroughly looted. Getting the plants up and running required an enormous effort, removing tons of sludge, restoring key components and the like.

Q: Okay. Good.

Other thoughts on Iraq? I know that there were a number of after-action reviews done of Iraq.

MILLIGAN: Yes, there were.

Q: And I'm wondering, did you participate in any of those? And if you did, do you think they were well done? Or have you read some of those reports and think that they're not terribly well done? Because obviously it's an important thing to do.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: But I'm sure there's differing quality.

MILLIGAN: I participated in some of them, such as the one by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, SIGIR.

I noticed though that when reading through the literature on Iraq written by journalists, their articles or books tended to come from a very specific point of view and sometimes could be a bit inaccurate. For example, while we were fortunate to have a cafeteria in the CPA building, the food was pretty basic and sometimes a bit terrible. That could be expected given the challenges of trucking food up from Kuwait and cooking for thousands of people a day. If it were a special occasion, let say New Year's Eve, the menu would include lobster tails and steak. Although that sounded quite luxurious, it really was not. The steak would be a tough piece of dried out meat. You would try to cut it with your plastic knife but would not succeed and your knife would crack in half. Hungry, you'd then turn to the lobster tail which was no improvement over the steak. Reporters wrote that CPA staff were dining in a palace on steak and lobster meanwhile outside the Green Zone the insurgency was raging. This wasn't exactly what it seemed like. I would come to see that some stories were written to justify a certain perspective.

Q: Uh-huh.

MILLIGAN: That being the case, there were some analytical pieces, some after action reviews, that were quite good, for example the one focused on ORHA and entitled Hard Lessons.

Q: Yeah. I saw two online, one by Brookings. It had "seven deadly sins" in the title. The other was done by the Rand Corporation.

MILLIGAN: Yes, the Rand piece was quite good—

Q: The Rand one was quite interesting and focused on management. But—now, you said you had done a paper when you were at NDU (National Defense University).

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: That could be attached to your oral history transcript when it is completed, if you wanted -- or perhaps via a link.

MILLIGAN: That would be great.

When I was wrapping up my second year in Iraq, Andrew asked me, “What are you thinking about next?” I said, “I would like to go to the National War College.” To me, the National War College served as professional therapy. (Laughs) What a luxury to be able to take the time to think through what had happened. Over more than two years, from the pre-war planning through the time at ORHA, CPA and the embassy, I was flying at the speed of light with little time for reflection. Everything was immediate and urgent. There was no time to process and think through things. The National War College gave me the space to—

National War College (2005-2006)

Q: So, it was immediately after Iraq that you went to the War College?

MILLIGAN: Yes. I took a couple months off in the early summer. That was 2005. The War College courses began in August. I spent some time that summer in Northern Ireland where Dean was serving as the Consul General.

Q: And meanwhile, you did get promoted, I believe.

MILLIGAN: I did. My promotion came through during my first year at the War College based on the work I did during my second year in Iraq.

Q: Do you recall what grade—so you were promoted to—

MILLIGAN: A one.

Q: To an FS-01.

MILLIGAN: When I was at the War College my promotion was announced in the morning auditorium meeting. I remember that because promotions for our military colleagues are a very big deal, complete with a promotion ceremony attended by families and friends.

And for USAID, we don’t celebrate them as much as our military colleagues do. My promotion was announced during a student body meeting. Everyone applauded. They wanted to know when I was buying the drinks. (Both laugh)

Q: It’s an important rite of passage. So, you said you did a paper on your experience in Iraq?

MILLIGAN: One of the mandatory classes was a seminar on the theory of war. The formal name was War, Statecraft and the Military Instrument of Power. Our seminar was led by an amazing professor and strategist, Dr. Lani Kass. Class discussions were vibrant. I walked out of every seminar class with a break-through in how I thought about things. Of course, we studied Clausewitz. Clausewitz counseled,

"The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish . . . the kind of war on which they are embarking, neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature." This was the starting point for my paper.

Q: I assume that many of your military colleagues at the War College had come out of Iraq as well?

MILLIGAN: Yes. I think they benefited from hearing the civilian perspective on Iraq. Many of my military colleague's perspectives on the course of the Iraq War shifted when they saw the bigger picture. I don't think they realized how much the course of the war was conducted and the post war administration was centered at the Pentagon. They assumed that the Department of State or even USAID had larger roles than was the case. This would be a reasonable assumption to make. I attended the War College with two colleagues, my good friends Karen Freeman and Tom Staal. Tom, as I mentioned earlier, had also been in Iraq.

At the War College, local commanders returning from war have the option of discussing their experiences in a "warrior's presentation". I attended a few and learned about the impressive actions of my military colleagues and how they addressed challenges in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other locations. Not many of my colleagues recognized that civilians were serving in conflict zones under very challenging conditions, to advance US national security. To address this, I pulled together the first ever civilian "warrior's presentation". Not only did my presentation discuss the critical work USAID did in Iraq, but it also provided specific examples of the challenging and dangerous conditions we faced. I showed slides of our vehicles destroyed by car bombs, IEDs, rockets and machine gun fire; examples from our security logs noting the spiraling rate of security incidents; graphs demonstrating that our implementing partners had a significantly higher fatality rate than the U.S. military, and more. It was eye-opening for them. We could be working in the same environment as our military colleagues, but we didn't carry weapons. Not only was the War College a valuable experience for me because it refined how I thought strategically, but I also believe that I contributed to the overall learning environment.

Dr. Lani Kass liked to kick off seminar discussions with a quick question to get the discussion moving. One morning during our first days at the War College, she asked, "Ok, quickly, what is one memory you have from a battle or conflict?" I was one of only a few civilians in the seminar so no one expected me to respond. After all, most would assume that civilians are not in conflict situations. After a few of my military colleagues responded, I added, "I will always remember the smell of cordite after a missile strike." Dr. Kass later told me that this was an "aha moment" for her as she had no idea that civilians served in such situations. It was important that Tom, Karen and I took away as much as we could from our War College experience, but it was a two-way street. Our job was also to educate others about USAID and what development and humanitarian assistance can do and can't do, and how development strengthens our national security.

Q: Yes. What a fascinating time to be there. Everyone was grappling with how to work in Iraq and having you all together at the War College was a wonderful opportunity.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: So, is there anything else about the experience at the War College that you would like to mention now? Now, the paper you're talking about was for a specific class in the first semester?

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: Did you also have to do a—

MILLIGAN: Long paper?

Q: —long paper? Yes.

MILLIGAN: No. That was optional.

I was asked if I wanted to expand this short paper into a long paper and I (both laugh)...I didn't want to take that on.

Q: You declined. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: But you could do that in retirement.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: I think we are at a good stopping point for today. And if there's something else you think of on War College, we can come back to it.

Q: This is Carol Peasley, and it is February 8, 2022, and this is interview number three with Chris Milligan.

So, Chris, when we finished up last time, you were at the National War College. I believe this was your preference when leaving Iraq?

MILLIGAN: By the time I left Iraq, no other civilian had been there as long as I had. I was there from day one, and even before then since I was engaged in pre-war planning. When I was asked "What is it that you would like?" My first priority was the National War College. I think it also made sense not only as a professional experience for me, but

because I would have a lot to contribute from a development perspective and bring my educational experience and contacts from the National War College.

The National War College really surprised me in several ways. First, it had a much broader academic curriculum than I had anticipated. The focus went well beyond military strategy. Secondly, it was a very collegial and supportive academic environment. This surprised me because for our military peers, it was a very competitive program and very important to their careers; those who did well could possibly become flag officers. Nevertheless, our military peers always have their colleagues' backs which creates a united team. Cooperation not competition: I learned a lot about teamwork from my military colleagues.

Q: And so, when you finished up your year at the War College, did you have multiple options that you were exploring or how did you make up your mind as to what you would do next?

MILLIGAN: What I wanted to do next was to take what I learned in the National War College and apply it in an interagency context. Serving at the NSC would provide me the opportunity to do so. I reached out to contacts at the NSC and interviewed for a position in the directorate coordinating humanitarian assistance. The interview went well. The head of that directorate basically gave me a handshake. USAID was supportive as well. It seemed like a done deal. I was told that there would be a pro forma interview with the head of the NSC, Stephen Hadley. I was told that I shouldn't worry, that it would basically be a courtesy call interview. I went to the interview, and Mr. Hadley asked me, "Well, I see that you've served in Iraq for two years," and I said, "Yes, I have," thinking that he would ask me for my insights. As I mentioned before, no one else had served as long as I had in Iraq. He looked at me and asked, "So, will Iraq work?" I wasn't sure what to make of the question. I was not expecting it. I stalled a bit, noting "It depends on your definition of work." He replied. "Well, what is your definition of work?" I immediately thought, okay, this interview isn't going to go well and perhaps the door is closing on my opportunity to work at the NSC. I replied honestly and as best I could with what I thought was a very reasonable explanation. I noted the challenges facing Iraq, but then discussed what the United States could do to ensure success. After the interview, I debriefed the head of the directorate. He said not to worry. "Just wait here. His assistant usually calls in fifteen minutes or a half-hour just to give the thumbs up." Well, I waited an hour. No call came. I departed with the director telling me to check back for the thumbs up.

So...I kept checking in. A few weeks went by. I graduated from the National War College. I was in Canada hiking in the Rockies when my phone rang. I was on top of the glacier at Lake Louise in British Columbia. It was the head of the directorate letting me know that Steve Hadley did not approve me for the position. The director apologized. There I was standing on top of a glacier with no onward assignment. I told the director that he didn't need to apologize and that I felt bad putting him in an awkward position. This is when I experienced another example of the military cultural value of always having your back. Somehow word got out that I did not have an onward assignment. A

member of the National War College Administration contacted and said, “We understand your onward assignment didn’t work out. We would love to have you come back as a professor.” At the same time, Jim Kunder, who was aware of my possible move to the NSC, learned of my predicament and said, “Chris, come back to USAID and help me out in the front office.” Jim was the acting deputy administrator at the time. When I returned from Canada, I began working in the USAID front office.

Office of the Deputy USAID Administrator -- Special Assistant (2006)

I arrived in the front office during a difficult time for USAID. The USAID Administrator, Ambassador Tobias, was in the process of standing up the Office of Foreign Assistance (F) and dismantling PPC (the Bureau of Policy and Program Coordination). The goal was to move development policy and strategy to the State Department and reduce USAID’s role to that of an implementing agency. The USAID Administrator would become the head of F. I tried my best to strengthen USAID internally as staff, processes and authorities were moving over to the State Department. Doing a little research, I uncovered an executive order requiring all agencies to have chief operating officers. USAID had never implemented it. Talking to Alonzo Fulgham who was in the front office with Jim, I pointed out the opportunity of using the COO position to build a stronger management base in our agency. I took a stab at drafting the initial memo to establish the position. It was approved and Alonzo assumed the reins of chief operating officer. We formed two teams under him. One was in charge of strategy and programs, and the other focused on management. We were not able to use the word “policy” in the title of any office or work unit. Ambassador Tobias would not permit this since he had moved development policy over to F. I believe Jim negotiated with Ambassador Tobias that USAID could retain some policy function. This became known as the small P policy, not big P policy. I stood up the unit under the COO that focused on strategy, programs and small P policy issues. We staffed it with three or four people, and then stood up the management and operations unit.

Q: And just for background here, this was just, for the record, is—because this was shortly after Ambassador Tobias took over, which was part of the reorganization in which the policy bureau of AID was—

MILLIGAN: Dismantled.

Q: —was dismantled and budget functions all went over to the State Department—

MILLIGAN: Correct.

Q: —and some of the original idea was to create at least some of the former Policy Bureau functions in the front office.

MILLIGAN: Yes. This is what we were trying to do. It was not an idea that came from Ambassador Tobias’ reforms but rather something we did to preserve what we could of

USAID's capacity. We did not have a lot of room to navigate in. Not only did the budget function move over to State/F, but also the policy and strategy function. We not only lost our wallet, but we also lost our brains.

Q: (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: What I was trying to do was preserve some of what was required for USAID to remain a development agency.

PPC was dismantled and key parts went over to the F bureau. Once I moved into the front office, I formed a small team focused on strategy, programs and policy. We kept things going and tried to preserve what we could. I was there for approximately three months when Dirk Dijkerman contacted me and said, "Chris, we have to talk." Dirk had been enlisted by Ambassador Tobias to set up the F bureau. He was working at a hectic twenty-four/seven pace. He only had a few minutes to meet. We went down to the food court, where all the big meetings are held, right? I think he had about 15 minutes for lunch. He was talking as he slammed down his lunch. He said basically that Ambassador Tobias wanted me to move to F. I had not met Ambassador Tobias so I was a bit surprised. Apparently, they wanted me to handle the Iraq portfolio in F. I was not keen on moving over to F, particularly since I had just set up the strategy and management units---and was leading the strategy one. I informed Jim Kunder and Alonzo, saying "Ambassador Tobias is going to ask you that I move to F." They replied, "Oh, he's not going to do that, don't worry about it." I was confident that he would, so I asked them, "When Ambassador Tobias makes his request, I think you should propose another name."

State Department/F Bureau -- Coordinator for the Middle East (2007-2009)

Well, the next day Ambassador Tobias told Jim that I was to be assigned to F. In a matter of very few days, I started at the F bureau. This was in December 2007. F was still being stood up. I was initially supposed to be in charge of the Iraq portfolio. Iraq had an enormous budget of several billion dollars. I believe they recruited me because I had served in Iraq and knew the budget inside and out. I was the obvious choice. F leadership quickly expanded my responsibilities to include all foreign assistance to the Middle East. This comprised not only the development-related accounts, but also the military assistance accounts, FMF—IMF, and other security assistance accounts. It was quite a large portfolio.

Q: Who was the head of F at the beginning?

MILLIGAN: Ambassador Tobias. He was dual-hatted serving also as the USAID Administrator.

Q: But there was an operational person who—was that Dirk?

MILLIGAN: Yes. Dirk focused on getting the systems and process of F up and running. He looked at strategy and policy and pushed forward on the intellectual thinking behind F-- different categories of assistance, different levels of country development—

Q: There was very heavy AID involvement, then, at the outset—

MILLIGAN: Yes, that is correct. F was staffed by USAID and State personnel. Standing up F was quite controversial at the State Department as well. At that time, USAID thought that F was a takeover of USAID by the State Department. My State Department colleagues saw it the other way around-- a USAID takeover of State Department authorities (laughs). F was run by the USAID Administrator. Depending upon where you sat influenced your perspective. For the State Department, standing up F was quite a shock. Before F, the regional and functional bureaus had enormous control over budgets at the State Department. They lost that control as those authorities went to the Director of Foreign Assistance, who was the USAID Administrator. For USAID, standing up F was traumatic because PPC was disbanded and strategy, policy and budget authorities moved to F. For State Department bureaus, this was an enormous change as well because it broke the rice bowls of so many and upended power bases throughout the building.

Q: Right, yeah. Interesting.

Speaking of the Middle East, one of the big programs that the State Department had was MEPI, the Middle East Partnership Initiative, that was run by Liz Cheney. Is that correct? Did you have oversight over the allocation of those funds? That was part of what you were doing?

MILLIGAN: Yes. The overall funding allocation for MEPI went through F. MEPI was required to follow F processes as well. Our mantra at F was to ensure the strategic, effective and coordinated use of U.S. government foreign assistance. As a representative of F, even though a USAID employee, I had to be neutral. I had to determine what was in the best interest of the U.S. government. A lot of my job was just trying to get the pieces to come together. I also had to make sure that all parties were at the table when something was being discussed so that the decision making was as transparent as possible.

Q: So, would you have been involved if there were discussions about what would be done via MEPI and what would be done via USAID. Taking Egypt as an example, I remember hearing stories from people who said that USAID was doing something at one point in time and then MEPI began to do it. Would you have been helping to broker those kinds of allocations? Were there clear criteria on what USAID and MEPI would focus on?

MILLIGAN: We would try to broker agreements as best as we could. The actual awarding of grants funding wasn't something that we got that much involved in. F was frequently asked to adjudicate disagreements and settle turf issues. The operational plan process was an opportunity for bureaus to ask questions about strategy and funding that may be duplicative. Ambassador Tobias, who previously was in charge of PEPFAR

(President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) applied the PEPFAR model to all foreign assistance.

The story about why F was created was that Secretary Rice was asked about the overall level of funding for democracy support. No one could answer her question. Not only did no one know, but there was no consistent way of tabulating what democracy assistance was or even saying what we were doing. We lacked a common budget accounting, definitions and language across the many bureaus engaged in foreign assistance. The operational plan was designed so that decision makers could have all the information at their fingertips. Hit a button and you would know much we're spending on democracy, where and when, what it was doing and coding it correctly with a common definition.

Q: Yep. In a theoretical sense, it makes really good sense to have that kind of (laughs) coordination and discussion.

MILLIGAN: I agree. It makes sense theoretically. The question is to what degree. It's essential to have a common methodology for reporting, a common understanding of terms and definitions. I think what happened though was that the bureaucracy that formed around these processes eventually became a constraint to efficiency. For example, one of the things I tried to do was streamline the operational plan process. The process required weeks of work by our embassies. The submission and approval process took months and months to complete. Overseas, staff were spending hours and hours at their desks working on the plans rather than engaging with counterparts or advancing programmatic goals. The approval process added considerable delays to the release of funds. When Ambassador Tobias departed F, I tried to improve the process. Henrietta Holsman Fore was the new Director of Foreign Assistance and Rich Greene was her deputy. Rich Greene had been in charge of PRM (Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration). I told Rich, "These operational plans are literally hundreds and hundreds of pages. Yes, they are packed with detailed information, but should F be required to approve every assistance activity implemented by an embassy? Or perhaps F could just approve the overall strategic use of the resources?" I had Rich's blessing to try to streamline the actual information inflow and approval process. For example, I proposed that F be engaged on large strategic issues in the operational plan, but not the individual activities. I pointed out that the burdensome process of approving hundreds of pages of activities significantly slowed down the allocation of resources. I questioned whether the juice was worth the squeeze. Can F play a coordinating role without relying on a burdensome process?

Q: Did the processes evolve somewhat differently by different regional coordinators, or was it homogeneous across the F Bureau? Or did each region begin to take on personalities of its own?

MILLIGAN: All bureaus followed a standard F process. Serving at the State Department increased my understanding of interagency effectiveness. I appreciated how our State Department colleagues worked the interagency. They had advantages we did not have at USAID. For example, my State colleagues had instantaneous access to the high side, or

the classified system. My State Department colleagues and I would flip back and forth between the classified and unclassified systems on our desks. To be effective in the interagency, you must have real time access to the classified system. USAID colleagues did not and often could not engage on critical assistance issues.

Q: What does that mean?

MILLIGAN: In the State Department most officers have a classified and an unclassified computer on their desk. At USAID, we only have unclass.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: USAID would have to get up from the desk and go to a skiff, open up a safe, get the hard drive out, boot up the computer and finally engage. USAID staff could not engage in sensitive policy matters in real time. They were and still are at a significant disadvantage.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: There is a constant stream of important communications moving forward on the high side, such as notes to the Secretary. Many times, I would call over to my USAID colleagues and flag an important document for them, asking them to engage on it as quickly as possible. I was trying to make sure that all parties, including USAID, had a voice in important decisions. But USAID was at a disadvantage, because it didn't have the same equipment that others had.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: By working in the Pentagon and then going to Iraq, I really understood the personality and the organizational culture of the military, or the various cultures because each branch has its unique culture. Working at the State Department, I was able to appreciate and understand the State culture and how to work effectively within that culture. F gave me considerable exposure to OMB and the Hill. I went regularly to the Hill to brief key staffers on Middle East funding issues. This gave me the ability to see the bigger picture, the overall environment in which USAID functioned.

Q: Yes. That's an important skill for any senior manager, obviously.

Did you get involved in standing up the Millennium Challenge Corporation? It had started a little bit earlier but was really gaining ground about the time that you were at the F bureau. Did you all have any involvement with that at all?

MILLIGAN: No, I was not involved in standing up MCC but I'm glad you brought it up. Some people say that the F reforms were too extensive, particularly in terms of processes which approved individual embassy activities and hamstrung USAID's policy capacity. Others note that the reforms didn't go far enough because they were limited to USAID

and State. They did not apply to the other entities that provide considerable amounts of foreign assistance. If the goal was to coordinate overall USG foreign assistance, then F reforms should have applied equally to all foreign assistance agencies. MCC operated outside of F's orbit. So did DOD, which provides considerable levels of development assistance. Some people believed the F reforms did not go far enough because the net should have been cast wider and included MCC and others.

Q: Certain parts of the world had had coordinators for a while, certainly from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. I believe that Dan Rosenblum was the Coordinator at that time. I was just curious, did they have to make massive changes in how they operated as well, I assume.

MILLIGAN: They did. Dan was dual-hatted. He was an F employee. I think that's how they made that one work.

Q: Oh, I see. Okay.

MILLIGAN: All the other coordinators were F personnel, with the exception of PEPFAR.

Q: And F still exists, right?

MILLIGAN: Correct. F still exists.

Q: But the processes have changed and is it a little less laborious than it was?

MILLIGAN: No, the processes are still bureaucratic and time consuming. It has been an issue that I have seen unresolved across administrations.

Q: No?

MILLIGAN: While there hasn't been progress in streamlining F processes, there have other been significant changes that have impacted USAID. First, moving budget and policy authority from USAID to F was controversial. To address this, F was created with the assurances that USAID would always have a place at the table because the USAID Administrator was dual-hatted as the Director of Foreign Assistance. Henrietta Holsman Fore was the last dual-hatted head of F. In fact, when she left, F staff threw her a party. I found a State Department baseball cap and a USAID one. We cut them in half and stitched the front pieces together into one cap with the logos. I presented her with the "dual-hat" noting that she should take it because with her departure, the position would no longer be dual-hatted. Rob Goldberg from OMB took up the reins as the F director and did an excellent job. Nevertheless, an important change had occurred that would impact foreign assistance in years to come. The Director of F was a State Department employee, not the USAID administrator, and now reported to the Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources. You can imagine what happens when you are the head of F, based in the State Department and you are interacting everyday with various leaders at State Department. You're not physically over at USAID. It's far more difficult to be

impartial. It's hard not to be swayed, bullied, or convinced by those seeking additional resources for the State Department, largely at the expense of USAID. And you report to the deputy secretary, with no accountability to the USAID administrator. It should be no surprise that over the years, the funds managed by State bureaus, particularly regional bureaus, have increased significantly. There is far greater duplication of effort by State and USAID. Not only does the overlap and duplication decrease the effectiveness of the U.S. government's foreign assistance, but it also creates confusion among implementing partners. F was supposed to be a neutral voice for the strategic, effective and coordinated use of resources. I don't think it is to the same degree that it was when the leadership was dual-hatted. The second change occurred during the QDDR and the agreement to stand up a new policy bureau and a budget office.

Q: Right. And when we come around, in a few years we'll get to the QDDR (Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review), which was probably also supposed to deal with some of those issues as well, including who had program funds and who did what. But again, we'll come to that a bit later.

You mentioned that you spent a lot of time on the Hill, and I was wondering if you had any observations about the kind of issues at that point in time that the Hill was most concerned about, or any thoughts about how USAID employees or State Department employees or anyone can be more effective in dealing with the Hill. Because obviously it's an important relationship and some people do it well and others less well.

MILLIGAN: Several things. I served for a short period as the acting head of LPA (Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs). This was eye-opening for me. Obviously, we need to have a proactive approach to Hill engagement. At some times in our history, we've adopted a wait and see mode. When I was acting head of LPA, I asked a colleague who was key to our overall Hill engagement, "What is our strategy for engaging the Hill?" I was told, "Chris, our Hill colleagues are very busy. We don't want to bother them. If they make a request for information, we'll respond." I've seen this same approach to our interagency work. Instead of proactively providing information demonstrating the importance of our work, we at times sit back and wait to be asked. The impression then becomes that USAID really isn't doing anything critical. We get left out or worse, the important things that we are working on move to other agencies who step up and engage.

One thing that I really appreciate is how we have created opportunities for USAID personnel to serve in a one-year secondment with a Hill committee. That experience is invaluable. Our DOD colleagues, our State Department colleagues benefit from Hill fellowships. USAID should make more opportunities available and emphasize such a fellowship as critical for professional development.

As Counselor, I realized that many of our Foreign Service officers had spent fifteen years overseas or more. Our regulations require officers to bid on Washington positions if they have been overseas for eleven or more years. This regulation that is based in legislation was not often enforced. As a result, some of our most experienced Foreign Service

officers had never worked in Washington and could not work as effectively in the interagency. Working with colleagues in HCTM, I ensured that the regulation was enforced. I also encourage more junior officers to consider and plan for a tour in Washington as part of their career development. To help new officers adjust to the Washington environment, I organized a Welcome to Washington seminar every year. It was a one-day seminar with key topics like how USAID internal decision-making works and how to engage effectively in the interagency and with Hill colleagues. The degree to which USAID will be relevant will depend on the quality of our interagency engagement.

Q: Interestingly, my next-door neighbor works on the Hill, and we were talking about this the other evening. She mentioned that there should be some reciprocity, that Hill staff should be able to be seconded to AID or the State Department for a year, or to an embassy or an AID mission. What would you think about that kind of idea?

MILLIGAN: I think it's an idea worth exploring. There is a pathway for some of our Hill colleagues. A large number of our political appointees, those in bureau front offices or serving as special advisors, have been staffers on the Hill. Quite a few are astonished when they arrive and see how USAID works internally. They had no idea about the complexity and the processes of all that is required to implement programs.

Q: Good. I'll tell her that. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Yes. It also promotes trust building. What I have seen during my last several years as Counselor was the erosion of trust between the legislative and the executive branches. It's difficult to get things done in an atmosphere where there's less trust.

Besides serving as committee staff, there are other opportunities for USAID personnel. For example, there is the House Democracy Partnership.

Q: Just before we go off of the Near East experience with the F bureau, were there certain issues that were particularly troubling to have to deal with or that took up an inordinate amount of time?

MILLIGAN: The Middle East has no shortage of issues. And a lot of them have considerable congressional interest. Besides Iraq, there was great interest in our foreign assistance to Jordan. Assistance to Egypt was also controversial given the difficulty that our implementers, such as the political party institutes, were having operating in that country. IRI and NDI could not register in Egypt and had to operate offshore. Egyptian assistance was ramping down, following a glide path. At the same time, we signed a new ten-year \$30 billion agreement with Israel. Assistance to the West Bank and Gaza was also very controversial, particularly assistance to Gaza following the Israeli incursion. At F, we had to put together an assistance package for a Gaza pledging conference while navigating the many legal restrictions and political sensitivities of what we could provide and not provide...and engage the Hill. Yes, there was no shortage of Middle East assistance issues.

Q: So, I bet it wasn't a nine to five job. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: No, but what a terrific learning experience! We had a great team and I made some lifelong friends.

Q: And so, you did this right up until 2009, and then you went over to be the acting AA for LPA.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: Was this after the election and before the Obama Administration political appointees arrived? So, you were involved in that transition?

MILLIGAN: That's correct. I wasn't really involved in the overall transition because I was over in the F bureau. There was a leadership gap at LPA. Alonzo was acting administrator and was looking for people to hold down the fort at LPA. Jay Knott did it before me. It was for a short amount of time but during a critical period.

Q: Right. And you probably had to deal a lot with the Hill as to when a nomination would come for a new administrator? Certainly, the newspapers were filled with lots of speculation and questions about when the nomination would be made. I'm sure you heard about it on the Hill.

MILLIGAN: And on the public affairs side, we had to plan for a town hall with Secretary Clinton who was coming over to USAID. That was an enormous amount of work as well.

QDDR Leadership Team -- Senior Development Advisory (2009-2010)

After a short stint at LPA, I returned to F. I was then asked by Alonzo to join the QDDR team that was being set up over at the State Department. Secretary Clinton announced the undertaking at a July 10th town hall at the State Department. The Department of Defense conducts Quadrennial Defense Review. Essentially, Secretary Clinton's idea was to elevate civilian power through a Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review. A small core "QDDR Leadership Team" was being formed at the State Department. The QDDR would be led by Deputy Secretary Jack Lew and co-chaired by Policy and Planning Director Dr. Anne-Marie Slaughter and the USAID Administrator. Of the five positions on the QDDR core team, two were career and three were political appointees. USAID could nominate one person. Alonzo asked me if I would do it. There was considerable uncertainty at that time. We did not have an Administrator. Some questioned how we could be represented fairly in the process without a confirmed Administrator in place. Given how USAID lost budget authority, as well as policy and strategy processes in the last reform effort, there was genuine concern that the QDDR would result in a further loss of independence and capacity. Alonzo asked me to represent USAID on the QDDR team because of my experience and contacts in the State Department.

Oddly enough, the State Department could nominate one career person on the QDDR team and unbeknown to them, they chose my partner, Dean Pittman. Very few knew that Dean and I were a couple then.

Q: (Laughs) How ironic.

MILLIGAN: I don't think even Alonzo knew at the time. Not many people did know. Barbara Feinstein knew. I asked her advice and she encouraged me to take the position. This is how Dean and I came to be the only career folks on the core team of five people tasked to bring together the process and content for the first QDDR.

Q: Wow. I hadn't realized that you were in the actual—the secretariat of it, the planning of it.

Before we go on to talk a little bit more about that, I did want to ask you, during this timeframe, at the change of administration, there were a lot of papers being written by Brookings, the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network, and others that were advocating for the reintegration of the foreign assistance elements -- such as PEPFAR and MCC -- into USAID and creating a cabinet level agency. Were you aware of those discussions? I'm just curious the degree to which any of that might have been discussed at the early days of the QDDR?

MILLIGAN: I was aware that there were some discussions going on and there were some papers but I wasn't present in any of those discussions.

Q: And it never became part of the QDDR discussions?

MILLIGAN: The QDDR process consisted of extensive outreach to the larger community and in reach at State and USAID. We read through key papers but the focus was less on reintegration and more on internal processes and capacities. And suggesting that USAID would be a cabinet level agency which would then have less direction from the State Department was a non-starter.

Q: Okay.

MILLIGAN: The QDDR was focused on internal organization, management and improvement of these two entities and their ability to conduct development and diplomacy.

Q: So, the secretariat then defined how this was going to work and what the scope was going to be and how it was going to work?

MILLIGAN: Yes. We had to take the concept of the QDDR that was announced and establish processes and specific objectives. We worked closely with Anne-Marie Slaughter, and also with a senior group that would provide feedback and make the ultimate decisions. The senior group was led by Jack Lew and included a senior USAID

representative and eventually the confirmed USAID Administrator Raj Shah. Cheryl Mills, the Secretary's Chief-of-Staff played an active role. Decisions on the direction of the QDDR and content were hashed out in these meetings. Proposals would come up; the senior group would discuss them and decide on what the key strategic pillars and lines of operation would be.

Q: Right. Because then you ended up with a number of different pillars and working groups created on each of those?

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: And did you all designate who the chairs of those working groups would be?

MILLIGAN: Yes. They would be co-led by State and USAID. The first step was a landscape analysis that considered the state of the world and global trends, and how the USG should respond. As I mentioned before, there was an enormous amount of outreach and considerable input from working group meetings. Despite the uncertainty, USAID staff stepped up and engaged at all levels of the process, demonstrating impressive leadership.

Q: Right.

So, you set and mobilized the teams and then people went off to have internal meetings between State and AID, and at some point, they also opened up and there was external consultation as well?

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: Were they given guidance on that or was that something that each of the working groups did on their own? Or how did they scope that out?

MILLIGAN: The core team would attend the kick off meetings and provide initial guidance. The Working Group leads would take it from there, checking back with us frequently, particularly if we were not able to attend a working group meeting. The core team also engaged external stakeholders and the Hill. It was a very intensive process.

Q: Right. I remember going to a meeting once that Jack Lew had at the Wilson Center. Were you at that meeting? It was getting external views on some management questions about AID overseas.

MILLIGAN: I think I played a useful role because many of my colleagues at the State Department didn't understand how USAID works, or even how foreign assistance works in general. I could play a helpful role in explaining why things are a certain way, and how best to think through other options. Having two career Foreign Service officers on the core team brought perspectives on how embassies and their USAID missions function overseas.

Q: The process took quite some time, is that correct? Wasn't it about two years?

MILLIGAN: Yes. It took longer than anyone originally anticipated. The process was launched in the summer of 2009 and the QDDR was released in December of 2010. In fact, I didn't see it through to the end. I was asked to go to Haiti to oversee the earthquake response. When I came back from Haiti, I returned to USAID and helped set up PPL (Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning). I reengaged in the QDDR process from a PPL perspective working with the Agency Counselor on comments to final drafts of key papers.

Q: Oh, that's right. Okay.

MILLIGAN: I also was engaging on the NSPD on global development that was being drafted. Not NSPD, they changed the term to PPD.

Q: Right. Were you at the secretariat involved with some of the big issues such as PEPFAR and USAID? I believe there were also issues about post-conflict work and OTI (Office of Transition Initiatives) and all of that.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: Were you—did the secretariat play a brokering role at all? There were some very different points of view.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: And how did they get reconciled?

MILLIGAN: When it came to some of the larger issues, those third rail issues, the voice of the secretariat was not as important as the discussion among the principals. We were back benchers in those discussions. We could help shape and inform the issues as we teed them up and also expressed our opinions. Preventing and responding to crisis and conflict was a pillar of the QDDR. At one point, there was a strong push to move OTI over to the State Department. The State Department has been struggling for quite some time to create an operational response to conflict. With respect to conflict prevention, how do you operationalize diplomacy? Perhaps it's easy to consider the assistance side particularly since USAID had gained significant experience since the creation of OTI in 1993. The State Department has looked for a proof of concept for their conflict office and later bureau. At one point, the OTI Director briefed the secretary's chief of staff on OTI. She asked what it is that OTI does. The answer she received was "We work on political transitions." Given that the State Department is the lead on political transitions, there was the natural push then to move OTI over to State. We nearly lost OTI. And years later as counselor, one of my main concerns was integrating CPS, the bureau with the OTI office, into the rest of the USAID. The more OTI is not integrated into USAID, the more easily it can be moved to State or DOD. A lift and shift. If that were to make sense, fine. But it

doesn't make sense, because conflict is a part of the development continuum, and you need conflict tools and development tools to work together to achieve our foreign policy goals. Fortunately, we were able to retain OTI. We were told that the decision would be revisited later. Another important decision that was made to eventually transition the Global Health Initiative to USAID. The QDDR laid out a timeframe and benchmarks for the transition. That was a tremendous accomplishment that would lead to better outcomes in global health security and an opportunity for USAID interagency leadership. The decision to transition GHI would be made by the end of FY 2012. But as you now know, GHI remained at the State Department.

Q: Uh-huh.

MILLIGAN: All these issues required active engagement.

Q: I mean, ultimately, it's what the secretary wanted. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: With respect to GHI, the QDDR emphasizes that it would be the secretary's decision.

Q: And what she would broker with the other folks.

I think there's an interesting lesson here about language and talking about what AID does. We probably need to use more modest language that talks about what the role of assistance does in facilitating and supporting political transitions. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Right. And at the same time, the development process is inherently a political process.

Q: Yeah.

MILLIGAN: The QDDR had several positive outcomes; one, it really did bring USAID and State Department people together to work on common issues. It built good teamwork across the agencies.

A very important outcome was that it enabled us to rebuild USAID as a development agency and restore capabilities that were lost when F was stood up. We brought back limited budget authority and restored the policy, strategy and planning functions. That was huge. And this was required if the QDDR were to truly elevate civilian power. I think it accomplished this goal. It *really* elevated development and redefined USAID. USAID is simply not a contracting office, which was the perspective of Ambassador Tobias. Development is a discipline, and it requires strategic planning and policy processes. The QDDR approved the decision to move policy, planning, learning, and strategy back to USAID. Secondly, by the time the QDDR was finalized, it incorporated and legitimized the USAID Forward reforms that were started independently of the QDDR process.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: This gave us the space and room to manage our own performance going forward. I think it elevated USAID. On the negative side, the process was very time intensive. Congress approved legislation mandating a regular QDDR process. A second one was completed, but the last Administration did not undertake one.

Q: Yeah. And the second one they did was a light touch, right?

MILLIGAN: A light touch, yes. And then, under the Trump Administration I think they said, Thanks, but no thanks.

A disappointing outcome was that Global Health Initiative did not move to USAID as laid out in the QDDR.

Q: Right. This has been a good summary of the pluses and the minuses. But, in retrospect, there probably were far more pluses than minuses from the process, so that's good. And as you mentioned, one of the great plusses being that USAID got the authority to have a policy bureau.

MILLIGAN: That's right.

Q: And so, you were asked to help stand that up?

MILLIGAN: I was. It was quite remarkable in a way. When we began the QDDR we didn't have a confirmed administrator or political leadership. We thought that the process could result in reduced authorities and capacity for USAID. Coming out of it, we had more authorities, we had more responsibilities and more, if you will, ability—autonomy to make sure the tool of development is used effectively to achieve our foreign policy goals.

Q: Right. That's a good reminder. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Yeah.

I worked on standing up PPL, the new Bureau of Policy, Planning and Learning, but before then, I was in Haiti for five months.

U.S. Response Coordinator, Port-au-Prince, Haiti (2010)

Q: That's right, yes, right. So, how soon was this after the earthquake took place?

MILLIGAN: Less than a month.

Q: It was less than a month. Now—because I interviewed two other people who were also—went down there. Lew Lucke was down there at some point.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: And Phil Gary was also down there at one point.

MILLIGAN: Correct, yes.

Q: Were you—did you—were you in the same job of either of them at one point or—?

MILLIGAN: I replaced Lew as the U.S. Response Coordinator.

Q: In Lew's job, okay. So, that was an interagency job?

MILLIGAN: It was a USAID position that oversaw the interagency coordination in country. USAID was the lead federal agency for the earthquake response. Raj Shah was sworn in as the USAID Administrator on January 7th. When the Haiti earthquake occurred on January 12th, Raj Shah had only been on the job for a few days. The earthquake flattened Port-au-Prince. It was a devastating earthquake--the largest natural disaster in the Western Hemisphere in modern times. 200,000 to 250,000 people lost their lives.

Lew Lucke arrived in Port-au-Prince as the response coordinator within several days. A USAID DART was already on the ground. I remember when the Haiti earthquake occurred. I was over at the State Department working on the QDDR and saw the media note. I immediately called Barbara Feinstein who was in LPA to flag this for her awareness. "There's been a tremendous earthquake. I hope you guys are already scrambling." And she assured me she was.

I did not know Raj Shah very well. I had met once before when he was an undersecretary in the Department of Agriculture. I went over to brief him before he was confirmed, updating him on the QDDR and USAID matters. He asked me my opinion of USAID and of development. I told him development is a discipline that I was pushing this approach in the QDDR. I told him that USAID is a small, scrappy agency that manages to do the impossible despite being understaffed, underfunded, and having to navigate byzantine bureaucratic obstacles to further development in some of the most challenging environments around the world.

Lew's arrival in Port-au-Prince caused a bit of confusion. The position of a U.S. Response Coordinator was new. Although the scale of the disaster and the complexity of the interagency response meant that a response coordinator would be required, we had not done so before. In the past, State positioned assistance coordinators in Afghanistan and Iraq, but a response coordinator was new to USAID. Generally, the DART would manage the overall response. At the same time, we had a USAID mission led by a capable mission director. The response coordinator was a new construct which caused a bit of confusion initially.

The mission director was Carleen Dei. I knew her quite well as we were both originally from the Office of Housing and Urban Programs. And of course, I knew Lew since I was one of his deputies in Iraq. I think that may be why they asked if I would go to Haiti and help out. I got the call to come over to the Ronald Reagan Building to meet with Raj. He was very busy so our meeting got pushed back. Then he had to head over quickly to the State Department. I jumped in his car. We talked for about five or ten minutes before he asked if I would go to Port-au-Prince. When the administrator asks you to do something, you say yes. And I did. OFDA (Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance) outfitted me with a knapsack with essential survival gear. I also went to a camping store to pick up a few more things. And then, literally within a day or so, I was in Port-au-Prince. I arrived about a month after the earthquake. The immediate emergency effort, activities like search and rescue, was ramping down, but the humanitarian needs were increasing, particularly with respect to potable water, shelter, health and food.

When I arrived, Lew told me that his intention was to hand the reins over to me in a couple of days. I overlapped with Lew for a couple of days and then I was the response coordinator. Lew set me up well. There were a few very prickly personnel issues that required action. He sorted them out for me before he departed; I appreciate him for doing that.

Q: Who did you report to?

MILLIGAN: I reported—

Q: To Cheryl Mills?

MILLIGAN: No. Not directly.

I did receive a lot of calls from Cheryl Mills. She was very engaged in the relief and response effort. I reported to Raj Shah since USAID was the lead federal agency. USAID stood up a Haiti task team, headed up with Paul Weisenfeld. I worked closely with Paul. I'm not sure if I reported to him or not. I don't know. In hindsight, you're quickly standing up a new structure, it is a real team effort. We had to demonstrate that USAID could lead such a complicated interagency response. And it was complicated. Just the sheer scale of the disaster was tremendous. Secondly, Haiti's close proximity to the United States meant that Haiti's humanitarian needs were in the press every day. Congressional delegations were arriving frequently. There was a large outpouring of assistance by Americans through NGOs and community groups. I think one in every two American families donated to the response. The disaster brought out the best in people, the generosity of the American people, but it made coordination more challenging.

Before I left, I met with Cheryl Mills. Cheryl knew me from my work on the QDDR. She wanted to make sure that I understood the seriousness of the work. She said, "Chris, do you know how much the Secretary loves her daughter, Chelsea? She feels the same way about Haiti. Don't mess up." (Laughs).

Q: Yes; so you were there, reporting to Raj. And you said the LA bureau had a task force as well.

MILLIGAN: Yes, the Bureau eventually stood up a Haiti task team.

Q: Eventually. And then, there was the mission.

MILLIGAN: And there was the mission. The mission contributed some personnel to the response. Many staff had evacuated with their families.

Q: And did Phil Gary go work for the mission? I think he was actually at the mission working on the earthquake stuff, and maybe then sort of relieving Carleene of some of the liaison responsibilities with all these other actors?

MILLIGAN: Maybe.

Q: But he wasn't there when you were? Or was he?

MILLIGAN: If he was, I don't recall. I know Phil. I don't recall interacting with him. Carleene was living in her office, running mission programs. Her residence collapsed in the earthquake. Carleene oversaw the mission development programs but was not responsible for relief or response work.

Q: Even though ultimately the mission would have to manage them?

MILLIGAN: Eventually, the mission would be responsible for what remained of the response, and more importantly the reconstruction work. My intent was to regularize the process by folding the response coordinator structure into the mission upon my departure. That would take some time. I stayed until June, until the drawdown of JTF, the Joint Task Force Haiti. I had to think through how the mission could manage the incredible volume of additional work. My recommendation was to fold the response coordinator structure under a second deputy mission director. I reassured Carleene early on that would be my goal.

Q: Was there any way to involve the mission, the people on the ground who might know circumstances—

MILLIGAN: Absolutely.

Q: —as you were trying to decide how to respond to something, obviously having people with on the ground experience would help to define?

MILLIGAN: Yes, we did. We incorporated the efforts of mission staff into the larger response, particularly the health team, the contractor's office, and others. But at the same time, a considerable number of mission employees had evacuated with their families.

Their houses were destroyed; their city wasn't functioning. The streets were blocked with twenty-five million tons of rubble.

When I arrived in Port-au-Prince, Lew was the response coordinator working closely with the U.S. military, DART and embassy, but he did not have his own team to support him. I focused on standing up the Office of the Response Coordinator building in key programmatic, reporting and coordination functions. We recruited staff through the CRC, the Civilian Reserve Corps. Peace Corps Response provided us with several return Peace Corps volunteers who spoke Creole. Besides establishing a structure and functions, we regularized processes like a morning stand up meeting including the DART, the military, interagency partners, and the embassy. We also regularized communications with Washington according to a set schedule. Initially, a large percentage of our time was spent chasing down specific information requests from Washington that required immediate attention, instead of coordinating the recovery and response work. Eventually, I was able to systematize reporting, setting up a regular reporting battle rhythm. Reports would be sent to Washington in a standardized format that was updated Tuesdays and Thursdays. This enabled the team to focus on the work at hand.

Perhaps another reason why Raj sent me down to Haiti was my experience of working with the U.S. military. It was chaotic when I first arrived at the embassy. Sharon Cromer was in Port-au-Prince assisting the mission with the response. I met her as she was departing, she wished me luck and thought that I would be able to make headway given my experience with the military.

SOUTHCOM had more than 20,000 troops in Haiti forming Joint Task Force Haiti. JTF Haiti had considerable resources, ships, helicopters, and vehicles. It was staffed by generals, admirals, and colonels. USAID was the lead federal agency and the Response Coordinator originally had no staff. This was confusing to my military colleagues. They did not know the limits of USAID staffing and resources. When I first arrived, I often heard, you are the lead federal agency, what's the structure, where's your staff and more importantly, what is the plan? Those were fair questions. There was not a plan at that point. Everyone was working in crisis mode handling the emergency response. I quickly saw the value added in bringing a team together to set forth a plan for the recovery so that our military colleagues knew where they fit in and what their job was and, importantly, when their job was done.

The military presence in Haiti was eventually extended to the first of June. It was not supposed to be as long originally. A plan was important because the military wanted to know what it had to do, how long they would be needed for, and when the mission would be accomplished and they could depart. What they feared was mission creep, moving from a humanitarian mission to one of stabilization requiring a longer presence. At several points, the NSC would have to make the determination if the military's presence was still required. The first time was whether the military could depart by April 15th. Washington pushed the military presence back to May 1, and then to June 1. The plan we had put together had metrics. I could make my recommendation to Raj on whether the military was still required based on data from updating the plan.

I kicked off the planning process and handed it over to David Atwood. David arrived from Washington early on. He was brilliant. Such a committed development professional. David and I helped think through each response and recover sector, set out lines of operations and metrics. We did this in a fashion that was similar to the way the military plans, which helped overall coordination with our DOD colleagues.

Soon, other USAID colleagues arrived from missions all over the world to help staff up the Office of the Response Coordinator. There is something special about USAID. We're like a family united by a common commitment. When someone needed help, people were flying in from all over the world, dropping what they're doing to help. And this happened in Haiti. For example, Gottlieb arrived to assist with UN coordination. David and I watched in awe as Greg got to work immediately. It was amazing, even on this way in from the airport, Greg stopped by the UN headquarters and held multiple meetings. He knew the UN folks, he had good contacts, and played an essential role in improving our international coordination efforts. Tina Balin and I worked closely together. Her knowledge of Haiti was invaluable to our work. Smart, effective, and committed, she represented the best of USAID. Mission Directors joined the team--Peter Natiello, David Eckerson, Todd Armani, and humanitarian response experts like James Fleming came in and helped us with the plan as well. We were fortunate to have public affairs experts like Janice Laurent and Kimberly Flowers. We created a real dream team. Our military colleagues saw us staff up with expertise and I think found it more reassuring.

Even though we had this capable team, our staffing and resources were sliver of what Joint Task Force Haiti had at their disposal. I would attend the end of the day meetings in the Joint Task Force Haiti camp, which was right next to the embassy. It was held in a large air conditioned tent. The local commanders take turns giving their debrief to General Keene, the three-star general heading up the task force. There would be upwards of twenty to thirty briefers and perhaps fifty senior personnel in attendance. The briefing would even include an update from the meteorologist, the chaplain, and a historian. I would sit there and think wow. A meteorologist. An historian. Here we are trying to staff up our team, grabbing people from our USAID missions all over the world such as our OTI team which came in from Zimbabwe. We are the lead federal agency with tremendous responsibility, but we are not appropriately resourced or equipped. But like I told Raj, we're scrappy, and we're going to get it done. The mismatch between what the USG invests in diplomacy and development as compared to defense was clearly visible.

Q: How did you define that end point for them that they would know that their mission was accomplished? Was it something finite?

MILLIGAN: Yes, we used the plan we had developed to set out the conditions that determine if their mission was accomplished. The plan was in the form of an extensive PowerPoint presentation with all the relevant sectors and quantifiable benchmarks in areas such as shelter, water, nutrition, health, et cetera. This was the PowerPoint that we updated twice a week as part of our regular Washington reporting.

Q: Okay. And then, when certain goals were met, then they could leave?

MILLIGAN: That was the intent. We would send the matrix up to USAID and it was then adopted by the NSC as a planning tool. Raj would transmit the document to the NSC, which could review it and evaluate the progress being made

Raj would ask my opinion before an NSC meeting on the military presence. I remember one time I recommended that Raj's position should be that they had met their requirement and could depart. Having performed a critical life-saving role, the military was anxious to depart since their next rotation would be in Afghanistan. They had other jobs to do. It was the end of April. According to the plan's benchmarks, the military's mission was accomplished. All they needed was the thumbs up from the NSC. They really thought they would be heading out. Their bags were packed when they got the news that they had to remain. I didn't look forward to walking into that big JTF Haiti tent, but they knew what I had recommended and that the decision was made much higher up.

Q: Wow. In some way, I mean, I'm really amazed by what you were asked to do. If you had not had the experience you had in Iraq and/or the experience you had at NDU (National Defense University), would you have been able to do this?

MILLIGAN: I would not have been able to.

Q: No.

MILLIGAN: The confusion and chaos would have been overwhelming. I was able to find a way through it, much like I did in Iraq by setting up structure and processes and being able to work effectively with DOD colleagues.

Q: Obviously one needs in this kind of interagency emergency a clear plan that defines what everyone needs to do, which can then be used by all the various actors. But most of us in USAID would want to do lots of analyses and take two years to do a plan. And so, do you have any thoughts on how to do the kind of plan that's needed in this circumstance that helps AID break away from its desire to do all this analysis before putting a plan in place? In many ways, what you did is very much the exception from AID's normal behavior.

MILLIGAN: Yes, what I did was not the norm, but events in Haiti and Iraq, and even Indonesia presented situations that required immediate action. Taking too long to pull together a plan would result in missed windows of opportunity in these fluid environments—and would come with serious consequences. We came together to form a common understanding, common objectives, and common assumptions. And in the case of Haiti, we decentralized the planning process. David and I oversaw the process, but we tasked experienced individuals to build the specific sector plans. This is when we relied on mission personnel as well as DART members. The pace of relief and recovery is different from that of development.

Q: Right, right.

MILLIGAN: It doesn't mean you don't plan or use analysis, but—

Q: It's a different kind of planning. Are there any—does AID do any training courses on this or does FSI have anything? It would seem to me this would be a great opportunity. I know that the military does its war games.

MILLIGAN: Right like wargaming.

Q: In some ways it's kind of a war games type of thing. I know, have those emergency reaction exercises at post, but I'm not aware of AID doing very much to expose people to this kind of work. I wonder whether more could be done.

MILLIGAN: Yes, more could be done. OTI excels in rapid planning and uses feedback loops to adjust the plan over time. As counselor, I really tried to integrate BHA (Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance) and CPS (Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization) more into the agency. The rest of the agency could learn from BHA and CPS's experience and processes. When I was in Burma, we quickly pulled together a plan to focus our interventions specifically on the country's democratic and economic reforms. A good outcome of a plan is that not only does it inform people how and what they do leads to a larger goal, but it also helps channel all the good intentions in constructive ways. During a crisis, there can be many generous offers of help. What many people don't understand is each offer comes at a cost because it takes up bandwidth that could be used on something else—which could be a higher priority. In Haiti, we were inundated with such generous offers, for example, donations of 1,000 of shoes for orphans. The cost of transporting and distributing those shoes would take away from time distributing food or medicine. And maybe shoes were not the priority. Having a plan with benchmarks informs people where the needs are the greatest, and how to best program the generous offers of assistance, or how to politely decline well-intentioned offers that were not necessary.

Q: Right.

On Haiti, I recall that Sam Worthington, CEO of InterAction, spoke of their efforts to help coordinate the American NGOs in. Did you have any contact with them or were you aware of their attempts to coordinate themselves? (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: The coordination with InterAction took place back in Washington through the RMT (Response Management Team) and then eventually the Haiti task team. We coordinated with NGOs on the ground in Haiti, but the most effective coordination would take place through the UN cluster system. Even though we, the U.S., were the largest provider of humanitarian assistance and also had 20,000 troops in country, we still recognized that this was an UN-led effort. There were regular meetings in each of the clusters, and overall coordination meetings at the senior level. Those meetings and side discussions resulted in real bureaucratic innovations, for example how best to get the

military security support to NGOs when required. For example, NGOs would request a military convoy to help distribute food. One innovation was Joint Operations Tasking Center which NGOs could plug into to request assistance. I think there were innovations on how military and civil society actors could work effectively during a humanitarian crisis in coordination through the—

Q: Through the UN. Okay.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

There were so many challenges. I mentioned the issue of responding to the frequent requests for information before we regularized the process. Another issue was the constant stream of VIP visitors, particularly those from Congress. While we welcomed the attention and concern from Congress, escorting delegations around Port-au-Prince took us away from the emergency response and recovery. Somebody, maybe it was in the embassy or back at the State Department, came up with the idea that CODELs should only be scheduled once a week, on Fridays. That was a brilliant idea. We could plan ahead and prepare for CODELs while ensuring that the lifesaving work continued.

There are several phases to a humanitarian response, particularly those as complex as the Haiti earthquake. While the emergency phase was ramping down, we were concerned about a second wave of death due to the lack of clean water, food, health services, and shelter. At one point, there were about 1.5 million people in IDP (Internally Displaced People) camps. The camps formed spontaneously and therefore the residents initially lacked access to food, clean water, adequate shelter, and healthcare. When those needs were addressed, we faced another challenge which was due to the unique nature of the crisis itself. The disaster took place in an urban setting with a very high poverty rate. Port-au-Prince was hit hard as were the other surrounding urban areas. The issue quickly became how to provide relief in an urban environment where so many people are extremely poor. Many of Haiti's urban poor, whether affected by the quake or not, moved to informal camps, creating well over 1,000 camps. Some camps became formalized and grew quite large. In the camps, residents could access food, water, healthcare services, and shelter. Those who moved to these areas also believed that if they squatted on a piece of land, they might actually gain the property rights for that parcel. Even though the conditions in the camps were very basic, they were more than what many in Port-au-Prince had before the earthquake. The camps became magnets where Haiti's poor could access services that they could not do so in their neighborhoods. When I first arrived in Port-au-Prince, there were an estimated 400,000 people in IDP camps a month after the quake. Several weeks later, that number increased to over a million. The camp populations swelled. The problem we faced was how to transition from an unsustainable situation of more than a million people in camps? We considered ways of encouraging residents to move in with families in the provinces by providing stipends. We also worked quickly to classify which houses were structurally sound so that residents could move back, and which needed to be torn down. You can begin to see the complexity of the issues we were dealing with.

Not only did the response attract a lot of attention from Congress, but Sean Penn, a movie star, was residing in one of the IDP camps. This increased the media attention. On one hand, many welcomed the attention. Haiti remained in the news preventing assistance fatigue. But sometimes, when the media got the story wrong, it impacted our overall response. For example, in May CNN reported that a diphtheria epidemic was threatening Haiti. There was no epidemic. At one point, a child that Sean Penn had taken to the hospital died of diphtheria. It was very tragic. The vaccine was not available immediately. The child was eventually in a hospital hallway, hooked up to an IV, and inadvertently pulled the IV unit and died. Sean did everything he could, I admire his commitment but poor healthcare occurs in Haiti, earthquake or not. It is a tragic reality and why Haiti remains such a development challenge. CNN declared an imminent diphtheria epidemic and the healthcare conditions in the camps were criticized. It was then learned that the child was not a resident of any IDP camp, but his family took him to the camp in search of healthcare which was more readily available in the camps. Haiti was not prepared for an epidemic, that is true and later we saw the devastating impact of cholera. But declaring an impending diphtheria epidemic based on one case of diphtheria hurt the overall effort by diverting hours of time of emergency workers handling the overall response.

Q: Did you have someone on the task force who was assigned to be a communications person?

MILLIGAN: Yes, we did. Both in Port-au-Prince and also in Washington.

Q: Because CNN was very hard on you guys. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: From the very beginning, actually.

MILLIGAN: Yes. It was a big media story.

But also, from the beginning, I know that I had to plan for a responsible transition. The departure of Joint Task Force would be the appropriate time to hand responsibility back to the mission. I mentioned the idea of creating a second deputy position. Interestingly, the mission still has two deputies today. That says something about the longevity of bureaucratic structure. The second deputy position was essential because of the promise of another billion-dollar supplemental for reconstruction.

One of the final actions we took was to brief Washington leaders like Cheryl Mills on the overall response. David Eckerson and I flew up from these briefings. When I heard that there was going to be a billion-dollar supplemental, I was skeptical. I expressed my skepticism, even to the seventh floor. The problem in Haiti was and still is one of governance. We saw that when we traveled outside Port-au-Prince to the town of Jérémie. I spoke to the mayor of Jérémie, which is out in western Haiti and where David Eckerson served as a Peace Corps volunteer years before. In any case, we met with the mayor. He described why he was unable to improve local services. The mayor said, "I have little

control over the quality of local services. I tried to fire some corrupt staff who are working in our clinics. Because they work for the ministry of health, they were immediately reinstated by Port-au-Prince authorities once I fired them. How can I get rid of corruption and improve services when corrupt local staff are protected by friends in the ministry?"

Why is Haiti poor? Because of hyper-centralization, the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of very few. Pumping a billion dollars into a system like that and hoping that things will change...well...they will not. It is not a question of funding. The funding will not have a lasting impact. We lost an important opportunity of pressing for governance reforms that would put Haiti on a different trajectory—

Q: Local government?

MILLIGAN: I'm not a one-trick pony when it comes to development theory and I do not think that local government reforms are the magic bullet or a panacea. But from what I have seen throughout my years of work is that getting the governance processes correct is important for sustainable progress. This was a critical issue in Haiti at that time, and still is today.

Due to the hyper-centralization, in Haiti, it was difficult to determine who you were ultimately dealing with. For example, clearing the rubble from the capital was essential to restoring services and rebuilding the economy. We issued contracts to clean up rubble. No matter how much we vetted and checked, it was difficult to find out who ultimately owned this or that company, or even the land where the rubble would be moved to. Uncertainty over land ownership has limited investment in Haiti for generations.

I understand that there are a handful of families that comprise the economic elite. With such a concentration of political and economic power, I don't think that standard development activities and approaches are going to make a systematic difference. A specific development project may benefit a community for a time. But it will not move the country forward. I think we should work with broad segments of Haiti society and assist with governance reforms in Haiti alongside any assistance programming. Otherwise, development assistance is more like humanitarian aid.

Q: So, what happened? Was the billion-dollar supplemental approved?

MILLIGAN: It was approved.

Q: It went forward and—

MILLIGAN: And today, Haiti is Haiti.

Q: And Haiti is Haiti and it's a mess.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: I left Port-au-Prince in June. This was well before the cholera outbreak, which was another enormous challenge for the country and the international community, and for USAID. But I was not there at that time so I can't speak to it.

But in those five months that I was in Port-au-Prince, I witnessed the remarkable accomplishments that occurred when the international community, with considerable support from the United States came together to assist the Haitian people. Together we provided emergency food relief for nearly four million people in the first three months after the earthquake, the largest emergency food distribution ever, as well as safe drinking water for up to 1.3 million people daily. USAID and other international donors provided support for the installation of more than 11,500 latrines and 25 water systems, provided basic shelter materials to 1.5 million people, employed more than 350,000 people (about half of whom were women) through short-term, cash-for-assets jobs, and cleared more than 2.7 million cubic meters of rubble out of the 10 million cubic meters of rubble created by the earthquake. All of this in incredibly challenging conditions following the devastating earthquake.

Q: Did you participate—I suspect that there were a number of after-action reports done on the Haiti response.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: Do you think some of them are well done—

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: —or do you have thoughts about after-action reports? Are they a good thing and are there things that can be done to make them better, at least make sure people read them?

MILLIGAN: Right. After-action reports are essential. I participated in several, one independent report was commissioned by USAID. It came up with excellent recommendations, not only for the interagency, but also for USAID. I also participated in an after-action session at the National Defense University with General Keene, Ambassador Merten, and Lew Lucke. After-actions are essential, but from what I see, very few people actually read through them.

Q: Yeah, how do you get people to read them?

MILLIGAN: I don't know. Because by the time the next emergency situation comes around, you don't have the luxury of time to track down the past relevant report and read through it.

Q: Right.

Should there be training courses on after action reviews? (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Well, you know, that's a good segue into a discussion of PPL and learning.

Q: Right, yeah.

MILLIGAN: The question is how does USAID become a learning institution? At USAID, our knowledge tends to walk on two legs. When there is an emergency, you call up someone who has had a similar experience and ask them for help.

Q: Yeah. No, it ends up getting embodied in people. Call Greg Gottlieb or Chris Milligan. (Laughs)

Okay. So—any other further thoughts about Haiti?

MILLIGAN: No. Coming out of Haiti, I wasn't going back to the QDDR because I had been away too long. When I left the QDDR, Susan Fine backfilled behind me as I went to Haiti.

USAID Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning -- Sr. DAA (2010-2012)

MILLIGAN: I didn't return to the QDDR team. I had been away for nearly 6 months. When I was asked what I wanted to do next, I replied "I hear you're standing up this new policy bureau, I would be a part of that effort." The new policy bureau was an early outcome of the QDDR that was still being drafted. Although the QDDR had not yet been finalized, USAID was greenlighted to begin the USAID Forward Reforms that had been incorporated into the QDDR. Susan Reichle was in charge of standing up the new bureau. Susan and I both joined USAID as PMIs and we had known each other for years. Working on forming the new bureau was an opportunity to restore the brains to USAID and reverse what Ambassador Tobias had done when he disbanded PPC. After all, as I told Raj, development is a discipline. It requires policy, strategy and planning based on analysis and evidence. Lucky me, my wish was granted, and I got to work on setting up the new bureau. It was hard bureaucratic work, defining structures, dealing with the administrative details like assigning FTEs (Full-Time Equivalent) and position descriptions. But it was also an opportunity to think through what the various capacities and then structural components of the bureau should be, how they should work together and what capabilities they would need.

Q: And as I recall, this was all, again, coming out of the QDDR where AID was given the authority to reestablish the policy bureau. The decision was also made to re-establish a budget office. The budget office was separate in part to attract Mike Casella, but I understand that the new Policy Bureau worked closely with the new budget office, and that it was seamless.

MILLIGAN: Yes. The new PPL Bureau was baked into the QDDR, which was still being drafted. Raj received the greenlight to go forward in the meantime. We were able to bring Mike Casella to USAID, which was an extraordinary coup for the agency, given his deep OMB experience. While the budget office or BRM was not part of PPL, we did work very closely together on a wide range of issues. We were co-located in a space just outside of the administrator's suite. It was a positive relationship.

Q: And so, you were then creating new policy papers for the agency. Were you also developing a new country strategy process as well?

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: And also looking at program design—

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: —and part of the whole programming process from strategy to project design?

MILLIGAN: Yes. We structured the bureau to include key capacities in policy, strategy and programming, monitoring and evaluation, and donor relations. The new bureau had some amazing talent. Ruth Levine for example. She was a joy to work with. So intelligent! I learned something new from her every day. A mark of very intelligent people like Ruth is the ability to discuss very complex issues in a simple manner. I just was amazed watching Ruth engage with agency leadership. Ruth focused on the key area of monitoring evaluation and learning, essential functions that were either nonexistent or had withered when PPC was disbanded. We were also able to bring Terry Brown back to help us reestablish core processes for strategic planning such as the CDCS and project design, eventually creating the program cycle that brought all the processes together. We had a policy office led by Leo Martinez, another brilliant colleague. While setting up this office, we had to begin from scratch and lay out a corporate process to establish the new policies. Then, the team worked with colleagues in key sectors to create ten policies in relatively short order. Some of them were very cutting edge. For example, we were the first bilateral development agency to have a youth policy. And Ruth Levine's work on an evaluation policy was recognized as the gold standard in the interagency. In short, what we were doing was building a bureau from scratch, setting up offices, pushing for resources and staff, while restoring essential corporate processes at USAID.

Q: Standing up the bureau with a mix since there were some political appointees as well as career people. Interesting that a career person was put in charge, Susan Reichle, but there were political appointees also in other positions?

MILLIGAN: Yes, there were. We could not have been successful without Susan's leadership. Previously, she had been in charge of DCHA (Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. Raj got to know her very well and respected her as anyone

would when one knows Susan. Raj wanted her to be his assistant administrator for this new bureau, PPL.

And we had political appointees as well. Larry Garber who had a policy focus. Tony Pipa led international donor engagement. Leo Martinez and Ruth Levine both whom I mentioned earlier were political appointees. Nevertheless, we did not view each other through that prism, we were one cohesive team.

Q: Right, so it all merged together well.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: Because sometimes, as you well know, it doesn't merge together so well. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Right. Yes.

Q: You have mentioned USAID Forward a couple of times. Part of that was a statement from Raj Shah that 30 percent of the USAID budget would go to local organizations. It created a lot of controversy. Were you there when people were grappling with how to redefine the policy changes that AID was trying to move forward in order to move away from some of that controversy?

MILLIGAN: Yes. By way of background on this issue, USAID has always been challenged to communicate clearly what it does and the impact of its work. We still have this challenge today, explaining clearly what we do and why it is important. I remember at that time we were standing up PPL, DFID (Department for International Development), which had been elevated to ministry status at the time, would issue their annual reports with very clear impact statements. They would note the impact of every pound in human terms, the number of children educated, etc. When we looked at implementing our reforms, Raj encouraged us to communicate with similar data-driven impact statements. If our work is really evidence-based, then we would need an explicit focus on data and benchmarks, with clear outcome goals and then hold ourselves accountable to them. I think this was not only a management tool, but an important communication tool as well.

Regarding USAID Forward, Bambi Arellano, the counselor, would chair the regular USAID Forward meetings bringing together their key bureaus and offices. Participants would report out how they were doing according to specific benchmarks. And a key benchmark was the percentage of awards going to local organizations. What is interesting is that we are still grappling with the same questions about local procurement today and re-visiting the same issues. At the same time, we've learned quite a lot and have made progress. We've learned about changes to our procurement systems and authorities that remove obstacles for local organizations. Nevertheless, I think that no matter how many changes we make to our procurement system, the key impediment is our limited staffing. When I engage with my interagency colleagues, very few are aware of how small USAID is. For example, working with our DOD colleagues, I had to explain to them just how

limited out staffing numbers were—we currently only have 1,850 Foreign Service officers. They are always stunned. One aircraft carrier has around 5,000 personnel. Localization, done responsibly, is a very staff intensive process. It requires time to collaborate, manage, and administer all that is required with these new local relationships even with simplified procurement systems. You simply can't do that with the limited number of staff that we have. At the same time, being co-located in embassies puts a hard ceiling on any staff growth. Being colocated in one embassy is a good thing; we should be working closely with other embassy colleagues creating one team. It also helps them understand how development works and enables us to leverage their expertise to achieve development goals as well. I have never seen an embassy that had excess physical space or room for staff growth. Therefore, from an embassy management point of view, working with local organizations requires a tradeoff. Do we have more USAID staff devoted to working with local organizations or do we have staff from other agencies working on other foreign policy priorities. Of course, if you were to ask any Foreign Service officers, Do you want to work with more local organizations, they would say absolutely we do. That's why we joined this agency, right? What is constraining us from working more with local organizations isn't just the barnacles of our procurement system, but the issue of staff bandwidth. We need a new operational model to be successful. One that takes into account the staffing requirements and physical constraints of embassies.

Q: Yes; I was interested in how the communication on the goals of USAID Forward was done in a way which wasn't very constructive.

MILLIGAN: At times, because some of the goals were finalized and set out by the Front Office, such as the local procurement goal, you could say that the communication and buy-in was a challenge. Perhaps that is a lesson learned. On the other hand, the Front Office needed to push to overcome bureaucratic inertia and if it had not, we would not have accomplished all that we did.

Q: Yes, right. It seems to be a lesson we all have to learn multiple times in our lives.

So, another big thing that took place while Raj Shah was Administrator was creation of the Innovation Lab. Were PPL or you involved with this effort in the early stages?

MILLIGAN: I was not as directly involved in it as Susan. I had my hands full with the other aspects of the bureau. PPL was home to a chief innovation officer and a chief scientist. At a certain point these functions were part of PPL until they were spun off.

Q: Okay. Given the fact that you had been working in the State Department both in the QDDR secretariat and the F bureau, did PPL have much involvement with State, either the F bureau or even the policy bureau in State?

MILLIGAN: More so with F than with the policy office but overall, not as much as you would have thought. Naturally, BRM took the lead for F engagement and would include PPL when appropriate. Susan would go over to the policy office at times, but the policy office in the State Department has a different function than that of PPL. At the State

Department, a considerable amount of policy is actually made by the regional and functional bureaus or through the NSC interagency policy. PPL's policy focus was technical, how to achieve better development outcomes. At the State Department the role of SP can vary depending on who is running it. SP can be more like a think tank whereas PPL tends to be more functional.

Q: Okay

MILLIGAN: We did actively engage with other counterparts at State. For example, as I mentioned, we would support BRM's (Office of Budget and Resource Management) engagement with State/F. Some of the policy work entailed reaching out to the relevant functional bureau at State.

Q: Are there things in retrospect that you wish you'd been able to do differently with the creation of PPL?

MILLIGAN: Yes, First, I would have moved the resource function into PPL, including both the program and operating expenses. Having BRM separate from PPL worked at that time because the right personalities were in place, but ideally, strategy, planning, and resources should be in the same unit. The split between the operating expense and program budget does not make sense. Looking at it holistically, we have a strategic planning process that outlines what our missions should do and how they will do it, that is separate from the program funding required to implement the plans, which is also separate from the operating budget they need to function to achieve those plans. This is not ideal. The Management Bureau oversees the operating expense budget but also executes the operational processes. This is a conflict of interest and it has skewed resources. It is the equivalent of a banker overseeing the institution's resources and lending himself or herself the bank's funds. I can't think of another institution where the budget authority funds itself and its programs. As a result, the Management Bureau is one of the largest bureaus and has the highest number of senior officers, with SES serving at more junior levels than in any other bureau. The agency processes would be more efficient and effective if we had one consolidated corporate budget function directly linked to strategy and plans. That was something that Mark Green's Transformation reforms set out to do. I think they got that right on paper—a consolidated budget function housed in a neutral entity and is kept separate from direct implementation and a conflict of interest. Unfortunately, they were not able to achieve this specific reform.

Q: Good point; nonetheless, you should be very proud that in a very short period of time you guys stood up a new policy bureau. That was not an easy task.

MILLIGAN: Secondly, I wish we could have achieved more flexibility in the planning processes. I tried to take this issue on. Missions are already swamped by F's operational plan process as well as separate time intensive processes for PEPFAR. Looking at the CDCS, I asked if we could have a more streamlined process, particularly for countries in transition. A CDCS sets out strategic goals over a five-year period. It's difficult to say what's going to happen in five years when you're working in a fluid transition

environment. You might not be able to anticipate what will happen over the next six months or twelve months. What missions need in that case is a strategic framework, something that doesn't require the level of intensive analysis and documentation of a CDCS. We came up with a concept for a transitional CDCS but it wasn't formally adopted. Ironically, when we went to Burma to reopen the mission, we never did a CDCS because I told them, "We're a transition country. We really don't even know what's going to happen in six months." Instead, we developed a brief but effective Strategic Framework.

Q: (Laughs). Yes; is there anything else you'd like to say about the establishment of PPL? I keep forgetting to ask you about your promotions. But you must have been promoted along the line, doing all the things you're doing.

MILLIGAN: I'm pretty sure I was promoted. I must have been in the Senior Foreign Service. Honestly, I never really tracked my promotions. Yes, I do appreciate being recognized for my work but my goal wasn't to be promoted. I mean, when you asked me about being promoted to an FS-1, I do remember that because it was announced in front of my peers at the National War College. The other promotions happened but I can't tell you when. (Laughs)

Q: Happened, okay. They happened somewhere along the road.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

USAID/Burma -- Mission Director (2012-2016)

Q: So, you had the opportunity to go to Burma to open up a new USAID mission?

MILLIGAN: As I mentioned earlier, my assignments have fallen outside of the bidding process. I've always been sent in to fill a gap or need, Ecuador, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Iraq.... When I was in PPL, the Assistant Administrator for Asia, Nisha Biswal approached me and she said, "Chris, Burma is opening up. Although this is close-hold, I believe we will be reestablishing a USAID mission in the near future, and we would like you to consider being the mission director." I respected Nisha very much and had learned a lot from her while I was serving in Washington. But I could not provide a response at that time so I said, "Can I get back to you?" I think that surprised her. So many people had been waiting for Burma to open up their entire professional career and would have leapt at the chance to lead the new mission in Burma. The reason why I had to mull this over was that I had become settled and found happiness in a way that I never thought was a possibility. How do I explain this? This was 2012. I'd been in the Foreign Service for a long time. When I joined the Foreign Service, you could not serve openly. I had at some point resigned that this would not change and that the Foreign Service would never recognize same sex partners without a mark on one's security clearance. I accepted that I would probably be single during my entire professional life. But that changed. And America changed. I was amazed how quickly the changes came. In 2009, State recognized same sex couples. In 2015, the Supreme Court ruled that same-sex couples in

the United States have the same legal right to marry as heterosexual couples. And in 2020 in a historic decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects gay, lesbian, and transgender employees from discrimination based on sex. About 233 years after our Constitution was established, the Supreme Court affirms that the protections of the constitution apply to the LGBT+ community. Today, although some still find this controversial and there are questions about whether the Supreme Court will withdraw these protections, I cannot be fired for being who I am. I did not think this progress would have been made in my lifetime.

Going back to the summer of 2012, when Nisha asked me if I would serve in Burma, Dean and I had already bought a house together. We were not legally married, we couldn't be, but for all intents and purposes we were. We had this beautiful life together, one that I had previously thought unattainable. Now that I finally had it, I had to think before living apart and moving overseas for four years. Dean was the Acting Assistant Secretary for International Organizations and could not move to Burma with me. We needed to think through a four-year separation before I could say yes. And that is why I asked Nisha, "Can I get back to you?" A week later she asked me again. Dean and I had discussed it and I told Nisha yes. But I had to think it through before I could say yes.

Q: Right; obviously a very—a big decision.

Now, I'm trying to remember how much change had taken place in Burma when the decision was made to re-open the USAID mission. Had the government changed?

MILLIGAN: No.

Q: So, it was just on the verge of changing, right?

MILLIGAN: There were movements toward change, but I don't think there was a clearcut verge to this change. (Laughs) It was—

Q: Well, was there the façade of change?

MILLIGAN: Yes. Not a verge but incremental. This is what had happened. Earlier in the year, the United States adopted an action for action policy toward Burma. If the military government initiated a reform, then we would meet that step with a positive action. The reforms were incremental and so were the U.S. responses. Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest in November of 2010. Secretary of State Clinton visited Burma in late 2011, meeting with President Thein Sein and Aung San Suu Kyi. The US announced a relaxation of some restrictions on aid and raised the possibility of an exchange of ambassadors. After a significant political prisoner amnesty, Secretary Clinton announced the restoration of diplomatic relations and exchange of ambassadors in early January 2012. Derek Mitchell was nominated as our ambassador and arrived in Yangon in July. As part of this action for action policy, we agreed to reestablish our USAID mission.

Q: She hadn't been elected to parliament yet?

MILLIGAN: She was elected in April, a few months previously.

Q: Okay.

MILLIGAN: Fortunately for me, Terry Myers, who I'd served under when he was mission director in Indonesia, was sent out to Yangon over that summer to lay the foundations for our USAID presence. He began meeting with key counterparts and thinking through possible strategic directions for the new mission. My arrival was made so much smoother because we had such a capable development expert like Terry there before I arrived in early September. Not only Terry, but the new mission also had a staff member, Ma Yin Yin, a dedicated professional who was serving as our executive assistant. We were deeply indebted to Jessica Davey from OTI who was also there when I arrived. I don't think anyone had more experience in Burma than Jessica. Simply put, the USG would not have achieved its goals without her expert guidance. ThuVan Dinh had also recently arrived from Bangkok to cover our health portfolio. The Burma programs that had been maintained during the military junta had a humanitarian focus and had been run from Bangkok.

Q: What kind of programs were we doing? Civil society development, humanitarian relief? Was it through OTI?

MILLIGAN: At that time, we had to think through what the new programmatic focus would be as we rebuilt the mission. There were innovative programs supporting civil society and media. One program enabled over 1,000 independent journalists to be quietly trained in Thailand and returned to Burma. There were two very large programs running at that time. One program provided support to refugees and IDPs along the Thai-Burma border. There was a considerable population of refugees in camps due to the military repression in Burma's ethnic states. The longest running civil wars in our time were in Burma. The support to communities along the border was longstanding. It consisted of health and education services as well as civil society development and advocacy services.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: Another major program was essentially a community development program that had been coded as humanitarian assistance, enabling it to operate during the military dictatorship. The program focused on very poor communities in central Burma's central Dry Zone, supporting agriculture, health and water. Although it appeared to be a basic community development program, it was built upon democratic principles. The communities would hold elections for key program positions, including for example a treasurer. The program would help the communities generate resources and create credit associations that increased community resilience and improved living standards. By 2012, the program had established and supported 372 democratically elected village development committees, 453 health development funds, 892 mother groups, 575 income generation organizations, and 156 water and sanitation groups.

Q: Who was implementing it, do you recall?

MILLIGAN: PACT was awarded the cooperative agreement in September 2011 by the USAID/Regional Development Mission Asia. The \$55 million program was called Shae Thot which means the way forward in Burmese.

It is hard to convey the impact that decades of isolation had on Burma. When I arrived in September 2012, there were more cellphones in North Korea than there were in Burma. SIM cards cost thousands of dollars and there was really no cellphone infrastructure in the country. Private cars were very rare as well. The streets were empty of traffic. You could get anywhere in the city within 10 minutes. Our phones were tapped and movements were restricted as well. You had to apply for permission to travel outside the city. Although this seems austere, there were individuals in the government committed to reforms and determined to take advantage of this opportunity to improve their country. I sensed the military leadership was also split. Some realized that Burma's future depended upon economic and democratic reforms but they needed to be cautious.

Besides the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and the reforms, the other major issue was the problem in Rakhine State and the persecution of the Rohingya. We now recognized it as genocide. Shortly before I got there, there had been another wave of violence. Rohingya villages were burnt to the ground and Rohingya homes in Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, were also burnt. There was some limited retaliation against some of the ethnic Rakhine but the vast majority of victims were Rohingya. I arrived in Burma and literally within seventy-two hours, I was on an airplane flying down to Sittwe with colleagues from the State Department, including Kelly Clements from the Front Office of State/PRM.

Q: So, we shouldn't have been surprised at what happened a couple years ago.

MILLIGAN: No, this issue had been ongoing and there had been violence historically before the reforms. It's an extremely complicated situation. Despite four years of hard work during my posting, we didn't make any meaningful progress.

Q: Who all was there working? Were there any other donors? I assume the UN was there. What about the World Bank?

MILLIGAN: Yes, World Bank did go back in. The UN had maintained a presence which it expanded, and other donors began arriving.

Q: Did the British also come in early on?

MILLIGAN: Yes, we had an excellent working relationship with our DFID colleagues. Over time, the donor community grew and grew. When I arrived, it was quite small. In my final year, I was co-chairing the overall donor working group, which had fifty-five bilateral and multilateral members.

Q: Wow.

MILLIGAN: This included the individual UN agencies. My co-chair was Toby Kurbanov, a UN colleague who headed up UNDP.

Q: Okay. So, you arrived and there was at least one program going on in-country, the community development program being implemented by PACT. Then, you had to decide what else you were going to do?

MILLIGAN: Yes. Besides the PACT program, there was limited work in HIV/AIDs and very limited governance work as well. We didn't have much time to figure out a strategic approach. We had to decide what we were going to do and had to be very quick about it. And figure out how to get resources quickly. Our budget cycle takes 4 years to get funds to the missions and we needed to respond quickly to windows of opportunity. The agency was so lucky to have Nisha Biswal as the head of the Asia bureau. She was masterful at bringing the agency together and leveraging the right strategic resources for Burma. Back in Yangon, we crafted a strategic approach that incorporated and adjusted the existing programs in a targeted manner to best advance Burma's democratic and economic reforms. There were offers of assistance that we had to turn down, many activities that would have been nice to do, but not essential. We had to stay focused and preserve our bandwidth for only the most strategic interventions. I say this because we did not have a development focus in Burma. This surprised some. As our staff grew, I'd sit our new colleagues down and say, "We are not doing development in Burma." This left them a little confused at first. "What do you mean, we're not doing development work?" I explained to them that Burma is still a military authoritarian government, and that we were not doing development work but rather using the tool of development to promote democratic and economic reforms. If and when those reforms are successful, we may have legitimate government to work with and then we could broaden our scope.

Opening up the USAID mission was not without controversy in the United States. Quite a few Burma Watchers, human rights groups focused on Burma, opposed reestablishing diplomatic relations and any assistance program. Their fear was that we would be inadvertently legitimizing the military government. They thought we were pawns and that we didn't understand that we were being played. While I understand their point of view, these groups were not on the ground in Burma. Many across Burma cautiously welcomed the reforms as well as the support we could provide to deepen them. We consulted extensively with civil society and local organizations on everything we did. This is why we had a reform strategy not a development strategy.

Q: And so, what were the core elements of the strategy to do that?

MILLIGAN: Our assumption was that Burma's transition to an elected democratic government had to produce social and economic benefits to the Burmese people or the reforms would not be sustained. While we focused on democratic reforms, electoral support, political party development, human rights and civil society/media, our

programming also included support for economic reforms and improved health service. Approximately seventy-five percent of the population was dependent upon agriculture. Therefore, an agriculture program should be a key part of our reform strategy. In Burma at that time, farmers had no choice. The government instructed them what to plant and it was almost always rice. If a farmer planted anything else, a government official would have the crops ripped out. Not only did we focus on agriculture to boost incomes and therefore sustain momentum for reforms, but we also ensured the programs strengthened democratic principles. I'll give you an example of what that means. One of the innovative programs incorporated the principle of farmer's choice of what to plant and when. The program worked with the Rice Institute in the Philippines. The Rice Institute staff would pilot different rice strains in test plots with farmers. Some were drought or flood resistant; others were more salt tolerant. Some produced more rice or had a tasty flavor. The farmers would vote on which rice strain was the best. That idea was revolutionary in Burma at that time, that farmers' opinion mattered.

One of the reforms that occurred with our support was a ministerial reform that allowed farmers to plant what they deemed best. This made a lot of sense given that Burma has many different eco-systems, from the Irrawaddy delta to the highlands, from the tropical areas to the Dry-Zone. As I mentioned, farmers in Burma were not allowed to choose what crop to grow in their fields. This was dictated by the government. Burma had a proud history as a leader in Southeast Asia. It was considered the rice bowl of Asia, particularly in the fifties. The military government wanted to reclaim that sense of pride and instructed farmers to grow rice and even what rice to grow. The idea that farmers had a choice was revolutionary. What appeared to be a simple agriculture project had the message that your voice matters. You can vote on what matters.

To figure out where to begin on agricultural reforms, we were lucky to have some great minds from Michigan State University to help us and the Burmese think through options. Engaging with the government was not easy at that time. The embassy was in Yangon and ministries were based in the capital of Naypyidaw. That was a five-hour car ride on a very crude and dangerous highway. There were no flights to the capital early in my tenure. Eventually, there would be. Engaging on reforms required spending a lot of time in the car driving up to meet with government counterparts.

Q: Now, how would you have picked that place to work? Was it because there was some receptivity from the military governors there? Is that how you chose to work in that area?

MILLIGAN: It was because it would ultimately strengthen momentum to sustain reforms. Democracy must produce a dividend. We have seen democratic reform movements sputter out when they do not produce changes that improve communities' welfare. A focus on agriculture which employed about seventy-five percent of the population was a no-brainer. Early and key reforms in the agricultural sector could produce a quick boost to the economy and people would feel that change in their lives.

Q: Were you working nationwide on this or were you working in specific geographic areas? If it was limited, how did you choose the geographic areas?

MILLIGAN: In terms of agriculture, the existing community development program Shae Thot had an agricultural component and was based in the Dry Zone of central Burma.

Q: Oh, okay.

MILLIGAN: Our agricultural policy reforms required working for the Ministry of Agriculture in Naypyidaw. We then looked at value chains for key crops with support from Feed the Future. There was considerable analysis of the different food chains and what crops we should focus our support on. Some of the crops were located in different areas of the country. For example, coffee is produced in the highlands of Shan State. Complementing these efforts was a Farmer-to-Farmer program that included sites around the country. The initial reforms that enabled USAID to reopen the mission were unexpected and therefore there was no dedicated reform budget for Burma. We had to assemble resources from wherever we could get them, as long as they supported our strategic focus. What we needed to do was to get activities up and running to support reforms that provided quick results, rather than a traditional development focus that would be based on a more strategic analysis of geographic areas etc.

With considerable support and leadership from Nisha, the mission relied on central programs for our initial work, such as the Farmer-to-Farmer program and Feed the Future. Because we didn't have much bilateral funding at that time, we cobbled things together as best as we could. The first initial activities were in place quickly and in time for President Obama to officially open the USAID mission in November during his historic trip. He cut the ribbon to the USAID office; that was quite an honor.

Q: And that was shortly after your September arrival?

MILLIGAN: Yes. (Laughs)

Q: Wow.

MILLIGAN: As I mentioned, we couldn't rely on a dedicated budget for the year or two. Funding based in Thailand supported the existing programs, but we need to ramp up support critical to the democratic and economic reforms. We were very fortunate to receive support from the Democracy Center via the Elections and Political Processes fund. We received three tranches of funding which I don't think had ever occurred before. A lucky mission may receive funds once; we did three times. This support was essential to the conduct of the remarkable democratic elections that took place in 2015. We received support from other central funds such as Complex Crises funding, Farmer-to-Farmer funding, Feed the Future, and OTI. This enabled us to get the program in place while waiting for the regular budget process to catch up with Burma's reforms. Besides scrambling to get funding and programs up and running, we began with virtually no staff. To build the mission while we recruited local FSNs, we relied on a series of long-term TDYs from USAID officers and FSNs around the world. Alex Gainer and Brian Stout joined the team on a TDY basis in September, as did Gerry Porta from

USAID/Manila. Joanna Ribbens moved over from Thailand along with ThuVan Dinh. Nancy Eslick came behind Alex as our next program officer. As we grew, we needed a deputy mission director and Ann Marie Yastishock TDY'ed in from Kiev for 6 months to fill that position. We had a regular and constant turnover of staff as TDYs ended and others began. We relied on support from FSNs TDYers as well. Gerry Porta from the Philippines was uniquely responsible for getting our democracy and election support programs established. He deserves much recognition for his work. Without his dedication and expertise, USAID's democratic support would not have been in place in time. When I think about who built USAID's mission in Burma, I not only think of the dedication and commitment of the brand new FSNs from Burma, but also FSNs who came from Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, India, Mozambique, Malawi, Serbia, Georgia, the Ukraine, Nepal and the Dominican Republic. Once again, I saw the same dedication and professionalism as when we opened our USAID mission in Iraq. FSNs from around the world stood shoulder to shoulder with us to get the job done.

Q: Were you also recruiting Burmese staff during this time as well?

MILLIGAN: We were. When I arrived, we had one FSN staff member, Yin Yin Aye. We quickly recruited staff and formed a mission. We weren't very large. Space was limited. But our FSN team members were extremely dedicated. They were all driven by a commitment to their country. I think they all wanted to support and be part of this change. We also received essential support from the regional mission in Asia, such as in procurement and the controller function. Courtney Chubb, the executive officer in Bangkok covered this function for us. Thorough, professional and very dedicated, she was instrumental in getting the new mission up and running.

Q: And where were you physically located? Were you at the embassy or did you have a separate office?

MILLIGAN: We were physically in the embassy. Initially, the USAID space was essentially a big empty room with a few offices along the wall. I'm told it has been the embassy's yoga room. We reapportioned it into cubes and then quickly ran out of space. The embassy allocated additional space, which had been used as a library. This was generous particularly since space was quickly becoming scarce in the embassy. Some of our staff had carrels that were about three-foot wide desktops. They were a simple workspace for one person. Our people had tight working conditions. A few office directors had offices with doors, while others worked out of carrels. This was a shock to some new arrivals.

Q: (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: But that was what we needed to get the job done.

Q: Right. Good spirit.

So, now you earlier mentioned that PPL had devised a system of transition strategy planning, but you did not follow that format in Burma. You instead did a strategy framework paper that laid out the priorities of what you would be doing to contribute to democratic and economic reform. Is that right?

MILLIGAN: We developed a strategic framework that laid out the objectives and included immediate results.

We did not have the ability to draft a 200-page CDCS which could have been quickly obsolete in such a fluid operating environment. The elections were scheduled for 2015. This was 2012. We had no idea if the military would reverse course or even if the elections would be conducted legitimately.

Q: Was most of your democracy funding related to supporting the election?

MILLIGAN: Supporting the elections was essential. Particularly since the country did not have the processes and capacities required for credible elections. We moved quickly to place a team of technical experts with the election commission and begin political party strengthening and election monitoring support. Besides this, we initiated a civil society and media strengthening program. OTI worked on important governance issues, with an emphasis on the national peace process. The relationship between the mission's offices and OTI was excellent. It was symbiotic. Many times, I realized that our traditional USAID program needed to incorporate lessons from OTI, such as flexible programming and feedback loops. OTI funding helped fill transition-related gaps that our programs could not support for one reason or another. True teamwork.

Q: Was OTI there before you were?

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: Oh, okay. I still don't quite get the notion of both being there at the same time.

MILLIGAN: World-wide, although OTI does operate in a few non-presence countries, most of its programs are in countries with established USAID missions. In Burma, there was a specific need and defined role for OTI, particularly for peace building. As I mentioned, the longest civil wars of our time were in Burma, such as the Karen civil war, the Shan civil war etc. OTI, headed up by Jessica Davey, led USAID's support to the complex peace process as well as targeted support for civil society. This complemented the democracy and governance programming; FHI 360 managed the civil society and media strengthening program, IFES, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems work closely with the electoral commission, IRI's (International Republican Institute) support for political party development, and NDI's (National Democratic Institute) assistance to Burma's parliament and election monitoring.

Q: Just going back to OTI for a second, one of the advantages of having them there is also they bring their own resources too. Is that correct?

MILLIGAN: They do, but OTI also requests that missions to chip in funds as well. OTI's overall funding level is limited.

Q: Okay.

MILLIGAN: Initially, OTI funded 100 percent of the programming with their TI funds. Once we were able to put Burma into the regular budget cycle, we were able to add to the OTI funding.

Q: Okay. So, from the beginning when you did your strategy you and OTI worked out the different lanes so that it would be a smooth operating process?

MILLIGAN: Yes. OTI participated in and was part of the strategy process. We were one mission. In fact, a lot of the best strategic thinking was done by Jessica Davey. She was one of the best minds in Burma at that time. Not only does she have invaluable information and perspectives, but she also possesses extraordinary analytical skills and an extensive network of local contacts. She has an unparalleled level of understanding of the local political, economic, and social environment. Burma was the most complicated country I've ever served in. We would not have succeeded with Jessica. She ensured that we did not step on any of the myriad landmines and helped us maintain the integrity of our programming and its focus on the people of Burma. It's exceedingly rare to work with someone of her caliber in one's career, and I am very fortunate she was a colleague of mine.

I call Burma the land of good intentions with unintended consequences. Just because you want to do the right thing does not mean that you are doing so, particularly if you do not have a thorough understanding of the complex political, social, and economic situation. I saw donor after donor blunder by coming in and doing what they thought made sense, only to make a misstep that undermined their credibility. For example, hosting a human rights event with civil society in a five-star hotel owned by a military crony... not a good thing. But Burma was so complex, who knew who owned what. You had to do your research and use your local connections. OTI produced a political map that unraveled the complex web of connections and relationships giving us a better idea of who was connected to whom and who owned what. We also worked very closely with the embassy's pol-econ section. We were one embassy.

One innovation that strengthened a one embassy unified approach was the creation of an assistance working group (AWG). An assistance working group had been established in Washington in 2011 by the Office of the Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Burma. This function was assumed by the embassy upon the arrival of Ambassador Mitchell. What we did was re-work this concept to ensure a strategic focus with the limited resources we had at hand. I co-chaired the AWG with the deputy chief of Mission. We met biweekly to consider proposed activities' strategic relevance, consistency with principles, and policy implications, and elevated sensitive decisions to the front office. Given the rapidly changing context, the AWG allowed for real-time decision-making and

calibration. Assistance information was shared widely through recorded minutes of the proceedings, increasing awareness, and understanding of different agency programs around the embassy. Assistance to Burma was subject to complex legal restrictions. The AWG created standard operating procedures to meet country-specific requirements and streamline processes. Offers of assistance not included in Post's operational plan were submitted to the AWG on a brief template, significantly increasing Post's visibility on all USG engagement in country, ensuring consistency with strategic goals and principles, and ensuring compliance with U.S. law. Bringing embassy offices and agencies together, the AWG was able to develop creative ways to move forward on difficult issues and created opportunities for embassy staff from across agencies to work together toward USG goals.

Importantly, the AWG also protected scarce embassy bandwidth and strengthened the post's ability to constructively engage Washington on assistance matters. The embassy was regularly receiving proposals of "good ideas" that, if accepted, would have come at a considerable cost to our limited capacity. By enabling the embassy to say "no," the AWG was able to either turn off nonstrategic offers of assistance or, when possible, retool them to advance higher priorities. The USAID legal advisor, Julie Southfield, was a permanent member of the AWG and provided expert legal opinion that benefited the embassy as a whole. She also was invaluable in helping us negotiate a bilateral assistance agreement with Burma. That was a process, but one that we saw through to completion. It took well over a year, but compared to other countries, that was not such a long time.

Q: So, the basic bilateral agreement to give you the rights and privileges to operate in the country?

MILLIGAN: Yes. This was a learning experience for our Burmese colleagues as the country began opening up and engaging with development institutions. They did not have any experience in this matter. We had to walk through line items regarding taxes and duties and explain why this enabled more assistance to the people of Burma and was not an infringement on state sovereignty. So, it was a long process. We wanted the agreement to be signed in time for the administrator's visit, but that didn't happen. We thought we could use the second visit of President Obama to compel the Burmese to sign the agreement, and that didn't work. But the Burmese eventually signed off in due time but with an interesting stipulation. The document had to be printed on goatskin paper. (Laughs) We had to find goat paper. My guess is that official Burmese documents are signed on goatskin for archival purposes. Burma is one of the hottest and most humid places imaginable. It rains non-stop for months on end in the rainy season. Ordinary paper would not last. Goatskin paper does. In any case, we did get the bilateral agreement negotiated and signed, and then we also helped the Peace Corps explore an initial program, get set up and helped them work through an agreement.

Q: You probably spent a lot of time talking with various government officials. I assume they were all military officials? Or were there civilians as well?

MILLIGAN: The top echelon in the ministries were former military officials, but the ministries themselves were staffed by civilians. They were very dedicated. One of our key partners was the ministry of planning. I remember touching base with a key ministry counterpart before Burma hosted its first development conference. She has been working night and day for weeks to ensure that it would be a success. When I saw her, she mentioned how she had not slept in weeks but no matter what she said, “We have been waiting for this moment all of our lives.” These were our counterparts. Hardworking and committed individuals who saw an opportunity for their country and sacrificed for it.

Since Burma did not have any experience with development donors, there was a bit of a learning curve. Initially, ministry personnel thought that development donors would provide funding to build things. The first development conference was eye-opening for the donors as well as our ministry colleagues. The Burmese had put together a plan rolling up infrastructure needs from the local levels all across the country and providing a detailed and itemized list state by state. This was a reasonable assumption. We had to explain that this was not how it worked and talk about the enabling environment, capacity building, engaging the private sector etc. It was hard to explain, and I think perhaps the Burmese were initially disappointed but by working together and trusting each other, we got there.

Inside the ministries, I think counterparts were working even harder than we were—and we were working very long days and weekends. We were fortunate to find some ministry staff who had benefited from USAID academic scholarships. Early on in our years at USAID, the seventies and eighties, we invested a lot in long-term training. I think you remember we’d support people to have degrees. We supported a whole cohort of Burmese studying agriculture at Texas A&M. When we arrived at the ministry, these guys who must have been in their sixties or seventies came out and said, “We knew you would come back one day. Let’s get to work”.

Q: Ahh.

MILLIGAN: There were people who had sacrificed and really wanted change. There were many true inspiring heroes throughout Burma. Sometimes we tend to think only of Aung San Suu Kyi, but there were so many other heroes at all levels and all places who sacrificed for their country.

What surprised me when I arrived was the depth and the richness of civil society. Burma was ruled for decades by military dictatorship brutally suppressing civil society, but a lot had been going on behind the ‘bamboo curtain.’ Many civil society organizations were formed to provide lifesaving assistance following the devastating Cyclone Nargis which killed perhaps 130,000 people. When the military government could not adequately respond to the emergency needs of the affected communities, civil society organized and mobilized assistance. In some ways, this became an NGO movement that initially began with a focus on humanitarian assistance and then on health—and then on broader issues. One of the things we worked in partnership with civil society one was an NGO law to

help legalize civil society organizations and provide them with basic protections. We did a lot of work on the basic governance reform building blocks in those years.

Q: Probably a lot of those people were the ones that have been out of the streets over recent months.

MILLIGAN: Yes. And sadly, some have had to leave the country.

Interestingly, while civil society groups themselves were very organized, some were reluctant to engage with international donors. This was a controversial point among the CSOs and was actively discussed when they came together in an overall umbrella NGO association. Many were concerned that they would put their integrity at risk and their focus could be corrupted by international donors' funds; that they would lose their downward accountability to their communities and become donor dependent. I think that's a very good point.

Q: Interesting. I mean, that is often a dilemma -- we too often distort the programs of local NGOs to do what we want them to do as opposed to what their clients want them to do.

MILLIGAN: In Burma at that time, the success and actually the longer-term viability of most civil society organizations was due to having a strong leader. If that individual left, then the organization would likely falter. Therefore, we focused our civil society programming on strengthening an organization's sustainability. We looked at key institutional processes, accounting and budgeting, strategic planning, developing an annual report, procurement processes, and other internal operations. Our goal was to partner with them and help build their institutional capacity

Q: Was Asia Foundation there? Had they stayed all along, or did they come—had they left and come back?

MILLIGAN: The Asia Foundation reestablished a resident country office in 2013. Dr. Kim Ninh was the country director who reopened the Asia Foundation's office. She was exceptional. Under her leadership, the Asia Foundation issued groundbreaking reports analyzing how the governance structure of Burma worked from the center down to the local level. It mapped out the different ministerial lines of authority and how they worked, what level were decisions made, where and how resources flowed—all of this had never been done before and was an invaluable contribution that supported the direction of future reforms.

Q: In the end, it's amazing what you all did in building a mission, building a program, trying to understand a country the U.S. hadn't been in for thirty years—

MILLIGAN: I agree, it is amazing what the agency did. I was fortunate to be the mission director. I have a certain view of leadership and the job of a mission director. Some people may view the mission in a vertical hierarchical manner and think that the mission

staff work for the mission director. Like a pyramid with the front office at the top and everyone else supporting the front office. I see it the other way. The mission director works for the mission. In our missions, development is actually done by our offices—not the front office. So, mission leadership should be working for the offices; supporting them to get their work done, addressing the obstacles, or providing the guidance and support they need to get the job done.

There is a humility in this. Humble leaders are humble and ambitious; they are ambitious for the people and the organizations that they serve, not themselves. They are passionate about the mission and the achievements of the team. They are other-centered and not me-centered. Egos get attention, humility gets results.

As we were building the mission, we finally were able to move from long term TYD staff to full time officers. When Leslie Marbury, our first office director for agriculture and economic growth, arrived, she introduced herself “Hi, I’m Leslie Marbury. I’m your new agriculture and economic growth office director. I just have a question. Where’s my office and where’s my team?” I said, “Yes...welcome to Burma.” (Both laugh)

Q: Your carrel’s right over there.

MILLIGAN: Right. My job was to ensure that Leslie had what she needed to build her team and programs. I let her know that I was there to support her. I told her, “You’re only limited by your own creativity. Anything is possible. What is it you need to do? I’m here for you.” Leslie is an extremely competent professional and she put together an impressive portfolio that sustained and furthered Burma’s economic reforms. She built a talented team, including a remarkable economist, Dan Swift, who would be a key player in providing advice to Aung San Suu Kyi’s economic team as she stood up her new government.

This was all done at an accelerated pace as we worked towards the elections of November 2015. The U.S. government had done an astonishing job in such a short period of time. This was not only because the U.S. embassy was united and organized across the various agencies, but also because the embassy played a catalytic role in coordinating the international community’s election assistance. This coordination took place on three different levels. There was a coordinating committee of donors supporting the elections; another level with political officers from the embassies, and the final level was a working committee of like minded ambassadors. Issues would be raised up for decision by the committee of ambassadors. This three-tier system united the international community’s diplomatic and development interventions and helped share information which was essential given how politically sensitive and complex the issues confronting Burma were.

Q: That’s great. And all supporting the electoral process in different ways to make it all come together. I assume there were observers for the election, including some probably brought from outside. But did the local international community also participate as observers?

MILLIGAN: Yes. Through NDI, the mission supported the training of local election observers as part of a longer process. The diplomatic community members served as observers on the actual date of the election. Burma also received some high-profile international election observers with the support of the Carter Foundation. These included former prime minister of New Zealand, Helen Clark, and others.

Because the story of Burma is such a compelling one, and because the country had been closed off for decades, once the reforms began, the country received a lot of international attention. Besides presidential visits, trips by high level dignitaries occurred frequently. As the mission director, I could get unexpected requests. For example, one day I received a call saying that the former prime minister of England, Tony Blair was in Yangon and wanted to see me that afternoon. It was a little surreal.

Q: Yes. But very heady and very exciting to be involved in something that seemed to be going in the right direction.

MILLIGAN: Things were going in the right direction then but we were never overconfident. We always checked ourselves.

Q: Nonetheless, were there any nagging concerns that it wasn't maybe going as smoothly as hoped or as it appeared on the surface?

MILLIGAN: We all went in with our eyes wide open. Change is never linear. My fears were that parts of the country would modernize and leave other parts behind, particularly the outer areas—that the benefits of the reforms would not be spread equally and that there would be those left behind. Today, the country is once again under the control of a brutal and backward military directorship. But the story of Burma is not yet written. It doesn't end here. The country that the military took over is a very different one. Communities changed enormously during the reform period. People have access to information. The number of Facebook users, cellphones, and computers exploded after the initial reforms. Economic opportunity increased dramatically as did people's livelihoods. They do not want to go back behind the bamboo curtain again.

Q: Okay. So, you haven't given up hope after what's happened recently?

MILLIGAN: No, although it's an extraordinarily difficult time and I do not want to downplay the reality of the situation. The Burmese people are resilient, and many are taking great risks to push back the military.

Q: Just looking at your CV, you mentioned partnering with twenty-two U.S. corporations and universities. Did this lead to direct U.S. investment in Burma, or were there other purposes?

MILLIGAN: There was an enormous amount of interest in Burma when the country was opening up to the world and during the early years of reform. Everyone wanted to be there. The mission and the Asia Bureau in Washington received many inquiries from

organizations who wanted to work with USAID in country. One of the things we did was to tap into that interest and expertise through an innovative university partnering program. U.S. universities would partner with a local university as well as with a U.S. private sector firm around a program of specific support in a key sector. We would co-fund the program. The partnerships were selected through an annual competitive process.

Q: I see. And so, you did it as a competitive process in which they sent proposals into you? Very interesting approach to becoming a grant maker.

MILLIGAN: It was a good way to manage the rush of interest. Otherwise, you could be overwhelmed by the many requests. Some were made by those with high level connections and who wanted their organizations to work in Burma. By running a competitive process, not only did we leverage resources and expertise, we also could explain transparently why a proposal that may have had high level support was not successful.

Q: Yes, that's a very smart way to handle that kind of circumstance. Saves a lot of time for everyone.

You had mentioned that the Asia bureau was scraping together funds from all over the place to provide you with a budget in the first year. By the second, third, fourth year what size budget are we talking about for Burma?

MILLIGAN: By the second and third years we were up to approximately \$110 million, more with humanitarian assistance provided to the Rohingya and other victims of violence.

Q: Was this ESF (Economic Support Fund) or was it DA (Development Assistance) or a combination?

MILLIGAN: We were fortunate. It was mostly ESF which provided the unique notwithstanding language that enabled us to program more rapidly and effectively in such a complex legal environment.

We also had other sources of funding, transition initiative funds, humanitarian assistance funds and some health funding as well.

Q: Okay. Good.

Anything else on Burma that you'd like to mention? It's rare to have a start-up opportunity during an AID career, and one that is as high-profile as Burma was. So, obviously a lot of pressure on you. But it seems like you all were able to manage it very effectively.

MILLIGAN: Right. I don't consider myself a start-up person, but there is a bit of a pattern; standing up ORHA, the USAID presence in Iraq, working in the early days of F, helping to organize the first QDDR, pulling together plans for the Haiti earthquake and structuring the response coordinator's office, standing up PPL and then the Burma mission. Looking back, it seems somewhat logical but I wasn't seeking it. I don't see myself as the start-up guy and didn't think that was my forte, but nevertheless, that's what has happened.

Q: It seems to be. But again, I think it's a testament to your planning skills and your ability to do it in a way that corresponds to the needs of the time. And when it requires flexibility you build that in; when it doesn't require it, you don't. It's a skill.

Changing the subject, another question: what was the security situation? Were you able to travel around the country fairly well or were there special concerns? If the latter, how did you work those out with the embassy?

MILLIGAN: The situation changed as the reforms proceeded and more of the country opened up to foreigners. When I got there, we weren't allowed by the government to travel a certain distance outside of Yangon. We had to apply for permission to do so—even if we wanted to travel to the capital of Naypyidaw for a meeting with the government. Eventually these restrictions became less rigid or applied to an increasingly smaller percentage of the country. Travel to sensitive places like Rakhine State always required approval and it was not always received despite the considerable humanitarian assistance we were providing to the Rohingya and also ethnic Rakhine. I took advantage of vacation time to explore the country as more regions began opening up. Dean and I hiked through the rural mountains of Chin State, staying in small villages for more than a week. We also spent five days on a boat sailing around the Myeik archipelago. Every weekend I would go mountain biking with a mix of local and expat friends. We regularly biked in the countryside outside of Yangon and took trips biking in Chin, Mon and Karen States and biked around Bagan. Biking is a wonderful way to see a country and meet its people.

Q: Now, you had said early on you were staffed with a lot of TDY people who would come in for months at a time, but ultimately you had permanent staff.

MILLIGAN: Yes, we did.

Q: By the time you left, how many Foreign Service officers would you have had?

MILLIGAN: I'd say, off the top of my head, around nine.

Q: Nine. Okay.

MILLIGAN: We were fortunate to have experienced and dedicated PSCs (Personal Service Contractors).

Q: Yes, a lean and mean mission.

MILLIGAN: Yes, lean and mean. We continued to recruit FSNs. I think our total staffing numbers were around fifty or sixty personnel by the time I departed in 2016.

Q: And did you continue to get support services for admin out of Bangkok?

MILLIGAN: We did. We continued to do so for key functions while we continued to build the mission's capacity. At one point, we created and filled a procurement position. While our EXO was based in Bangkok, she was supported by a team in Yangon. The controller function remained in Bangkok.

Q: There were—when I served in Bangkok in the mid-eighties and there was a mission in Burma at that point and David Merrill, I think, was the mission director, who later became, I think, ambassador to Indonesia at some point. There had been Burma experts in USAID, people like David Steinberg. Did any of them reach out to you to share their perceptions of Burma?

MILLIGAN: Yes. I really enjoyed meeting David Steinberg. We met before I headed out to Yangon and I would see him from time to time when I was back in Washington. I would engage with a wide range of groups during my trips back to Washington and participated in events at Brookings, the CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies) and other think tanks. I also had the chance to engage with other brilliant Burma experts who were based in Yangon, individuals such as Mary Callahan and Richard Horsey. What a tremendous learning opportunity for me.

Q: For some AID missions there often is a lot of contact with non-governmental experts or even diaspora groups in the U.S. I don't know if it's because some countries provoke strong interest or it's the receptivity of AID missions themselves. But I would think it would have been valuable for you to have that kind of contact whenever you came back to Washington.

MILLIGAN: Yes. It was. Nisha arranged introductory meetings for me with these groups before I even went out to Burma. The story of Burma inspires many people. For them, it is more than a country, it has been a cause. Many have worked on the cause of Burma for their entire lives. They are passionate about it and are quite invested. Sometimes, we need to take a step back and see Burma as a country and not just a cause—as a deeply fractured country that has little experience with effective democratic governance. Remember that Burma was a military empire, the largest in Southeast Asia. Then the country was taken over in tranches by the British and administered as a colony from India. Following independence, it went through successive authoritarian military governments. Burma is still a deeply fractured country that in the past has been held together by military authoritarianism rather than by a process of democratic nation-building. Burmese human rights leaders such as Aung San Suu Kyi are inspiring. I think many allowed themselves to believe that if only she were released from prison, then Burma would be a cohesive and vibrant democracy.

Q: Yes, right, right.

MILLIGAN: Perhaps that is why when the election of Aung San Suu Kyi also revealed the fractures in Burmese society and some were disappointed. They asked how could a human rights icon not speak out on behalf of the Rohingya? How could a human rights icon have a difficult relationship with civil society organizations? As committed development professionals, we can allow ourselves to have a romantic vision for our work, even more so for such inspiring places like Burma, and then, be disappointed.

Q: Did you have that understanding when you arrived, or only after four years?

MILLIGAN: It developed as my knowledge of Burma increased. Outside of a few experts, not many people knew a lot about Burma because not many people had worked there. I read a lot and sought out and listened to those with experience. I benefited enormously from Jessica Davey, our OTI Director in Burma. The embassy was fortunate to have an excellent ambassador, Derek Mitchell, who was an inspiring leader and very knowledgeable on Burma. I spend a lot of time listening to and talking with civil society, as well as our implementing partners who were working with communities across the country. Listening. Trying to figure out best we could be constructive in what was a very small operating space early in the reforms. Where was our value added? And also, how do we integrate the new mission into the embassy? I've never seen an embassy as unified and functioning as one team as the one in Burma at that time. And this unity of mission started at the top with our ambassador. The front office would construct interagency teams at post that would be led or co-led by USAID or our State colleagues. If you were meeting with the election team for example, you would not know who the State Department political officer was and who was the USAID officer. It didn't matter, right? Building cohesive teams also strengthened the overall community. People socialized together as well as worked together.

Q: And everyone had that same sort of—I'm going to use the word pragmatic—but the pragmatic understanding and not the romanticized version that those of us in Washington might have had.

MILLIGAN: Yes, I think this also started from the top with a clear strategic vision and then understanding of how what we all did contributed to it. This was important because what we were doing was viewed by some as controversial back in Washington-- that we were supporting a transition to elections under a military government. But the military government was not a homogenous block. There were reformers on the inside who were very courageous.

This reminds me of a funny story. We received many VIP visitors. President Obama, Secretary Clinton, and Raj Shah came out several times.

On one of Raj Shah's trips, we flew up to Naypyidaw to meet with key ministers in the government. One meeting was with U Soe Thein, the minister of the President's Office

who was key to the overall reforms. U Soe Thein was also a retired Admiral and former head of the navy. It was an important meeting and I wanted it to go smoothly. During the meeting, U Soe Thein looks at Raj and tells him that USAID could do better. Oh no! Raj asked him what the problem was. U Soe Thein responded, “USAID is a fish and needs to be more like a chicken.” You can imagine what it was like to be in that room. Here we were in a very high-level meeting being told that the key minister on reforms thinks USAID should be more like a chicken. Raj looked over at me a little puzzled. But then U Soe Thein continued, “We have an expression in Burmese. A fish lays 1,000 eggs and doesn’t make a noise. A chicken lays one egg and squawks about it all the time. You need to tell the people of Burma more about what you’re doing. You need to be more like a chicken than a fish.” His message was clear. Here was someone who was pushing for international engagement and continued reforms and had to convince the hardliners that opening up to the West was the right thing to do.

Q: Yes.

MILLIGAN: Although we had a very active public affairs component to our programs, we took U Soe Thein’s message to heart.

Q: Wow, that’s a great story and a good reminder that the reformers within governments need a lot of different kinds of support from us.

MILLIGAN: It also goes back to the idea that it is not just what you do, but how you do it. It’s not just the outcome of the health program, and it’s not just that it is building the next generation of leaders at the community level, it’s how knowing about this program allows reformers to say, Look at what’s happening in our communities because we took this very bold step.

Q: Yes, and also allowing them to get some credit for it. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Yes, but that was also a sensitive issue that we were very aware of and were very careful about. We did not want to legitimize the military government through our assistance. And as the country was preparing for elections in which the military government’s party would compete, we were very careful that the military did not co opt USAID assistance to increase their votes. On one hand, we wanted the reformers to have the support they needed, while not validating the military government.

Q: Because sometimes when we’re chickens forget that there are other people to take the credit.

MILLIGAN: Another challenge we faced as “chickens” was semantic...the use of the word “Burma” in Burma. The military government changed the official name of the country from Burma to Myanmar. The United States didn’t recognize this change. We would always have two sets of documents: those for use in Washington and those for use locally. We would have meetings with the government and we would get quite adept at

having an entire conversation without ever saying Burma. Instead, we would say, This lovely country, this country of yours. (Laughs) It became a reflex.

Q: Because we still officially refer to it as Burma, is that correct?

MILLIGAN: We do. When Aung San Suu Kyi was elected, we asked her what we should call the country. She replied “Call it Burma or call it Myanmar. We need to move forward. Let’s go forward.”

Q: So, you were in Burma for four years. I assume you managed your personal life to accommodate the four years in Burma.

MILLIGAN: Yes. Dean was back in Washington serving as the acting assistant secretary for international organizations. Once he was nominated as ambassador to Mozambique, he was to take off some time between assignments and join me in Burma. He was sworn in as the ambassador in December 2015. I returned to Washington for his swearing in and brought back two gold wedding bands from Burma. We got married. Dean went on to Mozambique arriving there in January and I returned to Burma and would depart post later that spring. The election had taken place in November, but the government would not take power until spring. As the co-lead for the donor community, I helped bring the community together and draft a series of transition issues to support the incoming administration. We wrote transition papers on key issues like agriculture and economic reform for Aung San Suu Kyi and her government. Even at that time, the international community continued to be coordinated, organized and focused on supporting the new government.

Gayle Smith, who succeeded Raj as the USAID administrator, came to Burma during my final days. I extended my tour by a few weeks to ensure her successful trip. In our meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi, Gayle also said, “Now Chris, don’t you have something to tell Aung San Suu Kyi?” I said, “Yes, I do.” I said, “I’m sorry to inform you that I’ll be leaving Burma.” And she said, “Really? Well, where are you going?” I said, “I’m going to Mozambique.” She says, “Oh. Be careful. Are you sure it’s safe there?” (Both laugh)

Gayle’s trip was finished. I was packed out within hours and was out the door to the airport.

Q: And this is when you went on leave without pay, is that correct?

MILLIGAN: Correct. Dean was already in Maputo as the ambassador to Mozambique. Before he departed Washington, we were married on December 15, 2015. Same sex marriage had recently become legal. I joined Dean in Maputo in June.

Q: Fantastic. I’m going to suggest that we stop for now.

Q: This is Carol Peasley and today is February 10, 2022, and this is session number four with Chris Milligan.

So, Chris, if okay, I would like to briefly go back to your assignment in Burma. Was it an accompanied post or not? I assume it probably was not when you first arrived, but I'm wondering whether that changed over time.

MILLIGAN: Thanks, Carol, that's a great question. It was an accompanied post. We had quite a few families with children at the embassy. One of the things we did once we had the mission up and running was change the assignment tour from two-years to four-years. The living conditions were not that much of a hardship to justify a two-year assignment and those assigned preferred to serve for four years. If families needed something in particular, Bangkok was only an hour flight away.

Q: That's good to hear.

When you said it changed from a two-year tour to four, was that just USAID? And just wondering about the dynamics of working out those issues with the State Department; were there any special dynamics or was it pretty routine?

MILLIGAN: State Department personnel had a three-year tour, a standard tour. When we stood up the mission there, we thought initially a two-year tour would be best given that the country was in transition, and we didn't know if it would remain stable. It was hard to tell which way the transition would go. Once we had officers assigned to Burma, they themselves said they would like to stay for four years. Burma is such a complex operating environment. It takes a couple of years just to figure out the political, economic, and social context. An officer could be more productive serving four years.

Q: So, is there anything else on Burma that you'd like to mention? You had mentioned last time that you then went on leave without pay. And did you have any concerns in doing that AID would be there when you wanted to come back? (Laughs) You had great confidence in the agency to not forget you over the eighteen months.

MILLIGAN: I had confidence, of course, that USAID would be there after eighteen months and would have something for me to engage on. I wouldn't know what I would do when I came back, but I always knew that there would be interesting things to do. I took leave without pay because when my husband became an ambassador, I thought, this is such a unique and important experience that we should share it as part of our lives together. The only way to do so was to take a leave of absence. When I was in Burma, we had a long-distance relationship. We made it work thanks to video calls and traveling back and forth. At one point, Dean was able to take more time off between assignments and live in Burma. He explored Yangon while I worked. He even went off to a Buddhist monastery and meditated for a week. More importantly, we were able to share the Burma experience, exploring the culture, hiking in Chin State, sailing around the Myeik archipelago and many other things. As we were lucky that he was able to come out for

extended periods of time, it was important for me to be in Mozambique to share that experience with him.

Q: Good. I'm going to use the term "dependent spouse," but it is a bit offensive. Anyway, did that experience change how you thought about how USAID should handle issues related to spouses at post? I'm curious because not everyone has the opportunity to wear the other shoe.

Leave Without Pay -- Mozambique (2016-2018)

MILLIGAN: When I became a dependent spouse, I was on leave without pay from USAID and under State Department orders. Being a spouse of an ambassador gave me a broader perspective on the U.S. government, on the interagency, of USAID's role.

I was initially concerned that I would be bored. After all, I was coming out of a very compelling, high paced environment defined by a historic election that was ushering in what we thought at the time was the beginning of an era of democracy and economic transformation. I wondered what my days would be like in Mozambique, I thought what would I be doing when I woke up on my first day in Maputo? But I found that wasn't anything I needed to worry about. I was immediately engaged and busy on so many things, pursuing personal interests, and also supporting the embassy efforts. For example, I was a volunteer teacher at the American School. The school ran a language program for everyday Mozambicans who wanted to learn English. They came from very modest backgrounds and after work would come to the American School. While I got involved in community efforts, I also spent time exploring and learning about the beautiful country of Mozambique.

Q: Sounds ideal. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: We might all be looking for those opportunities.

Did you have any contact with the AID mission at all other than socially?

MILLIGAN: A little bit, but it was mostly social. I wanted to make sure that I didn't interfere or be perceived as interfering with anything that was USAID related. USAID had an excellent mission director, Jennifer Adams, who had taken over from Alex Dickey. I made sure I did not cross any professional lines but I did engage socially with USAID staff. For example, I would attend a regular yoga class at the USAID mission. I also volunteered for the USAID mission mentoring program and was always available for other officers who wanted advice. Nevertheless, I wanted to make sure that I wasn't interfering in anything that was programmatic or operational.

Q: Right.

Did you during this time build on any of the academic work you had done at the War College? Did you do any writing or relooking at parts of your career?

MILLIGAN: That's a great question. Perhaps I should have. But I didn't. I didn't do any writing, but I did pursue other interests I hadn't had time for. I got into photography. I entered a few photography competitions and exhibitions and one piece that won an award. And competed in mountain biking races as well as road biking races with a group of Mozambican friends whom I would bike with. I would go bird watching throughout the region, exploring the many national parks in Mozambique, Eswatini, South Africa, Zimbabwe and beyond. I used this time to take a break, a mental break from work and immerse myself in other interests. I studied Portuguese, read local literature, and continued taking tennis lessons.

Q: Right. So, a very re-energizing experience.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: But during this period, you were asked—was it—I'm not sure if it was in the middle of it or at the end that you were asked to go to Madagascar to fill in. Was that when your leave without pay ended, or—

MILLIGAN: My leave without pay was wrapping up. I hadn't—

Q: And was Dean's tour also wrapping up at this point?

MILLIGAN: Dean still had more time in Mozambique. He would serve there through 2018 but I need to get back to work as my leave without pay was only for a year and a half. I didn't have an onward assignment. As my leave was wrapping up, I contacted Tom Staal and let him know that I was unassigned and available. "Tom, is there anything you'd like me to help with? I'm a free agent. Happy to serve and help out wherever you would like." And he said, "Well, we have some gaps in leadership in our missions in Sri Lanka and Madagascar, and we would love it if you could do a long-term TDY to either of these places." I said, "Which one is your bigger priority?" He said, "Madagascar." Madagascar would work out better for me as it was closer to Mozambique where Dean remained as ambassador. Although Madagascar is just across the water from Mozambique, it still took a day to get there. You have to fly westward to Johannesburg, South Africa and then retrace your steps back across Mozambique and across the Mozambican Channel to Madagascar. It's a longer trip than it should be. I worked in Madagascar from January to August 2018 taking a short break every two months to return home to Maputo.

USAID/Madagascar -- Acting Mission Director (2018)

MILLIGAN: The previous mission director had curtailed unexpectedly leaving a leadership gap in the mission. I was providing coverage on a TDY basis so brought a few suits and my mountain bike. This was the bike I had bought in Yangon and pedaled all

over Burma. I had brought it to Mozambique and went all over Mozambique and even Eswanti with that. It was one of the things I packed up as I went off to Antananarivo.

Q: Right. (Laughs) I believe it's a quite hilly place, so you probably made good use of that mountain bike.

MILLIGAN: Very hilly!

Q: Madagascar is such an interesting country, an island off by itself often neglected a bit by the Africa Bureau. Few high-level visitors made it to Madagascar. To what degree did the mission feel part of the continent, or did it feel a bit isolated? The mission itself has had an interesting history, with some highs being led by extraordinary leaders and with some lows and severe management challenges. I've always wondered if there was a sense of isolation there -- and the fact that some people could handle it while others could not.

MILLIGAN: I think you've characterized it very well. What you have also described is the history of Madagascar itself. Madagascar is such a unique and fascinating country due to this isolation. When I arrived in Madagascar, I read all that I could about the country and its development challenges. I brought together the key mission staff and asked them this, "Madagascar's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per capita today is the same as it was in 1980 despite hundreds of millions of dollars of our assistance and probably billions in foreign assistance. What isn't working? Why has Madagascar remained poor?" The post-colonial history of the country is one cycles of economic growth and then bust. These cycles repeat themselves over and over again and they parallel the country's political dynamics. A political cycle begins with a new leader who consolidates power and the country begins to see stirrings of economic growth. Then there's fighting among the elites which leads to political instability and an inevitable economic downturn.

During some of these cycles of political instability, the USAID mission had to go on drawdown and stop programming. The mission has closed and reopened in the past, mirroring the cycles of political instability. This has created anxiety, particularly among our local staff who would naturally be concerned for their job security. They remember when the mission had been closed before.

Shortly after I arrived in Madagascar, the country experienced another spike in political instability, creating anxiety about the future of programming and concerns about whether we would be shutting down again. It's a relatively small mission. I think staff feel isolated as more attention goes to the larger countries in the Africa bureau. The mission is also dependent upon regional platforms for key services and often has not been...well...it has been neglected. It seemed that Madagascar was not the top priority for regional services. This was another issue I took on when I arrived. I was able to engage with the incoming South Africa director, John Groarke, on the issue of regional support. Madagascar received key services from the regional platform in South Africa. John Groarke and I discussed the issues and clarified support service expectations. This was a long overdue conversation. At that time, it would take more than two years to award a

contract even after the selection process has been completed. John is a very experienced FSO and knew how to address this issue. As a result, we were able to have two major contracts awarded and programming underway.

Q: I believe you began to look at the mission's strategy of the country program and need for adjustments to take a better account of that cyclical nature of political stability and economic growth. What kinds of adjustments did you make to correspond with the realities on the ground?

MILLIGAN: When I arrived at the mission, I found that it had very successful programs in key sectors, but they were stove piped. The largest program was in health. There was also an environmental program as well as a focus on food security.

To begin the process of looking at the mission's strategy, I hosted a series of off-site retreats in the mission director residence. That was where I was staying with my suitcase and mountain bike. We got people together and we followed the classic War College strategy process. We kicked off a series of rich discussions about where we think Madagascar should be in five or ten years, what are our assumptions about Madagascar, what are the constraints and then agreed upon a theory of change. For example, the mission was successful programmatically in key sectors such as health, but the success was not leading to overall systematic change. And despite the successful health program, Madagascar remained dependent upon donor finance of the bulk of its health services. As a group, we discussed the impact of political instability leading to economic downturns and the negative impact on investment and how this led to increased instability. Of course, our local FSN colleagues were part of the core discussion group. We spent two intensive day long sessions working through the issues and developing our theory of change for Madagascar, and then thinking through the programmatic repercussions of that theory.

The mission had some funding that we could either put into one of the existing programs or we could think about something else. We decided to put these funds into an initial governance program. The funding was modest, but it would help us get a better understanding of what we need to do, or could do, regarding governance if we were to address the issue of political stability and sustainable economic growth.

Q: That must have been exciting. I assume the Malagasy staff participated in those discussions. Given the political divisions within the country, I wonder if those differences were also represented within the USAID FSN staff? Did you see those tensions? Were there different viewpoints or different perspectives being offered or were the FSN staff homogeneous?

MILLIGAN: I never picked up on any tensions among our FSN staff. The political parties in Madagascar are not based on ideologies but rather personalities. It is similar to Haiti in that respect. People will say that elections are bought and that demonstrations are paid for. What politics tends to be, rather than a competition of ideas, is a competition among political elites to capture the economic rents of the country.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: There's good research on this with respect to Madagascar—the impact of the country's political structure resulting in socio-political crises that have regularly wiped out, and even set back, the country's macroeconomic growth and human development.

Q: Now, the health portfolio, was that driven by PEPFAR?

MILLIGAN: No.

Q: So, you were very much the exception to the Africa bureau on that front as well?

MILLIGAN: Yes. We did have an extensive malaria program. We also had an issue that perhaps is unique to Madagascar, which is plague. The outbreak of plague tends to be an annual event in Madagascar. The year before, the situation was more serious than normal and the USAID mission played a critical role in ensuring that the plague did not spread beyond Madagascar. Normally, the plague would be bubonic. But that year, it mutated and became pneumonic and could easily be spread through air droplets and vapor, presenting a significant risk.

Q: Did the mission work closely with the global health bureau and Dennis Carroll and his team on that?

MILLIGAN: Yes. The mission did and we continued to do so once I arrived. We also worked closely with the Global Fund, with the UN and CDC. Obviously, this was a large, coordinated effort. By the time I arrived in Antananarivo or Tana as we call it, the major risk had been addressed. What we focused on then was preparation for the next outbreak since plague is an annual event. Some believe that the yearly burning of the fields, as well as the burning of the forests to create more agricultural fields, is the cause of the plague outbreak. They suggest that the mice and rats which carry plague leave the burning fields and forests and come into contact with people. Therefore, outbreaks occur at the end of the dry season. That's the theory. Nevertheless, since we know it's an annual event that occurs at the end of the dry season, we can prepare based upon the lessons learned from past experience. The mission sponsored an inclusive after-action review that brought the local and international community together to evaluate the most recent response. This was not without a bit of controversy since an evaluation of the response would likely point out areas for improvement.

I also pushed hard to ensure more U.S. leadership in the Global Fund's operations in Madagascar and also with GAVI, the fund for the vaccines and immunizations.

Q: That's great. You may or may not know the answer to this, but I would assume that the kind of preparatory work that was done on this might have helped Madagascar manage COVID. Have you heard anything about that?

MILLIGAN: I would think so, particularly since the plague was pneumonic and spread through droplets like COVID. I think any analysis would conclude that Madagascar was in a better position to manage COVID because of the infrastructure and capacity that had been put in place to manage the plague. I was able to see firsthand in field visits USAID's work strengthening local community health systems. USAID's health program had a grassroots approach and that was scaled almost nationwide. It supported the development of the community health workers, established local pharmacies, and created the backbone of the local health system. I thought is a very innovative program. For example, the program leveraged GDA (Global Development Alliance) funding to expand its impact. It sponsored a TV program which was similar to those American real estate shows where a house would get makeover. In this case, a community clinic received a makeover. At the end of the show, the renovated and re equipped clinic would be revealed to the community. Not only did this strengthen community ownership, but the program also reinforced key health messages, like wash your hands, as well good social behavior. What an innovative health program! I didn't have anything to do with setting it up or running it, but I really marveled at what it was achieving. The officer who oversaw the program, Daniele Nyirandutiye, got it. She was always thinking about how to leverage a bigger impact with existing USAID resources.

Q: Yes; that's a very interesting example.

It's hard to talk about Madagascar without mentioning natural resources management. I assume you had a program in that sector. Historically, there had been work related to the lemurs.

MILLIGAN: Yes, that work has continued. While there, we were able to launch two new programs focused on habitat protection.

There's a fascinating book on Madagascar called The 8th Continent. Being on Madagascar is the closest thing to being on another planet. The island of Madagascar, I believe, broke off from the Indian subcontinent some eighty million years ago and was uninhabited for most of that time. The animal and plant species that evolved there did so separately but on a parallel path to the rest of the world. Tree species and entire ecosystems evolved that do not exist anywhere else on the planet. Some animals evolved to fit certain ecological niches in ways completely different from the rest of the world. For example, we have woodpeckers that evolved to pry grubs out of trees. Because there are no woodpeckers in Madagascar, a type of lemur evolved to fit this niche. It has one extremely long special finger to get grubs out of trees. This lemur is called an Aye-aye. The island is culturally unique as well. The first human inhabitants were from Indonesia. They arrived in different waves. Each wave brought new technology, like upland rice terracing which was an innovation from lowland farming. There is an Arab influence from the north and an African influence, which you see more off along the coast. You can hear it in the music and in the importance Malagasy places on cattle, a very important cultural aspect particularly in the Malagasy rural areas. It just is a mesmerizing and unique country.

Q: Yes. I still regret never having visited. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: But going back to natural resource management, the deforestation was unlike any I've ever seen. Very few forested areas of the country are left. This distinctive world patrimony is being wiped out and I fear that it is being lost forever. For example, the spiny forest, which is unique to Madagascar, has plants that don't exist anywhere else. I saw miles and miles of it being rapidly deforested as a desperately poor rural population migrated from the drought in the south and cut down forested areas. These priceless forests cannot regenerate. Once they're gone, they're gone. Even the parts that have been cut down cannot be replanted. The indigenous trees and bushes don't grow back. We drove through miles and miles and miles of deforestation that after one growing season became fields of empty wasteland. The hills themselves are denuded as well. This unbelievable patrimony, which isn't only just patrimony to Madagascar, but to the world is being rapidly lost forever. Even before we really know much about it.

Q: Right. And it sounds almost impossible to reverse.

MILLIGAN: It is driven by economics, by poverty, by desperation. And poor governance.

Q: Other donors: I assume that the French and the European Union might have been major donors there as well.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: And I assume that you, the U.S. coordinated closely with them.

MILLIGAN: Yes.

Q: And was there a good system in place from that aspect?

MILLIGAN: It was not as robust a system that was in place in other countries, for example Burma. There was a formal annual meeting with the government but as you know, the real coordination doesn't take place in these formal conferences. Because I was only there for eight months on an acting basis, I didn't want to take on a high-profile role. However, I did do a fair bit of donor work. Besides the annual development donor meeting with the government, I met informally with the other main development partners, such as the Japanese, EU, and key UN agencies.

Q: It sounds like a fascinating eight months and one in which you made significant contributions. When you talked about governance, to what degree is there local governance in Madagascar?

MILLIGAN: Madagascar has a highly centralized system, both politically and economically. There really isn't a formal system of empowered local government. Studies have concluded that this had been a factor in the country's chronic cycles of instability.

Q: Are there other population centers other than the capital city and then rural? Are there other cities?

MILLIGAN: Yes, there are quite a few other cities. They're not as large as Antananarivo, but they are there. Unlike most of Africa, Madagascar was a country before it was colonized.

Q: Okay.

MILLIGAN: We traveled outside the capital. For example, we drove down to Fianarantsoa in the south. It has beautiful cobblestone streets and old churches and a long history. Antananarivo is the largest city, but there are other cities connected by roads, airports and seaports.

Q: Okay. So, theoretically there could be local governance.

MILLIGAN: Oh, yes.

Q: Yes, okay. Okay.

Are there any further thoughts about Madagascar? Presumably AID identified someone to come in and be the new mission director, and so you were talking to folks about what you would do next?

MILLIGAN: Madagascar had been on the bid list. John Dunlop replaced me as the mission director. My desire was to return to Washington at that point. I didn't have an onward position. Dean was going to be wrapping up in Mozambique by the end of the year. I asked Tom Staal about the timing of his tenure as counselor and whether they thought about who would come in behind him. I threw my hat in the ring for that position. Tom engaged the front office, Mark Green and his team...and they approved.

Q: The election and transition had taken place, and Mark Green was on seat as the AID administrator. So, this was now August of 2018?

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: Okay. So, Mark Green had been on the seat then for about a year and was not brand new.

Counselor to the Agency, Office of the Administrator (2018 – 2021)

That's correct. I arrived in Washington in early September of 2018. Mark was confirmed in August of 2017. The Agency's Transformation reforms were well underway. Tom Staal was playing an important role in these reforms. Besides being a skilled senior officer, Tom is very gracious. I arrived in September and Tom was retiring the following spring. This could have made for a complicated situation, but Tom proposed how we could work together as a team during this period. He encouraged me to move into the counselor role while he assumed a position of Senior Advisor to the Administrator. Tom even allowed me to move into the counselor's office. So kind! Tom moved into another office in the suite. We worked very well together. Quite a team. I was fortunate to be able to work closely with someone so experienced and frequently sought Tom's guidance as I transitioned into the counselor role.

One of our first priorities was organizing the worldwide mission director conference. I had organized several such conferences before, and even the first Program Officers Conference when I was in PPL. I was able to help Tom and a small organizing team think through not only the content, which was being finalized, but the logistics including locating a venue, establishing a budget, etc. The conference would take place in November of that year. It would serve as an opportunity for Tom to pass the counselor's torch to me, a ceremonial handing over of responsibilities.

Q: Do you remember the main themes of that conference and what the main issues were that the agency and mission directors were discussing and debating?

MILLIGAN: I do. The conference would focus on the main themes generated by the Transformation reforms that the agency was undergoing.

Another important theme was PSM, which is Prevention of Sexual Misconduct. David Moore, the general counsel and acting deputy administrator lead the Action Alliance for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct. The conference was an important opportunity to inform our overseas leadership about this work and cement their commitment. FSN empowerment was another important theme and, for the first time, members of the FSN Advocacy Council attended the conference. A real breakthrough of the conference was discussion about the role of USAID missions vis-à-vis the mandate of DCHA (Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance Bureau) and particularly OFPA (Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance). During a lively Q and A session, mission directors such as Leslie Reed were able to engage Admiral Ziemer on how problems occur when there is no clear chain of command in the field and how it erodes unity of purpose, accountability and teamwork.

Q: And Admiral Ziemer was the head of OFDA?

MILLIGAN: He was the acting Assistant Administrator for DCHA. Whereas previously he had been very firm in preserving the separateness and independence of OFDA in our overseas posts, hearing directly from mission directors provided him with a broader perspective and he changed his view. He said, "We need to work on this." This was an important opportunity to improve teamwork overseas, while also being mindful of how

essential it was to preserve the agility of OFDA. Reaching out to Admiral Ziemer's staff, we worked together on new draft field guidance. The field guidance was called *One Mission, One Team*. It specified that there was one senior representative of USAID in an overseas post and that this individual is responsible and accountable for all operations. No more parallel chains of command which not only led to conflict, but confused ambassadors and our overseas interagency colleagues. As we thought through what this meant and how to operationalize this new directive, the guidance became quite extensive. I think it had to be because we also wanted to preserve the agility and flexibility that OFDA needs to fulfill its mandate as the lead for international humanitarian assistance operations. We were able to disseminate this guidance and then update it when OFDA became part of BHA (Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance).

Q: And this included OTI?

MILLIGAN: It did. The original guidance for DCHA included OTI as OTI resided in that bureau. Under Transformation, OTI became part of the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS) and OFDA's function became part of the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). BHA updated the DCHA guidance under the leadership of Amy Tohill-Stull who was a DAA in the front office of BHA. CPS, however, did not update their guidance.

Q: Right. These were the offices that came out of the Transformation and the creation of the new Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: Right. If you maybe could talk a little bit about that. I have heard that it was very much led by career officers. Is that correct?

MILLIGAN: It was. When we think about Transformation, we tend to think of it first in terms of structure because these were the changes that were the most apparent. But it was also about processes, about how we partner, about engaging with the private sector, and many other initiatives. The design and the initial work on the bulk of these reforms took place before I arrived in Washington. Each reform initiative was led by a career employee. My understanding was that there was extensive in-reach across USAID as well as outreach with the partner community, colleagues on Capitol Hill and others.

These reforms made a lot of sense. The world in which USAID is operating has been changing rapidly and USAID must adapt. The world today keeps changing and the changes keep coming—from the nature of humanitarian crises which are more complex and protracted, to the growing number of development actors and partners, from the global ambitions of authoritarian regimes to the role of technology and innovation in redefining the world, how it works and even how it is governed. From the new challenges caused by State fragility to the accelerating challenges of a changing climate. Because the world is fundamentally different today, USAID must adapt and adjust to this reality. This

is the essence of the Transformation reforms. As a humanitarian assistance and development agency, we needed to focus on the core disciplines required to advance U.S. foreign policy goals in this changing world. In this respect, breaking up DCHA into these two new bureaus focused on humanitarian assistance and conflict made a lot of sense. One of my concerns, however, was that as we created two new bureaus, we didn't create new and larger stovepipes. The agency would only be successful if it were able to integrate these new bureaus into the rest of the agency's work. Humanitarian assistance, and conflict prevention and stabilization are on the overall development continuum. The programmatic gaps between humanitarian work, conflict and development work have undermined USAID's success, as well as that of other development agencies. This is why I pushed very hard to establish a backstop for humanitarian assistance and also advocated for a conflict prevention and stabilization backstop. If we are serious about standing up bureaus in these key disciplines, we need to prepare and train officers and provide them with career opportunities. Unfortunately, this proposal made some nervous as changes often due, and I encountered considerable resistance. In the end, we made the most progress in BHA and received the approval to create a BHA backstop. I think the jury's still out as to whether the agency will establish a conflict prevention related backstop or not. It is a shame to see the agency lose experienced employees because there are no professional career opportunities for them in areas such as conflict prevention.

Transformation was the Agency's largest reorganization in decades and it required cultural and operational changes that generated stress, anxiety and some resistance. Successful reforms require effective communications to build awareness, understanding and commitment. Through the Office of the Counselor, I energized the dialogue on reform and created two-way discussions with staff leading to renewed ownership of the reforms. By conducting five Bureau Town Halls reaching over 2,000 employees, I sought to clarify processes, clear up misunderstandings and increase buy-in. I dedicated a regular column in the Agency's newsletter to key aspects of the reforms and used the Monthly Mission Director calls and regular Notes to the Field to improve our overseas staff's awareness and participation. I reached out extensively to senior officials at State and DOD and spoke at think tank events. To build support externally, I engaged regularly with stakeholders and partners, and published an article entitled "USAID Reforms" in the Foreign Service Journal.

Q: Right.

Were you involved with the debate about creating a new multi sectoral development bureau that included democracy? Do you have thoughts on how that evolved?

MILLIGAN: By the time I came to Washington the structures were all in place and the CNs (Congressional Notifications) to create these bureaus had been submitted to Congress.

Q: Oh, they'd already been submitted, so you weren't part of the discussion on structural change?

MILLIGAN: No I wasn't. Although the CNs initially had holds placed on them, eventually quite a few of them were approved. Standing up new bureaus was an extremely complex and difficult task. To ensure progress, the agency created the Restructuring Management Unit under the direction of Jim Richardson, who was the head of PPL. Jim departed USAID to head up State/F leaving a void. I volunteered to fill in behind Jim. I led the RMU, really co-lead it with the chief-of-staff. The RMU convened the leaders of bureaus bi-weekly as part of a Transformation Advisory Council, which met regularly to keep the momentum moving forward on the reforms. This council was called the TAC, which I co-chaired. The person in the front office most responsible for the successes of Transformation and who pushed hard on the Transformation reforms and put in a lot of really hard work was the chief-of-staff, Bill Steiger. We would join forces to push things across the finish line, which included standing up the new bureaus. This was a very bureaucratically complex effort because it required a host of separate actions, new position descriptions and FTEs (Full-Time Equivalents) and budgets, and so many other administrative steps.

When I arrived in 2018, the structure was cooked and the CNs were on the Hill, including one for a new bureau called DDI (Development, Democracy and Innovation). I wasn't part of the discussion that stood it up so I can appreciate the conversations that took place, but I would have approached it differently if I had had the opportunity to do so. What would have made more sense would have been to take the D of democracy and combine it with the conflict bureau given the joint focus on governance. Of course, in a reorganization, there isn't just one right way. You can split a pie up in many ways, and there's a good rationale for many of the options. There's no perfect answer. But there is logic for combining democracy, human rights, and governance with conflict expertise given the interrelationships. What we have ended up with is an administrative distinction between the D of democracy and CPS, which will require leadership to mitigate overlap or friction between these two entities.

Q: This actually is a discussion I've had with two of your friends separately, Stephanie and Susan. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: Which I was not quite as opposed to as they were.

MILLIGAN: What is necessary to integrate humanitarian assistance and conflict prevention across the agency is the creation of a professional career track in these two new bureaus. This would require breaking up what is known as Backstop Seventy-six, which was the professional career designation for Foreign Service positions in the former DCHA bureau. Backstop Seventy-Six spans an enormous range, from humanitarian assistance to conflict prevention and all the way to more traditional democracy and governance work. It's a huge backstop if you think about the breadth of it. While breaking up the backstop into distinct professional areas makes sense, it would impact on the current cohort of officers in that backstop. I met several times with a group of officers from this backstop and we explored the pros and cons of breaking up the backstop into

three distinct professional tracks; democracy and governance, humanitarian assistance and conflict prevention. Many of them were hesitant at first. They appreciated the flexibility of a broader backstop. I reassured them that officers can and do move between backstops and we could even set up the new backstops as Seventy-six A, B, and C to ensure flexibility. What is important for the career development of our officers is that there is a home bureau that engages with them on their career development. Because of the Transformation reforms, Backstop Seventy-Six officers were spread across three bureaus: BHA, CPS and DDI. This would eventually lead to dysfunctionality and conflict as well. For example, if DDI remained the home of the backstop, it would play a role in the professional development and placement of officers who could be working in other bureaus. And if BHA and CPS did not have a unique backstop, it is very unlikely that they could integrate career officers into their bureaus. The consequence would be that the agency would continue to outsource core functions essential to our national security. To date, this outsourcing has been a source of friction. The agency has relied upon the services of dedicated non-career professionals, such as USPSCs to fulfill these core functions. Because these individuals are not career staff, they have to move from one temporary contract to another, which I do not think is fair to them. These are very dedicated professionals who have essentially had a career as USAID but are not career staff. We should find a way of bringing them into our career ranks and at the same time become less reliant on outsourcing for our critical functions. Absent that, the agency will continue to face friction and there will be resistance to placing career officers into positions that rely heavily on USPSCs because USPSCs will feel that their job prospects are being reduced. This really affects the agency's overall morale and the sustainability of our humanitarian and conflict-related work and needs to be addressed.

Q: Yes; these are the human resource issues which, you know, have been around for a long time and require probably more attention than they get.

Were you involved with discussion on the Hill after the congressional notifications had gone up? Was there a lot of consultation with the Hill to try to get their approval of the CNs? I wonder how the consultations with the Hill went and what were the major issues that they had and how you dealt with them.

MILLIGAN: There was active consultation with the Hill on Transformation. The lead for those consultations was Jim Richardson. Tom Staal, who was counselor at the time, also participated in those consultations. By the time I arrived, Tom had gone up to the Hill many times and the CNs were submitted. The consultations had finished and the CNs were either being approved or on hold. The workload then shifted to LPA which worked with the congressional staff and answered any remaining questions.

Q: I know that Transformation became very political regarding the Global Health Bureau. Were you involved at all in any of that, anything you can share with us on the Global Health bureau and the issues it was grappling with?

MILLIGAN: The Global Health Bureau was not part of the original structural reforms. The original reforms entailed standing up new bureaus, which were BHA, CPS, and DDI;

merging the Asia Bureau and the Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan; and restructuring the front office. There was some talk about reforms at the Global Health Bureau apart from standing up these new bureaus. I think it was just basically lifting up the hood and looking inside the engine of Global Health. At one time, there were some questions about whether to do the same for LPA. I wasn't really involved in any of those issues, but I was aware of some conversations that were occurring. Some of the ideas made sense. For example, elevating the office director for PEPFAR to a front office level position. This made sense given the number of staff and enormous level of resources in that office, as well as the high-level interagency engagement that was required. When it came to reforms, my door was always open. People would often come by and discuss the status of these reforms and provide advice on where an extra push was required.

Q: I think the chief-of-staff took the lead on Global Health; I was just curious if you had any insights.

Since you raised the subject of consultation with the Hill, do you have any thoughts on how USAID, especially career officers, deal with the Hill? Can it be done more effectively?

MILLIGAN: There are several things to consider. One, we must do better at proactively sharing information, not only with the Hill, but also with the NSC and interagency. Unfortunately, more often than not we wait and hang back until we receive a specific request. We do not effectively communicate the impressive impact of our work. So, the first thing to consider is being more proactive. Secondly, we need to communicate more clearly, more succinctly, and in plain English. We need to recognize that our colleagues on the Hill, as well as our colleagues at the NSC, have a very short amount of time to absorb the information they need. Besides proactively providing information, we should provide it in an easily digestible and non-USAID-speak format. Briefing the Hill and the NSC is a skill set one needs to develop; it's not inherent. And it's quite a different skill set than the academic USAID skill sets required of the development community. We're trained to write analytical strategies such as CDCSes. They are exhaustive sixty or ninety-page works. How we communicate sets us apart from our colleagues at the State Department. They have to boil down a complex issue into four sentences in their communications to State leadership. We are learning how to do that. I usually advise my USAID colleagues that if they want to learn how to write more effectively, they should read the State Department cables every day. They are an exercise in learning how to communicate important information succinctly and concretely. So recapping, we need to be more proactive. We need to think about how we communicate more effectively, and then we have to practice it. We should always look for opportunities to train the next generation of professionals, such as by bringing back benchers up to briefings on the Hill. Let them have the exposure and the opportunity to learn how to effectively brief key counterparts. This is a big growth area for our agency. The more people recognize that what USAID does is essential to our national security, the more will be asked of us, and the more effectively we will need to communicate. We need to change our mindsets and train the next generation.

When working overseas, we should seek out opportunities to participate in CODELs or virtual NSC meetings. At the very least, we should ask to be in the room. We shouldn't wait to be asked by the ambassador, we should volunteer and explain why it could be value added to have USAID in the room. Many times, meeting organizers may not understand why USAID's presence could add to the meeting. They may have a narrow view of what USAID does and not know how fully USAID is engaged in a broader spectrum of issues that impact U.S foreign policy objectives. We at USAID should be proactive, politically savvy, and become better communicators.

Q: Sort of related to this, USAID officers tend to spend more time in the field and thus often have a better understanding of how things work around the country. Do you think there are ways that USAID officers could more effectively add their on-the-ground knowledge to the decision-making process? USAID folks aren't likely to write cables.

MILLIGAN: Yes. I think there are some incremental steps we can take. We should write more cables. We should as an organization value cable writing and recognize our staff for it. I encouraged it. We wrote an insightful cable on the plague in Madagascar that enabled the embassy's voice to be heard and resulted in a policy change in how Washington engaged with the WHO. We had been advocating for this change internally at USAID without success. I discussed this with the mission's health officer Daniele, "We're not going to get anywhere just advocating internally with USAID, let's put it in writing." Sure enough, the cable was what was needed to get the issue on the discussion table back in Washington. That is the power of cables that most USAID officers are not aware of. Our State Department colleagues are always writing cables, and many address issues we are engaged on as well. At a minimum, we should be part of the clearance process so that we can shape the cable and add the development perspective if applicable. For example, there could be a State Department cable, beautifully written, talking about the democratic transition in a certain country. It should include a paragraph with insights from USAID since the mission would certainly be engaged in the electoral process. We might not have to author the cable but we could just easily add...

Q: Right, just add to it...

MILLIGAN: Yes, add to it or even, at a bare minimum, provide verbal input to the political officers drafting the cable.

We worked very closely with our public affairs office in Burma as well to make sure that what we were doing wasn't only limited to a USAID Facebook page but was amplified through other embassy platforms. There are many ways of elevating the development voice. Another way is placing USAID officers at the NSC. It's critical that our officers serve at the NSC because it is a two-way street of information exchange. Our officers at the NSC come back with very sharp interagency skills and they go on to leadership positions. But they also can reach back and flag opportunities for the development perspective to be included in shaping foreign policy decisions. Similarly, we should look for more interagency opportunities in the State Department and other agencies, and reward those who pursue such opportunities.

Q: Those are all good recommendations.

I'm flipping around a little bit but, when you talked about the worldwide mission directors conference you mentioned one of the subjects being sexual misconduct.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: This sort of arose at the time of the Me Too movement and I remember hearing directly or indirectly that there were women throughout AID who had expressed concerns consistent with the Me Too movement. Is that what prompted this special session at the mission directors conference? I'm just sort of curious if you could give a little more background about that.

MILLIGAN: While this did coincide in timing with the Me Too movement, what I think really mobilized the agency was the issue of sexual misconduct at Oxfam.

Q: Ah, Oxfam, right.

MILLIGAN: The Oxfam case opened the development communities' eyes to the broader issue. And we recognized it at USAID. A great deal of work took place before I arrived back in Washington as the counselor. The deputy administrator, David Moore and then later Bonnie Glick, served as the official champion of AAPSM's efforts. When Bonnie left, I stepped in to serve as the co-champion. The work was organized under a secretariat led by Keetah Salazar-Thompson, a very impressive leader with phenomenal skills. It was a real privilege for me to be able to serve alongside individuals such as Keetah. Without her leadership, the agency would not have achieved what it has to date. There were two work streams under the Action Alliance for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct or AAPSM. One focused on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse in USAID programs and the other engaged on preventing and addressing workplace sexual misconduct at USAID.

We have a noble mission, lifting communities out of poverty. But this noble mission does not negate the fact that we are an organization of human beings. AAPSM focused on concrete steps that could be taken to prevent sexual misconduct and harassment and has made USAID a leader in this space thanks to the work of Keetah and the many others who supported AAPSM. It has also rallied the efforts of the donor community as well and put the issue front and center on the agenda of international organizations. This work is so inspiring, I could go on at great lengths discussing what has been accomplished and the challenges that remain.

Q: No, that's good enough. Thank you. I should have remembered that the Oxfam incident would have prompted this.

MILLIGAN: Yes, but you were right to connect it to the Me Too movement because that was also an action forcing event.

Q: Similarly, I know that during the period that you were counselor, USAID really highlighted the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and that there were significant efforts on that front. Could you talk about some of the things that were done and what observations you have on what can be done more effectively?

MILLIGAN: Right. When I started my assignment as counselor, Bob Leavitt, the head of HCTM (Office of Human Capital and Talent), said, “Chris, let me give you some advice. You have a lot of core responsibilities that you are responsible for and have to get done, but besides them, you should probably pick three things to have as your priorities for your tenure as counselor.” What great advice. I thought about this quite a bit. I didn’t come up with the answer of what those three things would be the very next day, but as I settled into the job, they became clearer to me. One that emerged more rapidly than the others was diversity, equity and inclusion. The agency had a lot of work to do in this area. When I assumed the counselor’s role, I heard from many of our senior women inside the agency and outside that DEI was an important issue. There was the perception that the number of women in senior leadership positions had decreased. I raised this issue with the front office and highlighted it as an area I would focus on.

I also was very fortunate that Tom Staal created a Foreign Service officer position in the counselor office to serve as a senior advisor. What a brilliant move. The position had been temporarily filled and was on the bid list. It would take a year to fill. While it was out on the bid list, a series of rotating Foreign Service officers filled the position. The first one was Kim Kim Yee, who helped me out enormously. Daniele Nyirandutiye, who was still the health officer in Madagascar bid on the position but would not be in Washington until the following summer. Kim Kim and I began working to strengthen DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) in the agency.

I began by doing some basic research, just as I had with the executive order on the COO. To my surprise, I found out that USAID had a diversity and inclusion strategic plan which was quite recent. It was from 2017. I thought, Well, that’s odd. Here we have an agency-wide diversity and inclusion strategic plan and I had never heard of it. I also found out that such a plan was a federal requirement. I thought why is it that as a mission director I had never heard of this plan? I assume that the plan was a check the box activity and that it had been sitting on the shelf. I recognized that we had an opportunity. The agency was undergoing the largest reform in Washington in decades impacting so many staff. I thought, “Well, if we are undergoing an enormous transformation, if we are literally moving thousands of people into new bureaus, isn’t it time we look at DEI and update the plan accordingly?” I engaged OCRD, the Office of Civil Rights and Diversity and they agreed. They formed a working group to create a new DEI plan.

Creating a new plan was a very time intensive process. I cannot underestimate the amount of work done by our dedicated individuals from the Employee Resource Groups. Erin Brown and others facilitated the employee-led process that created the new plan.

Continuing my research by looking into the files, I saw that the agency had an Executive Diversity Council (EDC) that would convene senior leaders regularly to advance DEI. But this council had not met in well over a year. The new deputy administrator Bonnie Glick was now on board, and together we not only reconvened the EDC, but over time, enabled it to be a forum of senior leaders who discussed key measures to advance DEI.

Q: And who was on that council? What positions?

MILLIGAN: One member from the front office of every independent office and bureau. The EDC was guided by a formal charter that was drafted when Wade Warren was in the front office. It was co-chaired by the head of the Office of Civil Rights and Diversity and the deputy administrator, Bonnie Glick at the time. I was included as an honorary co-chair. Weeks before the EDC would meet, I would work intensively with the staff of OCRD on the agenda to make sure that it was action oriented and focused. OCRD has amazing talent, such as individuals like Dr. Clifton Kenon. I learned so much from him. The first quarterly meeting was really getting senior leaders back together and reviving the council. It can take a while for a committee or a council to get up and running and focus on those weighty issues, but it did.

There was more to do to strengthen DEI. OCRD was considerably understaffed and underfunded. This was made worse by the hiring freeze put in place during the early years of the Trump administration. To ensure a corporate approach to allocated scarce FTE, USAID created a Hiring Reassignment and Review Board (HRRB) in July 2017. The HRRB centrally approved staffing requests on a position-by-position basis and remained in place until February 2020. Bureaus and offices had to submit a written request to the HRRB to hire new staff. Any time a position was to be filled, whether it was a new position or an existing vacant one, a proposal would be submitted to the HRRB. The committee would meet regularly and spend up to six hours going through all the requests and ranking them, and if they were critical to the agency, approving them. OCRD submitted a proposal to fill one of its vacant positions. When the HRRB met, I read the proposal and said to Bonnie, “Bonnie? Just one person?” I said, “Why not more?” She said, “Right, why not ten?” This was extraordinary. No other bureau or office was able to realize such a large percentage increase in staff. But it demonstrated Bonnie’s commitment to strengthening DEI and what was possible when you had a senior champion such as the counselor flagging issues and opportunities and pushing as well. At the same time, there was a change in leadership of OCRD, which created an opportunity to revitalize this important office and improve its capacity to design, implement, and assess DEI efforts across USAID, as well as provide advisory support to bureaus and offices. Importantly, it enabled OCRD to clear long standing backlogs of EEO cases. And OCRD was able to submit the federally required Management Director 715 report on the status of DEI at the agency on time! This was quite an accomplishment. With restaffing approved, I then looked into OCRD’s budget. By highlighting the insufficient funding levels, we were able to increase OCRD’s budget threefold.

Actions to strengthen DEI should be based on analysis of data to determine what the barriers really are. I asked HCTM if they could start doing some basic analysis. I

remember saying, “We really need a strong focus on data because these are important issues that people are rightly passionate about. Discussions need to be based on data, rather than just perceptions.” Absent data, there was quite a lot of misinformation being passed around based on anecdotal incidents. HCTM launched an internal analysis of Foreign Service officer promotion data on gender, race and ethnicity. This report was presented to the Executive Diversity Council for further discussion and action enabling us to target actions that reduce barriers as well as monitor performance.

The counselor plays a critical role in the assignment of Senior Foreign Service Officers, not only in providing career advice and guidance, but as a permanent member on the Small Panel. The Small Panel is chaired by the deputy administrator and makes assignment recommendations to the administrator. Working closely with the Foreign Service Center in HCTM, the counselor ensures the smooth operations of the Small Panel. While OCRD is a member of the Small Panel, there had never been, at least to my knowledge, a specific discussion of DEI before the panel’s deliberations. I changed this. Moving forward, I ensured that we began the process with a discussion of DEI. OCRD presented an in-depth analysis of DEI, reviewing the diversity profile of our senior leadership, and differences, if any, in the cohort of individuals who are eligible to bid, who actually bid, and who were assigned. While we do not assign individuals to positions based on race, gender, or ethnicity, we need a better understanding of DEI by looking at facts.

DEI is a very sensitive issue. It was an area I chose to work on because, not only did I believe that the agency needed to make progress, but also because I understood it would be very sensitive. As counselor, one has the opportunity to take on sensitive subjects--things that others may hesitate to do. Many individuals retire from the counselor position, so there is no need to worry about jeopardizing your onward assignment. It really should be the counselor that shoulders such sensitive issues.

Complement this work, I partnered with HCTM to advance the agency’s new Leadership Philosophy. The “philosophy” articulates a common understanding of practices and behaviors that all staff should demonstrate. As its Senior Champion, I integrated the philosophy into our current processes and culture and developed resources to prepare our employees to lead anywhere, anytime more effectively. For example, deputy mission directors (DMDs) play an essential role in their Mission’s day-to-day operations yet receive no formal training or support to prepare them for this critical function. This was pointed out to me by Alicia Dinerstein, the former deputy mission director in Ethiopia. She had returned to Washington and we brainstormed on what we could do to support the agency’s DMDs. Alicia and I brought together a diverse group from across the Agency and designed and rolled out the first-ever DMD workshop. The workshop was a huge success thanks to Alicia. It provided DMDs with the practical skills necessary to manage Mission operations, improve staff performance and accountability, and operationalize the Agency’s reforms. I then worked with Alicia to ensure that this critical support was institutionalized in HCTM.

So, we were making a lot of progress and gaining momentum despite the challenges of the COVID pandemic, and then...then the country experienced the events of the summer of 2020 and the murder of George Floyd.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: And we had had a change in our front office leadership.

Q: I was going to say because you early on had the full support of Mark Green and Bonnie Glick, I assume.

MILLIGAN: Yes, I did. They were very committed to the welfare of USAID staff and to advancing DEI.

Q: Okay. And Mark left in late spring.

MILLIGAN: Mark left in April 2020.

His departure coincided with a very difficult period for not only our agency but our country, and for Foreign Service officers overseas. It became apparent to many FSOs that our own country doesn't always live up to the ideals that we advocate for overseas. While it was a difficult time domestically, I think it was as well for those overseas as we all collectively came to recognize that racism and discrimination are issues that still affect not only our country but many of our colleagues. Perhaps over the preceding years it may have been easier, or convenient, to turn a blind eye to this fact, but one could no longer do so.

Unfortunately, we did not have a front office that was enabled to communicate strongly or proactively on these issues. This made it even more difficult for our employees. To be fair, the front office was not permitted to engage on these issues given the stance of the administration. Later in the year, the administration issued two executive orders based on a somewhat revisionist interpretation of American history, and these orders essentially shut down efforts to strengthen. But USAID is comprised of mission focused people who don't need to wait to take action. The agency staff themselves mobilized. There was courageous leadership among career officers at the office and bureau level. Bureau leaders met with their staff, held town halls and conducted bureau-wide meetings. I sought out opportunities to engage in these town halls. They were conducted virtually due to COVID and attendance was in the thousands. I joined panels engaging with staff on the issues we were facing and devoted my regular column in the agency's Front Lines publication to the issues of racism and the work we must do as a country to become "a more perfect union". While the administration's appointees did not have the political space to act, I sought out every opportunity I could no matter how risky. Better to act first rather than ask for permission.

Earlier, the Action Alliance for Preventing Sexual Misconduct (AAPSM) launched a new Respectful, Inclusive, and Safe Environments (RISE) learning and engagement platform

for USAID staff that included training related to civility and respect, preventing harassment and sexual misconduct, and bystander intervention. The RISE Platform, led by Keetah Salazar-Thompson with support from OCRD, brought staff together for frank discussions on race and discrimination. As I participated in these sessions, I found that, for the first time, we were having honest and open discussions and sensitive and difficult issues. Those who attended walked away with a greater understanding of the issues of racism and discrimination that their fellow colleagues continue to experience in their lives. Looking back at those days, they were made even more trying by a new set of political appointees whose values did not reflect those of the agency, whether they were anti-Muslim, anti-women, or anti-LGBT. USAID is not often in the press. But during this time, USAID colleagues would often see articles about these individuals and their statements in the media, which made it an even more trying time. The media would call me regularly asking if it were true that I was about to be fired by the administration given my sexual orientation. Of course, I didn't engage with the press, but I am told they were on to something. Fortunately, I was not dismissed!

Looking back on my three years as counselor, they were unlike any other time in my thirty plus years with the agency. The challenges the agency experienced greatly impacted morale. Shortly after becoming a counselor, the federal government shut down for more than a month. The greater Washington area is a very expensive place to live. We have many employees who live paycheck to paycheck, and many faced significant financial issues. The shutdown continued week after week and the uncertainty was hard to bear. Some employees became Uber drivers while others cleaned houses to make ends meet. The Transformation reforms, while well intended, added another layer of stress to the workforce particularly as these reforms took three years and four years to implement. Transition and change are stressful. Employees experienced uncertainty about where they would be working, whether they would have the same portfolio, and who their supervisor would be. Despite the exceptional efforts at communication, as well as constant engagement with employee unions, many would not be reassured until the reforms were finalized. The CNs approving the new structures languished on the Hill for many, many months, which slowed down the process and increased the uncertainty. Staff were in suspense for so long, and that impacted morale. And then, add onto this were the events of the summer of 2020 that we just talked about, and then, in addition, USAID was now in the national headlines because of some of the actions of some political appointees. It was a very, very, extraordinarily difficult time for our folks in the agency. All of this against the stressful backdrop of a COVID pandemic with a global authorized departure of overseas staff while others worked around the clock to provide critical assistance to countries hit hard by the pandemic. Like I said, it was a time unlike any other I had experienced during my career at USAID.

Q: Right. On the DEI front, as I recall, you'd mentioned there had been a strategy. I think you all prepared a new strategy. Was that approved?

MILLIGAN: Yes. Not immediately. But eventually.

Q: Was it approved? Because I vaguely recall something about changes being made at the last minute or something.

MILLIGAN: Erin Brown and other members of our Employee Resource Groups did an extraordinary job of developing the new strategy. It was an excellent strategy because it was complete with concrete actions and metrics. The plan was presented to the revitalized Executive Diversity Council which approved it. It was then sent to the front office. And there it sat. Weeks went by. It stalled in the front office. When I looked into it, I was told that it was sent to OPM for approval, although this was not required. The acting administrator informed the Employee Resource Groups that he did not know how it got there, but nevertheless, it was there, and it appeared unlikely we would see it again. At the same time, as I mentioned earlier, the Trump Administration issued two executive orders that effectively suspended our DEI work. In September of 2021, President Trump issued an executive order that in practice suspended years of ongoing efforts to address racial disparities in the workplace. The extraordinary thing was that this executive order was written to apply not only to government agencies, but also, and quite remarkably, to our contractors and grantees and any other institution that had federal contracts or planned to apply for them. Not only was our DEI plan put on ice over at OPM, but all of our training activities were also shut down as well and hundreds of our partners sought legal guidance as to whether the U.S. government could dictate internal policy for private sector and civil society organizations.

Given the continuing importance of strengthening DEI, we elevated the issue in our engagement with the Biden Transition Team. I led the transition effort as the chief transition officer. A core task was assembling a set of briefings for an incoming administration. This work began over the summer, well before the November election. The transition briefing book would be composed of a set of briefing papers on each independent office and bureau's activities and main priorities. A very limited number of issues would be elevated and included as a prioritized set of core briefing papers. I ensured that one of these core papers was on diversity, equity and inclusion. The Transition Support Team that we assembled under the leadership of James Watson drafted the transition briefing book. Dan McDonald oversaw the entire process of drafting the briefing book. I was amazed at how skillful Dan was. He mobilized the agency to prepare the highest quality briefing book in record time. I have to say, in my thirty years at USAID, I have never seen someone who could make things happen and produce such excellent and timely results as Dan. We would not have succeeded without him. The DEI paper was up front and center, highlighting the work that had been done in the first several years of the previous administration, where the agency had gone, and what was needed for the road ahead.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: And of course, we noted the importance of releasing the new DEI plan.

Q: Right. And obviously the investments you'd made in collecting real data was a valuable part of that. Did it get approved?

MILLIGAN: It did. Eventually.

Q: Okay. Just—you can't leave us hanging there. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: The plan was eventually approved and released by the new administration. Approval of the plan was one of the first things that Administrator Power did upon her arrival at USAID in early May. On her first day at the agency, I organized a DEI session for her so that she could engage in a dialogue with staff overseas and in Washington on DEI as she was signing off on the plan. While it was good to finally get the plan approved after it languished for more than a year, in the meantime, we continued to broaden our efforts to strengthen DEI.

As we discussed, the previous administration's Executive Order 13950 and a perceived lack of high-level Agency commitment at that time halted progress we had been making on strengthening DEI. Nevertheless, Bureaus/Independent Operating Units (B/IOs) and Missions independently stood up separate DEI committees and produced work plans. Early in his administration, President Biden released the Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, providing us with an even greater space to advance DEI efforts beyond the DEI strategic plan that had been revised. Grateful for this opportunity, I formed a 200-Day DEI Action Plan Working Group bringing together a diverse group of individuals to develop specific actions to strengthen DEI that the new administrator could take within her first 200 days in office.

The action plan was intended to build momentum around and complement existing DEI efforts in support of the Biden Administration priorities. These existing efforts included the approval and implementation of the DEI strategic plan that we just talked about. The action plan was not a comprehensive strategy, but rather identified key opportunities for the new administrator to consider early in her tenure. These opportunities included how we operate internally, how we engage externally, and how we implement our assistance programs.

One of the key issues the action plan addressed was the lack of appropriate infrastructure and resources to expand DEI in the workplace and programming. USAID is a large and decentralized global Agency. While components of a DEI architecture were in place, they were poorly coordinated and under-resourced. Responsibility for DEI efforts was fragmented across multiple operating units and initiatives weakening accountability and unity of effort. For instance, the Office of Civil Rights and Diversity (OCRD) included a small DEI team that lacked coordinating authority or resources, and was inadequate to meet current needs, much less expanded efforts. Similarly, the Agency's Executive Diversity Council, which was recently reactivated, lacked any kind of authority and did not include representation from USAID's 17 Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). The ERGs played a key role in advancing the Agency's DEI efforts, but their role was unclear. The Bureau for Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM) also held significant responsibilities related to DEI, particularly around USAID's hiring and retention efforts.

Nevertheless, coordination on these efforts was largely internal to HCTM. Notably lacking, as well, was a centralized and accessible hub for DEI related data and resources.

The 200-day DEI action plan was structured around three main pillars, internal operations, external engagement and assistance programming. I am pleased to see that many of the recommended actions from the 200-day DEI action plan are now being taken up by the agency's front office.

Q: That sounds very exciting and nice to have a record of.

One other huge thing that you had to deal with in this same period started March of 2020 when COVID hit. You were probably right at the center of trying to figure out how AID would respond programmatically, but also what it meant for AID employees and how to manage given the lockdown.

MILLIGAN: That's right. What a challenge. It upended our operations and impacted on all our staff. The agency had never experienced anything like this before.

Q: Can you talk about that a bit?

MILLIGAN: The initial impact of the pandemic was felt in March when we initiated a period of remote work. Many of us thought it would be just a few weeks of remote work but it grew into months. We were all a bit surprised. When we all logged off and left our offices, we thought we'd be back in two months at the latest. Incidentally, this occurred immediately after the conclusion of our first ever worldwide deputy mission director conference which is something we should talk about as well.

COVID-19 had an unprecedented impact on our operations and presented considerable risks, stress, and uncertainty for Agency staff. As the pandemic moved across the globe, we had to continually adjust and adapt our systems and policies. This was an uncharted area. Not only did we have to maintain operations, expand COVID related assistance to hard hit communities, but also safeguard our workforce. Engaging daily with the USAID COVID-19 Task Force (TF), I worked to shape policies, adapt programs, and think through extraordinarily difficult operational and workforce problems. With the Global Authorized Departure, responsibility for implementing projects fell to many FSNs. I was able to assist the TF in expanding tools and authorities for FSN telework, procurement, and supervisory capabilities. Together with my good colleagues in HCTM, we resolved sensitive issues of home leave, travel, and change of duty stations. Communication was essential at that time. To address the high level of staff anxiety, I represented the Agency Front Office in weekly COVID calls with Mission Directors and also in numerous Agency Town Halls. We set up regular calls with the State Department's Director General to ensure USAID equities were included in State's COVID policies. I even volunteered to take on the responsibility of approving all Agency international travel for seven months--more than 700 requests--approving mission-critical travel while safeguarding employees' welfare. At the end of the day, my focus was on maintaining staff welfare, ensuring our world-wide continuity of operations, and enabling the provision of

emergency assistance to over 120 countries impacted by COVID-19. All this was made even more challenging by the global authorized departure.

Q: How quickly was the decision made on authorized departures from posts? Was that a Washington decision, or was it just individual posts making the decisions?

MILLIGAN: At the onset of the pandemic, the decision was left to the chief of mission based on the conditions in individual countries. As you recall, COVID hit different countries at different times. Later, the department issued a general authorized departure that allowed embassy personnel and their families to evacuate on a voluntary basis. This provided more flexibility to overseas missions and to their officers and families.

The issue, though, was what else we need to do to protect our people and how could we maintain the integrity of our operations during the global authorized departure. For example, I mentioned that we restricted international travel to missions to essential purposes only and it needed to be approved by the front office, which was a responsibility I took on.

Q: But that was travel of people going to the field or—this was not people coming back from—not the authorized departure. You didn't have to approve those?

MILLIGAN: No. Authorized departure had been approved. Neither did this apply to medivacs. It primarily was for those traveling to the field or between posts for work.

Q: So, it could be whether the contracting officer could go from a regional mission to a country mission?

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: Do you have a rough idea of what percentage of staff left and did they come back to Washington, or could they go anywhere they wanted since they would be working virtually?

MILLIGAN: Since the global authorized departure went in place in early March, over eight hundred staff departed on authorized departure and most went to their residence on record. This is a significant percentage of our overseas workforce.

Q: How did missions then manage the programs with all these people gone?

MILLIGAN: Fortunately, the COVID task force contained some very experienced professionals; Roy Donohue, for example, was one. We thought through what additional support and flexibilities missions would need to manage the program in the absence of so many staff. For example, we pushed through additional temporary authorities for FSNs, and also enabled them to have the additional equipment or internet access required whether that be laptops or cellphones.

Q: I would assume that in some countries the FSNs would have had to be going into the office to have access to internet. Was that the case or were there some countries where they worked from home? So, did offices need to be kept open for at least some functions?

MILLIGAN: This was on a case-by-case basis but I found it to be rare that there would be an FSN or any staff working a significant amount of time in an overseas office environment. Most worked from home and we did what we could to assist missions with any internet issues. I would also meet every two weeks with the FSN Advocacy Council. The FSN Center in HCTM would organize the meeting which brought together the worldwide FSN leadership to work through key issues. These FSNs were more or less attending these meetings from home similar to the vast majority of our employees in the United States and worldwide.

Q: Okay. My distorted view. The world is modernized and I'm not aware of it. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Yes, I think that adapting our processes during COVID made us realize how much had changed while compelling us to adapt even more.

Q: So, USAID is still basically working from home two years later, is that correct? (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: That is correct.

And the role of our FSNs continues to be as critical as ever. Pre-COVID, HCTM organized a worldwide FSN conference. Not only was this an excellent way of bringing the diverse FSN community together, but it also enabled them to focus on key priorities. One of the issues that we took as the counselor team was FSN security. Many of our FSNs face security threats, and not only those working in high threat countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Many work in countries whose governments may be at odds with the United States, countries like Nicaragua. Our FSNs can face additional security challenges because they are affiliated with the U.S. embassy.

I heard from one FSNs who worked in our office in Delhi. She explained that she was unable to attend events and meetings after work because she did not have access to the motor pool. It would be too dangerous for her as a woman to take a taxi. Taking a taxi by herself in Delhi would be a security risk and therefore this becomes not only a security issue but a professional issue. There could be more professional opportunities for those who could take a taxi to attend work events in the evening, namely men. One needs to think through the interplay and connections between security and professional opportunities. After the conference, we set regular meetings with USAID's Office of Security and others to focus on the top security issues that we could reasonably address. The worldwide FSN conference generated a lot of momentum and galvanized the FSNs as a community. Because of this, FSNs were better organized when COVID disrupted USAID's operations.

Q: That was very fortuitous. And the FSN Advocacy Council came out of that meeting as well, is that correct?

MILLIGAN: The FSN Advocacy Council had been formed and resourced earlier.

Q: Oh, okay. But very valuable because one certainly couldn't have put as much on the FSNs without that preparatory work.

MILLIGAN: Yes. And enormous kudos to HCTM and the team that pulled this conference together and did all the hard work.

Q: The counselor position varies with each incumbent. Probably everyone who's ever been in the job has played slightly different roles and done things differently because it depends a lot on the relationship with the administrator. Do you have any thoughts about how a counselor comes into the position and develops a mandate and priorities?

MILLIGAN: That's a great question because as counselor you don't manage people or money. Because of this, it's one's ability to influence that makes a counselor effective or not. And this influence is hopefully based on one's experience and credibility. USAID is fortunate that we tend to attract political appointees who are very smart and dedicated, but they do not necessarily have the decades of experience and understanding of how USAID systems work, particularly in overseas embassies. The counselor plays an important role as the voice of experience in the front office.

The counselor also has an important role in many management and personnel issues. I worked closely on a wide range of such issues with Bonnie Glick who was the deputy administrator at the time. I think we were a great team and she regularly sought my views on key issues. I mentioned earlier that besides regular responsibilities of the counselor, I also focused on three priorities. One was DEI. The other was strengthening the communications between Washington and our overseas missions, and the final one supporting the next generation of leaders. As counselor, and maybe you found this to be the case as well, I could at that time probably name more people in the alumni association than who were in the agency. (Laughs) And perhaps that was an indicator that it was time for me to consider my next step. In all seriousness, this was a clear indication that the future of our agency lies with our next generation of leaders. Alicia Dinerstein, who had curtailed as a deputy mission director in Ethiopia, pointed out to me that one of the most critical roles at USAID is the deputy mission director. Sadly, this position tends to be overlooked. There is no home in Washington that supports this position, there is no backstop, there is no office or bureau considering what skills deputies need and how to help them excel. Communications between the agency's front office, even including the counselor, were historically with the mission directors. The front office and bureaus held regular dialogues with mission directors and worldwide mission director conferences were anticipated as a regular event. All of our technical officers have a home bureau and many hold regular conferences. While I was counselor, I spoke at the conferences for program officers, DRG Officers, controllers and Procurement officers, regional legal advisors and quite a few others. Yet the deputy mission directors had been overlooked in

spite of the fact that it is the deputy who engages in the management and operations issues and who ensures the mission is operating smoothly and getting things done. I was grateful that Alicia joined the counselor team and became our point person on what we could do so better support deputy mission directors. My job was easier. It was to assist Alicia as she pulled together a team and designed a package of support for deputy mission directors, which included the first ever deputy mission director worldwide conference.

The conference was excellent—I really enjoyed it! Alicia and her team focused the conference’s content on the core skill sets that deputy mission directors needed to know. Although they play an essential role in their Mission’s day-to-day operations, they receive no formal training or support to prepare them for this critical function. The workshop provided the deputies with the practical skills necessary to manage Missions’ operations, improve staff performance and accountability, and operationalize the Agency’s reforms. They worked through what to do in a crisis, how to handle performance and behavior issues, as well as the different models of the mission director and deputy relationship. The conference was bookended by special training opportunities in key issues that we called a “bootcamp.” A notable outcome of the conference was a network of deputy mission directors for continual peer to peer learning and support.

The agency owes a great debt to Alicia. She finished her work and retired, but before doing so, she worked hard and, with a little help from me, institutionalized this support function in HCTM. HCTM now has a SLG unit that is supporting the next generation of agency leaders.

Q: That’s an important effort, particularly now with AID since many people are moving into deputy director positions with relatively less experience than in the past.

MILLIGAN: We’re seeing that more frequently as many go directly from a deputy to a mission director position in just a few years. In the past, individuals would serve as deputies for several tours at time. That’s not the case anymore. All this at a time when USAID’s work is more critical to our national security and foreign policy goals than ever before.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: Looking for other opportunities to support our staff, I also would meet regularly and assist, as best I could, Cheryl Anderson with her work at FSI. Cheryl had developed the curriculum for the New Field Leadership Course, a training course targeting first-time mission directors and deputy mission directors.

Q: The class is with directors and deputies together; it’s not two separate classes, right?

MILLIGAN: Correct; first-time deputies and mission directors together. Cheryl would invite me to participate in two sessions of the course. The course was normally held at

FSI. COVID changed that. Cheryl did a stellar job in adapting the course to a virtual platform which enabled the course to continue and assisted so many of our colleagues.

After many years overseas, a Washington tour can be challenging for many FSOs. Another new initiative I got off the ground was to assist those FSOs returning to Washington. Initial missteps can be costly. Pulling together a team of experts, I developed and launched a new “Welcome to Washington” Seminar for 40 senior FSOs. The training and materials, which included a resource toolkit, also allowed FSOs to create a peer support network, setting them up for success.

Finally, the USAID Alumni Association (UAA) members are an invaluable font of expertise that could be tapped to support our staff. To access this support, I negotiated and signed the Agency's first MOU with this association. The Agency is now engaging with UAA members for support on leadership development (including for FSNs), strategy expertise, public outreach, and critical operations. The results so far are impressive--we have matched eighty USAID officers with UAA Mentors.

Q: Right. And I know that the AID Alumni Association was very appreciative of your efforts on that front. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Very appreciative and very patient because it took time, it took quite some time to finalize, clear and sign.

Q: Yes; you had mentioned three priorities. You spoke about two of them—DEI and the next generation. What was the third?

MILLIGAN: The third one was communication.

As you know, USAID is a very large and decentralized agency. Two-way communication is ever so critical given the wide ranging Transformation reforms taking place in Washington. I wanted to make sure that our overseas offices were connected back to Washington, not only so they better understood these reforms, but also so that their voices were heard and could help shape their implementation. I revitalized the mission director call between Washington leadership and the overseas missions. I pulled together mission directors forming virtual roundtables on key issues and I wrote a column in the *Front Page* newsletter. I also prioritized engagement with officers as they came back to Washington, whether it was through conferences or when they were passing through on home leave. I can't tell you how many town halls I participated in. I forget how many. (Laughs) Though I do remember those at the Warner Theater, what a thrill to be on such a historic stage as the Warner Theater. Can you imagine? I had seen Etta James sing at the Warner years ago so how amazing it was to see the theater from her perspective. My bottom line was to communicate, communicate, communicate and then communicate more.

Q: Okay.

Now, you have already mentioned a bit about the difficulties associated with Mark Green's departure, and you've talked about some of the complexity and some of the issues in that interim period before the election. But you also said that the transition planning began in the summer before the election. So, maybe if you could talk a little bit about how that transition process is done, how the planning is done, and how it works post-election. Don't forget to include any of the chaos or complexity involved!

MILLIGAN:

The orderly transfer of power is a hallmark of our democracy. In June, the acting administrator designated me as the Chief Transition Officer, responsible for fulfilling the agency's legal obligations under the Presidential Transition Act. The Presidential Transition Act of 1963 establishes the mechanisms and procedures for an orderly and peaceful transfer of power. It has been amended several times. It stipulates what is required of federal agencies to prepare for this transition.

To fulfill the agency's requirements, I assembled a Transition Support Team (TST), bringing together a diverse group of experienced and motivated volunteers. The TST's exceptional efforts, whose members worked nights and weekends, ensured a smooth transition at USAID, enabling the incoming administration to effectively advance our country's priorities on day one. For example, Dan McDonald, a key member of the TST, engaged the agency's offices and bureaus in producing a 440 page briefing book made up of 127 papers on the current status and priorities of USAID. Following the election, Sonali Korde led the TST's efforts in organizing three intensive weeks of briefings with an Agency Review Team (ART) on a wide range of priority issues. I am so proud of the team's work. Even the ART lauded USAID's career-led efforts, dedication, and professionalism—recognition that is well deserved not only for the TST but also for the hundreds of staff involved, both in Washington and overseas. The post-election environment was unlike any other; politically-sensitive and fraught with risks. Working closely with the TST, I was able to successfully navigate around issues which could have derailed our work and the integrity of the process. I truly appreciate that the agency's front office never interfered with the work or direction of the TST despite the charged political environment in Washington.

Q: Did you start by looking at the briefing book that had been done for the previous administration? Is that the starting point?

MILLIGAN: Yes. We were so fortunate that the previous team had undertaken a herculean task of pulling together in-depth materials and suggestions into a transition briefing book. We really appreciated the hours and hours they spent on producing the book; we were so grateful for their efforts. Because of their work, I found that when I participated in the interagency transition planning meetings, I knew more than any of our counterpart agencies' colleagues because of the detailed information and suggestions contained in the briefing book. Wade Warren and his team did a great service to the agency in preparing this book. They ensured that the relevant memos, agency notices and other documentation were included which served as models for us. And the book wasn't

simply a list of documents, but also contained a detailed description of the processes that the team followed, which was very helpful.

They flagged for us an important issue which was that we should propose early on that USAID be elevated in the overall interagency transition planning process. The interagency transition planning divides organizations into two-tiers. The top tier is the Agency Transition Directors Council (ATDC). It contains departments and a select group of senior level agencies such as NASA. Historically, USAID had been in the lower tier group which was a random collection of one hundred or so smaller agencies, including entities like the Halibut Commission and others. The previous USAID transition support team pushed to have USAID elevated to the senior level ATDC committee without success. Not only is the ATDC responsible for ensuring an integrated strategy for presidential transitions, in the past, lacking representation on the ATDC delayed the arrival of a transition team to USAID or required USAID's transition to be coordinated via the State Department.

I drafted a request for the front office to send to the White House to elevate USAID, gaining us a seat on the ATDC for the first time. Our previous request in the past administration was not successful.

Because the former transition support team flagged this issue in the briefing book, we prepared to engage on it early on. We tried verbally flagging this issue for OMB which co-chairs the ATDC with the GSA, but we didn't get anywhere. I then drafted a justification that the chief-of-staff was able to send over to OMB. It was really due to Bill Steiger's continued pushing that USAID was elevated to the senior ranks of transition planning. This was a big win because it was an acknowledgement of the importance of USAID's work to our national security and foreign policy objectives. Our justification pointed out that the continuity of humanitarian assistance is strategic to our national interests during a transition and merited elevating USAID. OMB agreed. Hopefully this will continue to be the practice going forward.

Q: You're at the adults table, not the kids table.

MILLIGAN: Right. And it was important for the other adults to see us there. After all, those agencies on the ATDC were our interagency partners; State, Treasury, DOD, HHS and others.

So, we now have a chief transition officer, me, we've been elevated in the ranks of transition planning, we're meeting regularly with our counterparts at State and DOD and others through this committee, and we have been given invaluable briefing materials by the former team--we were in a very good position.

The next task was bringing together the briefing book. The Transition Support Team discussed and eventually agreed on the main corporate papers that would comprise the first section of the book. Then we tasked out these bureau and office papers, limiting these papers to two pages in length and providing a standard format for them to follow.

We could not have done without Dan McDonald. Daniel and a small team took on the tasking and collection of the papers. They worked intensively with the bureau and office drafters. I was amazed at how deftly Daniel operated. His knowledge of the building and how to get things done is impressive—really unmatched. The papers came in and they were of very high quality. An innovation to the briefers was the inclusion of hyperlinks embedded in the two-pagers. This way the essential information was upfront, and the reader could drill down and review background documents through the hyperlinks if he or she chose to do so. The briefing book was extremely comprehensive, such that I would provide it to the incoming political appointees upon their arrival. The acronym page alone helped clear up so much confusion—a crash course in “USAID speak”. I didn’t expect the incoming political appointees to read all 127 papers. I told them though if they were in a meeting on Africa for example, and they really wanted to know the difference between Power Africa and Prosper Africa, they could flip to the two-page papers and become quickly informed.

Another task required by the Presidential Transition Act is to ensure that succession plans are in place so that as political appointees depart, career officials are prepared to step in and keep the government functioning until new political appointees arrive. This sounds easier than it is. We worked closely with GC’s Jack Ohlweiler to determine who could be acting heads of bureau among career staff in the event of a transition. Jack walked us through the complex legal requirements and got us to a plan. As counselor, I had the opportunity to work with a wide range of leaders in the agency—and am so thankful that I had the chance to work with Jack. He is brilliant, insightful, fearless, and has a wonderful sense of humor. As counselor, I have a perspective that not many others have and I have seen first-hand how Jack has stood up to defend the integrity of the agency at key points, often at great personal risk. With Jack’s help, we submitted the succession plan. Meanwhile, the briefing book was in good shape, and we had prepared for the arrival of a Biden transition team. We were ready to hit the ground running as soon as the election was certified. And as you recall, things didn’t quite go the way they had in past elections. The election was not certified until December.

Q: So, there are no transition teams from the winner until the election is certified?

MILLIGAN: That’s right. There could be no engagement with any representative from the Biden team. We were in a holding pattern. We even had to modify our daily language because the election had yet to be certified. For example, we would not be able to say the incoming Biden Administration, we’d have to say, in the event of a new administration. As you recall, this was a very tense time for our country.

Q: Indeed. And the political appointees were all still in place from the Trump Administration, right?

MILLIGAN: Yes, they were still in place. But they were very respectful of the career-led process. Despite the wider political environment, there was no interference. The issues that we prioritized in the briefing book and how we chose to frame them were all career-led. The integrity of the process was preserved.

Q: Yes—kudos to everyone on that.

So, the election doesn't get certified until early December and then there's a transition team announced.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: Were they in place fairly quickly after that?

MILLIGAN: They were in place almost immediately after that. And we had a lot to do given the delays. We only had three short weeks left. The incoming transition teams are called Agency Review Teams or ART. Our own Transition Support Team had several components. One focused on operations, what the needs of the ART members would be, laptops, entry into the buildings, temporary security clearances etc. Another component was responsible for the briefing book. And the third component was responsible for setting up briefings for the ART, which was a very intensive process.

First, we proposed core subjects that we thought the agency review team should focus on and arranged briefers from the respective bureau or office. These briefings were all virtual. After completing the set of recommended briefings, the process was driven by the requests of the ART, what issues they wanted to focus on and whether they wanted deeper dives on any subject. The TST drafted notes for all these meetings and sent them right back to the ART. Daniel and Jen oversaw the drafting process. James and Karen were the leads for the TST and worked intensively with Sonali to set up the briefings.

Q: I know they also met with external parties, did you all advise who the ART might externally want to be meeting with or that was their own?

MILLIGAN: They did that on their own. It was important in our briefings that we were providing information and not making policy recommendations.

Q: Right. And obviously, one of the things that you all highlighted was the DEI strategy because then that got picked up and was acted upon immediately.

MILLIGAN: Correct.

Q: Were there other things you wanted early action on that actually occurred?

MILLIGAN: The DEI strategy was a key one, particularly since it had languished for months. We kept a close-hold running list of issues the AFT and new political appointees needed to know about so they could be effective on day one. Subjects like key humanitarian assistance efforts, ongoing issues with Congress, with the interagency, etc.

Q: Okay. And it was the ART that determined who would be the acting administrator before an administrator was nominated and confirmed?

MILLIGAN: This was never clear to me. No one engaged me in that issue. I assume it was the recommendation of the head of the ART back to the White House.

Q: Again, you've always talked about communication being an important function, I assume communication to the staff during this process was also something you spent a lot of time on.

MILLIGAN: Yes. But it became more difficult given the sensitive political environment we were in. USAID continued to be in the media including a November 9th article in the Washington Post regarding the transition. We were aware that anything we communicated broadly could end up in the press and possibly out of context. We did not want political attention on the agency at that sensitive time. We provided a series of briefings for office directors, and we briefed bureaus on the process before the election and after the election. I brought together the career heads of our bureaus and offices and briefed them on what we knew and provided the best guidance I could. I don't think we communicated at the level that the previous transition team did, but we did all we could despite the extraordinary political environment. With the inauguration a few days away, I brought the senior career staff together so that they would be prepared and responsible leadership would be in place on day one of the new administration. At this point, no one from the Biden transition team had communicated if there would be Biden officials at USAID on day one or who would be responsible for leading the agency. We had to construct a plan to ensure that the important work of the agency didn't stop. Working on our own, we put together a list of the important functions and matched career names to those positions, acting administrator, acting chief-of-staff, acting deputy administrator, etc. Having a plan lowered the anxiety among our senior career staff.

Q: When were the decisions made? Was it as late as January 19 or 20?

MILLIGAN: I am not sure when the decisions were made. That was not clear to us. We only learned about some of the decisions a day or two before the actual inauguration.

Q: And Gloria Steele was named the acting administrator and brought in. She had retired some months earlier.

MILLIGAN: That's right.

Q: Were there others or was she the only one who came in? Was there an acting chief-of-staff or any of those other functions?

MILLIGAN: Gloria was the acting administrator. Some of the political appointees arrived on day one. The transition was made so much smoother because one of those who arrived early was Michele Sumilas. She came in as the ATA for PPL but took on the acting chief-of-staff role until a chief-of-staff could arrive. Michele has considerable experience at USAID, having served previously as the chief-of-staff. She was just exactly the right person for the job, very knowledgeable, professional and trusted.

Q: She had been chief-of-staff for whom?

MILLIGAN: For Raj Shah.

Q: Okay. So, then on—so January 21, the inauguration has taken place and you all are starting back to work, although working virtually, I believe still.

MILLIGAN: That's right.

Q: And so, I assume that the—that Michele and Gloria and with the transition team's advice is beginning to lay out those early actions that you put in the transition materials.

MILLIGAN: Yes. The focus was also on reviewing any activities that were pending from the previous administration that may not reflect the values of the Biden administration and deciding whether to pull them back or not.

Q: Right.

MILLIGAN: Some required quick action, for example those that were budgetary or policy in nature.

Q: Right. And that included some policy papers that had just been issued, I believe in the last week.

MILLIGAN: Correct. Policy papers or policy decisions like CNs that had gone to the Hill, including the Global Health CN that you had referred to.

Q: Okay. So, certain things were pulled back then?

MILLIGAN: Yes; pulled back until they could be evaluated, and decisions made on whether the new administration would support them.

At the same time, the process of onboarding began. Every week, a new cohort of political appointees would arrive. One of the first appointees to arrive was our White House liaison, who played an essential role facilitating the overall onboarding process. Although we had heard of certain candidates for the administrator position, no one had been announced at this time.

Q: Right. And so, just how does it work? Does the White House advise AID that Political Appointee X is coming, or does Person X just show up one day?

MILLIGAN: The new administration has a vetting process. Once the appointee has passed this vetting, the White House liaison would advise us when the person would be arriving. We had an excellent White House liaison who frequently asked for advice on

certain positions and even asked if we had recommended candidates who should be considered.

Q: Right. And was there any orientation or training for the new political appointees as they would come in to help them get ready for whatever they were going to be doing?

MILLIGAN: There's the agency's basic onboarding process but I wouldn't call it an orientation or training. I would reach out to the new arrivals in key positions, introduce myself and welcome them to the agency. I would offer them the virtual briefing book that we developed for the transition and let them know that I was "available at any time." Some would follow up with additional meetings and we'd meet regularly. I would provide advice on any issues they were facing.

Q: Right. But again, that's where the transition book is very important because that gives them something to orient themselves to the agency. And most—many of them, obviously, had some background anyway.

Within a few months, Samantha Power was nominated to become administrator. How does the process work preparing her for the Senate hearings? Is the agency working with her to help her prepare for decisions and were you involved with that at all as counselor?

MILLIGAN: No, I was not involved in that. The process was led by LPA. The person who was our lead for briefing the ART also took the lead on preparing the briefing for Samantha Power.

Q: Right. Did you have any early conversations with her before her confirmation, just about your perspective on issues that the agency faced?

MILLIGAN: I had a meeting with her before her hearing.

Q: Okay. And then, she was confirmed by May or June, something like that.

MILLIGAN: Right.

Q: And so, now you're in the position of trying to develop a relationship with yet another AID administrator and needing to define the counselor role. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Right. One of my key priorities at this time was to make sure that Administrator Power and other key new leaders understood the depth of expertise at USAID and understood our agency. I set up meetings to facilitate Administrator Power's engagement with a wide variety of our professionals in Washington and overseas.

I retooled the monthly mission director phone call with the administrator, transforming it into a video call focused on the discussion of key themes such as localization, governance, corruption etc. I would use the selected key theme to introduce the other members of the incoming administration working on a particular issue. For example, for

the call centered on corruption, I introduced Sharon Green and then teed up a few mission directors to discuss the complexity of issues of corruption in their countries, what they were doing about it and what recommendations they had. The video call would be open for any mission director's participation, but I would reach out to several mission directors in advance to say, "Heads up. We don't want awkward silence. We want you to engage. Let's review your intervention because you're going to have to be succinct." The initial intervention by one or two mission directors would spark a wider conversation. I think this was helpful for the administrator to quickly understand how we get things done overseas, the issue and the constraints mission face, and also the excellence that we have in our thought leaders and management leaders overseas.

Q: Yes; that's important. I would think that it was very difficult to develop the informal relationships that are really an important part of a front office when you are working virtually. Do you have thoughts about how to develop relationships when you're doing it via the computer?

MILLIGAN: I agree—those relationships are invaluable. But they are difficult to form working virtually. I would prioritize coming in to work several times a week. I shared a suite with the acting deputy, Mark Feierstein. By coming in, I was able to reconnect with him since he was part of USAID's leadership team during Raj Shah's time. He was focusing mostly on policy issues and spent a great deal of time in NSC meetings. The relationship between the counselor and deputy is an important one. The deputy is responsible for management, operations, and personnel issues, including the policy issues he or she takes on. The counselor can help the deputy get up to speed with the necessary background on a complex issue as well as suggest advice on management, operations and personnel issues.

One recommendation that I had for the incoming team was to create two deputies, one for policy and the other for management and operations. A model similar to that of the State Department. Given the wide range of complicated issues USAID handles and complexity of its worldwide operations and funding, one deputy cannot adequately take on the span of policy, management and operations issues. I worked with our new director of GC and a small group to put together a concept for a two-deputy structure, and then participated in discussions on this with key staffers on the Hill. The CN passed quickly, and we were able to move forward with the new structure.

You mentioned the importance of developing relationships. This is more challenging when the workforce is working virtually. This is new territory not only for USAID and the federal government, but also for corporate America. While we need to maintain workforce flexibility, we need to think through any unintended consequences of remaining virtual. One of my concerns that I discussed with our ERGs is the importance of relationships. We need to continue to advocate for more workforce flexibility. As a large modern agency with global operations, we need to continue to evolve and adapt. But we need to ensure that we don't create a tiered system of those who come to work and those who don't. When you are in the office you form professional networks and can build trust with your co-workers in a way you cannot if you are working virtually. You

can say “Let’s go grab a coffee.” You may bump into someone and remember about a job opening that is becoming available or an opportunity to serve on a prominent task force. You create an informal network of trusted colleagues. My fear is that if we don’t recognize this potential, we will end up with a system similar to an “old boys’ and girls’ network.” Those who have the ability to come into the office could end up getting the best opportunities or being recommended for promotion. This is something that as a society we need to think through now. Increased workforce flexibility sounds great, and is very useful, but we need to think through and counteract any unintended consequences.

Q: Yes; absolutely.

I’m trying to think, on the counselor front, how you might have redefined your own role during this period.

MILLIGAN: That’s a great question. During this time, my priority was to ensure a successful start to the new administration. In some ways, I was a link between the new front office and the career staff, particularly those overseas. I recognize there were some key things I had to get done. One, as I mentioned, was the importance of ensuring that the new leadership understood the value that our career staff bring—and also of the values we hold as an agency. When you join USAID, you join a community united by a common mission. I wanted Samantha to be exposed and “get” our ethos, to understand what drives us and who we are. Samantha very quickly got it. She enjoyed engaging with career folks. I really appreciated how she prioritized swearing ins for mission directors and met with them and their families before each ceremony to get to know them and hear their stories.

The other key action was ensuring a smooth assignment process for the next cohort of senior leaders. This is done through the senior leadership group assignment process and consists of a small panel chaired by the deputy. As Mark Feierstein was active full-time at the NSC, I chaired the small panel on his behalf. This is a very intensive process and one that all small panel members take seriously. Through a series of long meetings, the small panel made its recommendations to the administrator and ensured that the new slate of candidates would be in place to carry the administration’s priorities forward. At the same time, I continued spending a large percentage of time providing professional advice to employees, not only foreign service officers, but civil service officers, FSNs, and PSCs. As a counselor, your door’s always open and some days, I would spend several hours counseling employees. I also prioritized institutionalizing the DEI efforts that we had begun under the previous administration.

One of the recommendations I had put forward with the 200 Day DEI action plan working group was creating a DEI coordinator position in the front office. This was an action that the State Department had just completed. At the same time, I continued to brief the Hill on our DEI efforts.

A lot of the things I had worked on over my tenure were now more sustainable and some were institutionalized in the agency, for example the DEI Coordinator position, the two

deputy structure, increased professional support for the next generation of leaders in HCTM, etc. Dean always says, “Don’t stay too long at the fair.” Susan Reichle advised me when I started as counselor, “You need to know when to hand the torch off.”

Q: So, recognizing you had achieved a lot, it was time to start thinking about what next.

MILLIGAN: It was time for someone else to come in with ideas and form a relationship with the new front office early in its tenure and start afresh and move forward. That’s what I realized over the summer. In August, I made the decision that it was now time to hand the torch off.

Q: Time to retire (Laughs) and take some time for yourself for at least—and you seem to be very smart and not committing yourself into something else immediately.

MILLIGAN: Well, I’m very fortunate to have an 18 month period of leave without pay in Mozambique because it prepared me for life after USAID. The idea of retirement can be intimidating. Some may wonder what will I do when I wake up in the morning, what’s my life going to be like? But I had a mini-break in Mozambique and found that I have so many interests. There are so many things to do particularly here in Washington.

Q: So, there’s a recommendation here to do a practice session midway through your career. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: What I didn’t recognize during my career but now looking back, is how flexible a career at USAID can be. Some people really think there’s only one way to achieve their goal or one path to develop professionally. This is not the case. There are many different ways. In the words of Joseph Campbell, “Follow your bliss.” If you do, you’ll get there. It’ll be fine. Do what makes you happy.

Q: Right. No, I used to always joke with people because I never did any career planning and it worked out okay. (Laughs)

And I don’t think you did any planning, given the interesting path that your career took, so.

MILLIGAN: That’s right, I never did any career planning. If people were to look at your career, Carol, they would probably look back at it in terms of a linear path and they would probably think that you had it all plotted out. Same for me perhaps. But that was not the case. I took a job opportunity, and it opened a whole new set of doors. I do not think I had a traditional career path. I was a deputy mission director in 2004 and ’05, and then didn’t become a mission director until 2012. That was because there were so many other fascinating and interesting things to do in the meantime.

Q: Right, right. Well, no, and I think that’s important advice for people.

I think that, you know, we need to try to kind of wrap up for now and any sort of concluding thoughts you have on your career. Any further observations?

MILLIGAN:

First of all, ending where we started this interview, there is a family behind every USAID officer supporting them and enabling their success. My family has always been there for me. I've been so fortunate.

To retire in our Agency's 60th year, provided me with an opportunity to reflect not only my time at USAID but on the history of our Agency. Over the past 60 years, USAID's role has been shaped by the major periods of our national history—from the Cold War to the aftermath of 9/11. The world today is so different now from that of 60 years ago. Tremendous progress has been made—but we face daunting challenges—from the nature of humanitarian crises which are more complex and protracted to the global ambitions of authoritarian regimes and the accelerating challenges of a changing climate.

As the world continues to evolve, USAID's mission is more critical today than ever before. More critical, and given the scale of the challenges, it is easy to become disheartened. But, in our 60th year and beyond, we should not lose sight of the incredible accomplishments. I have been a witness to so many of them over my 31 years.

Despite the progress, we can be discouraged by setbacks. I have experienced quite a few and they can be heartbreaking. But we need to remember that progress may not always be linear. Real change and fundamental reforms can take years to grow roots, to deepen institutions, and build economies and justice. No, it may not be linear, but the investments we make today ensure that progress can take place.

When we went back to Burma in 2012 and re-opened the USAID mission which had been shuttered for decades—and Burma had been isolated for years and years, there were no cars, no cell phones, no banks, really no economy. As I mentioned earlier, we found economists and agronomists that with USAID support had studied at our best universities in the 70s—and when we met them, they said, “we knew one day you would come back”—and they then said, “let's get to work”. And we did. And we transformed Burma's economy.

No—progress is not linear, and the story of Burma has been one of thrilling advances and heartbreaking setbacks—like today. But we are still there supporting Burma's return to a democratic path, and with our support and those leaders inside the country, the story of Burma is still being written. It doesn't end here.

I was in my 20s when I joined USAID and looking back, what I love about working for USAID, is it is a career that will challenge you and bend you in many different ways. It is unlike anything else public service.

There are times that you will be presented with a challenge, and you will say, I can't possibly do that. And you will. I can speak from personal experience when in one of my first years at USAID, I was asked to run airlift in Rwanda just before the genocide, or at

other times, landing in a C130 as one of the first civilians in Baghdad to set up operations during the war, or being asked to lead the USG response to the devastating 2010 Haiti EQ. That is why we need to keep preparing our new leaders for the next generation of challenges.

In working overseas, I have loved not only the adventure but the learning --continuing to learn every day about a myriad of things—not just development and social change, but cultures, languages, other histories and about this world, but most importantly, when we all do this, we learn more about ourselves, and what we can do that at times that we never could have imagined.

Retiring after 31 years, I want to say thank you. We are, perhaps more than any other institution I know, a community of people.

Together, we have briefed presidents in their offices and sat on dirt floors with farmers and villagers. We have traveled by plane, boat, jeepney, and even on foot to remote communities to deliver critical assistance that has transformed lives.

This is what I appreciate about USAID. We work together and we support each other. When the call comes from a colleague, we are there. We will scramble and fly across the world to help each other because we are united by a common mission. And regardless of how we came into this Agency (FS, CS, FSN, USPSC, IC) or where we come from—from the more than 80 or 90 nationalities that make up this agency, we stand shoulder to shoulder to get the job done. When we built our Mission in Burma, it was not only our American staff who came to help from other missions, but also our FSNs. Who helped build USAID's Mission in Burma? Not only the brand new and committed FSNs from Burma, but also FSNs who came from Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. Oh yeah, and India. Oh, and Mozambique and Malawi. And then there's Serbia, Georgia, and the Ukraine. And of course, Nepal and the Dominican Republic. And I saw the same dedication and professionalism when we opened our USAID mission in Iraq. FSNs from around the world stood shoulder to shoulder with us in Iraq, through rockets and mortars, to get the job done.

I have been so fortunate to have been guided by so many experienced FSNs over the years.

And so...when we celebrate our 60th year and those anniversaries to come, it is important that we recognize something about USAID that is not as common in this world as it should be. And that is unity. The unity of working together towards that common mission.

I have thought a lot about the question...what is USAID? And you know that USAID is more than just a collection of bureaus and offices and overseas missions. More than just contracts and grants, and programs. What do I think USAID really is? Well, let me describe it to you this way.

There is a power when people come together. USAID is more than us or more than the 10,000 in the Agency. It is also the community health worker in Madagascar, it is the poll worker in Iraq who will not be covered by insurgents, it is the local government official in Indonesia, the U.S. researcher at land grant university, the youth in the Guatemala highlands, the entrepreneur in Kosovo---USAID reaches out and brings together millions united in the belief of human progress. Carol, you have seen this, and I have seen this.

And that is what USAID is. USAID is the power of people coming together to advance human dignity.

Across the globe and through many decades, people have come together again and again to form this picture of a better world.

I am thankful to have been a piece of that beautiful mosaic.

What better career could there be?

Q: Right, absolutely, a career of constant learning and, in your case, having significant impact as well, so what more could one want? And I assume you encourage young people to do the same and to explore the options.

MILLIGAN: I do. I am signed up for an AFSA event tailored to more junior Foreign Service officers and recently spoke to a Georgetown class. I am envious of people joining USAID today. I know that it's easy to get discouraged with bureaucracy. We're a large organization. But when I think about what they're going to do, the worlds they're going to see, changes they will make, challenges they'll confront, I'm so envious of them.

Q: Well, thank you very much, Chris. And I must say, you've inspired me. I'm ready to re-enlist here. (Laughs)

MILLIGAN: Thank you.

End of interview